Kenny MacAskill – Poverty – Transcript

***Are poverty and poor parenting the main causes of crime?***

**Kenny MacAskill:** Poverty does have links. Equally, I think what we have always got to point out is that the overwhelming majority of poor people do not commit a crime, would never dream of committing a crime, are law-abiding and honest.

That said, it is not rocket science to work out that people who are offending are more proportionately more likely to come from areas that are poor. That's not because people in wealthy areas are better. It's just that poverty puts pressure upon people to act in different ways.

And I always remember the statistics - we now have multi-member wards in Scotland - but there was a friend of mine who had been the governor of Barlinnie in Glasgow, who one night decided to do a survey. And at that stage in Scotland we had 1000 - I vaguely remember the stats - we had 1222 council wards in Scotland. You had Portobello, not Portobello and Craigmillar. 1222 council wards, and in one night the majority of areas in Scotland did not have anybody in prison.

25% of the population in prison on that one night - and that was just a snapshot, but you could do it tonight and you would get exactly the same - 25% came from, I think, it was something like 55 of the 1222 wards, and of that 55, you could break it down - something like 35 were in Glasgow, 12 were in Edinburgh, 3 or so were in Dundee, some were in Aberdeen, 1 was in South Lanarkshire - it was clearly Gowkthrapple and the Motherwell area, one was in Renfrewshire - it'll be Ferguslie Park, in Paisley. In Edinburgh, it wasn't Meadowbank and Duddingston.  It was going to be Craigmillar, Pilton, Muirhouse.

So, there's a correlation there, that people who are in difficulties, who are devoid of hope, who don't have access to matters,  are..... and that's why law enforcement can't address all things. It has to be dealt with by social and economic changes, education and health.

Bad parenting, yes - if you grow up in...., it doesn't mean that you are required to, it doesn't mean that you will, because many people from parents with difficulties with drug or alcohol problems, will not end up that way. But my experience, and I'm sure it will be replicated by all the teachers here, behind every troubled child there is usually some issue at home. Mum's got a heroin problem, dad's on the drink, or whatever. There are issues there.

If you grow up in a dysfunctional family, it is very, very difficult, and you are bound to react and, equally, poverty doesn't cause crime but it does create circumstances where people will end up heading in that direction, and that's why some situations can only be dealt with by a police officer, by law enforcement.

Other situations to make Scotland safer, just like tackling alcohol abuse, it's about creating a fairer, more equal society. It's about providing access and opportunities. And it's about giving hope to people.

[End of transcript]