

Coalition for Marriage launched to defend marriage against an ‘act of cultural vandalism’



Supporting the Coalition for Marriage at its Westminster press launch on 20 February
(From left to right): David Burrowes MP, Fiona Bruce MP, Lord Brennan, and Lord Carey

The launch of the Coalition for Marriage in Westminster on 20 February sent a strong signal to the government that its plans to redefine marriage will face stiff opposition in the weeks and months ahead. The Coalition, a broad-based umbrella body representing pro-family organisations, MPs, peers, academics, lawyers, faith groups, and grassroots supporters, has been formed with one simple aim: to support the current definition of marriage and to oppose any attempt to redefine it.

For centuries, marriage has been defined as the voluntary union for life of one man and one woman to the exclusion of all others and the marriage-based family has brought countless benefits to children, to communities and to society as a whole. However, last autumn both the equalities minister Lynne Featherstone and the Prime Minister David Cameron announced that the coalition government planned to consult on redefining marriage with a view to passing legislation prior to

the next General Election that would permit same-sex couples to marry.

Cross-party support

At its press launch in Westminster, the Coalition was supported by the Labour peer and legal expert Lord Brennan, the former Archbishop of Canterbury Lord Carey, and Conservative MPs Fiona Bruce and David Burrowes. In the view of Lord Brennan, it was unnecessary for the government to contemplate redefining ‘the ancient and revered institution’ of marriage. He pointed out that same-sex couples can already acquire the same rights as married couples by means of entering a civil partnership and warned that if marriage were to be redefined,

many others would find their own rights eroded and churches that refused to solemnise same-sex marriages would be subject to legal challenges.

For his part, Lord Carey rejected ‘the mantra of the equalities industry that being equal means being the same’ and described the government’s proposals as ‘an act of cultural vandalism’. He expressed concern that the government was being ‘egged on by pressure groups and image advisors, but not the general public’ and feared that the best interests of children would ‘get lost in a cacophony of noise about “equality” and “human rights”.’

‘Whether’ or ‘how’?

In response to a letter from Family Education Trust last autumn, Lynne Featherstone, the minister in the Home Office who will be overseeing the consultation, offered her assurance that ‘no decision has yet been made on the outcome of this work – the results of the consultation will be key in finalising any decisions on the way forward’.¹ However, when we sought her assurance that the consultation will consider *whether* marriage should be redefined and not merely the mechanics of how it would work in practice, she declined to comment, beyond stating that the consultation document would outline the government’s proposals.² More recently, however, the Home Secretary, Theresa May, has made it clear that the consultation will be about ‘how’ and not ‘whether’ marriage will be redefined.

Given that same-sex marriage did not feature in the election manifesto of any of the major political parties in 2010, it is extremely undemocratic for the coalition government to contemplate pressing ahead with its proposal to redefine marriage

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age and to deny the British public the opportunity to state whether or not they are in favour.

Changing the language

The homosexual rights group Stonewall has suggested that legislating to redefine marriage is a straightforward matter that need not take up very much parliamentary time. They have published a simple two-page draft bill consisting of just five clauses. However, Colin Hart, the campaign director for the Coalition for Marriage, points out that 'The word "marriage" appears 3,258 times in UK legislation. It is woven into the fabric of our national laws. That can't be just unpicked in a single stroke.'

Stonewall's draft bill proposes to remove the terms 'husband' and 'wife' from UK law altogether and replace them with the term 'marriage party'. Family Education Trust director, Norman Wells, commented: 'This is nothing less than Stonewall wanting to rewrite the English language on their own terms and to impose their agenda on every married couple by force of law.'



Petition

Over the coming weeks and months, the Coalition for Marriage will be taking several initiatives, but as a first step it has launched a petition which states:

'I support the legal definition of marriage which is the voluntary union for life of one man and one woman to the exclusion of all others. I oppose any attempt to redefine it.'

The petition may be signed by any UK resident aged 16 and over, either online at www.c4m.org.uk or on a printed petition sheet, copies of which are available from Family Education Trust.

Notes

1. Lynne Featherstone, letter to Family Education Trust, 21 November 2011.
2. Lynne Featherstone, letter to Family Education Trust, 6 December 2011.

• The Coalition for Marriage may be contacted at:

C4M, 8 Marshalsea Road,
London SE1 1HL.

Tel: 0207 403 7879.

Email: admin@c4m.org.uk

Website: www.c4m.org.uk

The August riots in England - understanding the involvement of young people

The attitudes of young people towards criminal behaviour are determined by their families and particularly by their parents, according to independent research on the August riots published by the Cabinet Office. The first major study based

on what young people themselves have to say about the riots revealed that how young people are brought up is viewed as very important both in preventing and encouraging bad behaviour.

Researchers from the social research charity NatCen interviewed 206 young people in areas affected by the riots, including 39 young people in custody. Just under a quarter of those interviewed (50) were directly involved in the riots, while 23 were 'there but not involved' and 133 were 'neither there nor involved'. An additional 54 people participated in six focus groups in two unaffected areas.

The importance of parents

The researchers found that adults, and particularly parents, had played an important role in preventing some young people from getting involved. Parents exercised a restraining influence either directly, by refusing to allow their children out of the house and calling or texting them to check their whereabouts and safety, or indirectly, through their children's awareness that their parents would be horrified if they got involved.

Although the report noted differences in the way that events unfolded in different areas, the underlying factors and issues were very similar:

• *The riots had no precedent in young people's experience: it was 'a day like no other', when normal rules did not seem to apply and for some 'moments of madness' led to atypical behaviour.*

• *Young people's involvement in the rioting – what they actually did – can be classified into four main categories: watchers, rioters, looters and non-involved. Some young people moved through different types of behaviour during the riots: for example, **curious watchers** who went out to see what happened got caught up in events and become **opportunistic looters**.*

• *A set of initial motivations for involvement can be identified as directly related to how young people expected to benefit from their actions: excitement; 'free stuff'; getting back at the police.*

• *How and whether young people acted on these motivations depended on **situational factors** that related to 'on-the-night' group processes and dynamics, peer pressure and what young people saw happening around them.*



• *Young people also 'brought with them' an additional set of influences: **individual factors** including previous history of criminality and involvement with the police; factors that related to the attitudes and attachment to **family and community**; and wider **societal factors** such as local youth provision, poverty and materialism.*

*Decisions about whether to get involved were based on what young people thought was **right or wrong**; and whether they felt the **benefits to themselves outweighed the risks**.*

• **Gareth Morrell, Sara Scott, Di McNeish and Stephen Webster, *The August riots in England – understanding the involvement of young people*, Cabinet Office/NatCen, October 2011**
<http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/>

The crisis in parental authority

Confusion over the law on smacking has contributed to a climate of fear in which parents are afraid to administer effective discipline to their children, according to the former education minister, David Lammy. The Labour MP suggested that a crisis in parental authority may have contributed to last August's riots which broke out in his Tottenham constituency.

Mr Lammy stated, 'Parents in my constituency are frightened that if they smack their children, a social worker will come knocking at the door'. He added that parents are 'no longer sovereign in their own homes', since 'the ability to exercise their own judgment in relation to discipline and reasonable chastisement has been taken away'.¹

David Lammy's comments received support from Mayor of London, Boris Johnson. Mr Johnson stated: 'I think there should be a clear statement from the government that the benefit of the doubt should be given to parents, and they are the figures of authority.'²

Notes

1. *Mail on Sunday*, 29 January 2012.

2. BBC Radio Five Live, 2 February 2012.

The Good Childhood Report 2012

Norman Wells reflects on the limitations of the latest report from the Children's Society

The release of a new report from the Children's Society was greeted by some eye-catching headlines. 'Half a million children unhappy, says church-backed report,' reported the *Daily Telegraph*,¹ while the *Guardian* declared, 'Unhappy childhoods afflict one in 10 youngsters, finds Children's Society'.² And, sure enough, the very first page of *The Good Childhood Report 2012* states:

'At any given time, around 4% of eight-year-olds and 14% of 15-year-olds have low "subjective well-being" – a term used to describe people's assessments of, or happiness with, their lives as a whole. In total it can be estimated that around half a million children in the UK in the eight to 15 age range have low well-being at any point in time.'

These are striking statistics, but before we all prepare to emigrate to more child-friendly shores or resort to any other equally desperate measure, it should be borne in mind that the report is based on a study of *subjective* child wellbeing and inevitably the results are markedly different from any consideration of objective measurements of wellbeing.

Family structure

This accounts for the astonishing assertion in the associated report for policy-makers that, 'The structure of the family itself has only a small effect on a child's well-being', and that, 'The quality of relationships between children and their families is 10 times more powerful in explaining levels of well-being than specific family structures'.³

The casual reader might be forgiven for concluding that family structure makes no difference at all to child outcomes, and marriage does not receive a single mention in the entire 28,000-word report. But, remember, this is the first in a planned series of annual reports that will describe and monitor the *subjective* well-being of children, and it is entirely based on what children said they felt about themselves and their lives.

For example, when children were asked to state whether they agreed or disagreed with the statement, 'My family gets on well together', there was little difference between responses received from children living with both birth parents, compared with those living in a step-family or with a lone parent.

However, such a finding does not provide any warrant for suggesting that family structure has little or no effect on child wellbeing; neither does it follow that the outcomes for children from different family types will be the same.

Benefits of marriage

In fact, an earlier 'Good Childhood' report from the Children's Society, which gave more attention to objective outcomes and did not confine itself to the subjective, recognised the benefits of

stable married families and the damage caused by family breakdown. While no reference to marriage was made in that report's recommendations, in his 'Afterword', the Archbishop of Canterbury argued that: 'it will not serve us as a society, and it will not serve the growing generation, if we simply regard marriage as just one option in the market-place of lifestyles'.⁴ However, there is no such endorsement of marriage in the latest report.

Studies on subjective wellbeing have serious limitations. In 2010, the Childhood Wellbeing Research Centre found that the concept of wellbeing has 'a weak theoretical basis' and is 'difficult to pin down'. It has been described as 'intangible, difficult to define and even harder to measure' and as 'conceptually muddy... [but] pervasive'.⁵ Yet in spite of all the hazards, recent years have seen a gradual shift away from a reliance on objective measurements of child wellbeing and a growing focus on subjective impressions gained from speaking to children about their own feelings and perceptions.

What one commentator has described as 'Kevin the Teenager's self-pitying self-referential views'⁶ would not normally have been taken very seriously in the past, but now they are deemed of the utmost importance and can form the basis of public policy recommendations.

Incomplete picture

Although *The Good Childhood Report 2012* does state that, 'Objective and subjective measures together can create a rounded picture of the condition of the wellbeing of children in the UK', its focus is entirely on the subjective. At best, subjective measures give an incomplete picture; at worst, they offer a totally distorted view of reality.

When objective measurements are taken into account, the evidence is overwhelming that children living with their own married parents tend to have fewer emotional and behavioural problems, enjoy better health, do better academically, and have lower levels of stress,

depression and anxiety. They are also less likely to smoke, drink and take drugs, less likely to be sexually active or engage in crime, and less likely to be abused.⁷

Notwithstanding its limitations, the Children's Society report does indicate that children thrive on stability. However, it fails to join the dots and refuses to acknowledge that marriage provides a more stable environment for children that, in turn, produces better outcomes than any other living arrangement.

Notes

1. Martin Beckford, 'Half a million children unhappy, says church-backed report', *Daily Telegraph*, 12 January 2012.
2. Randeep Ramesh, 'Unhappy childhoods afflict one in 10 youngsters, finds Children's Society', *Guardian*, 12 January 2012.
3. Children's Society, *Promoting positive well-being for children: A report for decision-makers in parliament, central government and local areas*, January 2012.
4. Richard Layard and Judith Dunn, *A Good Childhood: Searching for Values in a Competitive Age*, Penguin 2009.
5. June Statham and Elaine Chase, *Childhood Wellbeing: A brief overview*, Childhood Wellbeing Research Centre, August 2010.
6. Paul Vallely, 'So was it really better in the old days for British children?', *Independent*, 15 February 2007.
7. See for example, Institute for American Values and National Marriage Project, *Why Marriage Matters: Thirty conclusions from the social sciences*, 2011, reported in Bulletin 145, Autumn 2011.

● The Children's Society, *The Good Childhood Report 2012: A review of our children's well-being, January 2012*, <http://www.childrensociety.org.uk>



Reconsidering the 'Good Divorce'

A new study from academics at Pennsylvania State University, published in the peer-reviewed journal *Family Relations*, questions the widely-held belief that children are adequately protected against the negative consequences of their parents' separation if they are able to maintain a strong relationship with both parents.

In the most extensive attempt to date to assess the implications of what is loosely termed a 'good divorce' for children, the researchers examined data on 944 families who had experienced divorce or the breakdown of a cohabitating relationship under the categories of co-operative co-parenting, parallel parenting and single parenting:

While children who received co-operative co-parenting following family breakdown had the smallest number of behaviour problems and the closest ties to their fathers, they did not score significantly better than children in the other two categories when measured against 10 other outcomes. The study reports:

Adolescents in the good divorce cluster... were no better off than were adolescents in the single parenting cluster with respect to self-esteem, school grades, liking school, substance use, or life satisfaction. Correspondingly, young adults in the good divorce cluster were no better off than were young adults in the single parenting cluster with respect to substance use, early sexual activity, number of sexual partners, cohabiting or marrying as a teenager, and closeness to mothers. Overall, these results provide only partial support for the good divorce hypothesis.

The researchers highlight the fact that a large proportion of marriage counsellors profess to be neutral about marriage and divorce. Their goal is to secure the 'happiness' of their client, regardless of whether that is achieved by an improvement in their marriage or its termination. With only a minority of marriage counsellors committed to trying to improve and save the marriages of their clients, many counsellors are quick to assume that the marriage is doomed and that their role is to help the couple achieve a 'good divorce'.

In the light of their findings, the researchers consider such an approach short-sighted:

Creating a positive postdivorce family environment — although worthwhile — is no guarantee that children will be unharmed by marital dissolution. For couples not yet fully committed to ending their marriages, focusing more strongly on rebuilding and improving the marital relationship makes a great deal of sense, especially when serious problems such as domestic violence are not present.

Definitions

Co-operative co-parenting - Families where children had a high level of contact with the non-resident parent and where resident parents agreed that the non-resident parent helped to raise the children, with little interference, only a modest level of conflict, and a high level of satisfaction.

Parallel parenting - Families where the non-resident parent was involved with the children, but communicated with resident parent infrequently and was perceived by the resident parent as having a limited role in their children's lives. Resident parents in this category reported little interference on the part of non-resident parents but a moderate degree of conflict and a low level of satisfaction.

Single parenting - Families where non-resident parents rarely saw their children, had little or no influence in their children's lives, and had little or no communication with the resident parent.

They warn against the tendency of many to regard a 'good divorce' as 'a panacea for improving children's well-being in postdivorce families':

Although mediation and divorce education classes are useful, helping parents to have good divorces may be insufficient to

buffer children from the full range of risk factors that often accompany marital dissolution...

Not all children with divorced parents experience long-term problems. But people's willingness to accept the good divorce hypothesis is reason for concern if some parents are lulled into believing that their children are adequately protected from all of the potential risks of union disruption.

Family Education Trust director Norman Wells commented:

The authors of this study are to be applauded for having the courage to honestly examine the evidence on such a sensitive issue.

Many parents make sterling efforts to mitigate the damaging consequences of family breakdown for their children, but they can never be eliminated altogether. We have not taken seriously enough the extent to which children are affected when their parents separate.

Although divorce rates in the UK have declined in recent years, family breakdown is affecting growing numbers of families as a result of the rise in cohabitation and births outside marriage. Cohabiting relationships are much less stable than marriages and even more so when children are involved.

The importance for children of the lifelong marriage of their parents cannot be overestimated. Far too often separation and divorce are presented as quick-fix solutions without thinking through the longer-term implications.¹

Note

1. Fiona Macrae, 'A divorce can never be good for children no matter how amicable it is, says study', *Daily Mail*, 2 February 2012.

• Paul R Amato, Jennifer B Kane, Spencer James *Family Relations* 60 (December 2011): 511 – 524.

The effects of divorce on children

In a recent extensive review of the academic literature on divorce, researchers from the Family Research Council in Washington DC concluded that divorce has 'pervasive weakening effects on children and on all of the five major institutions of society—the family, the church, the school, the marketplace, and government itself'.

The report, *The Effects of Divorce on Children*, recognises that not all children are affected by divorce in the same way or to the same extent. However, they assert that 'it is possible to predict divorce's societal effects and how this large cohort of children will be affected as a group. These effects are both numerous and serious.'

The report's authors, Patrick Fagan and Aaron Churchill, state that while no one likes to dwell on the pervasive and broad negative effects of divorce, we dare not close our eyes to reality. They express the hope that the bleak picture painted by the research findings will move people to 'set about the task of rebuilding a culture of families based on marriage, a culture of love and belonging, with all the societal props and protections necessary to make this familial norm normal once again'.

• Patrick F. Fagan and Aaron Churchill, *The Effects of Divorce on Children*, Family Research Council, January 2012. <http://downloads.frc.org/EF/EF12A22.pdf>



'Mend it – don't end it'

Sir Paul Coleridge spells out the importance of marriage

In an interview with *The Times* newspaper, the senior High Court judge, Sir Paul Coleridge spoke about the desperate need to promote marriage and reverse the 'appalling and costly impact of family breakdown' on children and society as a whole.

He spoke of his frustration at seeing hundreds and thousands of people going through the courts as a result of family breakdown, while nothing was being done about the problems that sent them there. The system was now at breaking point, with 12 month delays before cases could be heard.

Sir Paul stated: 'My message is, mend it – don't end it. Over 40 years of working in the family justice system, I have seen the fall-out of these broken relationships. There are an estimated 3.8 million children currently caught up in the family justice system. I personally think that's a complete scandal.'

He went on to say: 'It is a myth that children, even older ones, don't care. They care greatly and a break-up shocks the whole foundation of the family. It never recovers.'

Realism

Sir Paul, who addressed the annual conference of Family Education Trust in 2010 on the subject of turning the tide of family breakdown, reasserted his view that, 'Marriage, as the best structure in which to raise children, needs to be affirmed, strengthened and supported.'

He attacked the idealistic notion of the 'perfect' spouse and sounded a note of realism: 'We have to rid ourselves of this dream that we are going to find the partner who is perfect in every way: emotionally, physically, intellectually – it's just a nonsense. However wonderful and exciting a relationship is, you can't sustain it at that level; and that is the reality.' Marriage requires 'massive input', he said, but the effort is well worth it.

Marriage Foundation

Sir Paul has secured the support of several leading figures in the judiciary and legal profession for his new Marriage Foundation which he plans to launch later in the year. These include Baroness Butler-Sloss, the former President of the Family Division of the High Court, Baroness Deech, a leading family academic and currently chairman of the Bar Standards Board, and Baroness Shackleton, a leading family lawyer.

Although lobbying for government support for marriage will form part of the foundation's work, alongside research, seminars and conferences, Sir Paul recognises that there is a limit to what legislation and government policies can accomplish. He stated: 'Governments cannot legislate stronger relationships into existence. Ultimately, more and stronger marriages will result from individual choices, behaviour and culture. We will seek to influence those choices.'

• Frances Gibb, 'Don't give up on your marriage, says judge' and 'Lives shattered by surge in grey divorces, says judge', *The Times*, 3 January 2011.

Core Knowledge – What your year 1 child needs to know

Edited by E D Hirsch Jr, Civitas, 2011, £16.00
ISBN 978-1-906837-23-5

The core knowledge curriculum was developed by the American educator E D Hirsch and covers six academic disciplines: language and literature, history and geography, the visual arts, music, mathematics, and science. The subject of this review is the UK edition of the first in a series of resource books for parents and teachers, intended for use with children aged 5-6.

The book is full of stories, poems, explanations, activities, games and experiments, together with recommendations for outings and further reading. It is attractively produced with many illustrations, diagrams and photos. The chapter on language and literature, for example, includes well-known and much-loved poems and stories, Aesop's fables, tall tales and sayings, all printed in full and illustrated.

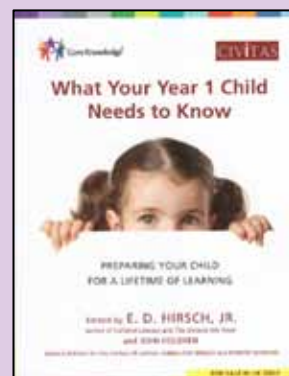
In history and geography, children are introduced to the continents of the world and given a whistlestop history of Britain and its parliament. The chapter on the visual arts covers colour, line, famous paintings of children, narrative paintings and sculpture. Each section is written in a style suitable to be read aloud by a parent to a child.

Aim

The aim of the core knowledge curriculum is to provide a common core of knowledge that is solid, coherent and challenging, in order to equip children to reason and think clearly. It counters the approach of many current educators who dismiss any attempt to impart a body of knowledge as 'rote learning', who promote child-centred rather than subject-centred education, and who attempt to teach 'thinking skills' rather than impart knowledge.

Such practitioners would argue that *what* students learn is not important, and that what really matters is that they learn to learn. For them, the child, not the academic subject, is the focus of education. According to the 'core knowledge' approach, such sentiments may sound admirable but they are only partly true and they militate against teaching important facts which are foundational to a child's understanding of the world around him and the development of his thinking and reasoning ability.

The book is not intended to be a complete curriculum nor a textbook or workbook, but is designed to be used by parents wishing to complement and reinforce their child's school education. It will also serve as a practical help and confidence-builder for parents considering or embarking on home education. Civitas has provided a valuable service in publishing a UK edition.



Nicola Wells

Why government support for marriage and stable family life is in the public interest

According to the Deputy Prime Minister, Nick Clegg, marriage and traditional patterns of family life are not worthy of government recognition and support. In a speech to Demos and the Open Society Foundation at the end of 2011, the Liberal Democrat leader stated:

'The institutions of our society are constantly evolving. Just look at the way the roles of men and women, and attitudes to marriage and divorce, have changed over the last century.'

'We should not take a particular version of the family institution, such as the 1950s model of suit-wearing, bread-winning dad and aproned, homemaking mother – and try and preserve it in aspic.'

*'That's why open society liberals and big society conservatives will take a different view on a tax break for marriage. We can all agree that strong relationships between parents are important, but not agree that the state should use the tax system to encourage a particular family form.'*¹

Social insurance

However, the Deputy Prime Minister came in for criticism from Dr David Green, the director of Civitas. In a *Daily Telegraph* opinion piece, Dr Green pointed out that strong families provide a form of social insurance, the benefit of which extends far beyond the immediate family members:

'Marriage can be looked upon as a kind of insurance policy which is in the common good because it helps to reduce the imposition of costs on others. About 30 per cent of all government spending is on social security, and in recent years family breakdown has caused a significant increase. Only recently, the government has embarked on a large additional programme for "problem families".'

Cross-generational solidarity

In view of the benefits to the public purse of stable and supportive families, Dr Green reasoned that not only are transferrable tax allowances between spouses to be welcomed as a positive good, but there is also a case for going a step further and encouraging 'cross-generational family solidarity by allowing income to be assigned to any relative living at the same address'. Dr Green wrote:

'A couple who took responsibility for looking after their elderly parents, for instance, could assign part of their income to them and pay less tax. Scrapping inheritance tax would further encourage mutual support across the generations. Families could build up assets – property, durable goods, shares, cash – with the intention of handing them on from generation to generation, thus rebuilding the extended family on a solid economic base.'

As it is, the tax system treats families less favourably than companies, in that companies are taxed on their net income after deducting their costs, whereas families are taxed before deducting costs and at a higher rate. Dr Green concluded:

*'Few things are more important to a society than the raising of children and yet Clegg is happy to give tax breaks to companies but not the family. Clegg's variety of liberalism turns out to be a shallow isolated individualism that has no place for the social institutions within which our lives are enriched and the values vital to the continuance of liberal-democracy are transmitted with love and attention from one generation to the next.'*²

Notes

1. Deputy Prime Minister speech to Demos and the Open Society Foundation, 19 December 2011 <http://demos.co.uk>
2. David Green, 'On marriage, Nick Clegg is hopelessly out of date', *Daily Telegraph*, 20 December 2011.

Widespread support for married couples allowance

According to a YouGov survey commissioned by the Centre for Social Justice, two-thirds of the British public support a married couples tax allowance and, in the wake of the August 2011 riots, over 80 per cent of those polled said they regarded family breakdown as a 'serious' problem facing society.

The YouGov survey found that the public believes that family breakdown ranks only behind long-term unemployment and welfare dependency among the greatest social problems facing the country. It is rated as more important than serious personal debt, schools failing children, alcoholism and binge drinking, and drug addiction.

Gavin Poole, the executive director of the Centre for Social Justice commented:

'Restoring a tax break for marriage would provide practical help to families and would send a signal right through society that marriage is a stabilising factor in society and contributes to the welfare of adults and children alike.'

'Healthy families and stable childhoods should be the foundations on which we build a better Britain. And from strong families, other reforms are given room to take root. Over the last forty years our high divorce rates have plateaued but the rise in unmarried parenthood has been accompanied by an escalation in family breakdown. Our research has shown that these trends have hit the poorest the hardest.'

- Centre for Social Justice press release, 'Public urges David Cameron to restore tax break for marriage – says new opinion poll', 2 October 2011.

Wise words from Iain Duncan Smith

'Far from simply being members of the labour force, the role that older people can – and in many cases do – play in wider society, is enormous. Whether it be volunteering, providing social care, or looking after grandchildren, we all gain hugely from the time and commitment that many older people give. We ignore this at our peril.'

'Though the vast majority of older people give their time willingly...and indeed get great pleasure out of doing so...we should not forget that many of the jobs they undertake would otherwise fall on the state. This is family doing what family does best – quietly, with great commitment, carrying out its duties. But I've long believed that the state has become ambivalent about the importance of family structure. Not just decent parenting but also the role of the extended family.'

'In an increasingly atomised society, and in a context of growing family breakdown, it is all the more important that we continue to support, celebrate and hold together these wider relationships. Without them society would simply collapse. So far from older people being 'dependents' supported by the rest of us, it is worth reminding ourselves of the extent to which society is dependent on them.'

- Iain Duncan Smith, *Kinship and Family in an Ageing Society*, Michael Young Memorial Lecture, 31 October 2011.

<http://www.dwp.gov.uk/newsroom/ministers-speeches/2011/31-10-11.shtml>



A Queer Thing Happened to America: And what a long, strange trip it's been

Michael L Brown

Equal Time Books, 2011, 689pp,
US\$27.99, ISBN 978-0-615406-09-1



The fruit of five years of research, this is a measured, well-reasoned and thoroughly-referenced analysis of the impact and progress of the homosexual lobby over 40 years, from the Stonewall riots in 1969 to President Obama's reception for 300 gay activists at the White House in 2009. It tells the story of how the radical activism of the 1970s has become the reigning orthodoxy today and stifled scientific debate on questions such as the causes of homosexuality and whether people with unwanted same-sex attraction can change.

The fact that this weighty volume is so thoroughly researched and compassionate in tone makes it all the more remarkable that the author had to launch his own imprint for it. Other publishers raised no objections with regard to the accuracy or quality of the book; the topic was simply too hot to handle.

The stated purpose of the book is fourfold:

- To document how we arrived at this point
- To examine some of the main lines of pro-homosexual thought
- To consider the impact of homosexual activism in society, and
- To ask where the current trajectory is taking us.

Homosexual agenda

Michael Brown demonstrates beyond dispute that a homosexual agenda to undermine traditional values has been advanced by stealth under the guise of promoting 'civil rights'. It has affected our vocabulary and changed the definitions of words such as diversity, tolerance, inclusion and hatred, so much so that those who do not celebrate homosexual lifestyles are frequently deemed to be hateful and bigoted, and 'diversity' is often used as a code word for embracing the goals and values of the gay and transgender agenda.

The influence of homosexual activists on the media, on school policies and curricula, and on higher education establishments, witnessed by the growth of gay, lesbian and 'queer studies' courses, is carefully and meticulously documented. No longer is Hollywood simply 'gay-friendly'; it is now positively 'gay-activist' and television has been employed as a tool to shape and manipulate the conscious and sub-conscious prejudices of the public.

Dr Brown rejects the argument that 'Gay is the new black' for four reasons: (i) the discriminatory treatment of homosexuals cannot fairly be compared with

the suffering endured by the African American community; (ii) there is no solid evidence to support the concept that people are born gay or lesbian; (iii) it is inaccurate to compare skin colour to sexual orientation since skin colour cannot be hidden, whereas a person's sexual orientation is not generally outwardly recognisable; (iv) it is wrong to argue that just because someone may be born with certain desires (or with a natural propensity to behave a certain way) those desires are therefore justifiable and morally acceptable, let alone deserving protection as a 'right'.

'Inclusiveness' is excluding

In the United States, as in the UK, major companies have been keen to demonstrate their 'gay-friendly' credentials by means of 'diversity awareness' training programmes and generous financial support for homosexual rights campaigns, including Gay Pride events. Dr Brown cites examples from his correspondence with senior executives at leading companies and shows how traditional groups are being excluded from the support of corporate America in the name of being 'inclusive'!

He also makes the telling observation that if the Black Pride rallies of the 1960s had been marked by the lewd public displays that characterise Gay Pride events, the whole movement would have been discredited. Yet in their zeal to support the homosexual agenda, leading companies are 'welcoming perversity in the name of diversity'.

Since the 1980s, it has been a major strategy of homosexual activists to downplay sexual behaviour and to focus rather on their identity as rights-holders. They

have worked hard to present themselves as part of the civil rights movement, campaigning for equality and justice rather than as part of the sexual revolution of the 1960s with its associations with promiscuity and the casting off of moral restraints. Michael Brown, however, cites evidence to show that there is an inseparable link between Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender (GLBT) activism and sexual issues and argues that it is disingenuous to try to disassociate sexual conduct from the wider homosexual agenda.

Courteous and compassionate

Dr Brown notes that the same arguments that are used to justify homosexual practice between consenting adults are now being used to justify incestuous relationships between consenting adults. Courteous and compassionate throughout, he insists that, 'Just because many of us don't believe in redefining marriage or in legislating sexual orientation and gender identity into specially protected classes doesn't mean that we can't live in respect and civility with our GLBT neighbours, co-workers, and family members. And should anyone threaten to mistreat or harm them because of who they say they are or how they choose to live, we should be the first to advocate for their safety and defence.'

Nevertheless, he is equally clear that the time has come to make 'a strategic adjustment to our trajectory before we pass the point of no return' and calls on readers to 'persevere through the inevitable vilification and misunderstanding' to turn the tide in schools, colleges, universities, the media, politics and the business world.

- *The book has a related website at <http://www.aqueerthing.com/> from which short extracts may be downloaded.*

Marriage to be taught in Free Schools and Academies

Pupils attending Free Schools and Academies must learn about marriage, according to a new model funding agreement issued by the Department for Education in January.

The Funding Agreement, which sets out the framework within which Free Schools and Academies must operate, states that pupils must be 'protected from inappropriate teaching materials' and must 'learn the nature of marriage and its importance for family life and for bringing up children'.

- **Department for Education, Model Free School Funding Agreement, January 2012.**



Respect begins at home

Family Education Trust has recently released a revised edition of its popular leaflet, *Respect Begins at Home*. The new leaflet includes recent quotes from David Cameron, Nick Clegg and Ed Miliband on the vital role of parents, but points out that although the leaders of all three major political parties are prepared to trumpet the importance of parents, they continue to pursue policies that undermine and marginalise them.

Along with the other titles in the Respect for Parents series, *Respect Begins at Home* is intended to raise public awareness of the various ways that parents are being undermined, both to embolden parents to take more responsibility for their children, and to impress upon parliamentarians and policy makers the need to show parents more respect.

Since the first edition of *Respect Begins at Home* was published in 2006, thousands of copies have been distributed through schools, churches, mother and toddler groups and other community settings. We hope that this revised edition will enjoy a similarly wide readership.

• *Copies of Respect Begins at Home are available from the FET office.*

Other titles in the Respect for Parents series

- *Respect Begins at Home* (leaflet), copies supplied free of charge.
- *Sex Education in Primary Schools: Dispelling the Myths* (leaflet), 10 copies - £2.25; 25 copies - £4.00; 50 copies - £7.00; 100 copies - £13.00 (prices include p&p).
- *Too Much, Too Soon: The government's plans for your child's sex education*, Norman Wells, £3.50 inc p&p (5 copies - £12.50; 10 copies - £22.50; 25 copies £50.00).
- *Waking Up to the Morning-After Pill*, Norman Wells and Helena Hayward, £5.00 inc p&p.

AGM and Conference – Saturday 23 June 2012

The 2012 AGM and Conference of the Family Education Trust will be held on Saturday 23 June 2012 at the Royal Air Force Club, 128 Piccadilly, London W1, when we are looking forward to hearing addresses by Harry Benson and Dr Tony Sewell.

Following careers as a Royal Navy pilot and as a businessman in Asia, **Harry Benson** founded the Bristol Community Family Trust in 2002 and has run over 400 marriage, relationship and mentoring courses in the Bristol area. He has also written several groundbreaking research studies on family breakdown and has served as deputy chairman of a group submitting family policy proposals for the Centre for Social Justice. Married for 25 years with six children, he is the author of *Mentoring Marriages* (see Bulletin 122) and *Let's Stick Together – The Relationship Book for New Parents* (see Bulletin 143).

Dr Tony Sewell is the founder and director of Generating Genius, a project which takes children and young people from challenging social circumstances and encourages them to strive for excellence through high standards of self-discipline, behaviour and academic performance. Formerly a London school teacher, he has spent many years as a teacher trainer at Kingston and Leeds Universities and has worked as an international consultant in education for the World Bank and the Commonwealth Secretariat. He has published widely on the experience of boys in education and is the author of *Generating Genius: Black boys in search of love, ritual and schooling*.

- *Further details will accompany the Spring bulletin.*
Please note the date in your diary now and plan to join us if you are able.

Thank you, Waitrose!

Towards the end of last year, Family Education Trust was selected by the Waitrose store in Twickenham as one of the three worthy causes to be supported under the company's community matters scheme in October.

The Trust faced stiff opposition from a very large national charity and a local school, but came in a creditable third and received a cheque for £225, almost a quarter of the store's monthly allocation for good causes.

We are grateful to the hitherto unidentified supporter who nominated us to the store and, of course, to the shoppers who deposited their green tokens in our slot during October.



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