

## A quiet plea for calm

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I am troubled by many of the discussions taking place in the media suggesting that there is an outbreak of violent threats from left wing campaigning organisations.

Some of these claims look to be blatantly wrong. It was, for example, suggested that an angry crowd had besieged Stella Creasey 's home last week. It transpired that a vicar had led inter - faith groups in a peaceful walk to her office and police attended throughout without incident reported. The most aggressive act was to leave post-it notes on the window.

Other MPs have made a big deal of receiving death threats. Well I have had them too. And many other threats. I assure you it is not fun to be the recipient of such messaging, and those making them are unambiguously wrong and should be subject to criminal sanction. But to suggest that because some (and it will be a few) partake in such behaviour that the organisations of which they claim to be a member do in an way condone such activity is just wrong. That is an assertion that no logical person should make. I am deeply disappointed to see some people of whom I would have expected better making such claims.

Maybe it's because I am a Quaker. And maybe because tax justice is thought to be a left of centre activity, that I know a lot of people who do question whether it is right to bomb in Syria. But let's also be clear, many of those same people feel on their own behalf or on behalf of others that they know that bullying and intimidation has been used as a weapon against them. Whether that is by surveillance, or because of the language used about those on benefits, or because it seems that questioning the power of the industrial and military infrastructure that supports so much of the state is always suggested to be subversive when so often the questions raised are valid concerns, many on the left do feel intimidated, powerless and even hopeless. I will never as a result condone those who react by suggesting violence: that will always be unacceptable, but at the same time I do also condemn the intimidation that has been too often used by those in power. That is as unacceptable.

In that case can I suggest that those who are now shouting out their concerns wonder

why some are so alienated that they might do this? I am aware many will criticise me for even suggesting that appropriate, but I think it is. If we do not ask why people are alienated we will never solve problems and create integration.

And in that context to suggest barring organisations and their decent, law abiding but concerned members from having their voices heard is most unwise. It is only on the basis of understanding of genuine concern that society can progress for the benefit of all, which is what those on the left of politics should want.