

JUSTICE COMMITTEE

HATE CRIME AND PUBLIC ORDER (SCOTLAND) BILL

SUBMISSION FROM P MCDERMOTT

Dear Sir

I wish to register my concerns about the Hate Crime and Public Order (Scotland) Bill regarding its impact on free speech.

In particular I would like to address question 6: 'Do you have views on the merits of Part 2 of the Bill and the plans to introduce a new offence of stirring up hatred?'

The police currently have difficulty interpreting the current hate legislation, introducing 'stirring up hatred' is so vague as to be almost impossible to police. It also opens the door to over zealous policing whereby stating a truth could be interpreted as 'stirring up hatred', I refer to the recent issue with JK Rowling's correct defence of biological women; if the new legislation was in place she would be without doubt prosecuted for stating an undeniable truth.

Furthermore offences of 'stirring up hatred' threaten freedom of religion and belief. They may stop people giving account of what they believe, this being true for atheists as well as religious people.

In my view the inclusion of 'stirring up hatred' is madness and we will be judged as a generation that truly lost its way by pandering to voluble minority viewpoints.

I end by including quotes from two eminent individuals commenting about the Bill:

"Scots are now locked in a woke chamber: virtue signalling, pandering to perceived victimhood, punishing any who assert biological fact, placing a halter of criminality on free thought when articulated by speech, abandoning common sense." - Jim Sillars, former Deputy Leader of the SNP

"The effect... will be to make everyone feel unsafe - unsafe to think, to speak, to discuss, to share ideas." - Emma Webb, Director of the Forum on Integration, Democracy and Extremism.

Yours sincerely

Peter McDermott
10 July 2020