

Readers write in about the Jamie Bulger case

8 November 2000

Below we publish two letters from WSWs readers about the Jamie Bulger case and the treatment of the two boys responsible for his death, Robert Thompson and Jon Venables.

Dear Editor,

I would like to congratulate Chris Marsden on the article concerning the tragic case of Jamie Bulger [see “Two boys imprisoned for killing British toddler Jamie Bulger face possible release” <http://www.wsws.org/articles/2000/oct2000/rel-o30.shtml>]. I suspect there will be many dissenting letters about the approach taken in trying to make some sense of this tragedy. It seems quite natural for Marxists to employ scientific methods when trying to come to grips with complex problems involving political economy, history, art, etc. In fact, it is this approach which makes your web site such a valuable source of information.

However in a case such as this, it is almost impossible not to be caught up in the emotional side of this tragedy involving a tiny child and two young children. But as Chris Marsden insists, understanding this case also requires a scientific approach, which must involve social and psychological explanations. Any alternative to this approach would only let off the hook those who support a social system that has created the social misery that produces such tragedies. Nature makes human beings neither bad nor good. It is the social relations of a decaying and indefensible profit system that is the problem.

Yours sincerely,

AC

Dear WSWs:

With this case in the news again I am prompted to write my feelings.

As a child care worker of 17 years, I have most definitely seen the background that produced these children. It is not only a background of social isolation and drug abuse, but of violence, of lack of education, and of complete apathy, where there is no expectation

of ever getting a job or going to tertiary training of any kind. Like so many children from this background they are condemned before they are even born to struggle endlessly, and perhaps the murder of Jamie Bulger was the explosion of anger and frustration that so often occurs, but most often occurs in adulthood.

The other aspect of the case which interests me is that we have treated these boys as if their crime were worse than if an adult committed it. We have preconceived notions about the innocence of children, and if they don't fit into our notions then their crime is even more heinous than if an adult were to kill a child.

I do not believe these children were capable of distinguishing between right and wrong in any meaningful way. They certainly will not be capable of it now.

Regards,

BM

Australia



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