

JUSTICE COMMITTEE

HATE CRIME AND PUBLIC ORDER (SCOTLAND) BILL

SUBMISSION FROM COLM BLACK

Dear Committee,

I am writing to express my concern about the proposed new bill on hate crime and free speech.

In the strongest possible terms I urge you to reject or amend this legislation. It is totally irrational to suggest that disagreeing or causing offense by holding particular views, constitutes hate crime.

One of the great advantages of debate in our democracy is the freedom, the treasured freedom of individuals to be able to speak and respectfully be heard on particular subjects. And simply because someone's views cause offense is no reason to shut down debate. Being offended often speaks more about the insecurity of the listener, as I have seen many times in my growing up in the hotbed of Northern Irish politics.

Iron sharpens iron, as they say. So the censorship of speech in public life, entertainment and the media is a truly retrograde step. Please think again about this bill. Our freedom in this country is immensely precious and this will undermine it.

Besides, I am unsure how such a law will be policed. Is it even possible? And if not, does that not make the law inadvisable and unworkable.

Yours sincerely,

Colm Black
21 July 2020