



## A vile underclass of serial trollops

**SHARON MATTHEWS**, the woman who kidnapped her own daughter in order to claim a reward, has provided us all with a picture of degenerate behaviour worthy of *Gin Lane*. Sharon, who has had seven children by six fathers and has never held down a job, funded her lavish lifestyle of pizzas, booze and fags, on welfare and housing benefits of around £390 a week. Her idle, feckless, criminality has earned her the *sobriquet*: “Most Evil Woman in Britain” (. . . evidently we have long needed a replacement for Myra Hindley). Sharon’s delinquency has even enabled the eminently respectable *Daily Telegraph* to give the long forgotten word, “trollop”, an airing along with splendidly vindictive phrases like, “our vile underclass”. This wave of national indignation has swept into our most sober institutions leaving madness in its wake. Some disordered souls have even suggested that “welfare dependency” is at the root of our economic woes and enabled France, *yes France*, to overtake us in the list of big, bigger, biggest, economies.

Accordingly, James Purnell, the rather irate looking Work and Pensions Secretary, is going to act very firmly. He aims to force women to name the fathers of their children on birth certificates so that he can chase errant boyfriends for child maintenance payments, which as unemployed fathers they will not be liable to pay. The state will also, no doubt, have to absorb the cost of paternity suits brought by penniless women

against penniless men and pay in full for the DNA tests ordered by the courts. Housing Benefit is also going to be reformed in order to prevent the poor from living in houses and flats that are too big or too comfortable for them. Maximum rates payable will be set to ensure that the unemployed do not get ideas above their station. If the Housing Benefit office refuses to pay the full rent then claimants will have to find the balance out of their £60.50p per week or save up in excess of £1000 for removal costs, a deposit, and a month's rent in advance, in order to rent somewhere more to the liking of Housing Benefit officials.

As if all this was not barmy enough, Purnell plans to force unemployed men of over sixty to attend "work focused interviews" or face losing their housing benefit and large chunks of their weekly pittance. At a time when UK unemployment is rising rapidly – it will probably reach two million by the end of this month – the Labour Government has decided to get tough with the introduction of the new *Poor Law* detailed in the *Welfare Reform White Paper*. Training or unpaid work on useful public projects will be offered to all those claiming benefits – which they will lose if they prove recalcitrant. It is intended to shift at least a million people off Incapacity Benefit and onto Job Seekers Allowance and then to threaten them, along with single mothers of children older than twelve months, with loss of benefits if they fail to find work.

In a surprising example of "joined up" government Labour does plan to get as many kids as possible starting school at four years of age. Which is just as well because there are no plans to improve nursery or crèche provision which will tend to undermine the scheme to get 400,000 single mums into work, unless Labour intends to create hundreds of thousands of jobs especially tailored to fit in with the primary and secondary school timetables.

Keenly aware that both the middle class and the mass of hard-pressed workers are increasingly angry about millions of people idling away their days on

handouts funded by the tax payer New Labour ministers have decided to whack “the vile underclass” as hard as they can. Lurid tales of “sink estates”, sexual licence, child neglect, child abuse, drug addiction, crime and vandalism, are all grist to this mill of moral outrage, not least because most of these tales are mostly true.

*Yes, there are literally millions of people who live from hand to mouth on benefits and have little intention of ever actually working for a wage or saving for their future.* Raised in very restricted circumstances, neglected, feckless, incompetent and disorganized; their kids are often destined to emulate the lives lived by their parents, because they simply do not believe the New Labour mantra that “work is the road out of poverty”. They know that this slogan is a lie. They know that if they are unlucky enough to actually find a job, that work is the route to long hours on the minimum wage and all the humiliations and inconvenience that are routinely experienced by those in menial occupations.

They know that if you lack the ordinary social skills that might enable you to interact effectively with supervisors or colleagues on a construction site, in a shop, office, factory or warehouse you will not be hired. They know that if you cannot communicate effectively on the telephone, or perform simple sums, drive, use a computer, or keep reliable records you will find it very difficult to find a job. Simply an inability to be polite or to keep your temper in most circumstances will render a person unemployable.

Consequently, it is not at all surprising that the millions of people who find themselves in this predicament at the bottom of the heap opt for a life of idleness, skiving, and ducking and weaving on the borders of criminality. They know that a six months government-training course, is not, in most circumstances going to render them employable, particularly in a situation in which literally scores of resourceful, capable and experienced people are available to fill every single vacancy. They know that

they have very little chance of anything but the most undesirable and unskilled jobs that are by their nature insecure and vulnerable to technical innovation that will render them obsolete. This is why they prefer the warm embrace of the “dependency culture” to actively seeking employment.

This underclass has been created by the fact that great swathes of well-paid unskilled or semi-skilled manual jobs have disappeared. This has been accompanied by the failure of educational and training strategies to ensure that people from poorer unskilled families are effectively equipped for these new conditions. These are long-term processes that have been compounded by developments in housing and transport that have resulted in the crowding together of low skilled and poorly educated people in residential areas, bereft of ordinary amenities, which are inhabited, in the main, by entirely unemployable people.

It should surprise nobody that such conditions have produced a malaise characterised by a lack of ambition, widespread moral decay, criminality and corruption. It is truly astonishing that both Labour and Tory leaders have failed to understand that, in the context of profound economic crisis, the moral indignation and repression which they are currently offering will simply result in more violence, more criminality, and more abuse and neglect. We already have more than five million people living on state benefits. Cheap, tawdry, half-baked schemes, designed to “re-engage the poor” by threatening and “remoralising” them will not solve *structural* problems that demand expensive and well-conceived *structural* solutions across the entire field of housing, local amenities, transportation, education, and training.