

## JUSTICE COMMITTEE

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

#### SUBMISSION FROM NIGEL AKAM

I would like to make a submission about the above bill which I believe is completely over the top and will greatly reduce the principle of free speech that we enjoy in this country. In particular I am very concerned about question 6:

*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 of hatred?*

I believe this 'stirring up of hatred' clause will make people frightened to speak out because they could unwittingly commit an offense under this clause just because they expressed their own views which someone else disagreed with. The way the clause is currently worded means it could even happen in a private conversation or in a home.

This is particularly concerning where religious beliefs and morality are being discussed as people can have vigorous debates and change their minds. The free speech clause on religion, as currently worded, is not strong enough to protect discussion or criticism which is part of normal life where people feel free to challenge religious or political view without fear of prosecution. This will affect all beliefs - Christian, Muslim etc - and even Atheists - if someone disagrees with them and wants to make an issue out of it.

I believe that any new 'stirring up of hatred' offence should only cover **threatening** behaviour which is easier to define than abusive behaviour or even disagreements which can have various interpretations by different people.

Existing criminal law already exists which covers threatening or abusive behaviour likely to cause fear or alarm so we really do not need a new law?

This bill, as currently proposed, will make Scotland a **far less tolerant society**, not more tolerant, which is what the vast majority of people want and was the initial concept behind Hate crime laws currently in place.

**We live in a free society and this must be protected at all costs. This particular clause will end our free society. It should be removed completely, or better still cancel the whole bill.**

Kind regards

Nigel Akam  
13 July 2020