

Mounting horror at story of Shirley McKie

The Herald. Glasgow (UK): Apr 9, 2004. pg. 23

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I completely agree with Mike Russell's analysis of the Shirley McKie case (April 7) and have followed her story with mounting horror at her treatment at the hands of the Scottish justice system.

As one of the fingerprint experts who initially spoke out against the Scottish Criminal Records Office, and had to leave my job at New Scotland Yard because of my support, I fully appreciate the trauma Shirley is going through as yet another body blow is delivered by Strathclyde Police.

Over the past few years, acting as an independent consultant, I have been asked to examine examples of SCRO's work and sad to say I continue to be extremely concerned about the accuracy and quality of some of their work.

The only solution to the problems appears to be a completely independent examination of the Scottish fingerprint and forensic services and consideration of separating them from police control.

Unless this is done I fear that there could be others like Shirley McKie - innocent people brought to their knees by an arrogant system with a complacent belief in its own infallibility.

Allan Bayle, 77 Great North Way, Hendon, London.

Shirley and our family have been heartened by the support shown following Mike Russell's article. She has been approached personally and received letters and e-mails from strangers who stand fully behind her in her fight for justice and cannot understand the intransigent and uncaring attitude of the police, the Scottish Executive and the Scottish Criminal Records Office.

As Shirley enters her eighth year of struggle, it is important to acknowledge the vital part the media have played in this "David and Goliath" struggle. At times their inquiry has been challenging but they have given Shirley a voice denied her by the system and have reported with clarity, accuracy and compassion. Without the constant questioning by the media she would have given up years ago, broken in spirit and health.

While maintaining a healthy scepticism about press, television and radio output I believe that these mediums are often the individual's only defence against arrogance, complacency and the misuse of power.

Iain A J McKie, 27 Donnini Court, South Beach Road, Ayr.

I must disagree with both Mike Russell and Ian Douglas with regard to Ms S McKie. Strathclyde Police are a public body and as such have a duty to collect legal expenses awarded to them by a court. If the shoe were on the other foot would the litigious Ms McKie permit her former colleagues to retain any monies owed to her? Further, it appears that courtesy of The Herald and the BBC, we now have a fourth verdict in our courts - "wrongly accused".

The real victim in this tragic saga is the lady who was cruelly murdered and the fact that her killer still walks the streets.

Gordon C Ford, 3 Eriskay Crescent, Newton Mearns.