

**JUSTICE COMMITTEE**

**HATE CRIME AND PUBLIC ORDER (SCOTLAND) BILL**

**SUBMISSION FROM STUART MELVILLE**

Dear members of the justice committee,

I am writing to voice my concerns over the hate crime and public order (Scotland) bill ((SP Bill 67).

I am deeply concerned that the section 3(2)(a) and (b) may be used to prosecute individuals for criticism of ideas, beliefs and/or practices of religious, social and cultural groups. I sincerely believe criminalising the act of communicating thoughts deemed to be offensive by member(s) of one or more of these groups will have the unintended effect of suppressing criticism of views, beliefs or tenets that incite hatred and violence against groups based on innate characteristics.

For example, criticising homophobic beliefs and tenants of religions such as Christianity, Islam or Judaism.

I strongly believe this bill will do more to harm than good efforts to create a more egalitarian society in Scotland.

This is also one of numerous examples in which attempts to merge several pieces of legislation has resulted in vague and contradictory language open to interpretation and acts of ill-will against those which the bill is intended to protect.

I sincerely hope members of the committee will heed the concerns stated above and those giving by others during this consultation. Thank you for taking allowing me to voice these concerns and for taking the time to read them.

Yours sincerely,

Stuart Melville  
[07 July 2020]