

Unison and the Shirley McKie case

I first met Kath Ryall in the BBC Newsnight studio in Glasgow earlier this year. At that time I saw her as a reasonable official rightly protecting the interests of her members. I told her she was having the wool pulled over her eyes by the Scottish Criminal Records Office experts she represents and offered to meet with her and explain exactly how and why. This offer was never taken up.

Since then she has taken every opportunity to attack Shirley McKie and in her latest letter (Justice for those accused by McKie, November 12) she has the audacity to impugn her honesty and integrity and that of our family.

Ms Ryall makes much of the SCRO experts' self-inflicted suffering but fails to mention Shirley's and our family's 10 years of trauma at the hands of an uncaring justice system.

It has been a psychological, emotional and financial nightmare watching Shirley lose her job and her police career. We have stood by helplessly as her health deteriorated and she nearly lost her home when Strathclyde Police insisted on her paying them back more than £13,000. Only the intervention of an anonymous benefactor stopped this happening.

Shirley has suffered two trials where her integrity and honesty were constantly attacked and has had to endure numerous psychiatric examinations in her fight for legal representation and a pension. Should she lose the coming civil action, our family stand to lose everything we have in legal fees. To date I estimate that Shirley and our family have spent in excess of £50,000 in our 10-year fight for justice.

Unlike Ms Ryall, we cannot sit back in a superannuated ivory tower backed by millions of pounds of union money and lecture others on truth and justice.

Let me ventilate two other facts that Kath Ryall might not like to face. Her SCRO experts did not make one "error" but two "errors". The second one consigned David Asbury to jail for the rest of his life. That he has now been freed owes nothing to her myopic views but is thanks to the hundreds of men and women from the world community of fingerprint experts who saw through the smokescreen being raised by SCRO.

In effect, we have the same four experts independently making an "honest" mistake in two identifications – a total of eight mistakes. That is either too coincidental to be true or shows such "incompetence" that a completely different set of frightening conclusions can be reached.

I would also ask Ms Ryall to contemplate the 14 experts from Lothian and Borders Police and the three from Aberdeen, many of them Unison members, who spoke out against SCRO and had the threat of discipline hanging over them as a reward for their honesty and integrity. How about some justice for them?

In presenting Shirley's case across the world I have often used the words of Robert Burns: "There's nane ever fear'd that the truth should be heard but they whom the truth would indite." I repeat my offer to Ms Ryall and any of her colleagues who share her views to visit me and learn the truth. If that proves too difficult, look in on the website www.shirleymckie.com where some of that perhaps unpalatable truth is available.

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Link to Unison letter: <http://www.shirleymckie.com/documents/LyallUnison12.11.05.pdf>