

**JUSTICE COMMITTEE**

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

**SUBMISSION FROM JEAN A C SMITH**

Dear sir/Madam,

I wonder if you have views on the merits of Part 2 of the Bill which has plans to introduce a new offence of stirring up hatred and also that that abusive behaviour can be subjective (the person feels he/she is being abused personally and feels threatened.) Dictionary definitions of 'threatening' generally include connotations of violence, menace or intimidation. Stating a free personal opinion, even in the home , is part of free speech so long protected in this country.

I do not understand all that is written in the Bill but I do feel concerned that in some areas free speech can be considered a crime and our genuine crime rates are in danger of overwhelming Police Scotland at present.

Is this not taking safety for vulnerable and minority groups, which is necessary in an accepting society, to such a level that a "crime" can be committed and dealt with by law simply because a person feels offended by someone disagreeing with them.

Many thanks in reading this. I do so hope you will consider how it may affect freedom of speech.

Jean AC Smith  
08 July 2020