

Asda sacks man for sharing comic sketch mocking religion

Posted: Thu, 27th Jun 2019

The supermarket chain Asda has sacked a man for sharing a sketch of the comedian Billy Connolly mocking religions including Christianity and Islam on social media.

Brian Leach was [dismissed](#) after a colleague complained that the sketch, in which Connolly said "religion is over" and called suicide bombers "wankers", was anti-Islamic.

The National Secular Society is in touch with Mr Leach, who is currently appealing against his dismissal internally, to explore whether legal options may be available to him.

Leach was dismissed without notice from his job as a checkout assistant at Asda's Dewsbury store in West Yorkshire last Wednesday, on the grounds of gross misconduct.

He had removed the post and apologised to his colleagues before he was sacked.

NSS chief executive Stephen Evans said Asda's decision to dismiss Leach "appears to be exceptionally harsh".

"Sharing a sketch which mocks religious ideas and suicide bombers on social media should not be grounds for dismissal. Brian Leach has good reason to feel aggrieved and many other British citizens have good reason to feel concern about what this could mean for their own freedom of expression.

"Any actions employers take to protect their reputations must be proportionate. We are therefore keen to explore what options may be open to Mr Leach to redress this situation.

"Regardless of what happens next, this episode should make us sit up and take notice of the power we give to religious offence-takers, particularly in the social media age."

The NSS has [challenged](#) blasphemy laws and codes since its inception in 1866 and played a leading role in the abolition of the blasphemy law in England and Wales in 2008.

In an interview with local paper [The Examiner](#) Leach said: "I'm really upset and I would love to know what Billy Connolly would think about what has happened to me."

An Asda spokesman told [The Examiner](#): "We would never comment on individual circumstances.

"However we do not tolerate any form of discrimination from colleagues or customers and take such behaviour extremely seriously."

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