

Official statement

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ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE MARRIAGE OF HRH THE PRINCE OF WALES AND MRS CAMILLA PARKER BOWLES

It is with great pleasure that the marriage of HRH The Prince of Wales and Mrs Camilla Parker Bowles is announced. It will take place on Friday 8th April 2005 at Windsor Castle. The Prince of Wales has said: 'Mrs Parker Bowles and I are absolutely delighted. It will be a very special day for us and our families.' Princes William and Harry released a joint statement: 'We are both very happy for our father and Camilla, and we wish them all the luck in the future. 'Mrs Parker Bowles will use the title HRH The Duchess of Cornwall after marriage.

It is intended that Mrs Parker Bowles should use the title HRH The Princess Consort when The Prince of Wales accedes to The Throne.

The wedding will be a largely private occasion for family and friends. It will comprise a civil ceremony in Windsor Castle. There will subsequently be a service of prayer and dedication in St George's Chapel at which the Archbishop of Canterbury will preside.

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Constitutional lawyer and writer Francis Bennion says-

This is a constitutional disaster. The statement 'Mrs Parker Bowles will use the title HRH The Duchess of Cornwall after marriage' is inappropriate. The wife of the Prince of Wales is expected to be called the Princess of Wales, which is the normal usage. The British people are entitled to ask that their future Monarch has a spouse who is fully respectable and does not need to be paraded under a second-rate title.

The statement 'It is intended that Mrs Parker Bowles should use the title HRH The Princess Consort when The Prince of Wales accedes to The Throne' is also inappropriate in various ways:-

There is a saying 'man proposes, God disposes'. Prince Charles is taking it for granted that he will accede to the throne but there is no certainty that his mother the Queen will die before he does.

Furthermore for all he knows it is also possible that public pressure will force Prince Charles to renounce his claim to the throne.

Under our constitutional law the spouse of the King has the title Queen. Prince Charles presumes to take it for granted that Parliament will agree to a change of title, but again this is not certain. Parliament will consider the matter in the light of future public attitudes if and when Prince Charles accedes to the throne.

Again, the people of the United Kingdom are entitled to ask that their Monarch will

have a spouse who is fully respectable and does not need to be disguised under a second-rate title. This is demeaning and offensive.

That the wedding will be a civil ceremony because (by reason of adultery and divorce) a Church of England ceremony is unavailable is inappropriate bearing in mind that if and when Prince Charles accedes to the throne he will bear the official title Defender of the Faith (that is the Christian Faith) and as such be supreme Governor of the Church of England.

Again, this can be changed only by Act of Parliament and there is no guarantee that Parliament would pass such an Act. Furthermore Prince Charles has already compromised that position by improperly insisting that he wishes to be known on accession as Defender of Faiths (presumably meaning all Faiths, whether consistent with Christianity or not).

Conclusion

The arrangement seems to be driven by a well-founded fear that the public will be unhappy about the marriage. This is met by a craven idea that the unhappiness can be bought off by treating the bride less generously than would normally be the case. This reasoning is faulty, because the generous British public are not like that.

Prince Charles's position is a travesty, and untenable. When Camilla should be a princess she is to be a duchess; when she should be a queen, she becomes a princess.

So what should Prince Charles do? I believe he should ask the Prime Minister to promote legislation whereby, on marrying Camilla, he renounces the throne and leaves it to pass to whoever at the time of the next vacancy is in line of succession. Meanwhile Prince William would be schooled to become King at what is likely to be a very suitable age.

The proposal also has implications for Commonwealth countries who have the Queen as monarch. I have not presumed to comment on that aspect.