

[« A Debate On Russia, in New York City | Main](#)

16 March 2014 12:01 AM

Why our grandchildren will say we were as evil as slave-owners

This is Peter Hitchens' Mail on Sunday column

If I thought the money would go to the right people, I would be all in favour of paying huge piles of cash to the descendants of slaves.

I am only against it because we all know that such compensation sticks to the fingers of lawyers and politicians.

The more I know about this terrible thing, the more worried I am that so much of our wealth and safety were based upon it.

The fact that we did not allow slavery on our own soil, and that in the end we abolished the trade, does not wash this away.

Abraham Lincoln wondered, soon before he died, if his country's gruesome Civil War might have been God's punishment for what he termed 'wringing their bread from the sweat of other men's faces'.

Lincoln, being a revered historical figure rather than a UKIP councillor, can get away with this sort of thing, and his words are inscribed in stone in Washington DC to this day.

Do we perhaps pay for it ourselves in various ways? I wouldn't know. But I think we should be careful before dismissing calls for compensation as just another politically correct campaign.

The point about slavery is not the one made in the rather strange film *12 Years A Slave*, which lingers over whippings and other cruelties, and portrays slave-owners and slave-drivers mostly as homicidal, sexually repressed maniacs or religious hypocrites.



The film says too little about slavery's single worst legacy: the casual destruction of families and the tearing apart of wives and husbands, mothers and children, brothers and sisters.

I am sure that this mass tragedy still poisons the lives of many in the USA.

But the most shocking thing by far about slavery is that so many perfectly normal people thought it too was perfectly normal at the time.

When we rightly condemn our forefathers for tolerating it, and for profiting from it, we should pause to ask this: what are we doing today, which we think is normal, which will horrify our great-grandchildren?

Three things spring to mind, and all are very close to home.

The first is mass abortion on demand. The second is our terrible neglect of the old, either left in chilly solitude or crammed into sordid, suspect institutions where they can be cruelly maltreated. The third is our disastrous treatment of small children – indulged with gadgets and sugar, but denied proper family life, handed over to the care of paid strangers for long, sad hours.

We will pay for all these things, too, I suspect. But why wait for Hollywood to point out that they are wrong?

Sorrow and a fake drugs war

It is always difficult when grieving relatives enter political debates. It seems harsh and ill-mannered to contradict them.

But, while I am profoundly sorry for Anne-Marie Cockburn, and offer her my sincere condolences on the death of her daughter Martha Fernback, I must beg her to reconsider what she seems to think about 'legalising and regulating' some drugs.

I must also ask her to look into her apparent belief that there is some sort of 'war on drugs' going on.

Martha died after taking MDMA, an illegal drug that has claimed several victims in the past. She attended a well-known Oxford secondary school (recently recommended to the hard-up posh classes by *Tatler* magazine).

Before joining any campaigns to further weaken the drug laws, I urge Ms Cockburn to ask her daughter's schoolfriends the following questions.

- 1: How easy is it to buy illegal drugs in or near their school?
- 2: Do they know of anyone in their age group who has been given a serious punishment for possessing illegal drugs?
- 3: How many of them have parents who take drugs themselves, or allow them to be taken under their roof?
- 4: Does the school ever say specifically in class or elsewhere that drug-taking is wrong and against the law?
- 5: What disciplinary measures does the school take against those caught with illegal drugs?

If Ms Cockburn still thinks there's any kind of 'war on drugs' once she's heard their answers, I shall be very much surprised.

There is absolutely nothing to be said in favour of the Tory Party.

Its leaders secretly admire the Blair creature but lack the courage to admit it.

I see the Prime Minister is yet again claiming he can't recall saying he was 'Heir to Blair'. Perhaps those who were present when he did so might refresh his memory.

Far from fixing the economy (a claim accepted by so many who should know better) they have driven us deeper into debt and created a dangerous false boom that they hope will last until the Election. Their promises to reform the EU are worthless and they know it.

So what can they do to persuade their remaining voters to turn out for them? Why, they can encourage personal attacks on their opponents.

It is all they have left. And that is yet another reason why any honest, patriotic person should shun them.

Each personal attack on a non-Tory political figure is new evidence of Tory desperation.

Michael Gove poses as the foe of privilege, complaining that Etonians outnumber children from poor homes at Oxbridge. But I'm struck by the way he uses free school meals to measure the level of privilege at our great universities.

Presumably, the same applies to schools. So it's interesting that at his local comprehensive, Burlington Danes, 67.6 per cent of pupils are eligible for free meals.

But at Grey Coats Hospital School, the elite academy miles from his home into which he has got his daughter, only 14 per cent qualify for free meals.

The ghost of Roy Jenkins is walking again. How he would have approved of plans to introduce 'assisted suicide', which will in time become mass abortion of the unwanted old. How civilised!

Like so many of the revolutionary 1964-70 Labour Government, Jenkins concealed the personal morals of an alley-cat beneath a smirk, a drawl and a suit, and also knew that if you can't be good, it pays to be careful.

But unlike the Tory aristocrats whose private lives were equally adventurous, Jenkins and his friends wanted to bring the rest of the country down to their level. They did so by a slippery trick.

Almost all of their revolutionary changes were achieved by so-called 'private member's bills'.

In truth, such things can only get through Parliament with huge help from government lawyers and whips.

But the government of the day can disown them, and the MPs of all parties who vote for them have no fear of being punished at a General Election.

Far from being freedom of conscience, a 'free vote' is a dishonest evasion of responsibility.

if you wish to comment, please scroll down

March 16, 2014 [Comments \(0\)](#) | [Permalink](#)

Share this article:

Comments

You can follow this conversation by subscribing to the [comment feed](#) for this post.



Verify your Comment

Previewing your Comment

Posted by: |

This is only a preview. Your comment has not yet been posted.

[Post](#) [Edit](#)



Your comment could not be posted. Error type:

Your comment has been saved. Comments are moderated and will not appear until approved by the author. [Post another comment](#)

The letters and numbers you entered did not match the image. Please try again.

As a final step before posting your comment, enter the letters and numbers you see in the image below. This prevents automated programs from posting comments.

Having trouble reading this image? [View an alternate.](#)

[Continue](#)



Post a comment

Comments are moderated, and will not appear on this weblog until the moderator has approved them. They must not exceed 500 words. Web links cannot be accepted, and may mean your whole comment is not published.

Name:

Email Address:(Not displayed with comment.)

URL:

Remember personal info?

Comments: