

YOUTH LIBERATION

MARK TAHA

I would like to begin by saying that I'm not an LA member — merely a sympathiser. This will, I think, become clear as you read on.

One of the most overused words in the English language is “liberation”. But the endless calls we hear from boring, long-winded, GLC funded groups for “national liberation”, “gay liberation”, “black liberation” etc., have set me thinking. What about youth liberation?

No, I don't mean various youth groups joining the other pigs with their noses in the ratepayers' trough. I mean freeing youth from the kind of petty restrictions we adults wouldn't tolerate in a million years. For instance, we now have all this scare-mongering about video nasties and their alleged bad effects on young people, and about various films and TV programmes like the Kenny Everett show and “Minder”. Channel 4's “Broadside” proved to my satisfaction that these so-called nasties do not turn their viewers into homicidal psychopaths and that kids are quite capable of distinguishing fantasy from reality.

Brent council last year introduced controls over space invaders machines, Greenwich council banned fruit machines from cafes, several Right-wing councils have called for tougher controls over amusement arcades, all because of the alleged moral danger to young people. Well, in many years of frequenting amusement arcades, I've never been raped, mugged, or offered drugs or prostitutes. Have I been going to the wrong places?

As for kids wasting their pocket-money, being accused of wasting money by a local authority is like being accused of promiscuity by the “Happy Hooker”.

THE AGE OF CONSENT

We read, in such newspapers as the *News of the World*, of “TEENAGE SEX, BOOZE AND DRUGS”. I believe that

the age of consent should be lowered to 14, and kids of 11 and upwards allowed to have sex with partners under 16. The drinking age should be cut to 14, and kids of 11 allowed to drink with parents' consent. Soft drugs should be legalised on the same basis as cigarettes. The “15” and “18” cinema certificates should be cut to 11 and 15 respectively. You see, I believe that we learn from our mistakes and that giving kids more responsibility will make them more responsible.

We read periodic shock-horror exposes of child labour. What's all the fuss about? What's wrong with kids working? Safety regulations should perhaps be tighter for everyone, and maybe there should be a minimum wage, but such things inevitably increase unemployment. I oppose the Youth Training Scheme and all similar things. Haven't people heard of freedom of contract? Kids can fix their own terms of employment, and if they think they're being used as cheap labour they can leave.

As for kids missing their education, has it occurred to the politicians that kids might be better off working? It's a chance to learn a trade. For instance, if a kid's going to have to run the family business some day, isn't working in it more useful than learning that the Battle of Waterloo didn't happen last time Chelsea played Leeds?

THIS SIDE OF THE IRON CURTAIN

Which gets me to the real point of this article, the British school system. Schools are the most statist institutions in Britain and subject kids to the kind of regimentation that has no place this side of the Iron Curtain. They can be beaten at a teacher's whim: they have little or no say in what clothes to wear or in what the rules are; they're under the tender care of Heads who seem to make up rules to amuse themselves, even ones governing what the kids do outside school. Why shouldn't kids break petty rules or bunk off from

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