

RCN 'pride' AND 'prejudice: Promoting 'division' NOT 'diversity'

For probably more years now than they would care to remember a relation of mine has been a member of the **Royal College of Nursing (RCN)** and over the years they have found the printed magazine '**rcn bulletin**' to have been helpful in, as it states on the front page of this periodical, '**promoting excellence in practice**' and '**shaping health policies**'.

However, for over a year now my relation's loyalties to the **RCN** and its periodical '**bulletin**' have become '**divided**'. Why has this happened? Simply because the **RCN** has taken upon itself the decision to use this '**bulletin**' to actively promote '**gay pride**' events, to actively encourage **RCN** member participation in them and above all to give **formal RCN backing** to such events.

By way of example let me quote some articles from the '**rcn bulletins**' 254 (14 July 2010) and 255 (28 July 2010).

In issue 254 on page 13 there is an article headed '**Be Proud at Manchester Pride**' where we read – '**Get ready for one of the biggest celebrations of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) life in Europe when Pride comes to Manchester. RCN members and activists in the North West have started preparations for the event which takes place over August bank holiday 28 to 30 August... RCN NORTH WEST IS JOINING IN as part of the PROUD CAMPAIGN to support PRIDE and members from the LGBT community. Members can be involved in either the parade or the weekend exhibition to raise the profile of nursing and the RCN**'.

On page 16 as part of a more detailed '**What's on**' section there are further details and encouragement for **RCN** participation in this event and details of the **RCN Diversity Officer and Lead Steward, David Wilkinson**.

This is how the actual '**Manchester Pride**' web site refers to the participation of the **RCN** –

Royal College of Nursing

The RCN is a professional trade union representing over 400,000 nurses and healthcare assistants across the UK. The RCN is the voice of nursing and as such exerts a powerful influence on Government and health policy makers at local, regional and national levels.

Also on this same page 16 there are details of '**Brighton pride**' held on 7 August with contact details of another **RCN** officer, **Lyn Charlton**.

In issue 255 on page 9 there is an article headed '**Proud to be at Pride Scotia**' where we read – '**RCN activists Karen Winchcombe and Andrew McGregor and STAFF Paul Matthews and Susan Watt, ran a stand at the first Pride event in Scotland last month. The health and wellbeing fair at the Pride Scotia event... was supported by RCN's**

PROUD CAMPAIGN... The RCN in SCOTLAND also attended the PRIDE GLASGOW event in July.'

On page 11 under 'News in brief' there was an item headed 'RCN TO TAKE PART IN BELFAST PRIDE' and we read 'The RCN in NORTHERN IRELAND will be participating for the first time in the BELFAST PRIDE rally on 31 July... The College believes EMBRACING equality, diversity, human rights and liberty is FUNDAMENTAL to NURSING CARE and is a significant source of STRENGTH and INTELLIGENCE for nursing staff, patients and the health care profession. [Cecil –how officially participating in a controversial and morally divisive parade will help achieve these lofty claims is utterly beyond my comprehension and in my view is an insult to the intelligence of members of the RCN and others mentioned] **The RCN will be providing a range of branded materials using the theme of "Proud" to show support for the event and make its presence known.**

Once more on page 16 of this issue under the 'What's on' section there were mentions again of the Brighton and Manchester 'Pride' events.

So much for the RCN and 'pride' – what about the RCN and 'prejudice'? Part of the Collins English Dictionary definition of 'prejudice' reads as follows – 'an unfavourable one (opinion) based on inadequate facts'.

On this RCN web, it states the following –

Proud of our diversity

Embracing equality, diversity, human rights and liberty is fundamental to nursing care and is a significant source of strength and intelligence for us, our patients and the health care profession.

We're celebrating equal opportunities for the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) community and promoting understanding and compassion towards diversity - **a message the RCN backs 100 per cent.** [Cecil – emphasis mine – no canvass of ALL the membership of the RCN has ever been taken so how can this '100% message' of support possibly be made?]

The RCN is proud of the diversity within the nursing community and will be championing this by supporting Pride events across the UK this summer. Look out for the RCN bus which will also be proudly driving through the parade routes of London, Brighton and many more. The RCN is also hosting an LGBT conference in June and attending the LGBT Summit 2010 in September, find out more in events.

Diversity is not just about sexual orientation - it's about race, faith, gender, disability and age too. The goal of creating an inclusive workplace where we all feel valued can look daunting at first and so RCN members are essential, because they can push for achieving equality. Learn more about diversity and how to become an RCN diversity champion in get involved.

The RCN is a member of the Stonewall Diversity Champions programme. This means the RCN is working with Britain's leading gay equality organisation, and other members of the programme, to improve our working environment for our lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) staff and members. Read more on the Diversity Champions programme on the [Stonewall](#) website.



Back in 2009 there was an issue of the 'rcn bulletin' [unfortunately I no longer have access to this issue so I'm working from memory and open to correction] that made reference to a small sample poll amongst RCN members that had been taken to gauge their thinking on 'gay' issues and if my memory serves me right it was on the basis of this minute membership sample poll that the decision to give **FORMAL** RCN support and endorsement to 'Pride' events was based.

Needless to say my relation was not one of those whose opinion was canvassed nor does my relation know of any nursing colleagues having been contacted on the matter.

This is no way for the RCN to decide a FORMAL attitude on such a controversial issue and the truth is that instead of promoting 'diversity' they are now promoting 'division'.

On the **RCN** web site in the section '**About us**' on <http://www.rcn.org.uk/aboutus> we read the following –

About us

The RCN represents nurses and nursing, promotes excellence in practice and shapes health policies.

To deliver our mission we aim to:

Represent

- the interests of nurses and nursing and be their voice locally, nationally and internationally.

Influence

- and lobby governments and others to develop and implement policy that improves the quality of patient care, and builds on the importance of nurses, health care assistants and nursing students to health outcomes.

Support and protect

- the value of nurses and nursing staff in all their diversity
- their terms and conditions of employment in all employment sectors

- the interests of nurses professionally.

Develop

- and educate nurses professionally and academically, building our resource of professional expertise and leadership
- the science and art of nursing and its professional practice.

Build

- a sustainable, member led, organisation with the capacity to deliver our mission effectively, efficiently and in accordance with our values
 - the systems, attitudes and resources to offer the best possible support and development to our staff.
-

At the beginning of the section just quoted it states ‘The RCN represents nurses’ – I believe it is disingenuous of the RCN to FORMALLY and PUBLICLY endorse ‘Pride’ events in the name of the RCN when the ENTIRE RCN membership has not been canvassed or balloted on this issue and if justice is to be done they should be.

HOWEVER, the more important issue is this – is it the job and/or mandate of the **RCN** to involve themselves in this public ‘Pride’ issue? Certainly, none of the ‘**aims**’ mentioned above would appear to give any such licence to the **RCN**.

The view of my relation, an **RCN** member, is this. People who lead a ‘gay’ lifestyle are perfectly entitled to be a member of the nursing profession and a member of the **RCN**. Their chosen lifestyle should not inhibit their right to work in any way and they should not be subjected to any abuse or discrimination because of it. If they, AS INDIVIDUALS, wish to participate in ‘Gay pride’ marches they have the legal liberty to do so, BUT, is it right for the **RCN** to publicly and formally endorse such events – that is another matter altogether.

Whilst my relation, as a Christian, would view the ‘gay lifestyle’ from a biblical standpoint, they do recognise and accept that the ‘law of the land’ is increasingly favourably disposed towards such lifestyles and this manifests itself in the growing number of public ‘Pride’ events. However, my relation is fully persuaded that formal, public endorsement of such events, coupled with encouragement to participate in them, is not part of the remit of the **RCN** and to that I would add my own ‘Amen’.

My relation is planning to put pen to paper and to write to the RCN to register their objection to the RCN's current course of action on this matter and I would encourage other like-minded RCN members to do likewise. My relation plans to write to Dr Peter Carter, RCN Chief Executive & General Secretary, 20 Cavendish Square, London W1G 0RN – our prayer is that many will do like-wise and so be the 'salt' and 'light' that Christ not only spoke of but expects [Matthew 5:13-16].

Cecil Andrews – 'Take Heed' Ministries – 13 August 2010

APPENDIX 1

My relation has sent a letter to Dr Carter and this is a copy of that letter, the wording of which may prove helpful to others who may also wish to write to the **RCN** –

Dear Dr Carter,

I am writing to you to inform you of something that has been troubling me greatly for just over a year now. As a longstanding member of the RCN I also receive their fortnightly magazine '**rcn bulletin**'. In the past and still today it has proved to be very helpful in the areas mentioned on its front cover - '**promoting excellence in practice**' and '**shaping health policies**'

However, over the past year, a number of articles that bear no relationship to these areas have been published in the '**rcn bulletin**' in the name of 'diversity' and they are I believe totally outside the remit of the RCN – I'm referring to items advertising, promoting and encouraging participation in various 'Gay Pride' events being held around the UK. Instead of promoting 'diversity' they are in fact promoting 'division'.

Let me immediately say that people who lead a 'gay' lifestyle are perfectly entitled to be a member of the nursing profession and a member of the **RCN**. Their chosen lifestyle should not inhibit their right to work in any way and they should not be subjected to any abuse or discrimination because of it. If they, AS INDIVIDUALS, wish to participate in 'Gay Pride' marches they have the legal liberty to do so, BUT, is it right for the **RCN** to publicly and formally endorse such events – I am convinced that it is not.

Whilst I as a Christian, as are countless other RCN members I would suspect, would view the 'gay lifestyle' from a biblical standpoint, I do recognise and accept that the 'law of the land' is increasingly favourably disposed towards such lifestyles and this manifests itself in the growing number of public 'Pride' events. However, I am also fully persuaded that formal, public endorsement of such events, coupled with encouragement to participate in them, is not part of the remit of the **RCN** and I would earnestly request that publication of such articles cease forthwith.

If the RCN want to gauge if they can in all conscience publicly endorse such events in the name of the RCN then a ballot of ALL RCN members should be taken to see if they consider such an endorsement to be part of the RCN remit.

Yours truly

APPENDIX 2

In the 'rcn bulletin' 257 (25 August 2010) on page 11 this short report and photo appeared



and on page 11 this short report and photo appeared –



In the wake of this further favourable promotion of the 'gay' lifestyle my relation sent the following email on janice.smyth@rcn.org.uk to Janice Smyth who is the Director of the RCN in Northern Ireland –

Dear Ms Smyth,

Some weeks ago I sent a letter to **Dr Peter Carter, RCN Chief Executive & General Secretary** that read as follows –

Dear Dr Carter,

I am writing to you to inform you of something that has been troubling me greatly for just over a year now. As a longstanding member of the RCN I also receive their fortnightly magazine '**rcn bulletin**'. In the past and still today it has proved to be very helpful in the areas mentioned on its front cover - '**promoting excellence in practice**' and '**shaping health policies**'

However, over the past year, a number of articles that bear no relationship to these areas have been published in the '**rcn bulletin**' in the name of 'diversity' and they are I believe totally outside the remit of the RCN – I'm referring to items advertising, promoting and encouraging participation in various 'Gay Pride' events being held around the UK. Instead of promoting 'diversity' they are in fact promoting 'division'.

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Whilst I as a Christian, as are countless other RCN members I would suspect, would view the 'gay lifestyle' from a biblical standpoint, I do recognise and accept that the 'law of the land' is increasingly favourably disposed towards such lifestyles and this manifests itself in the growing number of public 'Pride' events. However, I am also fully persuaded that formal, public endorsement of such events, coupled with encouragement to participate in them, is not part of the remit of the **RCN** and I would earnestly request that publication of such articles cease forthwith.

If the RCN want to gauge if they can in all conscience publicly endorse such events in the name of the RCN then a ballot of ALL RCN members should be taken to see if they consider such an endorsement to be part of the RCN remit.

Yours truly

In the light of the reports of the Belfast and Brighton 'Pride' marches that appeared in the '**rcn bulletin**' 257 (25 August 2010) I wish to especially lodge my 'local' protest to the RCN in Northern Ireland for this continuing promotion of a 'moral code' for living that is I believe not promoting 'diversity' but promoting 'division' amongst RCN members.

As I stated in my letter to Dr Carter **‘people who lead a ‘gay’ lifestyle are perfectly entitled to be a member of the nursing profession and a member of the RCN. Their chosen lifestyle should not inhibit their right to work in any way and they should not be subjected to any abuse or discrimination because of it.’** I also, as you will have read, defended their right AS INDIVIDUALS to take part in ‘pride’ marches but I totally challenge the right of the RCN to actively promote one particular ‘moral code’ over and against the views of those who in all liberty of conscience do not endorse that particular ‘moral code’.

Since becoming a nurse I have sought to help patients of all ‘diversities’ but, MY AGREEMENT to or ENDORSEMENT of their varying ‘moral codes’ is NOT FUNDAMENTAL to the ‘nursing care’ I give and so it is totally wrong for the RCN to continually assert that ‘EMBRACING’ [by way of formal corporate RCN support for] such ‘diversity’ is fundamental to nursing care.

It is sadly apparent that the RCN, along with other professions such as The Police, The Fire Service, and The Armed Forces have been ‘hijacked’ by politicians into actively promoting their political agenda in the realm of public morals and this is NOT a legitimate part of the RCN ‘remit’ in the absence of a full survey of all RCN members being taken. Until such time as a poll of all RCN members is taken on this issue the RCN should desist from its current policy of giving formal corporate public endorsement of these divisive ‘pride’ events.

Again, as I stated in my letter to Dr Carter, the **‘rcn bulletin’** has proved to be very helpful to me in the areas mentioned on its front cover - **‘promoting excellence in practice’** and **‘shaping health policies’** but this continual use of it to promote the ‘moral code’ of those who take part in ‘pride’ events has got absolutely no connection with **‘promoting excellence in practice’** and **‘shaping health policies’** and this practice should cease forthwith.

Yours truly

In conclusion, could I encourage in particular Christian RCN members living and working in Northern Ireland, and who disagree with the use of the ‘rcn bulletin’ to actively promote ‘gay pride’ events, to similarly contact Janice Smyth on janice.smyth@rcn.org.uk and register their objection.

Cecil Andrews – ‘Take Heed’ Ministries – 1st September 2010

APPENDIX 3

Following my relation’s letter of 16th August to Dr Carter she received the following reply dated 1 September 2010 from Janet Davies, Director of Nursing and Service Delivery. It is reproduced exactly as it was written to my relation –

1 September 2010

Mrs

Dear Ms ...

Thank you for your letter of 16th August 2010 expressing your concern of the RCN engaging with gay pride.

We appreciate that with over four thousand members, the RCN has a large diversity of people, who have very differing views.

We follow clear processes before deciding which events we will promote or engage with and this is covered by our Governance structure which consists of members elected from and by the wider membership.

We have very active groups representing minority and diverse groups. We are also aware from our trade union work there remains significant prejudice in some areas and one of the ways we can highlight these issues are attending gay pride.

Yours sincerely

Janet Davies
Director of Nursing and Service Delivery

My relation sent the following letter to Dr Carter by way of response –

Dr Peter Carter
RCN Chief Executive & General Secretary
20 Cavendish Square
London W1G 0RN
6th September 2010

Dear Dr Carter,

I refer to my letter of 16th August addressed personally to you and to the 'delegated' reply, complete with its 'facsimile signature', that I received from Janet Davies, a photocopy of which is attached herewith. It is with immense sadness and heaviness of heart that I would comment about this reply as follows.

1. I found the reply to be personally insulting – I was correctly 'addressed' as **'Mrs'** but then in the opening text I was referred to as **'Ms'**. I am not a **'Ms'** but as a Christian woman, who is blessed to be married, as defined in God's Word, I am rightly to be referred to as **'Mrs'**.
2. I found the reply to be inaccurate – it refers to the RCN **'with over four thousand members'** – the RCN's website states **'We are the largest professional union for**

nursing in the UK representing around 400,000 nurses, health care support workers and nursing students, both in the NHS and the private sector.'

3. I found the reply to be illogical – it accurately states ***'the RCN has a large diversity of people, who have very differing views'***. The RCN claims to promote ***'diversity'*** yet has taken upon itself to promote the 'moral code' of one small diverse group within the RCN knowing that by doing so it will cause division by undermining the 'moral code' of, I would believe, a significantly larger diverse group of RCN members.
4. I found the reply to be illiterate – it says in one part ***'one of the ways we can we highlight these issues'*** – sadly this and the earlier points appear to reflect a lack of any real interest or resolve to treat my concerns seriously.
5. I found the reply to be ineffective – it talks about ***'clear processes before deciding which events we will promote or engage with'*** but it did not address what I said should be THE clear process about determining RCN attitude on these matters when I previously wrote ***'If the RCN want to gauge if they can in all conscience publicly endorse such events in the name of the RCN then a ballot of ALL RCN members should be taken to see if they consider such an endorsement to be part of the RCN remit'***.
6. I found the reply to contain innuendo – it speaks of ***'from our trade union work there remains significant prejudice in some areas and one of the ways we can highlight these issues are attending gay pride'*** [yet again not a very 'literate' statement]. What exactly is being stated here? Are people like me who hold to a different 'moral code' from those in gay pride being classed by the RCN as guilty of ***'prejudice'***?

In conclusion, I would state that as long as the RCN continue on this corporate public promotional/endorsement path for 'Gay Pride' they are doing so ***'not in my (RCN) name'***.

Yours truly

Cecil Andrews – 'Take Heed' Ministries – 6 September 2010