

## Vindictive pursuit of a decent man

by Lynda Lee-Potter

When Matthew Kelly made his statement after his exoneration, he apologised for reading from a text. 'I just want to get it right,' he said with dignity.

There appeared to be no anger or desire for revenge but the depth of his emotion was clear. He has spent five weeks with the terrible fear that his career was over, that people might tell even more lies about him and that there was the possibility he might end up in prison.

His house has been searched, his computer taken and his life dissected.

Accusations of paedophilia are easy to make and difficult to disprove. Two years ago, I interviewed the family of football manager David Jones who was falsely accused of abusing children.

His sweet-faced 16-year-old daughter Chloe told me how she'd been terrified of seeing her father named in the News of the World's weekly list of paedophiles. 'Other people probably looked and thought, "Oh, those disgusting child abusers",' she said. 'I thought, "What if one of these men is innocent?" and some of them were.'

David Jones lost his job and a year of his life before he was cleared. He's convinced that the evil accusations made by a rent boy, a convicted arsonist and an armed robber broke his proud father's heart and killed him. What has happened to Matthew Kelly is equally shameful. His dignity, professionalism and courage has been awesome but the experience has taken its toll.

He looks greyer, older and strained. He has shaved his head and beard as though he wanted to bare not only his features but his soul. 'I've nothing to hide' is the subliminal message.

Of course we all want paedophiles to be caught, but he was arrested without a scrap of concrete evidence on the word of one man. Detectives failed to find any witnesses who could substantiate the alleged victim's story that he was molested by Matthew nearly 30 years ago.

The police know that individuals continually invent malicious stories about famous people. They do it out of malice, envy, for money or a pathetic yearning to feel important. They know that the current position, which allows the accused to be named

without a shred of evidence, is an added inducement to the greedy, malevolent or mad.

Matthew was arrested while playing Captain Hook in Birmingham in Peter Pan. Police drove him to Surrey but he then returned to Birmingham to do the last three performances of the season and got a standing ovation every time.

Detective Chief Superintendent Craig Denholm, head of Surrey CID, said police had been duty-bound to investigate a complaint of a serious nature.

But they didn't have to arrest him in the vindictive way they did. They could have spoken to Matthew in his own home when the show had ended. Waiting another couple of days after nearly three decades wouldn't have mattered. Instead, a bevy of officers marched into the theatre knowing it would ensure maximum publicity. The police used neither wisdom nor compassion.

Revealing the names of suspected paedophiles before there is any proof of misbehaviour has to be wrong. It's wrong for all people, irrespective of fame, because a bank manager's career can be ruined even more rapidly than that of a television star.

The law needs to be changed to protect the innocent. At the moment it's on the side of liars, conmen and perverts. They are able to manipulate the police, exploit the legal process and destroy the reputations of innocent men.

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-165950/Vindictive-pursuit-decent-man.html>