



People for Proper Policing in North Wales

The POLICE State in action ... AN OUTRAGEOUS ARREST FOR SPEEDING

14th November 2005. A mother-of-four was locked up in a Scottish cell and deprived of contact with her family before being driven to Scunthorpe to stand trial on Saturday - for a two-year-old speeding offence.

Michelle Keating (43), from Aberdeen, was caught speeding on the M180 in 2003 while rushing her husband to work at Humberside Airport. She received notice of police action against her and filled in the appropriate forms to send to the authorities, admitting the offence. She then heard nothing about the matter and believed charges must have been dropped. However, on Thursday, when she was stopped during a routine police check, it was discovered there was a warrant out for her arrest issued by North Lincolnshire magistrates.

And, in what **defence solicitor Stuart Cranidge told North Lincolnshire Magistrates' Court was 'one of the most outrageous cases I have dealt with in 35 years of being a solicitor' she was arrested and locked up for two days.** *"Mrs Keating was quite perfectly properly arrested and taken to a Scottish police station," he said.*

"She was assured somebody was being dispatched from Scunthorpe to collect her. In fact, nobody came to collect her until Friday." In that time, he said, Mrs Keating was not allowed to speak to her husband or father when they came to visit.

"When Mr Keating said 'I've got four children' the response was 'are you saying you can't look after your kids? In that event the next call I'll make will be to social services'," said Mr Cranidge.

Prosecutor Andrew Horner confirmed Mrs Keating had been found guilty of speeding in her absence. However, he successfully applied for the case to be reopened, before stating it should be withdrawn. *"I have to take into account everything that has happened to Mrs Keating and I do not think it is in the public interest to proceed,"* he said.

Mrs Keating's husband, Christopher (42), who had driven down from Aberdeen, said *the matter had been disgusting and his faith in the justice system had been severely shaken.*

"Why did my wife have to come all the way to Scunthorpe in custody to sort this matter out?" he said. *"We are law-abiding citizens and there is nothing to suggest we wouldn't have turned up. I can't understand why we didn't receive the proper notice about the original matter. We have moved house, but the car is registered to our new address and we pay a mortgage - we should be easy to find. In technology terms, we are visible from the moon."*

Mr Cranidge added: *"I'm delighted with the view taken by the Crown Prosecution Service in this case."*

The PPP comments there will be more such cases if we don't stop the whole process of automatic penalties and citizens being found guilty in their absence. Many will arise from the ANPR system and it's spin offs. The ineptitude of the Police and the millions of items of mail lost by the Postal service will exacerbate the problem. In an even worse case in Anglesey a partly disabled elderly lady driver was banned from driving in her absence because the paperwork never reached her. She unknowingly drove for months without a valid licence and therefore was probably uninsured.