How would you characterise your views on the Bill in general?

In support

We must put the legislation in place first in order to work towards a truly equal society. Once the legislation is there, it will be easier to challenge inequality and change attitudes through true education, accepting the equal dignity of each person. This bill strikes the right balance through allowing those who do not wish to get involved in same-sex marriage ceremonies to walk quietly away.

How would you characterise your views on the introduction of same sex marriage, so that same sex couples can marry each other?

In support

There is simply no doubt in my mind that same sex couples should enjoy all the same rights and status in society as mixed sex couples. Following from that point of view, I cannot accept that any hierarchy of marital unions would be just, nor that it would be just to term some unions as ‘marriage’ and other unions as anything else.

How would you characterise your views on putting belief celebrants on the same footing as religious celebrants?

In support

It seems to me that the couple intending to wed should be in a position to decide whether they would like to have their union conducted by a Humanist celebrant or by a religious celebrant and that their union should enjoy the same status, however I can see a need for some form of regulation of celebrants so that people cannot be wed by just anybody on the spur of the moment.

How would you characterise your views on the arrangements for authorising celebrants to solemnise opposite sex and same sex marriage (including the opt-in procedures)?

In support

I agree with the bill. No celebrant should be forced to conduct a wedding ceremony if he or she objects for any reason at all and, so far as I am aware, the bill does not expect any such restriction of choice. It is difficult to imagine anyway, why any couple would want to be wed by a reluctant celebrant. The bill strikes the right balance.

How would you characterise your views on civil partnerships changing to marriages?

In support
For those couples who wish to change their civil partnership into marriage, I recommend that administrative procedures be put in place to make this arrangement as quickly and cheaply as possible.

**How would you characterise your views on allowing civil marriage ceremonies to take place anywhere, other than religious premises, agreed between the couple and registrar?**

In support

I take the view that it is for the couple to decide on where to hold their big occasion, with due regard for the health and safety of the couple, the registrar and any guests. I don't really hold any strong views here, but some regulation might be necessary.

**How would you characterise your views on allowing the religious and belief registration of civil partnerships?**

Neither

I'm not really in favour of civil partnerships in so far as that they allow a hierarchy of unions, as I stated earlier. If people want them, I have no desire to stop them and if religious celebrants want to offer civil partnerships short of marriage, it's...

**How would you characterise your views on allowing transgender persons to stay married when obtaining a full Gender Recognition Certificate, which provides legal recognition in the acquired gender?**

In support

I strongly support everything which promotes equality for the transgender community. Transgender person should be allowed to stay married when obtaining a Gender Recognition Certificate for so long as both parties of the marriage desire, but nothing should be allowed to impede the transgender person from recognition in their true gender.

**Would you like to comment on the wider issue of protections for those in society who may have concerns about same sex marriage?**

It is difficult to see from what people need protection. I recommend that people who have concerns about same sex marriage decline to enter into such a relationship. No religious celebrant will be required to conduct a same sex ceremony against their will, nor should they have to. On the other hand, registrars are public servants, paid for by the public purse and any refusal to carry out the public function to which they have been appointed could be considered a breach of contract. Teachers, whether in the private sector or the public sector, should put the rights of their pupils first. All pupils, whether or not they are LGBT, should have the right to be aware of the laws of the country in which they live and should not be withdrawn from lessons in which same sex marriage discussion may arise, just as they are not withdrawn from lessons in which female celebrants are raised even though some denominations still find women priests unpalatable. Similarly, schools and teachers must not be permitted to discriminate against pupils who live in same sex households. There
must be no difference here for denomination or non-denominational schools, both of which are paid from the public purse.

**Would you like to comment on the wider issue of freedom of speech?**

I strongly support the principles of the bill. Others disagree and it is their right to do so. The bill will not restrict their right to object, and for so long as they do not use the public purse, e.g., as teachers or registrars, to promote their views, I shall support the principle of their right to hold a wrong opinion. However, for so long as some people oppose same sex marriage, they will find opposition and I shall be stand by that opposition for life.

**Would you like to comment on any other wider issues in relation to the Bill that are not mentioned above?**

This bill is a marvellous step in our progress towards a modern and equal country. I have nothing but praise for the Government for bringing this forward and also for other politicians for their support. Well done Scotland!

**Are you responding as...**

a private individual

James Forbes
18 August 2013