

JUSTICE COMMITTEE

HATE CRIME AND PUBLIC ORDER (SCOTLAND) BILL

SUBMISSION FROM GEORGE INNES

May I express my views particularly concerning Question 6 regarding *Stirring up Offences*.

Church Services are not excluded. A Sunday Service where Biblical truth is preached that Jesus Christ is the only Saviour and all other religions are false, or where homosexual behaviour is said to be sinful, could result in the preacher being prosecuted for stirring up hatred.

A stirring up hatred offence could be committed in private conversation in a person's own home.

The free speech clause on religion must be stronger to protect more than mere discussion or criticism. People should feel free to vigorously challenge religious beliefs.

Lord Bracadale's Independent Review on Hate Crime report, which led to the Scottish Government's Bill, stressed the need for a clear distinction between legitimate debate and rabble rousing. This Bill does not come close to reflecting this.

There are serious threats to free speech in this Bill as it is drafted, and I would urge that it is more properly scrutinised to avoid such dangers.

George Innes
11 July 2020