

JUSTICE COMMITTEE**HATE CRIME AND PUBLIC ORDER (SCOTLAND) BILL****SUBMISSION FROM KEITH BUCHAN**

Dear Sir/Madam,

Most sensible people in Scotland are in favour of reducing the amount of hatred in society. History shows that legislation is not the way to achieve this, although it can help to eliminate the more extreme manifestations of this attitude. Hatred is a matter of the heart and that is a difficult thing to change. It is as the Bible says - "Can the leopard change its spots?". That is how difficult it is to get rid of hatred. Christians believe that it is possible through the saving power of a risen Christ who comes to live in and change our hearts giving us what Martin Luther King called "The power to love" (He wrote a book with that title).

Hatred is not uniformly against those who hold "protected characteristics". It is also commonly directed against those who do not positively affirm and congratulate individuals on their choice of lifestyle or who sincerely believe that such life choices will not bring the individual happiness. There is often a strong wish to suppress the voice of those who have decided to change sex and who then decided to revert back to their original biological sex. There is a similar wish to silence those medics who once practised sex change procedures but subsequently abandoned it as they became convinced over the years that it only kicked the can down the street as far as dealing with the underlying psychological problems which were at the root of those individuals wishing to change sex in the first place. This actually happened at the Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore, USA which was a pioneer centre in sex change surgery several decades ago but has abandoned it now. Human beings are notoriously prone to make mistakes and in a liberal democracy like ours we should have the humility to admit that we do not know everything, far less that we know how to manage other people's thoughts and opinions. We live in a pluralistic society where the right to freedom of reasonable, respectful debate should be preserved. This Bill threatens that position by giving undue power to the minority of our society who feel strongly that everyone must applaud and approve same sex relationships and transgenderism/bisexuality by criminalising mere disagreement. I have seen first hand the damage it does to families when a child/grandchild decides they wish to change sex. There is one such individual in our family who has come from a broken home. We wish him (biological her) the best and accept him for what he is. It is his life and he has the right to self determination within the limits imposed by the law. We hope things will work out well for him but privately there is sadness that he has chosen this route which intuitively seems unnatural and is plainly against the teaching of the Bible in which gender is regarded as a fixed binary matter. I have come across other families where something similar has happened leading to family breakdown, banning of grandparents from seeing grandchildren, ostracising anyone who fails to applaud the situation or who expresses the least disquiet about it.

I am not in favour of anyone with protected characteristics being vilified/stigmatised/discriminated against but the Bill in its current form creates the setting for those who hold sincere traditional Christian values (or indeed

Islamic/Jewish values) being subject to these abuses. Please modify it to ensure that reasonable, respectful debate is still protected and that the bar for hate crime is that threatening or intimidating behaviour was manifested not merely that someone held an opposing view.

Thanks you for all you do to maintain law and order for us.

Keith Buchan
22 July 2020