

JUSTICE COMMITTEE

HATE CRIME AND PUBLIC ORDER (SCOTLAND) BILL

SUBMISSION FROM JANE KING

To whom it may concern

I am writing in response to the consultation for the above Bill, which, as I see it, poses a serious threat to free speech.

'Stirring up hatred' offences currently only apply to race, which is fair enough as race cannot be debated or discussed. Issues like sexual orientation, transgender identity and religion can be debated and one person may consider that a given statement stirs up hatred, while another may not. Who is to judge?

The new laws could be used by politically motivated people to silence those who disagree with them. It's scary to think that offences could be carried out within a person's home and they have no intention of stirring up hatred, they are merely expressing an opinion, and have no knowledge that they are committing a criminal offence.

There is no free speech protection in the Bill as it stands for religion, transgender or sexual ethics issues. These issues need to be debated openly, and differences of opinion need to be stated without fear of incrimination. I am aware that there are two clauses (11 and 12) to protect freedom of expression on religion and sexual orientation respectively, but they need to be strengthened.

I would be glad if you would take these issues would be taken in to consideration and the Bill amended appropriately.

Yours sincerely,

Jane King

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20 July 2020