

Robert Kilroy-Silk writes...on Out-of-Touch Judges

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Where do we get our judges from? Not from the real world, obviously.

The Lord Chief Justice, Lord Woolf, insists that murderers who admit to their crimes should have their sentences cut by a third.

This means that instead of life meaning life, a killer who confesses to his crime will serve maybe only ten years instead of the fifteen currently laid down by Parliament. Is this right? Is it fair? Is it acceptable? Is it okay to lop off five years of a murderer's sentence? Are we all relaxed and comfortable with a killer serving no more than ten years of a so-called life sentence?

Well, ask the victims' families. Very few of them would think it right. They will say, rightly, that they are serving a life sentence of grief and devastation. They will insist that life should mean life.

A couple I know whose 30-year-old daughter was brutally beaten to death by her partner - leaving three young children without their mother for all their lives - will be angry and resentful that the man who took her life and destroyed theirs could be released at the age of 40 and begin his life again.

The majority of the public would agree with them. Lord Woolf clearly thinks he knows better than these people. He's a cut above the rest of us. But he forgets that we pay his wages and his considerable expenses and that he's appointed to serve our interests and not to indulge his own liberal prejudices.

The truth is that Lord Woolf is completely out of touch with the views of real people and thus his comments, instead of improving the criminal justice system totally destroys the public's confidence in it.