



Inverclyde election candidate to champion free speech

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Dr Catherine McCall (Image: George Munro)



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AN Inverclyde woman says she will be fighting for free speech when she stands in the upcoming general election and has slammed the new hate crime law as 'anti-Scottish'.



Dr Catherine C McCall is a retired philosopher who founded degrees at Glasgow University and has travelled the world lecturing as a visiting professor.

The former Greenock Academy pupil says she has been speaking out ever since escaping with her life from a horrific road accident more than 30 years ago, which left her with life-changing injuries.

She is the Reform Party Scotland candidate, part of Reform UK set up by Brexit

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the SNP and other parties for 'attacking free speech' with the new law.

The Inverclyde and West Renfrewshire candidate said: "I am standing for free speech. The new hate crime act is anti-Scottish. Dialogue and debate is deep rooted in our culture and has been since the Scottish Enlightenment.

"Innocent people will be criminalised by a law which has been described by Jim Sillars as one of the most pernicious pieces of legislation produced by any government within the UK government in modern times."

Dr McCall believes the hate crime law, which passed into law earlier this month, is an attack on free speech.

Under the new Hate Crime and Public Order act a person commits an offence if they communicate material or behave in a manner that a reasonable person would consider to be threatening or abusive with the intention of 'stirring up hatred', based on a list of new protected characteristics.

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These are age, disability, religion, sexual orientation, transgender identity or being intersex. The already-existing crime of stirring up hatred based on race, colour, nationality or ethnicity is also added to the same act.

Dr McCall said: "It brings in to the law the concept that people are not equal under the law and some people are special. Why are they attacking the premise that everyone is equal under the law?"

"I have two of those protected characteristics, I am old and I am disabled. But I don't want those protections.

"If you are physically assaulted or, God forbid, murdered, you are not more or less assaulted or murdered because of protected characteristics.

"I stand by that absolutely in all cases. "

The retired philosopher stood at the last Holyrood election as a candidate for the All for Unity party.

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She trained as a philosopher and as a psychologist at Trinity College Dublin University and graduated with an honours degree at Cambridge University in

1980.

She has worked with many organisations in the arts sector and business during her career.

In the summer of 1990 Catherine, who lived in the USA at the time, was involved in an accident near the Mull of Kintyre while back home visiting family.

Dr McCall said: "My life and my mother's life were saved by a GP who was driving himself and his family on holiday. He came to the wreck and stopped me from bleeding to death before the ambulances and fire brigade arrived.

"The GP visited me in hospital two weeks later. I am alive today because of him."

Catherine was never able to return to the States and was left with life-changing injuries.

She added: "I think when you have a near-death experience it makes you see life differently. You only have one life and if you see something wrong, you need to stand up for what you believe in."

The Scottish Government insist that their new law provides protection from hate and prejudice without stifling individual expression.

But Reform Party Scotland candidate Dr McCall said: "I stand for free speech. It is only in conversations between people who have different views that new solutions are found, new insights are found.

"When politicians control speech they attempt to prevent the expressions of free speech that are different to their own."

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