

JUSTICE COMMITTEE

HATE CRIME AND PUBLIC ORDER (SCOTLAND) BILL

SUBMISSION FROM TIM BARKER

Dear Sirs,

In regard to the consultation on how Hate Crime can best be defined I make the following observations.

In a society where open debate has always been accepted as a freedom of expression, not least in Scotland, it is imperative that this democratic right is maintained.

Aggressive assertion on the other hand, where a person is put under undue duress is not acceptable.

We live in a multi- cultural and multi-faceted society where traditional values and new viewpoints are tolerated.

Freedom of multi-religious expression has a right to be aired in public without censorship.

Extremists on all sides of arguments should be allowed their right to have an opinion, but not to bring prosecutions against those who maintain a different stance from them.

To consolidate hate crimes under one piece of legislation regarding the stirring up of hate crime is too blunt an instrument. Many may find reason to level accusations against someone's pronouncements with which they disagree, to the extent that the perceived perpetrator is seen as stirring up anguish and anger.

Consequently, to be even handed across the divides, a more conciliatory clause on the statute book should be brought in to protect honest opinions delivered in a measured way.

I thank you for the opportunity to make this submission.

Yours faithfully,

John Steer
09 July 2020