

## **THE MINISTRY OF TRUTH SAYS SCHOOLS IN ENGLAND MUST NOT CRITICISE CAPITALISM**

Officially it is known as the Department For Education, although for some years professional educators may have seen it as the Department Against Education. It was 1978 when the Report on Political Literacy was published. As a member of the Working Party producing that report I felt optimistic that I would soon be living in a politically literate country: a country in which many of us would participate in the inclusive discussion of and consensual arrival at public values. Who became Prime Minister the following year? Even so Government and Politics was a popular subject in schools. And then we got the National Curriculum. Remember Kenneth Baker? I was present when he was asked why government and politics was excluded. Thinking on his feet he said it would be a 'theme'. It soon faded. Ofsted were not interested.

Today we have as Schools Minister Nick Gibb. He has a lot of years under his belt in that job. He first came to my notice when not only did he seek to exclude feminism from the A-Level Politics syllabus but also drew up a list of great political thinkers. Only one was a woman. No it was not Thatcher. I am happy to have played a small part in the campaign that forced him to change his mind. The Chief Examiner told me that this was not the limit of his attempts to influence how politics was taught and examined. His general attitude to education might be summed up by a leaked report that suggested he had told officials at the Education Department that he "would rather have a physics graduate from Oxbridge without a PGCE teaching in a school than a physics graduate from one of the rubbish universities with a PGCE". In other words qualified professionals do not seem to impress him. And "rubbish universities"?

He also believes that English should be taught by means of synthetic phonics. As a representative of the UK Literacy Association asked, 'If English is a phonetic language why doesn't Gove rhyme with Love?'

Gibb was also the brain (?) behind the famous A-Level Algorithm. Nearly had to resign over that.

So now criticism of capitalism is forbidden in England. My mate Mandy from Greece where sociology is now banned (not allowed to know how you are controlled) suggested getting round this by teaching empathy. Then I thought of teaching The Sermon On The Mount. Jesus a capitalist? Get out of that one Gibb.

I try to be light-hearted but this is deadly serious stuff. George Orwell wrote '1984' just after WWII. In libraries it is classified as 'fiction'. But is it?

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**Cliff Jones 28th September 2020**

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