

JUSTICE COMMITTEE**HATE CRIME AND PUBLIC ORDER (SCOTLAND) BILL****SUBMISSION FROM R CLELAND**

Sir/Madame I would like to share my deep concerns over the possible implementation of new laws regarding hate speech. As a 64 year old it seems to me that we have had in place perfectly good laws regarding this area of relationships. I most certainly am opposed to any kind of abuse and misuse of language against another person. However it must be accepted that people ought to be free to hold to ideas, ideals, views, beliefs openly and indeed robustly. We have all through out our lives been involved in discussions and debates that were strong and indeed very robust sometimes heated yet able to still remain friends indeed some of our most heated discussion will have been with our life long friends who remain just that and we can still hold to those differences strongly and yet love each other. Have we now to a place in society where we are saying such realities are no longer possible is modern humanity so insecure that it can no longer handle honest open debate must we now be forced underground to hold any opposition position to that of those who hold power and sway over our ancient people. I have lived in this fair land all of my days and indeed can trace my ancestry back to the such happens as the time of the covenanters of Scotland. Our people shed their blood that we might hold different views its called freedom just ask William Wallace. Now we all know History is open to debate. Lets take an issue such as Scotland independent in Europe such a suggestion baffles me (if you know what I mean) how can anyone be independent in Europe it just isnt possible and that needs open robust debate and even heated debate. This new crime could be committed by someone who had no idea they had crossed the line and the strictures entraps people rather than freeing them. We must be free to have rigorous debate. Religious beliefs and views on morality and ways of living out our lives are matters on which people can have vigorous debate and discussion and differences and indeed has been the case for centuries and people have been free to accept or reject such views and so it should stay that way. Again I want to say that I believe we are already perfectly served by the present laws there is no need to change them other than a desire to close down debate for personal empowerment and curtailing the liberty and freedoms of our people in a way that our forebears would have rejected outright. There will indeed be an even greater danger of groups silencing others and imposing upon our nation their own ideologies, as it is we are able to allow free discourse while protecting people from harm. I am sure that our first minister faces many a verbal attack and it is a sore thing to suffer under such but I am certain she would rather that than someone end up in jail or lose their livelihoods because they held to a worldview different to hers. Christianity might be ignored by many today but let us not forget that this nation has deep roots in Christianity and has much to thank Christianity for our modern freedoms. I am concerned that there seems to be no acknowledgement that biblical world views often differ from other worldviews and a preacher who takes the bible seriously might be accused of hate crime for motioning sin or perhaps holding to a different view of human sexuality than some in mainstream society (indeed I do remember a certain member of our parliament say that is a person held a certain view on human sexuality they should not be permitted to sit in that parliament). Just because we differ and we might say something is wrong doesn't mean we hate people indeed it is

the opposite. The bible says JESUS CAME TO SAVE SINNERS THATS HOW MUCH HE LOVED US. Atheists Christians LGBTQ+ Homosexual groups Political groups/Parties must be able to discuss and openly disagree. To legislate against this dose not bear thinking about for the mass of our population. This legislation has hidden within it the enslavement of a people and the silencing of a nation. This legislation may protect our poor feelings and emotions but will be a chain around our mouths. Dear friend we need open debate discussion open disagreement after all isnt that what we see week by week in your parliament and don't try and tell us it isn't robust because there are many the times I sit in my home and shake my head at the bitter attitudes displayed in that parliament but there again that is freedom of speech which you will lose because someone will take you to court you are not above such laws. We must be able to prove that a person was deliberately stirring up hatred and again many a discussion has got out of hand and someone says something they regret I would hazard a guess that that includes almost every single person in our great Parliament. It will be so easy to label something as hate speech or hatred simply to lock down opposition ie lets say an organisation has been challenged by a complainant it would be easy to shut that down by labelling it hate crime and I fear that is exactly what is behind this move. This legislation posses' great threat to many belonging to the major religions in our country who are law abiding members of our society. To be sure the courts will probably not be able to handle all the cases that will arise out of this.

R Cleland
20 July 2020