

JAILED BRITISH "HERETICS" HIRE ASYLUM LAWYER

Los Angeles, California--(9/29/2008)--

Two fugitive British writers jailed in southern California have hired an American lawyer to make their claim for political asylum in the United States, says Paul Ballard, coordinator of a legal defense fund for the pair known as the "Heretical Two."

Bruce Leichty, a San Diego County immigration lawyer with 20 years of experience representing asylum-seekers in California, has met with the "Heretical Two" and has agreed to take their cases, Ballard and Leichty announced today. Said Leichty, "This is an vitally important Internet free speech case, where an obsessive security apparatus runs amok and punishes dissidents by making them criminals, and one does not have to share the views of the Heretical Two to appreciate the threat."

The label "Heretical Two" was applied to Simon Sheppard, 51, and Stephen Whittle, 42, when they were undergoing criminal trials in Leeds Crown Court in Britain on several speech-related charges. Sheppard created and administered and Whittle wrote under a pseudonym for a website--hosted by a server in California--found at www.heretical.com.

Prosecution of the Heretical Two - Simon Sheppard was found guilty on Friday July 14, 2008 of ten counts of 'race hate' all relating to internet publishing posted in the U.S.A and Stephen Whittle (Luke O'Farrell) to four counts also relating to internet publishing (the case having strong parallels with Dr Toben's current extradition hearings in London). Simon's remaining eight charges and Stephen's one outstanding charge were to be considered by the jury on the following Monday. However, the authorities neglected to take their passports and they left over the weekend for Ireland, then flew to Los Angeles International Airport (LAX) and surrendered to officials in order to seek political asylum in the U.S.A. The law over internet publishing in the UK has been reinterpreted to end freedom of speech on the internet and the Heretical Two were facing the imminent prospect of lengthy prison sentences. They are currently being held under the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) System at Santa Ana Jail, P.O. Box 22003, Santa Ana, CA 92701, USA. Simon's prison number is 0800006404 and Stephen's number is 0800006408. Please write, but do not place return address stickers on envelopes; all labels are removed and they would be unable to reply. They can only send two replies per week so would like to thank the many people who have already written with messages of support - please keep writing, as it all helps. Also they would like to thank those who contribute to the defence funds. The first immigration court session was held on September 17 with Bruce Leichty as defence attorney. The judge claimed that she did not have the power to release the Heretical Two under the defensive procedures adopted by the US authorities. The 'asylum-only proceedings' for the Heretical Two was heard by immigration judge, Rose Peters, on October 14. This move by their attorney to get them released before the ruling on asylum was denied by the judge, whose reasoning appeared contradictory. The date of the (main) merits hearing is not yet determined, but will be set on November 13.