GAY PEOPLE LOSING FAITH IN STONEWALL

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Last October a group of LGB rights supporters asked Stonewall to “commit to fostering an atmosphere of respectful debate rather than demonising as transphobic those who wish to discuss, or dissent from, Stonewall’s transgender policies”. Since then, Stonewall has refused repeated requests to enter into any such dialogue.

The government continues to treat Stonewall as if it represented the views of progressive thinking in general, and specifically LGB opinion. It does not.

We believe it has made mistakes in its approach that undermine women’s sex-based rights and protections. The most worrying aspect of this is that all primary-school children are now challenged to review their “gender identity” and decide that they may be the opposite sex if they do not embrace outdated gender stereotypes.

The architect of this policy, Ruth Hunt, who recently resigned as Stonewall’s chief executive, has — surprisingly — been made a life peer. Her exclusion of any alternative views has divided supporters of gay and lesbian rights in a way that may be irreparable.

If Stonewall remains intransigent, there must surely now be an opening for a new organisation committed both to freedom of speech and to fact instead of fantasy.

Jonathan Best, former director, Queer Up North; Julie Bindel, journalist and feminist campaigner; Gill Butler, former trustee, Stonewall; Beatrix Campbell, writer; Maureen Chadwick, TV & film writer and producer; Stephanie Davies-Arai, director, Transgender Trend; Simon Edge, former editor of Capital Gay and writer for Attitude; Simon Fanshawe, founder, Stonewall; Eileen Gallagher OBE, TV producer; Kath Gotts, composer; Claire Graham, intersex advocate; Jane Harris, author; Kate Harris, former supporter of Stonewall; Bev Jackson, founder, Gay Liberation Front; Darren Johnson, London Assembly member 2000-16; Jane Clare Jones, writer and philosopher; Ann McManus, TV and film scriptwriter; Ann Sinnott, former Labour councillor; Caroline Spry, TV and film producer; Kathleen Stock, philosopher; Helen Watts, former leader, Girlguiding UK; Miranda Yardley, transexual rights activist