

JUSTICE COMMITTEE

HATE CRIME AND PUBLIC ORDER (SCOTLAND) BILL

SUBMISSION FROM JAMES FLYNN

I am very worried that this bill will stifle legitimate expression of differences of opinion. There is already sufficient provision in the laws for prosecuting anti-social behaviour, like racist language or attacks. When it comes to moral values, there is a huge swathe of views (for example on the morality or not of homosexuality, transgender issues, abortion, sterilisation etc) and in religious matters. It would be self-defeating to legislate in such a way that people could not express, in a peaceful and constructive way, their beliefs, even if they differ from the majority opinion.

There must be room for robust difference of opinion, within families, between neighbours and in the public forum, including the media. Otherwise, we will be reduced to a herd of people that stifles or threatens individuals. In all dictatorships (and i lived under a Communist one in Angola where even to mention other parties or certain countries was dangerous) whole populations are controlled by laws limiting freedom of expression.

Yours sincerely,

James Flynn
21 July 2020