

12th November 2012

Dear James,

Thanks for your letter dated 22nd October in response to my email regarding the Freedom of Information request for disclosure of correspondence between Prince Charles and ministers.

I am disturbed that you say "I am pleased that the Attorney General has issued a certificate under the Freedom of Information Act vetoing the disclosure of correspondence between HRH the Prince of Wales and ministers in seven government departments." In my humble opinion, the Freedom of Information Tribunal's judgement 'that the Tribunal accepted the importance of the Education Convention (EC - the right of the heir to the throne to be instructed in the business of government) which carried with it a duty of confidentiality but concluded both that advocacy correspondence was outside the EC and that such correspondence formed no part of the Prince of Wales's preparations for kingship; indeed that it was not the type of activity in which the Monarch would engage' was wholly correct.

In the face of this straightforward judgement, the Attorney General, it seems to me, in order to come to an apparently required, prejudged conclusion, resorts to sophistry. He states "I take the view that the correspondence has a constitutional function, which makes any analogy between it and correspondence between a private individual and a Minister inapposite" and then, in his conclusions, states "The information is personal data relating to the Prince of Wales for the purposes of section 40 of the Freedom of Information Act. Its disclosure would breach data protection principles because it would be unwarranted by reason of prejudice to the Prince of Wales's rights, freedoms and legitimate interests".

One side of his casuist judgement is "constitutional function" and "preparation for kingship" and the other "personal data" and "prejudice to the Prince of Wales's rights, freedoms and legitimate interests". Do the Prince of Wales's personal interests characterize a constitutional function and preparation for kingship? If this is accepted to be the case by the Prince of Wales and the Attorney General then I would say that there is a deep dysfunction at the heart of our constitution.

Sincerely

Paul Turner

16th October 2012

Dear James,

I have just heard that the Attorney General, Dominic Grieve MP, has decided to veto the release of letters from Prince Charles to various government ministers. I find this very disturbing.

The Guardian newspaper requested the letters under freedom of information laws. Last month the information tribunal ruled that the correspondence must be released, but I believe that the government, today, decided to use their veto to prevent the letters being made public. This is, apparently, only the fifth time the veto has been used since the freedom of information act came into force more than ten years ago.

In his statement, the Attorney General stated that the letters were 'particularly frank', expressing Charles's 'most deeply held personal views and beliefs', and that they would be 'seriously damaging to his role as future monarch'.

If Charles's views would be 'seriously damaging' then the British public surely has a right to know what these views are? We cannot have a monarch whose views and beliefs are at odds with his role as Head of State can we? Surely it would be better to have all this out in the open now? This situation has echoes of Edward VIII.

According to the official website of 'The British Monarchy': "As Head of State, The Monarch undertakes constitutional and representational duties which have developed over one thousand years of history. In addition to these State duties, The Monarch has a less formal role as 'Head of Nation'. The Sovereign acts as a focus for national identity, unity and pride; gives a sense of stability and continuity; officially recognises success and excellence; and supports the ideal of voluntary service. In all these roles The Sovereign is supported by members of their immediate family.

These duties do not include, as far as I am aware, lobbying government for their own personal benefit (one can only assume that this is the reason for the secrecy). This should be the very antithesis of 'duty developed over one thousand years', but it seems that for the Royal Family, their own enrichment will always trump the nation's. If the letters would reveal noble, charitable, altruistic, philanthropic etc views, then the Prince might be embarrassed by having them made public, but to be 'seriously damaging' then they would presumably reveal something else altogether.

The British public has no idea how the letters have or will affect government policy; so much for open government and modern democracy eh?

Sincerely

Paul Turner