

**JUSTICE COMMITTEE**

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

**SUBMISSION FROM KEN BURNS**

Dear Sirs,

I wish to submit the following comments.

Firstly, I do not think the bill is necessary, as existing law covers threatening or abusive behaviour likely to cause fear or alarm.

Secondly, the bill's protection of free speech is inadequate; it could be inappropriately used to criminalise religious beliefs, and views on morality which may differ from other peoples views.

Thirdly, as drafted, the bill could be used to criminalise private conversation at home.

Fourthly, religious services which preach the exclusivity of their own religion could be seen as stirring up hatred, when the leader is only expounding what has been in his scripture for many hundreds of years.

Fifthly, there is no allowance for someone who did not intend to stir up hatred – the result might be that the view of the offended person is right, rather than the lack of intention.

Lastly, the bill creates the risk that politically motivated people will label disagreement as hatred to silence opposition. This already happens, creating social pressure which often stops freedom of expression, and has resulted in people being sacked by politically correct employers. Reinforcing this trend by elevating social pressure to legal sanction is unfair and unacceptable.

Yours sincerely,  
Ken Burns  
15 July 2020