

The Rt. Hon. Tony Blair MP
10 Downing Street
London, SW1A 2AA

2nd February 2004

Dear Mr. Blair,

Gender Recognition Bill

I write on behalf of the Church Society to object to Government proposals for transsexuals.

The Church Society Trust has been entrusted with the patronage of 117 livings located in most dioceses in England. In collaboration with Bishops and Parish representatives, Church Society Trust seeks to appoint godly men and, once they are licensed, to support them in ensuring the pastoral care of the parish.

The trust considers applications for livings and selects those who, in confession and conduct, uphold traditional Christian teaching. The Gender Recognition Bill will make it a criminal offence for the trustees to discuss one basic issue of character relating to candidates - their true sex.

We consider it immoral for a person to reject his God-given sex. We also believe that church leadership positions should be held by men. (Section 19 of the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 enshrines this as a right.) The Trust would not wish to appoint a woman who believed she was a man. Nor would we appoint a man who was purporting to live as a woman.

A candidate who is biologically female but has changed her sex in law could deceive the trustees into believing she is a man. She could be appointed to a freehold and, under Church rules, could not be removed from it if the truth about her sex emerged. Even if a trustee did discover a candidate's true sex, the Gender Recognition Bill would criminalise him for disclosing it to other trustees.

I have to say that, as a matter of conscience, I personally would break the law rather than be complicit in deception. But can it really be right for the Government to introduce a law that forces me to lie?

Yours sincerely,

David Phillips
General Secretary, Church Society