



FRIDAY, JUNE 10, 2005

UK Law To Fight Hate Speech Against Muslims Is Deemed Dangerous...By The Left

by Michael in New York on [6/10/2005 02:41:00 PM](#)

In the US, the far right would be freaking out over a law that "protected Satanists" by banning hate speech directed towards people of faith -- political correctness, they'd call it. **The UK law, intended to provide coverage for Muslims** that Jews and Sikhs enjoy because of race-based laws against inciting hatred, would also provide new protection for Satanists, pagans and even atheists. (Republicans would defeat it in a minute by calling this the Devil Worshipping Act.)

But in Great Britain, the law is being criticized by the *left*, which thinks it goes too far in making ideas illegal. Many also make the point that mocking someone's religion is not the same as mocking their race. Many major comedians and thinkers on the left see it as a dangerous encroachment on free speech. Well-intentioned measure or a law trying to ban blasphemy?

The actor and writer Stephen Fry told Radio 4's PM programme that the Bill was "rather shaming" and "an embarrassment to the statute book".

"It just suggests it's not a thought-through or needed piece of legislation," he said. "It is something to please communities."

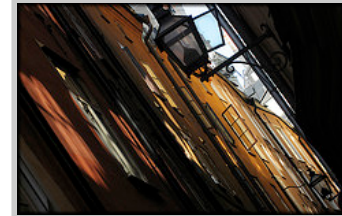
The author Salman Rushdie has complained that the measure would "sacrifice freedom of speech in order to placate Muslim voters".

Shami Chakrabarti, director of Liberty, said: "This offence is capable of catching attacks on ideas as well as people. "At best this is an empty sop to a community sorely let down by government. At worst it is a dangerous new blasphemy law out of step with our best traditions."

David Davis, the shadow Home Secretary, said the law would be "massively counter-productive" and "seriously undermine freedom of speech". He said: "Religion, unlike race, is a matter of personal choice and therefore appropriate for open debate."



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