

11 August 2011

Dr Julian Lewis MP
House of Commons
London SW1A 0AA

Dear Julian

RIOTS AND THEIR CAUSES

The recent spate of appalling riots and criminality calls for a two track response:

- first, swift tough action to intervene, prosecute and punish offenders
- second, a serious attempt to understand and correct underlying causes.

The first of these is being addressed, as the Prime Minister made clear in the House of Commons today. I'd like to say something about the second.

For far too long we have taken too far the ideas popularly grouped under the heading *political correctness*. This must change. I'll illustrate with the experience which brought to an end my seven year service as a prison visitor in June 2008. On the Friday before Fathers Day that year, BBC Woman's Hour devoted a programme to exploring the value of fathers in families. I sent the programme an email. As background it mentioned my role as a prison visitor. It went on to regret the absence of fathers from their families, as of course has to be the case when men are imprisoned. I was telephoned by the BBC and asked to speak on air the following Monday in a follow-up programme. I agreed. As a courtesy I sent the Prison an email (reproduced on the following page). I was hauled up before the Governor; my email to the BBC had been forwarded to Prison Service HQ and condemned. Why? Principally because its sentiments ran counter to the Prison Service 'vision and values' which included diversity. Apparently it was unacceptable to promote the importance of fathers in bringing up children, on the grounds that "all forms of family have to be equally valued". The Prison had a 'diversity manager' (with whom I had worked to help gay men, actually) and seemed to regard diversity as a key value. I think that emphasis is totally wrong. HM Prison Service should be doing all it can to prepare its inmates for a better approach to life outside — not to worry about a radio programme in which normal family life is recognised and promoted.

So in addressing this current lawlessness we must overturn an overweening insistence on *political correctness*. We must reassert the necessity of families staying together. We must insist on families *with fathers* bringing up their children with appropriate discipline, understanding proper societal values. We must re-calibrate our policies in favour of support for family life. We must require fathers to be present for their children's discipline and development. We must even re-balance school curricula to include education for proper parenting, all the while so many children do not have stable families and proper home life.

Correcting our current weird *laissez faire* approach will take more than one generation, but the recent lawlessness is a wake-up call. We must start the long painful trek home now.

With kind regards as ever

Yours sincerely

John Dexter

From: John Dexter [mailto:johnopv@yahoo.co.uk]
Sent: 13 June 2008 15:49
To: Lane, Terry [HMPS]
Subject: Woman's Hour

Dear Terry

Advance warning

I listened to Woman's Hour on BBC Radio 4 this morning, whilst they were discussing the importance of fathers. Something touched a nerve and I sent an email. This afternoon I was telephoned and asked if I would appear on air on Monday next, when there will be a follow up. Of course I may not be called, but I shall be ready to talk if the editors choose to slant any of the programme towards the perspective I took.

Here is the email:

As a prison visitor over seven years I have got to know more than a hundred prisoners. So many of these men (and there are more now than ever before) come from broken families, often because their fathers have left home or very sadly sometimes abused their own children. The median age of prisoners in my local prison is 32, so most of them are young. Most of those people have children of their own, in many cases by more than one woman. They speak not of their wives, but of their girlfriends, their babymothers. I foresee more and more family breakdown, more and more disillusionment amongst children growing up, more and more crime as a result of family breakdown. The cultural reason for family breakdown has something to do with our present obsession with sexual equality, and neglect of the distinctively different roles of mothers and fathers. Fathers do matter, especially to the children. It is the children who are important, not the desires of adults. Those on the programme who concentrate on the inequities in housework and 'childcare' (horrid word) miss the point entirely. Until we get back to non-PC acceptance of the need for different roles, mothers and fathers each taking their traditional roles and responsibilities, families staying together, society will suffer.

Do let me know if any of this gives you or the Governor a problem, for I shall probably be asked to identify 'my local prison'.

Best wishes

John