

To Whom it may concern:

I vigorously protest the sedition provisions in the Anti-Terrorism Bill 2005 and ask that these be removed.

How long would a corrupt politician such as US President Richard Nixon have stayed in power without the freedom of the press who investigated him and exposed the illegal actions he presided over in order in his efforts to undermine his Democrat opposition?

Under the legislation, urging disaffection with the Government is to attract up to seven years' jail. These measures are un-Australian and in fact "fascist," a word Radio National's leading talkback commentator Jon Faine (a relatively conservative man) did not hesitate to use when discussing the sedition provisions on air yesterday. They also bring to mind regimes such as Saddam Hussein's, where citizens were reputedly afraid to speak out for fear of being jailed - the kind of thinking our Coalition government claims to find abhorrent.

Remember Gallileo was charged with treason and jailed when he said the world was flat - beware overcontrolling the free flow of ideas within our vibrant, multi-cultural community and trust that our current laws, combined with the common sense of the Australian people (who must have the right to choose their own opinions and face the consequences of their own actions within the due process of current laws) are sufficient to counter any perceived threats.

I agree with Dr Jeremy Fisher, Executive Director of the Australian Society of Authors, who states the proposed sedition provisions are:

1. Unnecessary - current law already prohibits inciting crimes, membership and funding of terrorist organisations, and racial vilification.
2. Dangerous - by their nature they are political and have been used against Gandhi, Mandela, and the supporters of the Eureka Stockade.
3. Too broad - a person or an organisation could be charged with sedition without, as existing law requires, having urged force or violence.
4. Unfair - the sedition laws reverse the onus of proof. The accused will be assumed guilty and will need to prove their innocence. It will be almost impossible for them to do this under the proposed legislation.

I agree with leading writers and thinkers Arnold Zable, Judith Rodriguez, Judith Buckrich and Jackie Mansourian of Melbourne PEN that this legislation silences debate whereas within an open, democratic society the Government must remain open to analysis, review and criticism, including in the media.

Kind regards,

Jen Jewel Brown
Wrier and artist