

JUSTICE COMMITTEE

HATE CRIME AND PUBLIC ORDER (SCOTLAND) BILL

SUBMISSION FROM ANDREW BROWNING

I wish to express my strongest disagreement with the proposed Hate Crime and Public Order Bill, for it will undoubtedly promote the kind of problems we have seen recently of people expressing views that do not spring from hatred and yet are deemed 'criminal'.

The arrest of a preacher because he mentioned that homosexuality is a sin is an example of this. He was simply expressing a view as we are all entitled to do. To criminalise this because someone 'takes offence' or feels subjected to 'hatred' is to put power into the hands of a 'lynch mob' who will shout 'hate', 'hate', 'hate' when free speech is simply being exercised. If we want to create a system of 'one-thought', gross injustice, and victimisation, where people who will say anything to try and shut down disagreeable opinions, then this bill work be very helpful. Of course, if the tables were turned they would cry very bitterly and would probably go round breaking a few windows!

As a Christian, who believes in the Bible, I want to have the right to express my opinion, and also, I want people to have the right to disagree with me - peacefully. This is surely a basic human right, which people have died for in UK. Let us not go back to the 'dark ages' with some new form of injustice created by those who wish to suppress the peaceable views of others. It should be noted that those who use this kind of attack on free speech can be the most hateful people imaginable, who resort to threats and damage of property out of sheer spite. You only have to see the way some people treat those who call homosexuality 'sin' to see that - politicians have been destroyed over this. We need to prevent this "tyranny of the belligerent".

'Hate' is not something we should leave to be defined by the feelings of an individual, but it is something shown by definite acts such as incitement to violence, acts of violence, slander, libel, property damage etc. Our present laws surely are sufficient for all of this.

Thank you for taking time to read my letter,

Andrew Browning
01 June 2020