

The English Show their Sense of Justice

Facebook and the internet are certainly bringing the intrinsic decency and sense of fair play of the British into prominence, as well as their refined use of language.

In response to the news that a man was stabbed to death in Basildon, apparently by a gang of young people, the internet commentators did not wait for a guilty verdict by a court of law: for them, it was sentence first, verdict afterwards.

'Hang the b...dy lot of them' posted one.

'Hang them!' repeated another immediately below.

'That's just what I was going to say,' wrote a third, 'string 'em up the bastards.'

'This scum are a waste of space, skin and air.'

How about a public skinning alive, then, £100 for a front seat, £20 for obstructed view, no trial necessary? A new way to reduce the budgetary deficit?

Even more charming were the Facebook contributions that greeted the reduction of the sentence given to Lee Kilburn on appeal.

Mr Kilburn is a 42 year-old man of previously good character who was driven to distraction by children who constantly knocked on his door and ran away. It so happened that his wife had just been diagnosed with a brain tumour, and had a very severely shortened life expectancy. Exasperated, Mr Kilburn chased one of the children, an 11 year-old girl, who had just knocked yet again on his door, and there are two versions of what happened next: he says he ran after her, grabbed her and she fell, he fell on top of her and she broke her nose on the ground; she says he punched her and broke his nose. At any rate, she needed surgery to correct the break.

Mr Kilburn admitted that he lost his temper and was in the wrong, but denied that he intended to injure the girl. The appeal judges agreed that there were mitigating circumstances, released him from prison and suspended his sentence.

Here is one delightful response to the judicial decision:

*I'd go inside [prison] just to wrap a quilt round his neck
and stab the ... in his skull until his head is drained, no
remorse, no mercy, dead! His cell would be covered in red.*

The moral delicacy of the man who wrote this is evident from his refusal to spell out the four-letter word he wanted to use to describe Mr Kilburn. The line has to be drawn somewhere.

Did people have lovely sentiments such as the above before Facebook enabled them to be expressed anonymously in public,

or did the possibility of expressing them in public
anonymously call them forth?

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