



Dr Lynne Jones, M.P.
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Please quote reference
in all correspondence

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Professor Robert Pinker
Acting Chairman
Press Complaints Commission
1 Salisbury Square
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Our ref: D0129/043/ID
Date: 09 April 2003

Dear Professor Pinker,

Complaints about articles relating to transsexual people:

Thank you for your letter dated 07 April, (your reference: 030731/732), the contents of which I have noted.

The Commission's point that the Code has not been breached because the discriminatory pejorative references made in the articles refer to a group rather than an individual, serves to highlight the inadequacy of the Code.

I should be grateful if the Commission could inform me if they would consider it acceptable to make pejorative references about a *group of people* based on their race, colour, religion, sex or sexual orientation or to any physical or mental illness or disability that a group may have in common? If not, will the Commission consider amending Clause 13 of the Code to include groups of people as well as individuals? If this is not done, I am concerned that editors are given licence by the PCC to make pejorative and discriminatory comments about vulnerable groups of people, adding to the prejudice that individuals in those groups face. For example, just as it is not acceptable to call people with mental health problems "nutters" or black people "niggers", it is not acceptable to call transsexual people "gender benders" but the Code appears to be silent on such pejorative and discriminatory references.

I should also be grateful if the Commission could let me know whether they would have considered the Code to have been in breach had the terms "Gender Bender" and "Sex Swap" been used in relation to an individual transsexual person?

Finally, I would like to clarify that transsexualism is not related to sexual orientation, it is a physical condition, known in medical terms as Gender Dysphoria, which causes those