

KENT MESSENGER

Harriet's Law or Ignoring the Law?

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Harriet Harman on Fred the Shred's pension entitlement: "it may be the law but not in the court of public opinion" it reminded me of a passage Bolt's play "Man for All Seasons" about the execution of St Thomas More by Henry VIII for his refusal to sanction the royal divorce on grounds of conscience. More's future son-in-law, Roper, urges him to arrest Richard Rich, whose perjury will eventually lead to More's execution. More answers that Rich has broken no law, "And go he should if he were the Devil himself until he broke the law!" Roper is appalled at the idea of granting the Devil the benefit of law, but More is adamant:

"What would you do? Cut a great road through the law to get after the Devil?

... And when the last law was down, and the Devil turned round on you - where would you hide, Roper, the laws all being flat? This country is planted thick with laws from coast to coast, Man's laws, not God's, and if you cut them down -- and you're just the man to do it -- do you really think you could stand upright in the winds that would blow then? Yes, I give the Devil benefit of law, for my own safety's sake!".

Once you start citing your interpretation of public opinion as a reason for ignoring the law, it is a slippery slope indeed. Hitler was very good at it; so is Mugabe

