Written submission from Donald Black

Land Reform (Scotland) Bill

I am a retired teacher, a home owner and proprietor of a small self-catering business in rural Scotland. I am not a major land-owner.

I am, without reservations, in favour of:

1. Establishment of a Scottish Land Commission;
2. Transparency about owners and controllers of land;
3. Engaging communities in decisions relating to land;
4. Restoration of non-domestic rates on shootings and deer forests. (I pay non-domestic rates on my small self-catering business and I see no justification for this exemption);
5. Improved management of deer on land;
6. Reform of the provisions for agricultural tenancy;
7. Retention of current access rights.

I am, with some reservations, in favour of:

1. Fairer Scotland. My reservation is that the much-trailed "50% of Scotland's land owned by under 500 people" is of little relevance. Much more important to me is the principle that the land of Scotland is held in trust for the benefit of the people of Scotland as well as the owner;
2. A new power of sale where a landlord is in breach of certain obligations. My reservation is that, there needs to be clarity, transparency and fairness because the power vested in the hands of ministers is formidable;
3. Enabling community purchase of land to further sustainable development. My reservation is that the purpose must be clearly 'developmental' and 'sustainable'. Some projects which manage to start up, but fail to continue sustainably would be better not to start.