



REALLY Stephen Fry... REALLY?

In case you haven't heard, our national treasure, Stephen Fry, reportedly waded into the murky topic of Operation Yewtree and historical sex crimes whilst speaking at a Labour Party dinner. He allegedly 'went off on one'* and thinks there should be tougher laws to discourage people from inventing false claims of rape and sexual assault.

What? Like the law that considers perjury a crime? Or wasting police time? [Or perverting the course of justice](#)? Not good enough for Mr Fry apparently. Huh.

These measures are in place and obviously a pretty good deterrent since [the figure for false allegations is roughly 4%, and that's just of reported assaults](#), a huge percentage (around 80%) go unreported to the police and some victims tell no-one. But scarily, the *real* deterrent (and this deterrent deters the majority whose claims are true), is the ordeal and disbelief experienced by those who have *already been harmed*. These things cause isolation and shame on top of trauma.

Well shame on all of those who call to further silence people.

I've worked with young people before now and have heard stories about girls being assaulted, except they don't even know it's assault, don't realise it's something they have a right to say no to, let alone protected from by the law. Why is this...? Oh maybe because the importance of women and children's bodily autonomy and believing that those who abuse them should be brought to justice, is something to be ranted about over a fancy gala dinner.

So, Mr Fry allegedly stated, fewer than 50% of those questioned by Yewtree were prosecuted? So what? If someone burgled your house Stephen, would you rather the police only question a couple of people in case they got the wrong one? Gosh what an inconvenience, helping the police with enquiries!

Of course, we know it's not that simple, being questioned for sexual offences does have negative implications regardless of guilt. Careers can be ruined by those doubting one's innocence, reasonably or not. The fact is that there are more victims who are disbelieved, undeservedly so, than those accused, that's just maths, I thought Stephen Fry was good at maths.

Maybe the solution is that the privileges afforded to those who report rape or sexual assault need curtailing? The majority of them being vulnerable women and children who are often abused by people in positions of trust, you know people simply *awash* with power. Privileges such as being subject to disbelief from the police, from family and friends, a lack of support, having to give a statement which describes the ordeal in detail, social stigma, physical examination and last but not least the potential for being cross-examined in court. Who wouldn't make it up? It sounds like a right lark.

Interestingly something Mr Fry wildly overlooked is the responsibility that lies with tabloid



journalists who pounce rabidly on any whiff of scandal and then try people in the press. What of their use of biased and revolting hyperbole and salacious copy thus making a sideshow of both victims and suspects? Reporting of sensitive matters like this should be treated respectfully, not like a cheap thrill (often) paired with [sexualised images of young women as at least one of our prominent papers does](#), further encouraging the reader to see it as titillating entertainment. The responsibility is not with the police who are for the most part doing their job admirably despite cuts across the sector. And let's face it slugging off the tabloids would've gone down far better at a Labour gala dinner, politicians bloody hate journalists.

So what should we do so Stephen's mates don't get unnecessarily hauled in for questioning in future? And how do we prevent uncovering, 30 years down the line, abuse and assault by the rich and famous that women and children were too scared to report, or disbelieved if they did?

Well for starters we need to treat victims with care and respect and make sure they feel they can come forward at the time of their ordeal, not 30 years down the line. This would spare them and future victims years of anguish, as well as sending a message loud and clear that abuse will not be tolerated however famous a person is.

No one is above the law, although I'm sure there may be some powerful but cowardly men out there having once abused their power and privilege and now wondering if there will be a knock on the door. These men who once believed they were above the law and are likely very grateful for Stephen's 'speech', and who count on the silencing and shaming of victims.

Thankfully, Fry's words were apparently met with 'deadly silence' - which suggests very little agreement - and Ed Miliband commented to say he fully supports Operation Yewtree, I'd have been violently sick on my membership card if he hadn't.

I sincerely hope Mr Fry thinks long and hard about what he has said, he's a champion of equal rights in so many other ways, which makes this an added smack in the chops and it really saddens me. Especially as many many people look up to him and his words could have some awful consequences for people he could have used his power and privilege to help.

You can find the authors blog via this link: www.mytightswontstayup.com