

Green peer urges Lords to delete “pre-crime” from Public Order Bill



Green Party

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Green Party peer Jenny Jones has urged the Lords to stop the government’s “pre-crime” laws in a vote on the Public Order Bill on Monday.

The government has proposed late amendments to the Bill that give the police power to ban protests, or a series of protests, ahead of them being held. It doesn’t matter if the organisers have never been convicted of a crime and what’s planned is non violent, the intention is enough for the police to judge it as illegal, if they feel it will ‘seriously disrupt’ someone’s life.

A protest only has to be “more than minor interference” to be counted as “serious disruption” under a government supported amendment. The judgement over what is minor, rather than “more than minor interference”, will be left to the police to predict, ahead of the proposed protest.

As these pre-crime amendments have been submitted late and in the Lords, it means the Lords can vote them out of the bill.

Green Party peer, Baroness Jenny Jones said:

“The Lords have a rare opportunity to stop the draconian shift towards pre-crime. Under these proposals, the police will be able to ban protests that they think might cause more than minor disruption.

“A government that bans strikes, introduces voter suppression and stops effective protest is destroying democracy from within. I hope the Labour peers will pull out all the stops and join with the rest of us who aim to stop pre-crime and these other draconian proposals from becoming law.”

“The practicalities of enforcing pre-crime are fraught with problems for the police. For example, the million strong protest against the Iraq War caused serious disruption, but there has never been a law that allows the police to ban such a gathering.

“The police might have to guess at the numbers attending a demonstration and what the protestors might, or might not, do. Pre-crime laws give the police a

huge discretionary power to decide what is a good or a bad protest. It puts the police in the position of making political choices with government Ministers applying pressure to ban protests that are embarrassing to them.”

ENDS

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