



# Punishment and Politics

*Michael Tonry*

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## **Punishment and Politics** Michael Tonry

Labour has embarked upon a root and branch remaking of the criminal justice system in England and Wales, with a mass of new legislation implemented or planned. It has ensured a continuously high profile for criminal justice issues, and they have been at the centre of wider political discourse. Yet the basis and evidence on which these reforms are being introduced is both uncertain and highly controversial. Despite spending tens of millions of pounds of research into the criminal justice system in the name of evidence-based policy, evidence has counted only in relation to lowlevel technocratic issues. On the big issues the clear weight of evidence points in opposite directions to those which the government has taken. The primary drivers of recent policies have rather been the emulation of recent USA policies (at a time when these are now being abandoned in the USA because they have been shown to be ineffective); and a media-driven agenda with a focus on conspicuous crime prevention which have had the effect of heightening rather than assuaging public fears and concerns. This provocative yet authoritative book seeks to expose and to unravel what has really driven the making of criminal justice policy in the UK. It will be essential reading for anybody interested in knowing what is going on in criminal justice, and why it is so central to political debate more generally.

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