

**JUSTICE COMMITTEE**

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

**SUBMISSION FROM MAURICE AND JEAN BRADLEY**

Dear Sir or Madam,

Thank you for your email encouraging us to share our views. We have read your information on the Bill again, and would like to comment particularly on Question 6 - Do you have views on the merits of Part 2 of the Bill and the plans to introduce a new offence of stirring up hatred?

Lord Bracadale's independent review on hate crime was very clear that there must be a clear line between being able to have free debate on all areas of life, and trying to cause trouble or harm to others of a different persuasion. The Bill does not do this. It is left up to a judge to decide what a person really meant. Even Police Scotland are asking for free speech clauses to be included so that they are not inundated with cases that are not hate crimes, but people wanting to silence others.

There are so many areas where people can be offended in our society today - sexual orientation, marriage, transgender issues, religious beliefs, to name the most obvious. The general public are not yet aware of much of this, or at least the depth of feeling, and could be accused of something they do not intend, in a normal conversation, and even in their own home.

We have a hard won history of free speech in this country which must not be thrown away. Religious groups must be allowed to continue to discuss their beliefs, preach and teach those beliefs and debate with others. This includes atheistic beliefs. This clause must be stronger and clearer. This is also true of the clause on sexual orientation. Just because people disagree on things does not mean they hate the other. Many of those discussions will stem from a love and concern for the person with differing beliefs.

We are very aware of other countries whose laws are very controlling. Please do not take Scotland down this route. This Bill has care at its heart but must protect all the people, not just those whose voices are loudest at the moment. Please hear our concern and look again at this section.

Maurice and Jean Bradley  
21 July 2020