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Criminal Law Policy Unit

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E. Goodman
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Our Ref
Your Ref
Date 28 April 2003

Dear E. Goodman

SEXUAL OFFENCES BILL

Thank you for your letter dated 27th March in response to my earlier letter. I am sorry that you dispute my assertion that the Government will examine the scope for a review of prostitution, the exploitation, organised criminality and class A drug abuse associated with it. The Government has stated that this is the case in the command paper "Protecting the Public" which was published on 19th November 2002.

The main changes that are being made to prostitution legislation by the Sexual Offences Bill, currently before parliament, do not address the issue of prostitution directly, but tackle the exploitation of the prostitution of others, and the abuse of children through the production of pornography. These are important areas of the criminal law and they need to be tackled as soon as possible and it is appropriate that they are tackled in this Bill.

You suggest in your letter that clauses 56 and 58 create victimless crimes relating to prostitutes, and that these offences are embedded in a section of the Bill relating to protection of children. This is clearly not the case. Clauses 56 and 58 are included in the section of the Bill clearly headed "Prostitution and Child Pornography" and the section covers the exploitation of both adults and children in prostitution and of children in pornography. Equally, it is not right to say that these are victimless crimes. Clauses 56 and 58 do not make criminals of the prostitutes themselves. They are designed to protect people from the exploitative actions of those who seek to control or exploit them such as pimps. It is these people who are criminalised by the clauses.

The Metropolitan police have been consulted on the clauses in this Bill at a number of stages throughout the development of the offences.

I hope this information is of use to you.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Stuart Harwood". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Stuart Harwood
Policy Adviser