

WRITE TO: Letters, The Hinckley Times, Atkins Building, Lower Bond Street, Hinckley, LE10 1QU
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Vast majority of this country are not practising Christians

REVEREND John Whittaker's attack on what he calls the 'anti-religious rhetoric' of the National Secular Society appears to be predicated on a deep misunderstanding of secularism. As Rev Whittaker is surely aware, the majority of British people are not believing, practising Christians.

In a religiously diverse society, secularism is the ideal framework for ensuring that everyone's reli-

gious freedoms are equally protected. In opposing the imposition of worship in council meetings, secularists are simply trying to ensure that town hall meetings are for everyone, regardless of their faith, or lack of it. Councillors are not elected for their religious beliefs and council chambers are not places of worship.

His fear of a 'crusade to eradicate faith' is as hysterical as it is paranoid.

There is no attempt to 'air brush faith out of public view'. We should all be grateful for the charitable works conducted by organisations both religious and secular. But Rev Whittaker should think twice before using charitable work as a bargaining chip for special privileges.

Stephen Evans
 Campaigns Manager
 National Secular Society

Don't force Christianity on us

I was saddened by the Reverend Whittaker's article in last week's paper about compulsory prayers as part of council meetings.

What made me sad was that he chose to follow a path of division, rather than a path of inclusion and social cohesion. Many people find religion a huge benefit in their lives and the church can be a positive defender of communitarian values. However, it does not follow from this that the beliefs of one religious group should be forced upon all others.

Equally, to oppose this is not an expression of anti-religious sentiment.

I was also sad at the reverend's suggestion that the 1.4 million people who volunteer in church projects would stop doing this if their religious practices could not be forced on all others.

The National Council for Voluntary

Organisations has estimated 19.8 million people in the UK volunteer every year. Many of these will have no religious beliefs, a recent social attitudes survey of UK citizens found that 50.7% stated they have no religion. People presumably volunteer because they believe in what they are doing or simply enjoy volunteering.

To correct one point the reverend makes; there can be no such thing as a militant Atheist.

Atheism is simply an absence of belief in a god, there is not a system of beliefs to be militant about. It would be rather like saying that not joining a craft club was a hobby.

By contrast forcing Christianity on reluctant councillors could be described as militant.

Rod Parker
 Teignbank Road

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On car crashes into bungalow - Glad no one was hurt
 Nicola Collison

On florist Jessica Andrews shortlisted for Chelsea Flower Show - Congrats and well done!
 Ami EA Leckie

On diver dies at Stoney Cove - People choose their hobbies and they know the dangers. If we tightened up too much on things that are fun the world would be a boring place.
 Glenda Gill

On Barlestone Cop raided - Low life cowardly scum need their hands breaking
 Shirley-ann Stretton