

JUSTICE COMMITTEE

HATE CRIME AND PUBLIC ORDER (SCOTLAND) BILL

SUBMISSION FROM SAMUEL SHIELDS

To the Committee

This my response to the above proposed legislation.

Hate Crime Bill 2020

Q1 I do not think this Bill is necessary as there are sufficient laws that can deal with hatred and hostility that manifests itself in acts of violence, threatening behaviour, incitement to physical harm or engender fear.

Q6 This Bill being presented to the Scottish Parliament substantially weakens the rights of individuals to express their views and does not protect freedom of speech. It is right that people should be able to express their opinions and beliefs in public and private, to disagree with or make a case for what they believe, and not be criminalised for it. In doing so it must not be their intention to incite acts of violence, physical abuse, encourage intimidation or cause terror. It is proper that hostile hatred showing itself in violent, threatening behaviour, causing harm, fear or alarm are dealt with robustly, and laws exist already to cover this, the proposed legislation is not the solution to dealing with hatred against people.

Speech that an individual feels or deems to be offensive, may under this legislation be used to criminalise those who hold different views or values and want to express them. Feelings or what we deem offensive is too weak a basis for writing any law on Hate Crime, as it is too subjective, it is threatening behaviour or the incite to such that needs dealt with. People do hold views that others may find offensive, which has always been the case but that does not mean they have any deliberate intention to physically abuse, threaten, harm or act in a violent manner towards those who may feel offended nor do they seek to incite others to such vile behaviour.

We must protect the freedom to disagree, to express opinions without fear and to challenge others views.

Samuel Shields
21 July 2020