

**Letter to the Editor: Journal of Forensic Identification**

Dear Mr Grieve,

*'To sin by silence when they should protest makes cowards of men.'*

These words of Abraham Lincoln came to mind as I read the comments of your members from Nevada and the UK in your article 'Forest and Trees'.

If your correspondent from Nevada is tired of hearing Shirley McKie's name then he/she should substitute that of a loved one.

Unless the fingerprint community remains vigilant and vocal what happened to my daughter could happen to anyone, anywhere.

This whole debate is not about Shirley McKie.

As you stated in your article the issue is one of **'taking a stand for justice or injustice, seeking truth or falsehood and supporting wisdom or folly.'**

The rights and freedoms we enjoy today are the results of such struggles.

SCRO and their apologist are a far greater danger to these freedoms than a thousand Shirley McKies.

If your correspondent believes this struggle is won then my experience over the past four years should warn him otherwise.

Unlike the Nevada expert I care little for possible **'schisms in professional organisations and perhaps split membership.'**

My concern is that we have fingerprint experts of honesty, probity, integrity and expertise who are willing to listen and learn from their mistakes.

Experts who welcome legitimate challenge and see it as the lifeblood of a growing and dynamic profession and not as something to be suppressed and opposed at all cost.

I have experienced arrogance, complacency and the 'wall of silence' which surrounds and supports the 'Myth of Expert Infallibility'.

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This brings me to your UK correspondent.

He/she takes comfort that, '**In the UK there is a long and entrenched respect for the principle and rules of sub-judice.**' and seeks to contrast this favourably with the American system.

This is only half the story.

Yes the rule has much to commend it but it is abused day and daily by individuals and organisations who wish to suppress the truth and fear open discussion.

It is a very effective delaying tactic that discourages the complainer and often leads to prohibitive legal costs and further extreme psychological trauma forcing the individual to give up their fight.

In the UK there is a long and entrenched history of hiding behind 'sub-judice'.

Over the past four years it has been used by SCRO and their apologists at every level to try and silence debate and cover up the state of chaos that has now been revealed within that organisation.

Had it not been for the international debate promoted by Pat Wertheim, David Grieve, Ed German and Allan Bayle the 'truths' uncovered at my daughter's trial would have been suppressed. The incompetence and inefficiency would have continued to threaten every person in our community and Shirley would have been left broken without hope and without a career.

I would also take issue with your correspondent if he alleges that fingerprint challenges have occurred in Scotland before my daughter's case.

SCRO has never been successfully challenged throughout its history. It appears as if the whole system of prosecution in Scotland now freely admits to having subscribed to the 'myth' of SCRO infallibility.

In the UK as a whole there have certainly been challenges to fingerprinting and mistakes have been made but when uncovered they have always been admitted and early remedial action taken.

**What makes the Shirley McKie case unique is that never before, in the UK, has there been such a campaign of cover up and failure to admit mistakes in the face of world-wide condemnation.**

Having opened with the words of a world renowned American President I would like to close with the thoughts of Scotland's national poet Robert Burns:

**'There's nane ever fear'd that the truth should be heard but they whom the truth would indite.'**

When David Grieve and Pat Wertheim arrived in Scotland they were sarcastically derided by the apologists for SCRO as 'cowboys' and perhaps your Nevada correspondent had it right when he accused David Grieve of being on his 'high horse'.

I personally hope that these 'cowboys' whether on 'high horses' or not continue to fight for the equity and justice they believe in and for a fingerprint profession open to challenge and change.

**Thanks to them the truth has been heard and SCRO and their apologists have been indicted.**

**It is to their eternal credit that these men heeded Abraham Lincoln's wise words and did not sit silent.**

Yours sincerely,

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**Iain A J McKie**