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## **Eton Suppresses Dissent**

The Free Speech Union is disappointed to learn that Eton's governing body has decided to uphold the decision to sack our member Will Knowland. No teacher should lose his or her job for challenging ideological orthodoxy, least of all a teacher at Eton. This is a betrayal of the school's 580-year history of encouraging its pupils to think critically and independently about difficult questions.

The Free Speech Union will be referring Eton's trustees to the Charity Commission and the Attorney General for failing to discharge their duty to protect Eton's reputation and to ensure it is pursuing its charitable object, which is to advance education for the benefit of its students.

In addition, the Free Speech Union will be working with its supporters in the House of Commons to amend the Equality Act 2010.

We do not believe the legal advice given to Eton's Head Master about the Equality Act, which he used to justify sacking Will Knowland for refusing to remove his video lecture from his personal YouTube Channel, is correct. The Act was never intended to prohibit teachers from introducing their students to a broad range of different perspectives on controversial topics, such as sex and gender. Nevertheless, it was poorly drafted and can be exploited by enforcers of rigid, progressive orthodoxy to silence those who disagree with them.

We will be asking an MP who is in favour of free speech to bring forward a bill amending the Equality Act so it cannot be used in future as an excuse to censor dissent from left-wing dogma in schools, as it has been in this case. It is important that all schoolchildren are introduced to a wide range of different viewpoints about controversial issues and encouraged to make up their own minds, not indoctrinated with the "correct" opinion.

It is ironic that Eton has decided to name 12 scholarships after George Orwell, one of its former pupils, given the decision its governors have taken today. 1984 is a satire, not an instruction manual. As Orwell said, "If liberty means anything at all, it means the right to tell people what they do not want to hear."