

I only have two political heroes, Aung San Suu Kyi and William Wilberforce. Both are defined by their steely determination to fight for what they believe in. In Wilberforce's case it took him almost his entire lifetime to abolish the slave trade in part due to much opposition to his proposals from certain parts of society.

It was Wilberforce's legacy that was often evoked during the debate in the Commons earlier this week on new legislation to deal with what is termed modern day slavery. Sadly Wilberforce abolished a trade but he didn't eradicate an industry and it is, 200 years on, shameful to learn that in this country human trafficking is the second largest income generator for criminal gangs after drugs.

It is a hidden crime and a hard one to deal with under existing legislation, in part because the victims are too scared to come forward or sometimes physically and emotionally unable due to the torture they've been subjected to, and in part because there are too many bits of legislation that may cover the crime. The Bill going through parliament will consolidate current legislation into one, making it much easier for the police and other enforcement agencies to catch those who trade or use slaves.

It is hard to believe that this County, which hosts the Oak stump that Wilberforce sat on to persuade Prime Minister Pitt of the need to abolish slavery hosts a significant percentage of those forced into modern day slavery. Over 50% of slaves are found in the South East. Kent Police have been working hard to help bust this heinous crime and most importantly protect the victims, often children. This Bill will strengthen their hand. It will give victims protections they don't have at present and it will set up an Anti-Slavery Commissioner to stamp out future practices.

It is devastating this Bill is needed 200 years after slavery was abolished and yet it is here, in a modern form, and with my hero in mind I am determined to see the end of it.