

The Longford Lecture 2005

Saturday, 10 December 2005

The prestigious Longford Lecture, hosted by CH4 News presenter JON SNOW and sponsored by the Independent newspaper (Editor Simon Kellner attended) took place on 5/12/2005.

THE LONGFORD LECTURE 2005 by Baroness Hale

The Longford Lecture, 100 years after the birth of the mighty Frank Longford, a man with the courage and conviction of all thatâ€™s best in Christianity, was given by Baroness Hale, Britainâ€™s First Female Law Lord, and I have to say I disagreed with almost every word.

She spoke on the subject of Women In Prison.

For me, the problems of prison are universal.

We should indeed examine individual cases but to group or categorise into genders or skin colours or ages is to do nobody any favours.

Are we not beyond generalities like assumptions that one gender is more sensitive than another or that children only belong to mothers or that bad facilities for women are OK for men?

Worse than that I believe detours like this damage the crucial and vital attention needed to the appalling problems in our Criminal Justice System by deflecting attention from them.

Arguing philosophical issues like â€œis it worse for women than men in prison?â€• avoids practical problems likeâ€

- 1) Institutional Immorality in the police and CPS behaviour.
- 2) Accountability of officers, lawyers, judges and jurors who get it wrong.
- 3) Irresponsibility in the media.
- 4) Political obedience to tabloid headlines and pressure.

Address some of those issues and weâ€™ll start doing some good.

But donâ€™t blur the problems by gushing on about trivial fringe topics.