

**JUSTICE COMMITTEE**

**HATE CRIME AND PUBLIC ORDER (SCOTLAND) BILL**

**SUBMISSION FROM ALASDAIR AITKEN**

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am writing to express my concerns about the above Bill.

My fear is that someone could easily commit an offence of stirring up hatred unintentionally, being unaware that their speech could be interpreted as abusive.

People with religious beliefs and strong views on morality should be able to have vigorous debates and a free society should protect this.

I am also worried that there is a serious risk that politically motivated complainants will label disagreement as hatred to try and silence their opponents. The mere threat of prosecution for stirring up hatred may cause many to keep quiet, this is a more subtle but equally dangerous threat to freedom of speech and undermines a free society.

There needs to be a clear distinction between legitimate debate and rabble rousing.

Alasdair Aitken  
19 July 2020