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Gay MP faces the axe

Deselection threat for Blair ally over photo

By Jane Merrick
Political Reporter

LABOUR MP Chris Bryant was last night facing the threat of deselection by his local party after posing semi-naked on a homosexual dating website.

The Christian, a close ally of Tony Blair, faced a humiliating apology for using his Cheyder Rhondda agency to send a stranger a photo of himself wearing only a pair of Y-fronts.

Along with the photo he sent a gay chat-room and someone e-mail back.

Party officials demanded a vital explanation from Mr Bryant after the incident was described as a "serious error of judgement".

A groundswell of local opinion growing in favour of an immediate ban from proposing since the photo appeared on the website.

Losing his seat would be a huge disappointment for the MP who still hopes to be a minister.

Mr Bryant's picture, which he took himself with a digital camera in his bedroom mirror, was viewed across the country in South Wales where he is MP for Rhondda.

It was proved personal knowledge in the local party that he was homosexual, and influence were emitted by the website.

Paul McDonald, a Labour member of Rhondda County Taff Council said: "It is difficult to believe a supposedly intelligent man would do this. I'm surprised he did so overtly."

"Had Mr Bryant was elected as a gay MP, it was known he was gay but we didn't know actually, more about his lifestyle. I think if members of the constituency party were put under pressure most they would be likely to call for a vote of no confidence."

A senior member of Rhondda Borough Labour Party said: "Alot of people are very disappointed in Chris Bryant.

"People selected him knowing he was gay but this sort of behaviour he has engaged in very is not what we expect from an MP. It is a very serious error of judgement and I believe it is likely he will face a vote of no confidence."

Locals spoke of their "disbelief" that a public meeting on Monday evening on the dangers of pre-school in the rural community had been overshadowed by the scandal.

One said: "This was an important issue for us, yet nothing could get discussed because he (Mr Bryant) has become the butt of jokes.

"I don't know how he can continue to represent the constituency."

While Mr Bryant has apologised to constituents, he maintained it was still a private matter.

Apologising for getting and "waste was authentic" he said in a statement: "I'm sorry this has happened.

"I've always been quite honest about my private life but never sought to make an issue of it.

"I'm sorrowful whole have sought to do so.

"The important thing is the work that I do for my constituents."

Pat Bryant, secretary of the Rhondda constituency Labour Party, insisted there were no plans for an emergency meeting to discuss Mr Bryant's case.

She added: "Many members are pleased to have a hard-working MP and fully expect him to getting on with his job."

Snap: Mr Bryant's website picture which he took himself in the mirror

Mother's fury at libidinous LibDem

LIBDEM MP Paul Marsden last night faced a stinging onslaught from the outraged mother of a young woman who rejected his advances.

American researcher Christina Hetter, 28, had been working for the MP for less than week when she demanded a transfer because he tried to kiss her.

Miss Hetter's mother Elizabeth accused him of abusing his position.

Speaking from the private girl accommodation she and Ralph run with her husband Wolfgang in New York, she said: "An MP should not use his power and influence to take advantage of people. Nobody should do that."

Mr Marsden's unwanted advances were revealed after he was forced to admit a six-month affair with a political journalist and drunken encounters with researcher Fiona Pilkington, 24.

Miss Hetter's Mother Elizabeth also joined the attack, saying: "I have strong feeling about right and wrong behaviour and I hope that is my Christian belief. The actions of some MPs are strange."

It emerged, meanwhile, that the MP for Shrewsbury and Atcham – who defected from Labour two years ago – named Kimberly King Pair in an email to pay off friend Dr Ellis Pal.

Dr Pal, 51, has claimed he asked her for sex in 2001 in return for leaking info on NHS issue.

She decided not to report him because of the impact it would have on his wife. But she is now considering contacting the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards. She said: "He doesn't have any integrity in his personal life."

The LibDems' health spokesman could be accused of breaching the MPs' Code of Conduct.

But for the party has insisted his private life is his business. Sources said the only matter brought to its attention was Miss Hetter's allegation, which had been dealt with immediately and appropriately.

Mr Marsden has denied Dr Pal's allegations and said of Miss Hetter: "I emphatically deny any impropriety."

He appeared at Birmingham County Court yesterday in a bitter wrangle over office equipment with his former Labour Party constituency bosses. He was ordered to pay more than £1,100 for unpaid rent, missing equipment and costs.

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