



MAST

Mourne Action for Survivors of Terrorism

Committee Clerk
Room 419
Parliament Buildings
Ballymiscaw
Stormont
Belfast
BT4 3XX

11th October 2012

Dear Sir,

Civil Service (Special Advisers) Bill – Call for Evidence

Some time ago we in MAST responded to a consultation supporting a bill to ban people with serious criminal convictions from holding the post of Special Adviser at Stormont.

We understand that this bill has passed its second stage by 62 votes to 32 and that the bill has now been referred to the Finance and Personnel Committee.

We in MAST support Clause 2 of this bill because we believe it is totally wrong and unacceptable that someone with a serious criminal conviction should be able to hold the position of Special Adviser due to the hurt caused to innocent victims' families.

Special Advisers are positioned within the top ranks of government and with this comes status, standing and the wages of top civil servants. This is not allowed to happen within the regular ranks of the civil service so why should they be able to hold the top position of Special Adviser?

We are also in support of Clause 4 (the production of an annual report) as we believe that the public have a right to know how much of their money is going to Special Advisers and this requirement is already in place in the rest of the UK.

MAST are also in support of the introduction of a Code of Conduct and a Code for Appointments (Clauses 5 and 6) as this will introduce greater regulation to the issue,

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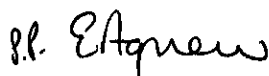
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Finally, we in MAST are in full support of Clause 7 which removes the right of the Presiding Officer (or speaker) to appoint a Special Adviser. The Speaker has never exercised the right to appoint a Special Adviser and the role of the Speaker is above party politics and therefore he should not have the option to appoint a Special Adviser, a post which by its very nature is party political.

We in MAST would like the comments we have made within this correspondence recognised and taken into consideration.

Yours sincerely,



Sandra Johnston
Chairperson

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