SCOTTISH INDEPENDENCE REFERENDUM (FRANCHISE) BILL

QUAKERS

CRIME, COMMUNITY AND JUSTICE SUB-COMMITTEE

Prisoners Section 3 of the Scottish Independence Referendum (Franchise) Bill

Quakers in Britain support the right of prisoners to vote and have endorsed public statements by the Prison Reform Trust, the Howard League for Penal Reform and others, urging the UK Parliament to amend the law.

People sent to prison remain members of society and should be encouraged to exercise their civic responsibilities despite the denial of their liberty. As part of their rehabilitation we should encourage responsibility as far as possible, and exercising one’s right to vote is part of that responsibility. As far as the right of prisoners to vote is concerned, we see no reason to make a difference between elections and referenda. We are all unique, precious children of God, even those who have transgressed.

Thus we are concerned about Prisoners Section 3 of the Scottish Independence Referendum (Franchise) Bill, which confirms that convicted prisoners will not be entitled to vote in the referendum, stating that the European Court of Human Rights ruling on prisoners voting does not apply to referendums.

We strongly support the submission to the Referendum (Scotland) Bill Committee by Quakers in Scotland, the Howard League for Penal Reform Scotland and others, making the case that the Scottish Government should allow prisoners to vote in the referendum on Scottish Independence.

Jamie Wrench
Clerk
11 April 2013