WE ARE ALL TERRORISTS NOW!

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Category: Politics

Today's Daily Telegraph reports the rather frightening news that a Tory MP believes that Christian teachers who say in the classroom that they believe same sex marriage to be wrong, should be dealt with under anti-extremist laws.

So disagreeing with something which wasn't even legal a few years ago gets you lumped together with ISIS. It's no wonder that even the National Secular Society thinks that this is a massive infringement of free speech.

You may think that this is alarmist and that governments and the police would not misuse legislation in this way. Just as they would never use anti-terrorist legislation to detain an old man who had the temerity to heckle the Foreign Secretary!

The problem is that the proposed laws are incredibly vague:

> *Ministers have signalled that the orders, expected to be a key plank of the Government planned new Counter-Extremism Bill, would be used not only curb the activities of radical Islamist clerics but those who promote other views deemed to go against â€œBritish valuesâ€ .*

Anything that goes against British values risks legal sanctions. The problem is that I haven't a clue what British values are; apart from feeling awkward in most social situations, knowing how to queue Â properly and believing that you can't get a decent cup of tea abroad. The Telegraph goes on to say:

> *Ministers have defined British values in the past as including broad notions like democracy, tolerance and the rule of law.*

Though tolerance would not extend to those whose opinions don't fit in, apparently.

This is not just a concern for those of us of a religious persuasion; once the government starts telling us what ideas we may or may not hold, all of us are in trouble. These are the sorts of legal tricks used to stifle opposition and political dissent in many parts of the world.

As for me, I find myself (for once) fully in agreement with something Giles Fraser wrote in the Guardian a few days ago.

> *Let me be clear. I condemn absolutely any theology that calls for or encourages violence. If people are doing that, arrest them. But â€œnon-violent extremismâ€ is, by definition, neither of those things. And attacking it is simply an attack on thinking big, thinking differently and arguing passionately. It comes from a now defunct C of E mindset (now defunct even within the C of E, thank God) that assumes itâ€™s the job of religious people to be pastorally*

> *nice, softly spoken and uncontroversial. But thatâ€™s not Jesus. And like him, I believe in pulling the mighty from their thrones and lifting up the lowly. And I believe there is an authority greater than yours â€“ one I would obey before I would obey the laws of this land. And if that makes me a dangerous extremist, Mr Cameron, then you probably ought to come over to south London and arrest me now.*

When you've done with the Rev Fraser, Mr Cameron, I live in High Wycombe!