

JUSTICE COMMITTEE

HATE CRIME AND PUBLIC ORDER (SCOTLAND) BILL

SUBMISSION FROM JENNIFER MCKNIGHT

I am finding myself increasingly anxious that, under the proposed Hate Crime Bill, important debates, discussions and expressions of thought will be criminalised in Scotland.

As an example, I recently asked a perfectly reasonable question in an online forum, regarding the evidence used by World Rugby to conclude that trans women retain physical advantages over natal women in the sport. In response I received a barrage of gendered, misogynistic abuse and told that my question was "hateful". It absolutely was not, I am not a hateful person. However, the responses I received certainly were. If you look into debates on this issue, you will find that "hateful" and "violent" are applied to even the most innocuous comments or discussions, I believe as a silencing technique that the hate crime bill would strengthen. This is not what anyone expects of a free society.

I note that the sexist abuse I received would not be punishable under this law as neither sex nor gender are among the protected characteristics. This I find discriminatory as it protects gender only in those who are trans gender.

I have repeatedly defended the SNP against what I thought were ludicrous accusations of authoritarianism, however this bill represents the criminalisation of free expression. None of us has the right to never be offended. This will do untold damage to debate in Scotland and to support for the government.

Jennifer McKnight
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