

JUSTICE COMMITTEE

HATE CRIME AND PUBLIC ORDER (SCOTLAND) BILL

SUBMISSION FROM GORDON & JUNE BELL

I write with regard to the above and understand that Submissions have to be with you by Friday 24th July.

I am concerned by aspects of this Bill which seem to me to be a clamping down on free speech and normal general debate which surely is a cornerstone of a democratic society.

A free society must protect debate on religious and moral issues and beliefs and allow people to choose and in some instances change their minds.

Offences of stirring up hatred threaten freedom of religion and belief and stop people giving an account of what they believe. This would as much affect atheists as religious people.

I think too that existing criminal law already covers threatening and abusive behaviour therefore why the need for a new law. I believe that the wording of this Bill is flawed and as I said above will damage free speech and debate.

I believe too that politically motivated complainants will try to label disagreement as hatred and thus try to silence opponents, resulting possibly in the Police being inundated with this type of complaint.

Abusive behaviour is very subjective and thus I think that any new stirring up hatred offences should only cover threatening conduct.

I write on behalf of myself and my wife who shares the views i have expressed above and trust that you will give due consideration to them.

Gordon & June Bell
22 July 2020