

**JUSTICE COMMITTEE**

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

**SUBMISSION FROM MORAG MUNRO**

I would like to make a representation regarding the Hate Crime and Public Order (Scotland) Bill:

**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.**

**I am of the view that the new law is not required. Existing criminal law already covers threatening and abusive behaviour which could cause intimidation or fear. What should happen is that the existing laws are fairly and consistently applied.**

**The provisions of this Bill could result in the restriction of free speech. Already we are seeing the vilification of people who voice a different view on sexual orientation or transgender matters. Even now people are afraid to speak out for fear of reprisals, but if this becomes law, people who have no intention of offending, could find themselves criminalised just for disagreeing.**

**Church services should be excluded. By preaching that Christ is the only Saviour, by preaching about sin as laid down in the Bible, a preacher could suffer prosecution. Offences of stirring up hatred will stop people expressing their belief, thereby threatening freedom of religion and belief for those with faith and those with no faith.**

**Offence could be taken where no offence is intended. People have different personalities - some can be very sensitive, even paranoid. Any stirring up hatred offence should be where the words were intended to stir up offence.**

**There is also the risk of spurious complaints, where people could use the Act to punish someone they dislike. Also, a politically motivated person could use it to silence an opponent.**

Morag Munro  
14 July 2020