

**JUSTICE COMMITTEE**

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

**SUBMISSION FROM LYNDA BANCE**

To whom it may concern,

I would like to respond to question 6 about the new offence of stirring up hatred. I think this new legislation could lead to someone saying something unwittingly that is seen as abusive by others. They would not be trying to be hateful but if our words can be construed by anyone as abusive then we would be in trouble. I think this undermines our freedom of speech. I am also worried as a christian mother that my religious freedom could be undermined. Surely I should have the freedom to express my views and we should be able to disagree with others without running the risk of being labelled as 'abusive'. We need to support debate and discussion, not disable it, I don't want to live in a totalitarian state. I would be in favour of amending this proposed legislation so that people from different religious backgrounds can disagree with each other and not be criminalised. I want to treat others with respect but I would like to be allowed to say my views and my opinion of the truth without being lambasted or accused of committing a hate crime. If someone threatens another person then that is different to expressing an opinion.

Lynda Bance

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10 July 2020