

Abuse of Remand

Written by Tony Hill

Both the Norfolk and Suffolk Constabularies use remand as an interrogation tool. If they have no evidence they will simply send the suspect to prison without trial. The message is "Make a false confession and walk out of here or insist on your innocence and get banged up on remand 3-6 months". The Magistrates Court and District Judges knowingly go along with this. I have heard them say "Remand for the usual reasons". Do they even remember what the "usual reasons" are? I believe the usual reasons are flight risk or risk of intimidating witnesses. But for most suspects these reasons are nonsensical. A frail old man remanded so he will not intimidate a street gang of 30-something year old thugs. A person who owns a house facing a sentence that cannot exceed 3 months will not abandon their home and flee the country. Suspects are often remanded for non-custodial sentences: if convicted they cannot be imprisoned, but until they confess, while they are still innocent until proven guilty, they can be imprisoned. Even for suspects facing custodial sentences the remand time often exceeds the sentence if convicted.

In one particularly heinous case the police searched the suspect's house and removed cherished, irreplaceable, family heirlooms. They then threatened to destroy these items unless the suspect made a false confession. This is a low intensity form of torture: The suspect confesses not because they are guilty, but to make the pain stop or prevent unacceptable damage.

This often results in an innocent person getting a criminal record that will haunt them for the rest of their lives. They will be unable to get a job in their usual profession, perhaps having to be content with menial jobs in the future. They will have difficulty getting bank loans. They will be stigmatized for something they did not do. The police will see them as an easy target, and repeatedly arrest and charge them for an easy victory. After a few times around the loop the suspect's thinking changes: Before they thought that prison was just something that would not happen to them, not in a million years. Now they consider prison to be inevitable; just another bad thing that happens every so often. They will no longer strive for a good job, nice home, car, possessions, because they can lose those things in a heartbeat whenever the police get a whim to arrest them. Often they will transition from honest, productive members of society into the very criminals they were accused of being in the first place. Why not: If you have to do the time, then why not do the crime. Some gentle, peaceful people become violent, just out of rage

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brought on by injustice. You would not want to be anywhere near these people when they get out. It is not their fault: They were radicalized by the Criminal Justice System.

Politicians often try to justify their actions by reducing the burden to taxpayers. Well, imprisoning innocent people is not in the interests of the public purse. Not only does it cost taxpayer money to keep someone in prison, but the additional incidental costs of destroyed lives are many times greater and difficult to quantify. But financial cost should not be the concern here. The injustice, the barbarity, the senseless depravity is far more important.