

The abortion amendment in the Serious Crime Bill
Comments by David Paintin, one of the architects of the 1967 Abortion Act

1. The **Stop Gendercide** campaign has a website that states it is supported by voluntary donations' but does not name its founder or its address. A poor-quality video features several young women deploring sex selection in India and two clips of Fiona Bruce MP who, having identified herself, makes her case for not destroying fetal life. The social pressures that force a woman to abort a female fetus are mentioned but the adverse effects for the woman of giving birth to another girl are not described; these may include alienation from her husband, loss of status in the family, divorce and separation from her existing children. The video ends with the words 'We are saving the lives of women who are not born yet'.
2. Fiona Bruce states, on her website, that she is an Evangelical Christian — she shares the belief of the Roman Church that the fetus has full human rights. Almost all her parliamentary questions have the aim of exposing defects in the application of the Abortion Act. Her amendment is a Trojan Horse – by implying that abortions specifically for gender selection are common — and unethical — she hopes to attract support from parliamentarians who do not share her religion-based views. In fact, she is attempting to limit the discretion doctors have to provide abortion if continuing the pregnancy would threaten physical or mental health. This discretion is the essential element of the Act, and is why it does not list specific situations in which abortion would be legal – such in pregnancies following rape or incest, or when the fetus is malformed.
3. Abortions in which the gender of the fetus is the principal indication are extremely uncommon. There were none in the approximately 25,000 legal abortions provided by the NHS District Pregnancy Advisory Service in Paddington and North Kensington of which I was the director from 1970 to 1991.
4. The statistical evidence that census data show a shift in the sex ratio in favour of boys in women in who regard themselves as Indian is suggestive rather than significant. But such terminations are legal if consider necessary by the woman herself— there is no doubt that the stress she would experience if she gave birth to a further girl would threaten her mental health.

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