Stephen Lawrence and Justice

Thursday, 05 January 2012

Lord Justice Leveson should be looking at the appalling but subtle influence of the media on those who are meant to bring fairness and decency to our society. Like the Judges.

To Gary Dobson and David Norris, Mr Justice Treacy, sentencing the men to a minimum of 15 years and two months and 14 years and three months respectively, told the Old Bailey in London that the killing in April 1993 was a "murder which scarred the conscience of the nation".

"The high level of public interest in this case is at least in part a reflection of the abhorrence felt by right-thinking people at the nature of this crime. This... should be reflected in the sentence," he said.

Have we gone mad?

The "high level of public interest" in the case was because it was a great story. The media loved it and kept pushing it. But did "the public" care one way or the other? I doubt it; they were more interested, in general, in what they would be having for dinner that night.

And even if they DID care, should that influence the length of sentence?

Was Lawrence's murder any worse than that of hundreds of kids killed over the past 18 years?
Does "the racist element" make it a worse death than drugs or gangs or robbery or any of the other, surely equally venal, motives?

Nobody dares even suggest it.

Is the Judge saying "if you don't make the front page of the Mail, you'll get lighter sentences"?
Is he saying that since Damilola Taylor was killed by black men they should get shorter sentences? They certainly did.

I believe we've all gone insane thanks to the good old media (in which I am a part, incidentally; have been for nearly 50 years and remain so).

Leveson and his worthy colleagues like to pretend they have all got it right. But they are as influenced by the media as the rest of us. The Inquiry was set up because of the "outrage" (in some of the media) that a dead girl's phone was hacked into. Giving the parents "false hope" their daughter was still alive.
Forgive me for wondering why that is such an appalling thing to do.

Immoral? Possibly - although I suspect it was justified by serious and genuine consideration that the media might be more able to find her than the utterly useless Surrey police.
Especially as, at the time, she wasn't known to be dead, simply "missing". Quite possibly a runaway.
Yet it's such a great story that everyone obeys the simplistic majority slogan headline and we are all so horrified that we set up an entire Inquiry.

Believe me, there are many far better reasons to examine media responsibility.

I'm glad that is now technically happening but I doubt whether the Leveson panel either will, or wants to, get to the truth.

That might provoke negative media coverage.

And public outrage.