

Conference,

Let me take you back 18 months. Like many of you, you were here, with me, at the ICC for Spring Conference. And here, we were debating an emergency motion on the digital economy bill.

That motion was accepted and we sent the message clearly, that this conference condemned Website-blocking and disconnecting internet connections as a response to copyright infringement.

It condemned the threat to the freedom, dignity and well-being of individuals and businesses from the potential termination of their internet connections, which could lead to the closure of internet hotspots

And it condemned the Digital Economy Bill for focusing on illegal file-sharing rather than on nurturing creativity.

Which also is why, by the way, I personally feel that the wording in the motion in front of you is preferable to those in Amendment 2.

During these 18 months, we have been working on bringing you this paper, with many colleagues like Neville Farmer who has spoken well to lay out the case for Amendment 1 - a chance raise the level of gameplay in government's IT strategy.

But it is not the amendments I wish to focus on. Today you have two options before you.

Option A calls for the repeal of the parts of the DEA which allows the targeting of the internet connections of households, libraries and schools.

It calls for repeal of the sections which deals with the blocking of websites with injunctions, unworkable in practice, and easily abused.

Option B calls for the latter only.

Conference, I implore you to vote for option A.

And it's not just me standing before you. Consumer Focus, the statutory consumer watchdog, opposes these sections of . They highlight how this Bill was rushed into law after the election had been called and the House of Commons was not allowed to scrutinise the Bill.

Remember that this bill was introduced in the dying days of a discredited parliament.

They show that the evidence for the impact of these provisions are based on research undertaken by, or for the trade associations who lobbied for the act itself.

They tell the story of the presumption of guilt and how cutting of the network connection of people is a disproportionate punishment for a civil offence. Disconnecting a household from the internet deprives all members of the household from access to essential public and private services, for which in some cases no off-line equivalent exists anymore.

Some of you here today will have been approached by various lobbyists, I myself was told by a representative of the Alliance Against IP Theft characterising that this policy says it is illiberal to support the the rights of people to benefit from their work.

Nothing could be further from the truth. Line 12 states this explicitly. What is illiberal is the arbitrary punishment of those who have never been accused of a crime, who have never been arrested, and have never been to court.

I in no way support internet piracy. It has a real impact, and something must be done! But let us not be swayed into supporting legislation which was disgracefully enacted, won't work, and is morally bankrupt.

Conference, I call on you to vote for option A.