



**To: Public Bills Committee**  
**From: Crime, Community and Justice Sub-Committee of Quaker Peace & Social Witness**  
**Date: Tuesday 17 November 2015**

Dear Friends,

## **Immigration Bill 2015-16**

### **Summary**

- In making this response we are drawing on Quakers' long-term experience and active engagement with prison reform.
- Our focus in relation to the Immigration Bill is on where it creates new criminal offences for illegal migrants, in particular those related to illegal working and driving.
- We are concerned that these proposals increase the likelihood of people, particularly ethnic minorities, being caught up unnecessarily in the criminal justice system.

### **1. Introduction**

- 1.1. The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Britain is a denomination of around 20,000 members in Britain. Quakers have a history of active engagement with the criminal justice system for over three hundred years.
- 1.2. We have a long-standing stance against the use of imprisonment as the default response to wrong-doing. It is a false assumption that repetition of the offence is prevented by imprisonment. We are for the use of prison only when there is no reasonable alternative.
- 1.3. Any criminal sentence should have a positive purpose, and is more likely to be effective if the expected outcome is clearly identified. In these instances, there appears to be no purpose other than punishment.
- 1.4. We leave it to others better placed than ourselves to provide statistics and detailed policy analysis on the specific matters contained in this bill.

### **2. Illegal working**

- 2.1. Up to a year's imprisonment and/or a fine seem an entirely negative response to the offence. Non-nationals working illegally in the UK are already at risk of deportation. We cannot see how imprisoning or fining them provides any remedy for either the government or the people concerned.

2.2. We fear that any focus on predominantly small, local businesses already employing people of various ethnic backgrounds may escalate pre-existing prejudices against 'non-white' workers in the UK.

2.3. Increasing the level of punishment for this offence may simply augment the power held by unscrupulous employers. This could in turn create yet more exploitation of vulnerable people: a result at odds with the government's measures to eradicate trafficking and modern-day slavery.

### **3. Driving licenses**

3.1. As with the punishment for illegal working, we cannot see how imprisonment and/or a fine produce any positive outcome to the offence.

3.2. We fear that ethnic minorities may be disproportionately subjected to driving licence checks. We would like to see the Bill contain proposals on how to limit this risk, and also on how to recompense people who have been wrongly searched and detained.

### **4. Conclusion**

4.1. We feel, with the Migrants' Rights Network, that this Bill is a "*legislative sledgehammer which will cause a great deal of suffering to those citizens and migrants caught beneath it, but do nothing to reduce levels of migration, the exploitation of migrant workers, or to increase the wellbeing of the public*".<sup>i</sup>

Gillian Charters,

On behalf of QPSW Crime, Community and Justice Sub-Committee

*Quaker Peace & Social Witness (QPSW) is part of the central organisation of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Britain. Its Crime, Community and Justice Sub-Committee supports and represents Quakers in the area of crime and community justice.*

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<sup>i</sup> Migrants' Rights Network briefing on the Immigration Bill September 2015 [www.migrantsrights.org.uk](http://www.migrantsrights.org.uk)