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Call to expunge record of former political prisoners

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Sinn Féin TD Martin Ferris has broadly welcomed the Law Reform Commission's proposals that some old convictions would not have to be disclosed during job applications and interviews. However, Deputy Ferris said a major issue which needs to be addressed now is that of the discrimination former political prisoners.

Speaking today ahead of the publication of the LRC report Deputy Ferris said, "Very old convictions for petty crime have long been recognised as a barrier to employment and hence to full rehabilitation and to full contributive participation in society. Sinn Féin broadly welcomes the Law Reform Commission's proposals that some old convictions would not have to be disclosed during job applications and interviews.

"A similar approach has been recommended by Sinn Féin for some time and by the National Economic and Social Forum report of January 2002 on the reintegration of prisoners.

"We are not talking about serious offences here like violent crime or sexual violence but rather very minor offences that are a long time in the past. The removal of this barrier to employment, and to services, for people with past minor convictions, where the risk to the public is minute, is very welcome and overdue.

"Sinn Féin will read this report in detail today when it is published. We would be concerned to ensure that adequate safeguards are in place in relation to people seeking employment in positions of trust with older people and other vulnerable groups.

"A separate major issue that needs to be addressed now is that of former political prisoners. It is nearly 10 years on from the Good Friday Agreement but former political prisoners are still subject to grave discrimination in a wide range of areas from employment through to adoption. The government must tackle this head on and I am calling again for the records of all former political prisoners to be expunged. The political nature of the conflict in Ireland has now been recognised. This recognition must be extended to political ex-prisoners

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