

HOW THE LIBERALS RUINED BRITAIN

By Melanie Phillips

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So now the chickens have well and truly come home terrifyingly to roost. The violent anarchy that has taken hold of British cities is the all-too-predictable outcome of a three-decade liberal experiment which tore up virtually every basic social value.

The married two-parent family, educational meritocracy, punishment of criminals, national identity, enforcement of the drugs laws and many more fundamental conventions were all smashed by a liberal intelligentsia hell-bent on a revolutionary transformation of society.

Those of us who warned over the years that they were playing with fire were sneered at and smeared as right-wing nutters who wanted to turn the clock back to some mythical golden age.

Now we can see what they have brought about in the unprecedented and horrific scenes of mob violence, with homes and businesses going up in flames, and epidemic looting.

Clearly, there is some as yet unidentified direction and co-ordination behind the anarchy. But what is so notable and distressing is that, after the first day when adults were clearly involved, this mayhem has been carried out in the main by teenagers and children, some as young as eight.

The idea that they should not steal other people's property, or beat up and rob passers-by, appears to be as weird and outlandish to them as the suggestion that they should fly to the moon.

These youths feel absolutely entitled to go 'on the rob' and steal whatever they want. Indeed, they are incredulous that anyone should suggest they might pass up such an opportunity.

What has been fuelling all this is not poverty, as has so predictably been claimed, but moral collapse. What we have been experiencing is a complete breakdown of civilised behaviour among children and young people straight out of William Golding's seminal novel about childhood savagery, *Lord Of The Flies*.

There has been much bewildered talk about 'feral' children, and desperate calls upon their parents to keep them in at night and to ask them about any stolen goods they are bringing home.

As if there were responsible parents in such homes! We are not merely up against feral children, but feral parents.

Of course these parents know their children are out on the streets. Of course they see them staggering back with what they have looted. But either they are too drunk or drugged or otherwise out of it to care, or else they are helping themselves to the proceeds, too.

As David Cameron observed yesterday, there are clearly pockets of society that are not just broken, but sick.

The causes of this sickness are many and complex. But three things can be said with certainty: every one of them is the fault of the liberal intelligentsia; every one of them was instituted or exacerbated by the Labour government; and at the very heart of these problems lies the breakdown of the family.

For most of these children come from lone-mother households. And the single most crucial factor behind all this mayhem is the willed removal of the most important thing that socialises children and turns them from feral savages into civilised citizens: a father who is a fully committed member of the family unit.

Of course there are many lone parents who do a tremendous job. But we're talking here about widespread social collapse. And there are whole areas of Britain, white as well as black, where committed fathers are a wholly unknown phenomenon.

In such areas, successive generations are being brought up only by mothers, through whose houses pass transitory males by whom these women have yet more children — and who inevitably repeat the pattern of lone and dysfunctional parenting.

The result is fatherless boys who are consumed by an existential rage and desperate emotional need, and who take out the damage done to them by lashing out from infancy at everyone around them.

Such children inhabit what is effectively a different world from the rest of society. It's a world without any boundaries or rules. A world of emotional and physical chaos.

A world where a child responds to the slightest setback or disagreement by resorting to violence. A world where the parent is unwilling or incapable of providing the loving and disciplined framework that a child needs in order to thrive.

Yet instead of lone parenthood being regarded as a tragedy for individuals, and a catastrophe for society, it has been redefined as a 'right'.

When Labour came to power in 1997, it set about systematically destroying not just the traditional family but the very idea that married parents were better for children than any other arrangement.

Instead, it introduced the sexual free-for-all of 'lifestyle choice'; claimed that the idea of the male breadwinner was a sexist anachronism; and told girls that they could, and should, go it alone as mothers.

This was the outcome of the shattering defeat of Tony Blair, in the two years or so after he came to power, at the hands of the ultra-feminists and apostles of non-judgmentalism in his Cabinet and party who were determined, above all, to destroy the traditional nuclear family.

Blair stood virtually alone against them, and lost.

One of these ultra-feminist wreckers was Harriet Harman. The other night, she was on TV preposterously suggesting that cuts in educational allowances or youth workers had something

to do with young people torching and looting shops, robbing and leaving people for dead in the streets.

But Harman was one of the principal forces in the Labour government behind the promotion of lone parenthood and the marginalisation of fathers. If anyone should be blamed for bringing about the conditions which have led to these appalling scenes in our cities, it is surely Ms Harman.

And this breaking of the family was further condoned, rewarded and encouraged by the Welfare State, which conceives of need solely in terms of absence of money, and which accordingly subsidises lone parenthood and the destructive behaviour that fatherlessness brings in its train.

Welfare dependency further created the entitlement culture that the looters so egregiously display. It taught them that the world owed them a living. It taught them that their actions had no consequences. And it taught them that the world revolved around themselves.

The result of this toxic combination of welfare and non-judgmentalism was an explosion of elective lone parenthood and dysfunctional behaviour transmitted down through the generations at the very bottom of the social heap — creating, in effect, a class apart.

Once, children would have been rescued from their disadvantaged backgrounds by schools which gave them not just an education but structure and purpose to their lives.

But the liberal intelligentsia destroyed that escape route, too. For its onslaught upon marriage — the bedrock institution of society — with a tax system that penalises married couples with a wife who doesn't work, was replicated by an onslaught upon the understanding and very identity of that society. Instead of transmitting knowledge to children, teaching was deemed to be an attack upon a child's autonomy and self-esteem.

Thus it was that teachers adopted the 'child-centred' approach, which expected children not only to learn for themselves but also to decide for themselves about behaviour such as sexual morality or drug-taking.

The outcome was that children were left illiterate and innumerate and unable to think. Abandoned to wander through the world without any guidance, they predictably ended up without any moral compass.

All of this was compounded still further by the disaster of multiculturalism — the doctrine which held that no culture could be considered superior to any other because that was 'racist'.

That meant children were no longer taught about the nation in which they lived, and about its culture. So not only were they left in ignorance of their own society, but any attachment to a shared and over-arching culture was deliberately shattered.

Instead of forging social bonds, multiculturalism dissolved them — and introduced instead a primitive war of all against all, in which the strongest groups would destroy the weak.

Closely related to this was 'victim culture', in which all minority groups were regarded as victims of the majority. So any bad behaviour by them was excused and blamed on the majority.

In similar vein, all criminal wrongdoing was excused on the basis that the criminal couldn't help himself, as he was the victim of circumstances such as poverty, unemployment, or as yet illusory cuts in public spending.

The human rights of the criminal became seen as more important than the safety and security of his victims. Punishment became a dirty word. So the entire criminal justice system turned into a sick joke, with young hoodlums walking off with community sentences or Asbos (antisocial behaviour orders) which they held in total contempt.

Mr Cameron has declared that all those convicted of violent disorder in these riots will go to prison.

Really? Isn't it more likely that they will end up on some community penalty which will see them taken on trips to Alton Towers to make up for their disadvantaged upbringing? This is the normal response of our sentimentalised and addle-brained criminal justice officials.

In short, what we have seen unfolding before our horrified gaze over the past four days in Britain is the true legacy of the Labour years.

The social and moral breakdown behind the riots was deliberately willed upon Britain by left-wing politicians and other middle-class ideologues who wrap their utter contempt for the poor in the mantle of 'progressive' non-judgmentalism.

These are the people who — against the evidence of a mountain of empirical research — hurl execrations at anyone who suggests that lone parenthood is, in general, a catastrophe for children (and a disaster for women); who promote drug liberalisation, oppose selective education (while paying for private tutors for their own children) and call those who oppose unlimited immigration and multiculturalism 'racists'.

And the real victims of these people 'who know best' are always those at the bottom of the social heap, who possess neither the money nor the social or intellectual resources to cushion them against the most catastrophic effects of such nonsense.

Britain was once an ordered society that was the envy of the world — the most civilised, the most gentle and law-abiding.

Can Broken Britain be put together again? David Cameron is commendably talking tough: but will he have the stomach for tough action?

Will he, for example, remove the incentives to girls and women to have babies outside marriage? Will he dismantle the concept of entitlement from the Welfare State?

Will he vigorously enforce the drug laws? Will he end the kid-glove treatment of 'victim groups', and hold them to account for their behaviour in exactly the same way as everyone else?

Repairing this terrible damage also means, dare I say it, a return to the energetic transmission of Biblical morality.

Anyone heard from the Archbishop of Canterbury about the riots? Anyone care to guess what he will eventually say about them? Quite.

When church leaders stop prattling like soft-headed social workers and start preaching, once again, the moral concepts that underlie our civilisation, and when our political leaders decide to oppose the culture war that has been waged against that civilisation rather than supinely acquiescing in its destruction, then — and only then — will we start to get to grips with this terrible problem.

Until then, within the smouldering embers of our smashed and burned-out cities, we can only look upon the ruins of the Britain we have so dearly loved: the Britain that once led the world towards civilisation, but is now so tragically leading the way out.

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