

JUSTICE COMMITTEE

HATE CRIME AND PUBLIC ORDER (SCOTLAND) BILL

SUBMISSION FROM ALASDAIR PEARS

Dear Justice Committee

In relation to the above bill I would like to address point six of your consultation.

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 of hatred?

Our society has been rooted in free speech and free thought which leads to robust debate and consideration of ideas. This is of particular importance around the most important of issues which thereby makes them often the most sensitive. There is no place for hatred but I fear that open and private discussion with differing opinions on issues such as religion, sexuality, transgender and meaning could be prosecuted as stirring up hatred even when this is not the aim and things are done sincerely. This supposed stirring up of hatred could be done by one on either side of a debate, ie "God is evil and vindictive and those who follow him are fools" or "Jesus is the only way to God and those who do not follow him are misled".

I hope good protection for free speech can be done so we can continue to live in a free society. We only need look at the news with places such as Hong Kong and Russia where these abilities to express ideas freely is gone. We must treat this with the uppermost care and precision in order to get this right.

Yours sincerely
Alasdair Pears

Alasdair Pears
21 July 2020