

Christian Magistrate Suspended and Sent to 'Equality Training' for Suggesting Children Need Mom and Dad

January 19, 2015

By Martin Beckford and Jonathan Petre

A Christian magistrate has been disciplined by a Tory Cabinet Minister for expressing the belief that children should be raised by both a mother and a father. Richard Page told colleagues behind closed doors during an adoption case that he thought it would be better for a child to be brought up in a traditional family rather than by a gay couple. He was shocked a week later when he found he had been reported to the judges' watchdog for alleged prejudice, and was suspended from sitting on family court cases.

Mr. Page, an experienced NHS manager, has now been found guilty of serious misconduct by Lord Chancellor Chris Grayling – who previously spoke in support of a Christian couple who turned away a gay couple from their B&B. He has also been ordered to go on an equality course before he is allowed back in the courtroom.

The married 68-year-old was told he had broken the oath sworn by all Justices of the Peace (JPs) as well as Labour's controversial Equality Act, by being guided by his religious views and discriminating against the same-sex adoptive parents.

Last night, critics said the case was another example of how people who hold traditional Christian views feel they have no freedom of speech and find it difficult to hold public office in modern Britain. Mr. Page told The Mail on Sunday: 'There is tremendous pressure to keep quiet and go along with what is seen to be politically correct. Everyone else seems to be allowed to stand up for their beliefs except for Christians.' Mr. Page was called on to consider an adoption order at a family court last July.

As a lay judge he is not required to be legally qualified and is meant to 'bring a broad experience of life to the bench' in making decisions. Because of the controversial secretive nature of such hearings, The Mail on Sunday cannot publish details of the case.

But as is standard in such cases, social workers presented their report on the adoption case in the courtroom then Mr. Page went into a separate meeting room with fellow magistrates to discuss whether or not to approve the placement order with the prospective parents.

It was at that point, behind closed doors, that Mr. Page said he raised several questions about whether or not the adoption was appropriate, and also mentioned his view as a Christian that it would be better for the child to be raised by a mother and a father rather than the prospective parents who were two men. 'I think there is something about a man, a woman and a baby, that it's natural and therefore the others are not. That is the comment that I made,' he said. 'Therefore, since my task as a magistrate is to do the best for the child, my feeling was, quite reasonably, that a man and a woman would be better.'

A strict law means the detail of the disciplinary complaint against Mr. Page must remain confidential. Mr. Page has been a magistrate for 15 years, with an unblemished record, and his views as an evangelical Christian had never caused problems before, either on the bench or in his former job as a manager at an NHS mental health trust.

He and his wife, who have three grown-up children, had been foster parents themselves and he hoped this background would prove useful when he became a JP. So he that was 'gobsmacked' when he discover a week later that a formal complaint had been made about his allegedly prejudicial comments in the private meeting, which was not attended by the same-sex adopters.

Mr. Page said: ‘What I was staggered by was that they were saying I was a Christian and therefore I was prejudiced. They were far more prejudiced in their complaint than I was in what I said.’

Mr. Page said he had thought the discussion was just like any other that happens between magistrates when they disagree on a case and have to use their judgment to make a decision. ‘Why do you have magistrates if there isn’t a different view that they can have? We all have views and that’s what you have to bring to decision-making, and mine are Christian views.’

He accepted his decision was colored by his religious philosophy but insisted: ‘That’s allowed because that’s what we’re here for. ‘Our job is to do what’s best for that child and that must be something to do with the magistrate’s views rather than just ticking the box.’

Mr. Page was brought before a local conduct panel, where he was told he had broken the judicial oath, which requires magistrates to ‘do right to all manner of people’, ‘without fear or favor, affection or ill will’. But he pointed out the oath also includes the words ‘so help me God’, and therefore he was abiding by the oath as he was doing the best for the child with the help of God.

Last month, Mr. Page was told by Lord Chancellor Chris Grayling and the Lord Chief Justice, who decide on disciplinary matters for judges and JPs, that he had also breached Labour’s Equality Act that bans discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation.

As Shadow Home Secretary in 2010, Mr. Grayling had backed a Christian couple’s right to turn away a gay couple from their B&B – and as a result of the furore initially missed out on a Cabinet post after the Election.

But a short statement published by the Judicial Conduct Investigations Office states Mr. Page has been given a reprimand for having been ‘influenced by his religious beliefs and not by the evidence’, which amounted to ‘serious misconduct’, and told he should have declined to sit on the case. Tomorrow, he must undergo training on equality law and the judicial oath before he can resume his position.

Mr. Page is the latest in a series of Christians who have either been disciplined or forced out of their jobs for expressing their views publicly. Andrea Williams, head of the pressure group Christian Concern that has advised Mr. Page, added: ‘There’s no understanding that he could be acting out of compassion for a child. They just think that he’s prejudiced and that people who hold this view should not be in public office. ‘We need more people like Mr. Page in public life. Why should he, after all these years of service, suddenly have some kind of mark on his record for believing a child should live with a mother and father? ‘Christians have to decide if they want to stay silent, say nothing, because if they reveal what they think and say supposedly controversial things such as children need a mum and a dad, at that point they can find themselves in trouble with their employers and professional bodies.’

After this newspaper was alerted to the very brief official summary of the case against Richard Page, we tried to speak to people who knew more about it. But a senior court official, Malcolm Dodds, the clerk to the justices for Kent, warned that...

To read this article in its entirety, go to:

<http://www.prophecynewswatch.com/2015/January19/194.html>