

JUSTICE COMMITTEE

HATE CRIME AND PUBLIC ORDER (SCOTLAND) BILL

SUBMISSION FROM PAUL REES

In response to the request for feedback.

I wish to express my deep concerns as to how this proposed legislation will damage free speech.

I do not want to engage in threatening conduct to any other citizen in Scotland but unfortunately the way hatred is being defined seems to be very subjective.

Living in a free society we should be able to debate and dispute other people's views and ideas in a health and robust way.

Yet I fear that some could take this vague notion of 'abusive' and charge others with committing an offence under this legislation where none was intended.

The hate crime bill for England and Wales seems to protect freedom of speech and the right to voice disagreement and dissent by requiring evidence of 'threatening conduct' and by assessing whether comments were 'intended to stir up hatred'. These seem to provide a more objective measure of determine whether a 'hate crime' was committed.

I believe that the unintended (I hope unintended) outcome of this legislation will end up convicting comedians; religious leaders and news paper commentators of a crime.

Please do not turn this proposed legislation into law. Rethink and make use of the more objective hate crime laws of England.

Yours sincerely

Paul Rees
20 July 2020