

Letters to the Editor



Naked truth about the arm of the law

Sir, Daniel Finkelstein argues that, even though Stephen Gough has harmed no one, he deserves what is in effect a life sentence for defying the law, and that he should rely on parliament to change unjust laws ("The naked truth is this man must be locked up", Dec 23).

History shows us that parliament lags so far behind public opinion that often protests involving breaking the law are necessary to grab its attention at all.

The Tollpuddle Martyrs broke the law, and more recently laws banning homosexuality were only altered after parliament recognised that they were being widely ignored. Indeed, parliament itself only became the supreme law making body by the ultimate law-breaking of the Civil War.

In Gough's case it is ironic that the 1986 Public Order Act under which he was initially convicted makes no mention of nudity, which is not illegal, so he did not actually break the law as written, but merely what a few magistrates believe that it should be.

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