

Citizenship and Censorship in a Free Society

Panel event

6.30 for 7.0 PM, Wednesday 30 November 2005

The Frontline Club, 13 Norfolk Place, London W.2

The Home Office has just introduced a “Britishness” test, an examination to be taken by applicants for British citizenship. Meanwhile, the Terrorism Bill is currently before Parliament: the Prime Minister announced at his press briefing in August that the Bill would be intended to “change the rules of the game” and “to widen the grounds for proscribing” organisations, specifically mentioning Al Muhajiroun and Hizb ut Tahrir as organisations that would be banned.

Our panel will consider the role of the citizen in a free society, and the role of social mechanisms in controlling citizens’ speech.

Questions:

- What fundamental rights and duties should govern a citizen’s relations with fellow citizens?
- What should be expected of a new citizen?
- What should the State require as the qualifications of a new citizen (*eg. citizenship tests, qualifying residence period*)?
- What is good citizenship, and how should good citizenship be encouraged?
- In what circumstances should a citizen’s speech, or expressive actions, be censored?
- What methods of social control currently operate to restrict citizens’ speech (*eg. politically correct speech codes/ self-censorship*)?
- What, if any, methods of social control should operate to restrict citizens’ speech?
- How effective or productive could censorship or proscription be?
- Would the UK benefit from a different legal regime governing freedom of speech (*eg. a constitutional right, with clearly-defined limited exceptions, as in the USA*)?

Notes for speakers:

The Frontline Club (www.thefrontlineclub.com) is a private members’ club for journalists, but the public are invited to this event.

After a few introductory remarks from the chair, each panellist will be given ten minutes to cover any issues they believe should be highlighted; the questions above are merely provided to assist you in formulating your remarks, and your contribution may cover any, all, or none of the topics there listed. We drafted these questions only to give an indication of the subjects we hope to cover in discussion, not to place limits on speakers’ contributions. Following panellists’ initial remarks, we shall have at least twenty minutes questions from the floor. Then panellists will have the opportunity to make brief final remarks.

About the Transatlantic Institute

The Transatlantic Institute (TI) promotes and facilitates a new understanding of international issues, free of political partisanship and institutional bias. Views and opinions expressed in publications, at events or venues provided or organised by the TI, are the contributor’s own whether or not the contributor is associated with the TI. We provide the means for such views and opinions to be offered, in the spirit of encouraging reasoned critical debate about international issues. The TI has no corporate view and supports no political organisation or policy. Academic freedom and freedom of speech are prerequisites of the debate fostered by the TI.