

JUSTICE COMMITTEE

HATE CRIME AND PUBLIC ORDER (SCOTLAND) BILL

SUBMISSION FROM ALAN CHRISTIE

Dear Sir/Madam,

I wish to record my objection to the Hate Crime & Public Order (Scotland) Bill that is passing through the Scottish Parliament.

In general terms, I am quite horrified and astonished (yet not surprised) by the contents of the Bill which is vague and subjective to say the least.

Being Scottish, and proud of my heritage, it grieves me to think that a Parliament that I voted for, is proposing to use powers contained within the Bill. Furthermore, as an officer with considerable experience serving within the public sector, I fear that the repercussions if this piece of legislation would be catastrophic for our communities. In Scotland we have for centuries enjoyed freedom of speech and this Bill would decimate the valued and cherished culture that many of our predecessors gave their lives to preserve.

For a democratic society to function, freedom of speech (regardless of views) is absolutely essential. My reading of the Bill would completely undermine this freedom, stifle debate and cause deep division in our communities and amongst families. I mention the latter since the Bill proposes to cover private conversations as well as those held in the public domain. The Bill criminalises speech or expression of opinion simply because it is deemed insulting, hateful or offensive, even if it is 'speaking the truth in love.'

To suggest that someone could be considered to be hateful or categorised as a criminal simply by writing an article, owning material or a piece of literature that expresses a value or belief, without having to prove intent, is quite simply astounding.

These proposals cause me to question if we are living in a free, democratic society or under a dictatorship regime as in countries like North Korea where citizens have to be careful about everything they think or say? The very idea that the state legislates our thoughts and our language is quite incomprehensible. The fact that it is proposed by the Justice Secretary in itself is cause for concern.

In my view, the Bill is unbelievably authoritarian and is profoundly dangerous. It causes me grave concern! For this reason, I wish to record my (strong) objection to the Bill.

Alan Christie
21 July 2020