



Richard Littlejohn, Jimmy Savile & the Need for an Independent Press Commission

Richard Littlejohn's most recent post in the Daily Mail is deeply offensive on numerous levels. Supposedly, it is meant to be Littlejohn's 'opinion' on who he would like to win the election on Thursday. It is a truly depressing state of affairs when 'political debate' involves insulting statements about the physical appearance of candidates. At EVBHQ, we struggle to see the relevance of Ed Miliband's face to his policies on the NHS or why Nicola Sturgeon's clothing is somehow representative of her policies on ending violence against women and girls. The continuing misogyny, racism, classism and body-shaming of candidates in the media shows how little they have learned from the Levenson inquiry.

It is Littlejohn's references to Jimmy Savile which are the most horrendous in this recent article. Granted, referring to the SNP as Stalinists as though a democratic vote on independence was analogous to mass genocide and systemic human rights abuses is a rather tedious form of hyperbole usually only seen in badly researched essays written by first year high school students. Calling Leanne Wood, leader of the Welsh Nationalist Party, a 'dopey bird' is simply misogyny, but the casual dismissal of child sexual abuse demonstrates the press's inability to regulate itself.

Littlejohn suggests that he would rather have Savile babysit his children than a labour government is simply disgraceful. He has a complete lack of empathy for the victims of Jimmy Savile - and all other victims of sexual violence. It shows just how much contempt our culture has for victims of male violence. After all, Littlejohn's column was published in a newspaper and not a self-hosted blog.

As with Katie Hopkins' recent comments on migrants, Littlejohn's column demonstrates the clear need for an independent press complaints commission. These types of comments would not be published by a responsible media. There are numerous comparisons that Littlejohn could have used to evidence his hatred of the labour party. He didn't need to invoke the name of a serial sexual predator whose crimes are only just now being made public due to cover-ups and media refusal to publish information.

Victims of child sexual abuse should be able to read newspapers without seeing 'jokes' dismissing their experiences as irrelevant.

The need for an independent media complaints commission isn't about 'political correctness' or limiting media's freedom of expression. It's about ensuring that we have an independent, responsible media that does not denigrate, harass, or blame victims of male violence, domestic and sexual violence and abuse, child sexual exploitation, and rape culture. We wouldn't have needed the Levenson inquiry if the media had chosen to act responsibly in the first place. It is the very behaviour of the media that has resulted in demands for strong measures of accountability.

Littlejohn didn't need to use the reference to Jimmy Savile. The editorial staff could have



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insisted that, at the very least, that one line be removed. Instead, the newspaper with the largest distribution in the UK has helped perpetuate rape culture by dismissing victims of systemic child sexual abuse and exploitation as irrelevant.

We need a better media because this simply isn't good enough.