

JUSTICE COMMITTEE

HATE CRIME AND PUBLIC ORDER (SCOTLAND) BILL

SUBMISSION FROM COLIN PALMER

Good morning,

I write as a concerned resident, father and business owner about the above proposed Bill being considered by the Scottish government.

Whilst I understand the need for reforming the law to adequately cover today's challenges, the section in Part 2 suggests a new offence of "stirring up of hatred" which is a dangerous proposal that could be used against the cherished right to free speech. It is absolutely vital that this is clarified to protect persons of faith so that they are not hindered from being able to state their conviction or conscience in any situation, publicly or privately. The proposed bill as it stands could unwittingly suppress the free speech of our great country which is founded on Christian values, and embraces persons of any faith into our culture. Furthermore, the free preaching of the gospel in public which reaches out to all humanity regardless of race, colour or gender or status, and is well known to have a positive effect on society, could be at risk if someone in disagreement or opposed to a religion decided to use this law to justify a challenge in the courts.

Also I note there is a proposal to abolish the offence of blasphemy. It is hard to see why this should be required except that it sadly follows the downward trend in society for respect of religious freedoms. Blasphemy is deeply offensive to persons of all faiths and an abolishing of this offence will only contribute to the decline in moral standards in Scotland.

I would respectfully ask that the government takes definite steps to ensure that this bill is carefully considered so that any amendments to the current law do not unwittingly hinder the free speech of all faiths, or provide a basis for persons opposed to biblical truth to silence persons of faith.

Regards,

Colin Palmer

Colin Palmer
22 July 2020