Justice Committee

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

Written submission from Anthony Connor

1. Do you agree with the proposal in the Bill to repeal the 2012 Act? What are your reasons for coming to this view?

Yes, terrible ill thought piece of law.

2. Did you support the original legislation?

No.

3. Do you consider that other existing provisions of criminal law are sufficient to prosecute offensive behaviour related to football which leads to public disorder? If so, could you specify the criminal law provisions? Or does repeal of section 1 risk creating a gap in the criminal law?

Yes, we already have existing laws to deal with sectarianism.

4. Do you have a view on the focus of section 1 of the 2012 Act, which criminalises behaviour surrounding watching, attending or travelling to or from football matches, which may not be criminalised in other settings?

Unjustifiable to sanction one set of people purely based on the assumption they are going to a football match.

5. Do you consider that other existing provisions of criminal law are sufficient to prosecute threats made with the intent of causing a person or persons fear or alarm or inciting religious hatred? If so, could you specify the criminal law provisions? Or does repeal of section 6 risk creating a gap in the criminal law?

Section 6 has hardly been used in the whole period since it was enacted and that police and prosecutors regularly use other legislation eg Communications Act, 2003.
6. Do you have a view on the proposed transitional arrangements in the Bill: that there should be no further convictions for section 1 and 6 offences from the date on which the repeal of those offences takes effect; and that the police will cease issuing fixed penalty notices at least from the point at which the Bill is passed?

The whole practice of targeting football fans should be stopped immediately.

All pending cases should be thrown out of court so no more public money is wasted.

Enough people have suffered from being convicted under this law and they should also be quashed.

7. To what extent do you consider that the 2012 Act has assisted in tackling sectarianism?

None whatsoever. Police Scotland has made it its business to class political beliefs as sectarian. The actual meaning of sectarianism is not clear to officers in this country.

Anthony Connor
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