

JUSTICE COMMITTEE

HATE CRIME AND PUBLIC ORDER (SCOTLAND) BILL

SUBMISSION FROM ANN WANLESS

Mr Justice Secretary

I have concerns with the 'stirring up hatred' section of the Bill.

Why is this necessary when there is already law in place to deal with those who act aggressively towards their fellow citizens?

Racism is wrong and should not be tolerated. It is the sections dealing with peoples' beliefs and social behaviours that I am uneasy about.

In Scotland we have prided ourselves on freedom of speech. The proposals regarding stirring up hatred seem to rule out any reasonable disagreement between one person's sincerely held view about life style and belief system and another's. Politically motivated persons could abuse this legislation endlessly wasting police and judicial time when under the existing legislation we should be able to have disagreements and discussions with people without feeling the need to recourse to the courts.

It would be helpful if the government found ways to help people towards tolerance of those with differing views instead of introducing yet more legislation.

Encouraging philosophical debate from a young age would be a good thing to do. Teaching us all to understand that because we disagree with one another it does not mean that we hate or despise them.

Yours sincerely

Ann Wanless
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