



People for Proper Policing in North Wales

Policeman's fury over gang sentence. May 8 2007 Daily Post

A POLICEMAN yesterday criticised a judge for the lenient sentences given to six yobs who battered him and stabbed his teenage son.

PC William Howie, an officer for 27 years, said the sentencing of the gang, who launched a vicious attack outside his home, sent out the wrong message to the public. He also said the sentences, by Recorder Gareth Jones at Mold Crown Court, could have serious implications for all police officers.

PC Howie was at home in Caerwys, about to settle down to watch football on television, when two frightened teenagers knocked on his door. The officer says that they were seeking sanctuary from attackers so he let them in. As an off-duty police officer, he believed he could have been charged with neglect of duty if he had refused to take them in and they had then been attacked. A hostile mob gathered at his home, and when he told them to leave, identifying himself as a police officer, he was head-butted, punched and repeatedly kicked on the ground outside his home. His wife and son were injured trying to save him. His son suffered potentially life-threatening injuries after he was struck over the head with a bottle and stabbed to the side.

At Mold Crown Court last Friday, the prosecution said that they could not say who had inflicted the stab wounds. However, a young man who smashed the bottle over the son's head admitted affray and wounding and was sentenced to 14 months youth custody. Five others who admitted being involved in the violent incident and pleaded guilty to public order offences escaped with community penalties. Another youth has been sent to the youth court for sentence.

Now PC Howie is seeking urgent talks with Chief Constable Richard Brunstrom in the hope he will sanction a letter to the shadow Home Secretary. The officer says he fears that the Home Secretary's plea to judges not to jail so many people results in the type of lenient sentences given out on Friday, which he branded disgusting.

"I just cannot believe that I as an off-duty police officer was subjected to such violence at my own home, my son and wife came to my aid and they were injured, my son seriously, and these youngsters just appear to have got away with it" the officer said.

The PPP comments We fully support and agree with PC Howie and congratulate him on his dedication despite being 'off duty'. Fortunately this gratuitous violence did not result in fatalities. IF the previous good behavior of the participants was credible then suspended prison sentences would have been appropriate as a major deterrent to further acts of violence. We also know from recent exposes of the lax conditions in prison that young offenders are likely to leave with more problems than when they enter the system. Why can't the courts make the perpetrators pay compensation to the abused and injured?