

# Silent protest over island's abortion law

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***Canadian author Margaret Atwood's dystopian novel *The Handmaid's Tale* provided the inspiration for a silent demonstration at this year's Tynwald Day.***

Participants donned the outfits of the handmaids central to the novel whose only purpose is to bear children and whose rights are eroded to the point of being non-existent.

A spokesman for the group, who wanted to remain anonymous said: 'The same imagery has been used by a group in the US and it is a way to show what happens when you remove a woman's reproductive rights. It allows women to lose full control over their own bodies.'

The demonstration was inspired by the current debate among



The 2017 Tynwald day ceremonies at St John's - a silent protest by members of an anonymous pro-choice group, dressed as characters from the Margaret Atwood novel *The Handmaid's Tale* to highlight the issue of women's reproductive rights.

island politicians about changing the laws relating to abortion, which is currently not permitted, except in limited circumstances. Participants wore face veils, cloaks and bonnets and were anonymous and silent.

She said: 'The imagery is important and we want to show that it is important for women to be able to make their own choices. It's not about us or who we are as a people. That's not important.'

She said it was simply to illustrate unfairness and the fact that they were not happy with how women were treated in Isle of Man law.

'It's about access and people's rights and, with regard to abortion, it should not depend on how much money you have and whether or not you can afford to go off island.

'Abortion is a personal thing and no woman has an abortion without thinking about it. But it's her choice and it's not a form of contraception. The idea that a woman is simply a host, an incubator is wrong.'

**She said the group was inspired by a pressure group in the US called the Betsy Riot, but emphasised they did not share the US group's tendency towards using aggressive tactics to put the message across.**

'Our objective is simply to have similar rights to those afforded to women in the UK,' she said.