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More on Human Rights Act 1998

Lord Lester of Herne Hill (letter, 21 August 2000) contradicts himself in successive paragraphs.

He first says the Human Rights Act (HRA) was needed so that British courts would be 'able to give speedy and effective remedies when ministers, civil servants and other public authorities infringed basic civil rights and freedoms'. In the next paragraph he admits that when British law is found incompatible a speedy remedy cannot in fact be given under the HRA. It is then for Parliament to consider whether it wishes to alter the incompatible law, which obviously will take time.

Lord Lester talks of abuse of powers and infringement of our human rights. The truth is that in almost every case it is a matter of argument and legitimate difference of opinion whether or not one of these vague rights has indeed been infringed.

As a legislative draftsman and writer on statutory interpretation, my own view is that the HRA will prove a cause for concern in bringing confusion to our laws with little corresponding benefit - except to legal practitioners in the field.¹

¹ *The Times*, 29 August 2000.

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