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MEN AGAINST RAPE

As men, we fully support the lead being given by Women Against Rape in exposing the hypocrisy of the government, and of Home Secretary Rees in particular. He has spoken of his 'concern' at the possibility of 'even . . . only one person' dying as a result of the firemen's strike. This is revealed as cynical politicking when set beside his complete failure to express concern for the life and liberty of rape victims, and his tacit endorsement of recent encouragement to rapists in the courts.

In July, in a statement supporting the Petition of Women Against Rape, we wrote about the release of Guardsman Holdsworth as follows:

Guardsman Holdsworth's defence used the fact that he was a soldier to get him off. The Court of Appeal confirmed that violence was expected of him, as a soldier and as a man. Men in uniform—soldiers, police—represent what is expected of all men. We are all expected to be experts in violence. That means we are expected to have power and authority over women, to use violence or the threat of violence first of all against *them*.

The reported remarks of Judge Mason, in the recent case of Royal Navy engineer Markham ('It would be a shame if the country loses your services') amount to a reaffirmation of judicial policy in the face of protest against the Holdsworth judgement. The endorsement of rape by government and the courts makes women justifiably more suspicious of *every* man. It serves to divide women from men even further at a time when recession is already setting those with no pay increasingly against those with low pay.

In our earlier statement, we wrote:

Women Against Rape have shown how women's weakness in the face of men's violence is rooted in their lack of money. The more women are financially independent of men, the easier it will be for men to refuse to play the policeman and foreman, in marriage or in the street, at home or abroad.

Women Against Rape are voicing the question of countless women when they ask: ' . . . is licence to rape a 'perk' to supplement low pay in the armed forces?' Given that servicemen represent the violence that is expected of all men, we ask: are leniency towards rapists in the courts and the continuing legality of rape in marriage seen by government as 'perks' for *all* men? Is unrestraint of rape part of a package, in return for pay restraint? We have no doubt that it is.

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