



FSU
FREE SPEECH UNION

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Free Speech Union Opens Scottish Office

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Yesterday saw the launch of the Scottish office of the Free Speech Union, a non-partisan, mass membership organisation that stands up for the speech rights of its members. The FSU has opened a Scottish office due to overwhelming demand from its Scottish members who are concerned that free speech is in peril north of the border. They are particularly worried about the chilling effect of the Hate Crime and Public Order (Scotland) Act once it is activated.

This isn't a concern confined to opponents of the present SNP Government. The Scottish Advisory Council of the Free Speech Union includes Jim Sillars, the former Deputy Leader of the SNP; Joanna Cherry, the SNP MP; Chic Brodie, the former SNP MSP; Murdo Fraser, the Conservative MSP; the journalist and former Rector of Edinburgh University Iain Macwhirter; the education professor Lindsay Paterson; the academic Neil Thin; the Director of Communications for the Catholic Church in Scotland Peter Kearney; Hindu community leader Puneet Dwivedi; Brexit campaigner Tom Walker; former ASLEF official Tom Burns; and the award-winning poet Jenny Lindsay.

Joanna Cherry QC said: "Free speech in Scotland is under threat from laws open to being weaponised to censor legal speech emanating from both Holyrood and Westminster. The establishment of FSU Scotland is therefore timely and needed and I am delighted to join the Advisory Council."

Fraser Hudghton, the Director of FSU Scotland, said: "Scotland is known across the world as one of the bastions of the Enlightenment, boasting such intellectual giants as Adam Smith and David Hume. If we want to preserve that legacy, we need to make sure free speech is robustly protected."

The Scottish poet and FSU Scotland Advisory Council member Jenny Lindsay said: "In nearly twenty years of programming and writing in Scottish literary culture, I have never known an atmosphere so stifled, nor the precepts of freedom of expression so disregarded by individual writers and arts organisations alike. This does not need to be the case, and I dearly hope for robust discussion about re-energising Scotland's literary landscape so that writers and thinkers are free to explore complex contemporary issues without fears of no-platforming, ostracization, smearing and loss of livelihood."

The FSU is the brainchild of journalist Toby Young, who was himself cancelled by an outrage mob in 2018, losing five positions. He said: "I'm delighted we're opening a Scottish office. The FSU is one of the fastest-growing organisations in Britain as more and more people recognise their right to free

speech is under threat. My worry is that we won't be able to employ people quickly enough in Scotland to cope with all the demand."

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