

# The Hilarious Pessimist



Yes mate

**Friday, 19 April 2013**

Recently I flew from a provincial British airport, taking a cup of coffee in a café there before the flight. I was served by a man who, if I had had a child young enough and if that child had had a child young enough, could have been my grandson.

‘What do you want, mate?’ he asked me.

‘Please don’t take it badly,’ I said mildly, ‘but I don’t think you should call your customers mate.’

‘I can call them what I like.’

‘But you shouldn’t call them mate.’

‘It’s friendly.’

‘It isn’t. It’s vulgar.’

‘It’s better than being rude.’

‘It is being rude, or at least crude.’

This little exchange was highly instructive. First it illustrated the paranoid egotism of many young Britons who take the mildest unfavourable comment on their conduct as a vicious assault and become aggressive in response (or in self-defence, as they see it).

Second, it showed how freedom for many young Britons is simply a matter of doing what they want without anyone – customers, employers, whoever it might be - telling them otherwise. If I want to call you mate, I'll call you mate; there's no law against it. A cat may look at a king.

Third, it showed how young Britons increasingly do not recognise that different ways of speaking and modes of address are appropriate to different situations. Their social outlook is thus a crude one; any difference in levels of formality would represent for them at best hypocrisy and at worst a manifestation of oppressive inequality. In the process, the distinction between friendliness and overfamiliarity is lost, rendering social interaction shallow and vulgar. Here is a world of no degrees and a complete absence of refinement, where – despite or perhaps because of the doctrine of multiculturalism – people refuse to think about how other people see them.

Fourth, it shows that such young people believe that intention of an act always trumps its effect. If he meant to be friendly, then he *was* friendly, even if the other person specifically tells him that he found his act offensive or rude. What counts is the intention.

This might all seem very trivial, but it had severe economic consequences. It means that service industries aiming to provide a high level of service will not employ young Britons of relatively poor backgrounds but prefer young Poles, French or Spanish, none of whom would dream of behaving in this way. In a few words spoken in a café, we can espy the grim future of our country.

Picture <http://www.sonicabuse.com/2010/11/oaf-speak-to-sonicabuse/>

[< previous](#)

[next >](#)



Made on a Mac