Justice Committee

Railway Policing (Scotland) Bill

Written submission from United Against Separation

About us

United Against Separation is a grassroots campaign group that supports Scotland remaining part of the United Kingdom. With over 85,000 supporters on Facebook we are one of the largest grassroots campaigns opposed to separation.

Our view

We strongly oppose the Railway Policing (Scotland) Bill which aims to abolish the British Transport Police in Scotland and urge the Committee and Parliament to reject the dangerous proposals. We would like the Committee to take into account the following points when considering this bill:

1) This bill will seriously undermine national security and crime prevention on our railways which as experts have made clear is better handled by a specialised transport police force that works across Great Britain reflecting the cross border nature of the service provided.

2) The British Transport Police and British Transport Police Authority both oppose the proposal by the Scottish Government and offered alternatives that would prove less damaging, these proposals have been ignored for ideological reasons.

3) The Rail Unions, RMT, the Transport Salaried Staffs' Association (TSSA) and train drivers union ASLEF all oppose the change.

4) Over 2000 signed a petition against these proposals when they were previously proposed.

5) The 2016 SNP manifesto made no reference to this policy, and Labour, Liberal Democrats and Conservatives all previously stated their opposition to this policy. There is no democratic mandate for this dangerous bill.

6) The disgraceful consultation by the Scottish Government last year on this only focused on implementation of their decision to abolish the British Transport Police, it did not seek views on if it should be abolished.

7) Police Scotland is already facing severe financial problems and there is a risk that after a merger takes place railway policing will lose out on the current level of staffing and investment.

8) There are huge difficulties around contracts and pension rights for present employees of British Transport Police who would be severely impacted by this bill.
9) The Smith Commission devolved the power over policing of the railways but it did not advocate abolition of the British Transport Police.

10) This is another attack on a British institution to undermine the United Kingdom and an attempt to weaken cross border cooperation even if it harms national security. It continues a long running campaign by separatists to purge anything with the word “British” from Scotland.

We urge the Committee to consider these points and reject the bill. We also call on all political parties to publicly state their commitment to repealing this disastrous bill if it is passed and restoring the British Transport Police role in Scotland after the SNP is removed from power.

There is no justifiable reason for the British Transport Police to be abolished and merged into Police Scotland. The Scottish Parliament and Government has the option to exercise more oversight and influence railway policing policies within Scotland without abolishing an effective and respected cross border police force.

The Railway Policing (Scotland) Bill is unnecessary, malicious, destructive, and dangerous. It should be opposed by all MSPs that put the interests of policing and national security above a divisive narrow party political agenda.

United Against Separation
30 January 2017