

JUSTICE COMMITTEE

HATE CRIME AND PUBLIC ORDER (SCOTLAND) BILL

SUBMISSION FROM STEVE SAUNDERS

Dear Sir/Madam

I am submitting this return because, in my opinion, Scotland has slipped far from being recognised as the 'Land of the Book' and that the proposed Hate Crime Bill takes the nation further away from the laws of justice and morality which once made this nation proud of its Christian Heritage. The removal of excessing blasphemy laws under which nobody has been prosecuted for in excess of 175 years confirms my opening statement. It should not be removed but there should be more awareness of the hurt caused to Christian when the Name of their Lord and Saviour are abused or taken in vain.

It is a long document and not easy to read and understand the changes. One thing I have learnt that the proposed restriction on Freedom of Speech goes far too far, when compared to the text of that currently in use in England and Wales which was approved by the SNP MPs in 2006 who backed safeguards to free speech in Scotland. How can this bill propose such a radical change - effectively introduced by many of the same people?

I believe that too much influence in society has been afforded to the LGBTi community and an inappropriate level of funding by the Scottish Government allowing groups such as Stonewall to promote their own ideology and agenda. For instance the sex education videos brought into primary and secondary schools has been produced in the main by members of the LGBTI community and approved by the Scottish education system without consultation to parents and teachers. Encouraging young children and teenagers to 'have fun' when trying out sex or sexual intercourse when they are either far too young or below the age of consent is not, in my opinion, the way to raise children and will certainly do nothing to stem the increasing number of unwanted pregnancies in Scotland, currently sitting at a 10 year high.

I do not believe that there is the need for this bill given the negative impacts that are going to occur across the nation as a result from it, which will hit both the secular and non-secular sectors alike.

I do not believe that there has been sufficient public awareness or broadcasting of the content of the bill, particularly during a period when the nation has been locked down by the Covid -19 pandemic. I believe that majority of the general public would be appalled if they were made aware of the content of this bill. Funding organisations such as Stonewall (by the Scottish Government, for example), only allows them to add fuel to their fire.

Statements by Mr Swinney stating that silence is discrimination (or will be viewed as such) must be weighed up against the wording (bias) of the bill which, if enacted, precludes: -

1. Freedom to disagree with LGBTI ideology
2. Freedom to disagree with transgenderism
3. Freedom to say that other faiths are false

This is already happening in many reported cases overseas.

In my opinion the Bill is 'supersensitive' and allows authorities to assume the worse in somebody's speech or behaviour, whereas when I grew up one was innocent until proven guilty. Further, it is not just acting insensitively that will be penalised but also any conduct that may be likely to stir up hatred can result in someone being charged. Again in my opinion, the current position in England and Wales, where threatening behaviour intended to stir up hatred is an offense, is a better way forward. It appears the opportunity for 'reasonable debate' is being removed by this proposed bill.

As a Christian, I believe that Christ is the only way to God but I understand this would be considered as abusive language under the proposed bill. So what are priests and ministers allowed to say from the pulpit? It is the cornerstone of our very belief system which is under threat! As I stated earlier this has taken the pendulum far too far, another reason why I believe that the proposed bill needs to be scrapped or modified to allow all faiths to worship and discuss their differences in a constructive and peaceful (non-threatening) way. I could add many more examples as to why the proposed changes are offensive to me, and the countless Christians up and down Scotland, who have the same issues.

I believe also that there is no need to change the current law regards threatening and abusive behaviour, as it is already covered under existing criminal law in Scotland.

In closing, I believe in and pray daily for a fair and just society in Scotland but the introduction of this bill, in its current form, will drive Scotland further away from the words woven into thistles on the Mace in the Scottish Parliament, "*Wisdom, Justice, Compassion, and Integrity*" and towards a nation ruled by anarchy.

Yours sincerely

Steve Saunders

21 July 2020