

Letters to the editor

Letters to the editor to Brechin Advertiser, 13 Swan St, Brechin, DD9 6EE
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Good to see a refreshing balanced letter

Sir,

For some months now a debate has ensued concerning the proposal for minimum alcohol pricing.

Much of the debate has been characterised by unpleasant personal attacks on me and my party by hardened SNP activists.

However, last week, the Rev. Mumford wrote a refreshing balanced letter setting out his reasons for reconsidering this policy.

Whether I agree or not, I have enormous respect for people, such as the Rev. Mumford, who espouse balanced views which are not aimed simply at scoring party political points.

The Rev. Mumford sets out persuasive arguments and many will agree with his stance.

He argues that: "ways need to be found to reverse the culture of alcohol abuse and anti-social behaviour."

I entirely agree that the problem is a cultural one. As a Conservative, I am committed to encouraging the development of responsible behaviour in society.

This is why the Conservatives propose to repeal the Human Rights Act and legislate for a British Bill of Rights and Responsibilities, the key word being 'responsibilities'.

Alcohol abuse is clearly a major cultural issue in Scotland and for that

matter across the United Kingdom.

Like the Rev. Mumford, I believe that ways need to be found to reverse this unacceptable culture of alcohol abuse.

Education, beginning at home, but also through civic society organisations and the churches and much better enforcement of the existing law, is the way forward.

Parents hold the key to much of this. As I have mentioned before in earlier correspondence, alcohol is literally 'as cheap as chips' abroad.

Yet in Italy, France, Spain or Greece (all countries that produce and consume huge amounts of wine and other alcoholic drinks), there is no evident widespread abuse of alcohol. Why?

Even though these countries are fully culturally westernised and enjoy the same level of lifestyle as anywhere throughout Britain, alcohol abuse is not really a major issue.

On the other hand, illicit drugs abuse affects these countries and, like Britain, they face the same societal problems. But why not alcohol abuse?

In these countries, from an early age, children are exposed to alcoholic drinks, such as a glass of wine over a normal family meal or a sip of communion wine at religious cere-

monies, removing any of the mystiques that so many of our youngsters attach to alcohol.

For instance, in the Greek Orthodox church, children as young as one year old are weekly given a sip of communion wine.

Alcohol consumption is an integral and normal part of everyday Christian family life. From a very young age children are taught to respect and enjoy, in moderation, alcoholic drinks.

Clearly, we need to proactively tackle alcohol abuse.

Enforcing existing law (more police on the streets, cracking down on under-age alcohol sales, ensuring appropriate sentencing) coupled with a government sponsored drive to educate children, parents and society at large on the unacceptable side of excessive alcohol abuse, along with 'targeted' minimum alcohol prices, will begin to reduce this unpleasant culture which has arisen in very recent years.

This is all possible and well within the powers of the SNP government, who would have my support if they pursued these policies.

Yours etc.,
 Alberto Costa,
 Conservative Candidate for Angus.