

SOCIAL FRACKING

A SHORT POLEMIC

I began writing about **SOCIAL FRACKING** as the Coalition Government was taking over in 2010. It seemed an appropriate description for the effect of its policies. David Cameron's 'Big Society' (remember that?) was a fatuous cover for the further dismantlement of local government and the democratically accountable bodies that maintained our physical and social infrastructure.

We might trace the deliberate intention to frack society back to Margaret Thatcher, particularly in her second administration when she got rid of the 'wets'. Tony Blair has been described as a 'Son of Thatcher'. But, for me at least, it was the deliberately chosen policy of austerity inaugurated in 2010 that has bored deeper into the foundations of society and made it dangerously unstable and difficult to restore.

I suggest that there are six components in a social fracking kit. Since May 2010 our governments have used the full set.

1. Anti Political

Politics is about public values. The public have to be involved. It is a process that precedes policy making. Widened participation in the discussion of public values is difficult to control. That is why those with power prefer public involvement to be limited to the implementation of policy.

You can buy policies and personalities in the election market place but little else.

2. Anti Democratic

At election time we might once have made our votive offerings to the Goddess Demokratia. We often convince ourselves that we still do. In fact, our votive offerings go to the Goddess Oligarkia. We preserve an Establishment to which we do not have access.

3. Anti Intellectual

In his book Tony Blair uses the word 'intellectual' a lot. He thinks it means people who see only the approved target and work out how to hit it. When we are being intellectual we have doubt; we question; and we are prepared to learn from losing arguments.

For years now questioning has been discouraged. As Margaret Thatcher would have said: "Austerity? There is no alternative." And for as long as governments suppress the national intellect nor shall there be.

4. Anti Education

Education is about growth, development and fulfilment. It is not a thing apart, neither is it divisive. To differentiate children and schools and teachers according to class, religion and the wealth of parents is destructive. In every phase of education teachers, students, the curriculum, examinations and parents are now drawn into a dog-eat-dog contest. Michael Gove's hero, Tony Blair, called all this 'choice'. Who chooses?

5. Anti Social

In order to witness the making of decisions by elected representatives it is still possible for members of the public to attend local government committees and to read the minutes of earlier meetings. This just about remains part of how government is held accountable within society. As, however, services are taken over by private companies our lack of ability to walk into a boardroom to witness similar decision-making prevents us exercising such healthy public participation. Less and less do local authorities provide public services; they commission companies to provide them. Accountability is now at one remove and, when companies sub contract, sometimes at several removes. Our lack of ability to witness reduces the knowledge that we can deploy when we vote.

6. Pro Getting Away With It

It is because governments get away with it that society is being fracked. By and large our mainstream media are complicit; our educational institutions are focussed upon league tables and inspection; and the once popular subjects of Government and Politics, Media Studies and Sociology have been chased from school timetables. Despite what it says on our passports we are not citizens. We are subjects: subjects who allow powerful people to rule without challenge.

For a less polemical but far longer discussion of social fracking here is the link.

<http://www.criticalprofessionallearning.co.uk/assets/SocialFrackingSummarised.pdf>

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