

**JUSTICE COMMITTEE**

**HATE CRIME AND PUBLIC ORDER (SCOTLAND) BILL**

**SUBMISSION FROM RICHARD HENRY**

Dear Sirs

I'm extremely concerned about this legislation & the effect on free speech.

In particular I'm concerned about Part 2 of the Bill & the plans to introduce a new offence of stirring up of hatred.

I think this could be extremely dangerous as hatred offences could unintentionally be committed by someone who had no intention of stirring up hatred. They might not even know that their words could be considered abusive.

Surely people are allowed to hold their own religious beliefs, which many have held for millennia before, and not to have to change what they believe or what they say about what they believe to fit in with the fads & fashions of the current age. It's incredibly arrogant to think that our society has all the answers. This legislation could seriously impact people's ability to speak of right & wrong moral behaviour which surely we all have a right to do.

As a Christian I am most alarmed at the prospect that my Pastor could be guilty of 'hatred speech' by simply preaching the Bible's message on the orthodox Christian faith or morality which our ancestors have done for countless centuries.

Obviously hatred crime is a terrible thing & no responsible person would approve of hate speech but the free expression of religion must be protected & people should be allowed to vigorously express their religious beliefs & others should be allowed to vigorously challenge these same beliefs. This is the mark of a civilised society. Pushing through this current legislation is a dangerous threat to freedom of speech & the freedom of religion.

Please ensure that this bill is ditched to avoid calamity & ordinary well meaning members of the public being caught up unwittingly in hatred crime.

Thanks for your help.

Yours faithfully

Richard Henry  
20 July 2020