LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

CALL FOR VIEWS ON THE NON-DOMESTIC RATES (SCOTLAND) BILL

SUBMISSION FROM ANONYMOUS

One of the proposed outcomes of the Barclay review is the removal of rates relief from educational charities. This in particular affects private schools.

Whilst I can understand the merit in schools, in both the state and the private sector, being treated the same, the impact of this change on both families sending their children to private schools, and on the schools and their staff, will be severe in some cases.

I understand some larger Edinburgh private schools will have an increased rates bill of £500,000 per annum. These schools do not generate a surplus of £500,000 per annum. This means that either fees have to rise, or costs will have to be reduced, or most probably a combination of both. In all likelihood this means staff numbers will have to be cut.

These jobs lost could be either teachers, administration staff, janitors or groundsmen, but some will sadly lose their jobs. We have spent too long as a nation recently believing what we want to believe, and ignoring cold, hard facts. It is time that ideological dogma is put behind us and we are held accountable for our decisions, rather than believing in for unicorns. One of the consequences of this proposed change in the law will be job losses.

Job losses will in turn affect the communities in which those staff live, which is particularly the case for some of the rural schools in Perthshire, where the local private school is a provider of good, stable employment.

Further, it costs the state around £6,500 per annum to educate a child. At a time of reduced budgets for local authorities as a result of decisions made by the Scottish Government, and tightened family budgets, should schools decide to increase fees by more than parents can afford then some parents will have no option but to remove their children and enrol them in the state sector. This will increase the burden on the local authorities to find, and fund, school places for those children from already stretched budgets. The decision to remove children from schools may also bring into doubt the continued existence of several rural private schools. Should these close (and several have already closed since the late 1980s) the impact on job in those local communities will be keenly felt.

It is all very well saying ‘the rich can pay’. Not all parents of children at private schools are rich. The decisions those parents collectively make, following any implementation
of the proposed changes will undoubtedly impact on the jobs of the hard working staff at many of the most successful schools in the country.

If the Scottish Government is happy to see staff lose their jobs then go ahead with this proposal, but when they do, don’t blame the parents as the blame will lie at Holyrood.