

[The ultimate victory for tolerance](#) [1]

Written by [Anton Howes](#) [2] | Tuesday 6 April 2010



Shadow Home Secretary Chris Grayling's remarks regarding the right of Bed & Breakfast owners to reject gay couples may have been homophobic, or they may have been an ill-judged attempt to cater to a bigoted religious group. *[Ed - I really don't think it was either. Grayling was just making a common-sense statement regarding the rights of people running businesses in their own homes. More broadly, this whole thing can easily be looked at as a private property issue.]* However, they should have been an expression of faith in a society that would never accept such bigotry.

Without equality or anti-discrimination laws, liberals would like to think that people would boycott any institution that tried to discriminate on race, gender or sexuality. In the case of a Bed & Breakfast that banned gay couples, they would very quickly go out of business through lack of custom and popular public pressure. In the case of the BNP, activists to combat their racism abound. Even the furore over Grayling's remarks attest to this effect. Liberals trust the people to enforce equality and tolerance.

Statists on the other hand assume that the government should take on this responsibility, creating and enforcing laws that compel all institutions to not discriminate. This is either because they think government is merely enforcing the view of the people, or because they do not trust the people to do it. I suspect it is the latter.

Some decades ago, when bigotry was more widespread, liberals would have argued that discriminating institutions would lose out to institutions that based their decisions on merit alone, proving the equality of homosexuals, women and other ethnicities, and the superiority of tolerance. Statists would have placed their trust in government rather than the free market to shatter the view that bigotry could be at all acceptable. However, in terms of banning discrimination within government itself to set an example, both liberals and statists would have been agreed.

Since then, the precedent for tolerance has been established, and the attitude of the majority has changed. If we live in a broadly tolerant society that cannot abide bigotry, which I believe we now do, equality laws should be redundant. After all, there is no need for a law that prevents something that could no longer exist. We should trust in the people to enforce equality ? it would be the true test of a society, and the ultimate victory for equality and tolerance.

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