



The Fifty- Fifth issue of a sort-of letter substitute, kinda thing. Maybe weekly, maybe not. Available from:

30 Ava Park, Belfast, BT7 3BX, Northern Ireland
tw@tommyworld.net
<http://www.tommyworld.net>.

Available via the World Wide Web, or as an email attachment. I recommend the Portable Document Format (pdf) or, if you insist, a word or Rich Text Format (rtf) can also be emailed. Get in touch and we'll sort something out. You are going to [TorCon III](#), aren't you? Dated, already, 04/08/02.

TommyWorld 54 – A Po Faced reply.

By Mark McCann.

When I began reading the latest issue of Tommyworld I wondered for a moment if I'd fallen into some Philip K Dick alternate universe where Germany won the war and the Irish Elk still roams free on the hillsides of Donegal. Is it just my faulty memory or did not that particular 'legendary' beast become extinct about 10,000 years ago? Has the news not reached Derry yet?

I could perhaps accept that the Elk is still out there on Slemish mountain minding its own business but I have a more serious problem accepting the idea that some people out there 'need killin'.

I admit there are a lot of people who cause untold pain, havoc and destruction and appear to contribute nothing during their time on this earth but intense unhappiness for others. And, admittedly, it would seem to be a nice, tidy option to completely remove these worthless individuals from existence.

But leaving aside any po-faced religious arguments against such a stance - the sanctity of human life or whatever you chose to call it - there is still a huge can of heaving worms to be faced if you accept your point of view.

The paedophile is the bogeyman often used in arguments like this about the death penalty. I guess this is because the abuse of a child is viewed by all right thinking people as the ultimate in monstrous acts and anyone seen defending a paedophile's right to continue living must in some way condone their actions. This is of course complete codswallop.

My problems with the death penalty for anyone (including paedophiles) are many (not least of which is establishing the absolute guilt of the accused) but here's just one for starters: who decides what constitutes a crime worthy of death?

You seem to suggest that this should be restricted to paedophiles. But what about child murderers? Those who only kill children rather than abuse them. Surely their crime is even worse? Put them up against the wall as well? But then what age constitutes the cut off point for the definition of a 'child' murder - the legal one of 16? Do we then decide that the murder of a 16 year old is more heinous than that of a 17 year old? That doesn't make much sense. Why not kill all murderers then and make things clear cut? A life for a life. That seems neat and tidy. Okay, but what about 'freedom fighters' or self-styled soldiers fighting a war? Are they murderers? What if they are fighting against an oppressive government like Nazi Germany? Would you consider the state execution of these people to be just? Probably not.

All I'm saying here is that life is never black and white. Despite what some people seem to think, life is a grey ethical sludge through which all of us have to trudge to find some semblance of justice. In getting there we have to ensure that the way we deal with paedophiles and murderers doesn't corrupt us and our society. I think the death penalty does just that. It undercuts our moral and ethical base. If you don't believe me just look at photographs of someone who has been fried in the electric chair and then tell me you still have respect for the people and government who did it. I certainly don't.

The way a society conducts the business of justice is a good indication of the maturity and health of that society. A society which puts people to death to satisfy a lust for retribution is, in my mind, immature and dangerously unhealthy.

And we should know, we live in one.

Mark

More replies to the last issue, most of them a lot less involved than this will be posted later this week. Yes, two issues this week as I try to catch up on my schedule before I actually get married. More of my responses, and you other comments as well as some wedding stuff.

See you sooner than you think.

Tommy.

This is being distributed to a whole bunch of friends on the net, if you received this and would NOT like to be on the mailing list please accept my apologies for this intrusion and let me know so that you will not be bothered by further ramblings. If you know someone who would like to be on the mailing drop me a line.