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## CONSIDERATION OF PETITION PE1514

14/07/14

TO: Public Petitions Committee (PE01514)  
FROM: Spencer Fildes (Chair) Scottish Secular Society

The Scottish Secular Society supports Public Petition No. PE01514, petitioner Norman Bonney, “Making Time for Reflection representative of all beliefs”

The Scottish Secular Society is not concerned to advance the cause of religion or of the absence of religion, but embraces the principle that political institutions should be neutral in such matters.

According to the 2005 guidelines, Time for Reflection “should be laid in the context of both Parliament and the Scottish people as a whole” and “will be consistent with the principle of equal opportunities for all.”

As the petitioner has pointed out in a peer-reviewed publication—

(<http://pa.oxfordjournals.org/content/66/4/816.full?keytype=ref&ijkey=FsTaFzelltXK7YQ>)

TfR does not at present meet these criteria, in that religious positions, especially mainstream Christian positions, are greatly overrepresented in proportion to population, as are minority religions, while those who hold no religious belief, while now an actual majority of the Scottish population, are greatly underrepresented. Thus TfR as currently administered does not meet the context of “the Scottish people as a whole”, nor is it “consistent with the principle of equal opportunities for all.”

Those who hold no religious belief are less prominently represented by organisations than believers, but are equally concerned about the major underlying issues. There is no shortage of individual philosophers, authors, and other thinkers in Scotland who can offer Parliament much to reflect on outside any religious framework, enriching TfR at the same time as making it more representative of the population that Parliament exists to serve.

For all these reasons, we support the petition.

ENDS

**PE1314/K**

For further information contact

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