

## Justice Committee

### Offensive Behaviour at Football and Threatening Communications (Scotland) Bill

#### Written submission from John McAree

With regards the above Bill and the Justice Secretary's comments today I would like to raise the following points:

Making the sign of the cross is not an act of aggression- it is actually a prayer- and for an individual to be liable to prosecution because another individual feels that its was done "aggressively" is an outright attack on Catholicism. As a 37 year old regular church go-er, I've yet to see anyone bless themselves aggressively. I will keep an eye out on Sunday, though, and will be sure to report any offenders.

Secondly, there should be no difference between outlawing Irish Republican songs which some people find offensive and other, political songs such as Flower of Scotland. Flower of Scotland isn't the Scottish national anthem. As part of the UK, God Save The Queen is the Scottish national anthem. Flower of Scotland celebrates the actions of an insurgent and terrorist, and those of a usurper king, which is equally as, if not more, political than most Irish Republican songs I can think of.

Thirdly, moving onto the Act itself. The Act gives too much power to individual interpretation. What one police officer finds offensive may not be what others do. For example, officers on duty at Celtic Park often find songs offensive, and act accordingly under existing legislation. Other officers, for example, on duty at Ibrox have much more tolerance. Unless, of course, there are other reasons?

Fourthly, the Act enshrines the right of the Orange Order and other groups to march with impunity, while raising the threat of arrest for anyone protesting against them.

I shudder at the authoritarian powers which this Bill will bestow on the police. I also shudder at the implications of this Bill on Roman Catholics and Scots of Irish origin. I believe that this Bill is the most blatantly anti- Catholic piece of legislation since the Act of Settlement.

John McAree  
22 June 2011