

JUSTICE COMMITTEE

HATE CRIME AND PUBLIC ORDER (SCOTLAND) BILL

SUBMISSION FROM ROBERT L. COOK MBE

Dear Sir/Madam,

In respect of the aforementioned bill about to be discussed and passed shortly at the Scottish Parliament I would like to address question 6 with the following comments:

In no sense of the word would I personally stir up hatred against anyone in terms of race, gender or sexual orientation. I am 73 years old and worked for the greatest part of my life as a social worker/mental health officer.

I am also a committed Christian and try to live as Christ would have me live, ie loving my fellow man and serving him/her but I have also enjoyed the privilege all these years to have free speech.

I am really concerned that this proposed Bill could silence myself and others holding Christian beliefs in relation to morality and what the Bible teaches about it.

I believe that there are existing laws which cover any abusive behaviour which is likely to cause offence in way of fear or threatening others.

I would expect church leaders /preachers to continue to state what the Bible says about sinful and perverse acts, whatever they are, without being at risk of being prosecuted.

Any new law if required should allow non threatening views to be expressed and protection given to religious organisations or anyone who wishes to challenge Biblical views.

It would be a grave mistake to pass a law which silences people's views and undermines a free society.

Finally I refer to Lord Bracadale's review on Hate Crime which states the need for the difference between legitimate debate and causing deliberate offence to others. This proposed bill does not address this.

Kind regards,

Robert L. Cook MBE

8 July 2020