

PE1521/M

Petitioner Letter of 15 January 2015

John Pentland MSP
Convener
Public Petitions Committee
Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
EH99 1SP

PE1521: No More Page 3 in the Scottish Sun and Scottish Parliament

Dear John

Firstly, our congratulations on your election as Convener of the Scottish Parliament's Public Petitions Committee.

Many thanks for the opportunity to respond to the letter from the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC), which focussed on the interference with a person's freedom of expression. Following recent tragic events in Paris, we would emphasise that our petition recognises that freedom of expression is a fundamental right which must be maintained.

We have been clear from the outset this petition is not about censoring the press. Our petition has been about an organisational decision whether to buy/allow sale of certain products within the Holyrood campus. A free choice of purchase, similar to a free choice the Parliament makes to buy ethically traded products. This is not discriminating against other providers but a proactive choice to support the values held by the organisation.

However, in the context of the freedom of expression response from the EHRC we would observe (from previous correspondence with the Scottish Parliament Corporate Body) that such freedom of expression is current denied to the Daily Star and Sport being sold with Parliament campus. We are not arguing for a reversal of this policy as we support the very strong stance the Scottish Parliament has taken through your equalities framework. Rather, we are asking for what appears to be a proactive stance to be extended to the Scottish Sun.

We would also observe that if the Scottish Sun is not removed from voluntary sale within the Parliament campus after this petition, due account should be taken of the page 3 feature and impact on the equalities framework. We would hope that any future sale will conform with the Indecent displays (Control) Act 1981 on days when the front page features a highly sexualised or indecent image.

We also welcome the letter from the SNP Group, their support for the No More Page 3 campaign, which is a welcome endorsement and brings them in line with the views of other political parties on this matter.

Yours sincerely

Jane O'Donnell and George Eckton