Frankie Boyle

Outspoken **comedian** [**Frankie Boyle**](http://www.guardian.co.uk/stage/frankie-boyle) has condemned new laws designed to stamp out religious hatred and bigotry in [Scotland](http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/scotland) as "colonial," "laughable" and "an attack on freedom of speech".

In an interview with [The List](http://www.list.co.uk/article/39776-interview-frankie-boyle/) magazine, Boyle described the legislation, which was passed by the Scottish Parliament last month, as "the ruling classes telling the working classes what to say and think".

Describing the behaviour of Rangers and Celtic fans as "a valid culture", he continued: "You can't come in and say that the opinions those people hold, the songs they sing, the language they use is inferior and invalid."

The [offensive behaviour law](http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2011/dec/14/scotland-religious-hatred-football-law), which carries a maximum sentence of five years' imprisonment and an unlimited fine, introduces two new offences regarding the expression of "religious, racial or other forms of hatred" in public or online. It specifically targets conduct during football matches, both in and around grounds and among groups of fans watching elsewhere, in pubs or on big screens, as well as serious threats made on social networks and elsewhere online.

Boyle admitted that this was "a real problem", but called for an approach that tackled its root causes, rather than its effects. "If we were really serious about this the first step is to end religious segregation in schools. It's a Scottish reaction to think we can get rid of all this with a piece of paper.

"Some of the songs and words contravene laws on racial hatred, and maybe even on inciting violence. But that's a debate that needs to be had. Why aren't we having that? Because it would be really fucking awkward."

The comedian has also drawn criticism for [joking about the McCann family in the interview](http://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/scottish-news/2012/01/10/fury-as-frankie-boyle-cracks-joke-at-expense-of-missing-madeleine-mccann-86908-23692313/).

Asked whether he had been following the Leveson enquiry, Boyle replied, "Yeah. I saw the McCanns on there and really wanted them to go, 'Could you round it up in the next five minutes, mate? We've left the kids over in Starbucks.' Just to show they can still have a bit of a laugh."

A spokesman for the Scottish Conservatives dismissed the remarks as "the latest in a series of ill-judged comments from this particular comedian – a sure sign he is running out of anything genuinely funny to say.

“The most offensive man in comedy.”

