

**DEATH PENALTY CASES**

- **Derek Bentley** – He was executed in 1953 after a failed appeal against his conviction for the murder of PC Sydney Miles in 1952. It was his accomplice **Christopher Craig** that had killed the policeman, however Craig was 16 and thus got prison time whereas the 19 year old Bentley was executed. This showed the problems of judges having the power over life and death and inflexible laws that could lead to the death penalty, campaigns at Wandsworth prison by public protesters, debates in parliament and an extensive media campaign against the death penalty. His case was very important in the eventual ending of the death penalty in 1965.
- **Ruth Ellis** (9 October 1926—13 July 1955) was the last woman to be executed in the United Kingdom after being convicted of the murder of her lover, David Blakely – a rich racing driver she had met as a night club hostess. She was hung in 1955 but her composure and courtesy in court made people think twice about the death penalty.
- **Timothy Evans** – He was wrongly executed for the murder of his wife in 1950 after confessing under the stress of her death. She had actually been killed by John Christie who had killed her whilst pretending to carry out an illegal abortion of Timothy and his wife’s unborn baby. He was killed despite huge holes in his story which changed several times and he was posthumously pardoned in 1965.
- The campaign to end the death penalty was rejected in 1948 and 1956 but was pushed through by Roy Jenkins in 1965 and made permanent in 1969. After the Human Rights Act in 1998 and the 16<sup>th</sup> protocol of the European convention on human rights the UK can’t reintroduce it.

**CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTION**

- Before the 20<sup>th</sup> century armies were made up from volunteers – those who objected to war did not sign up
- Opposition to war became a criminal offence when conscription was introduced in the world wars
- The only people excused military service were those in reserved occupations and medically unfit
- Conscription was introduced in WW1 because of the need to replace soldiers lost in the trench warfare
- There were more objectors in WW2 – most of them were found work in industry or agriculture
- Some did very dangerous work, such as bomb disposal
- Britain reverted to a volunteer army after WW2
- There are still issues regarding soldiers obeying orders when a war (e.g. Iraq 2003) may be considered illegal

**20<sup>th</sup> CENTURY 2**

**ATTITUDES TOWARDS CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTION**

- Objectors did not want to fight on the basis of their individual conscience
- This led to a dilemma in a democracy that was fighting for freedom...
- Objectors needed to prove to a military tribunal that they were genuine
- Alternativists would do non-combatant duties; absolutists would undertake no war work
- They were put in prison and treated harshly – they found it hard to get work after the war
- There was more understanding after the war when the horrors of war became better known
- Objectors were treated better in WW2
- WW2 tribunals had no military personnel
- The Peace Pledge Union was allowed to continue its campaign against war
- Attitudes among the British people changed less – they still treated objectors badly

**DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

- This is the act of physical or mental abuse of a partner and/or one’s children
- It was not a crime until the later 20<sup>th</sup> century as men were thought to have the right to discipline their families
- It was legal for a man to ‘moderately chastise’ his wife with stick no thicker than his thumb – the ‘rule of thumb’
- Violence against women was made illegal in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, but judges were reluctant to interfere in domestic affairs
- Women had little power to change things until they achieved the vote in 1918
- Campaigns to change the law developed in the 1960s and 1970s
- There have been legal changes since then that have made domestic violence illegal

**CHANGING ATTITUDES TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

- Until the 20<sup>th</sup> century men had the right to discipline their families
- Authorities resisted legal change to this – police were reluctant to intervene in domestic matters.
- Judges were reluctant to use the law at first – for the same reason
- Legal changes now protect both genders against all forms of abuse
- However, 1 in 4 women and 1 in 6 men still suffer from domestic violence

**DOMESTIC VIOLENCE LAW**

- 1976 Domestic Abuse Law made it possible for abused partners to get an Injunction against their abuser.
- Rape in marriage became illegal in 1991.
- 2004 Police given more powers to tackle abusers
- 2014 – coercive behaviour in a relationship became illegal.