

Eric Pickles' favouring of Christianity risks causing rifts in society

Posted: Tue, 21st Feb 2012

The Communities Secretary, Eric Pickles – and the Coalition Government as a whole – risks alienating huge swathes of the population of this country with calls to return Christianity to the centre of public life, says the National Secular Society.

Mr Pickles said today, as part of his new community cohesion strategy document, that: "A few people, a handful of activists, have insisted that it isn't enough simply to celebrate the beliefs of minority communities; they want to disown the traditions and heritage of the majority, including the A few people, a handful of activists, have insisted that it isn't enough simply to celebrate the beliefs".

"In recent years we've seen public bodies bending over backwards to translate documents up to and including their annual report into a variety of foreign languages.

"We've seen men and women disciplined for wearing modest symbols of Christian faith at work, and we've seen legal challenges to councils opening their proceedings with prayers, a tradition that goes back generations, brings comfort to many and hurts no one. This is the politics of division.

"Harriet Harman [deputy Labour leader and author of the Equalities Act] was leading the country down the wrong path. If we are to remain a country where people of different backgrounds feel at ease and get along, we need more confidence in our national traditions. We need to draw a line.

"Some see religion as a problem that needs to be solved. We see it as part of the solution."

Terry Sanderson, president of the National Secular Society, said:

"The Government seems to be trying the same tactics that are used by the Republican Party in the USA – the appropriation of religion for political purposes. But as all the latest research shows, large proportions of the population of this country are not Christian or religious at all and they simply cannot be suddenly forced to live under a semi-theocratic regime run by Christians. Mr Pickles is heading for big problems with this."

"While we agree that there should be some common values to live by – a shared language and respect for human rights – there cannot be a religious hierarchy that discounts the feelings of those who don't share in that faith. It is a recipe for conflict between communities that already eye each other with suspicion. We see all over the world that when religion is given power, conflict follows. We have managed to some extent to keep this kind of sectarianism out of our policy making; now Mr Pickles intends to restore it in a big way.

"The Government is going in completely the wrong direction with this and it is bad news for all of us."

- [Share on What's App](#)
- [Share on Facebook](#)
- [Share on Twitter](#)

- [Share on Email](#)
- [Subscribe to RSS Feed](#)