



Latest Lunacy from Abroad: Children Firing Teachers

Perhaps the best case study in leftism run amuck is England, which in two generations has gone from Churchill and churches to hate-speech laws and halal ritual. For example, in recent times the U.K. has treated us to stories about a school guide stating that toddlers who say “yuck” in response to foreign food may have bigoted tendencies, about a 66-year-old pet shop owner and grandmother forced to wear an electronic tracking bracelet because she sold a goldfish to a 14-year-old, and a police officer who was harassed because he wouldn’t don a pink ribbon to mark a homosexual event.



And, now, in a case of *Lord of the Flies* meets *1984*, Britain’s Ofsted (Office for Standards in Education) is mandating that head teachers consult students on changes to school policy. In fact, children now have so much power in some British schools that they are allowed to sit on teacher interview panels, ask applicants ridiculous questions and destroy their chances for career advancement. Reporting on the story for the *Daily Mail*, Sarah Harris provides an example of just such a case, that of a teacher who was denied a position because the children felt he was “too strict.” Harris quotes the educator as saying, “I felt upset that two out of three of the adults liked me enough but that the pupils had that much sway.”

As for the questions some children would ask, Harris provides the following examples: “Can you sing your favourite song? What fancy dress character would you dress up in to go to school and why? What rewards/trips would you provide for pupils?”

More ridiculous still are the reasons why some children cast votes against teachers. As to this, Harris writes:

One teacher took a snowboard along to impress a group of five to seven-year-olds as part of the interview but failed to get the job.

The youngsters preferred two other applicants who brought in balloons and a didgeridoo.

Another teacher lost out for supposedly looking like “Humpty Dumpty”; another because he didn’t allow the pupils to email him at home.

But even sillier are childish adults who believe that children should be invested with adult rights. Yet this idea is common nowadays. It is reflected in anti-spanking activists who argue that since you aren’t allowed to strike an adult, the same prohibition should apply to children (does the fact that we may not hold grown-ups against their will mean that we also shouldn’t send a child to his room?); efforts to grant 14-year-olds the vote (hmm, what kind of politician wants to grow the Britney-fan vote?); and courts that will disallow a father’s grounding of his daughter, ruling the punishment was too strict. It really is a case of the inmates running the asylum and encouraged by people who belong in an asylum.

Yet, as with so many principles espoused by modern man, some exceptions may apply. That is to say,



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while leftists are zealous about thrusting children into adulthood when it can undermine tradition (e.g., granting them power over adults or exposing them to sexual material), they oppose allowing kids to use firearms, or buy alcohol or cigarettes. They also oppose the subjection of youth to adult punishment after criminal convictions, despite the fact that adult responsibilities go hand-in-hand with adult rights. For, if the former truly is truly inappropriate, then the latter is also. Just as responsibility comes with authority, authority comes with responsibility.

Yet, this elevation of the child is a function of a wider problem: the radical egalitarianism of our time. Moderns have lost sight of just hierarchies and often behave as if “democracy” extends to every single aspect of society, including not just schools but also workplaces and the family. But aside from the fact that even our government isn’t meant to be a democracy, our families and schools aren’t even meant to be representative republics. They must be autocratic by nature.

A child cannot learn from you unless he is first willing to listen to you. This is why “listening enforcement,” known as obedience, is a prerequisite for learning. And this places that old admonishment, “Respect your elders” in perspective. It didn’t exist simply because adults had earned their props by managing to negotiate the dangers of youth. Rather, its true purpose related to the imperative of molding the next generation: It ensured that those in need of guidance would respect the educators (adults) enough to accept their direction. Without this, civilization collapses. And this is why respect for adults should not be undermined with idiotic policies that place children on a quasi-equal footing with their elders.

To digress a bit, there is an irony here as well. As society’s most important institutions become more democratic, the state becomes more autocratic. This not only goes hand-in-hand like responsibility and authority, it is explained by that relationship. That is, to the precise extent to which the family “government” — and to a lesser extent, the schools — break down and are unable to fulfill their responsibility of creating a generation of civilized citizens, the government will step into the breach and micromanage people’s lives. To compensate for the barbarians’ lack of internal control, it will provide *external* control.

Getting back to teachers, it is certainly undeniable that there are bad ones in the schools. Yet the solution isn’t to empower children any more than the remedy for animal cruelty is to give beasts the right to sue in court (which the asylum inmates in Switzerland proposed). Then again, with some of the adults we have running things today, it’s doubtful the kids could do any worse.

Photo: British Prime Minister Tony Blair with students at the Heart of England School in 2004: AP Images



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