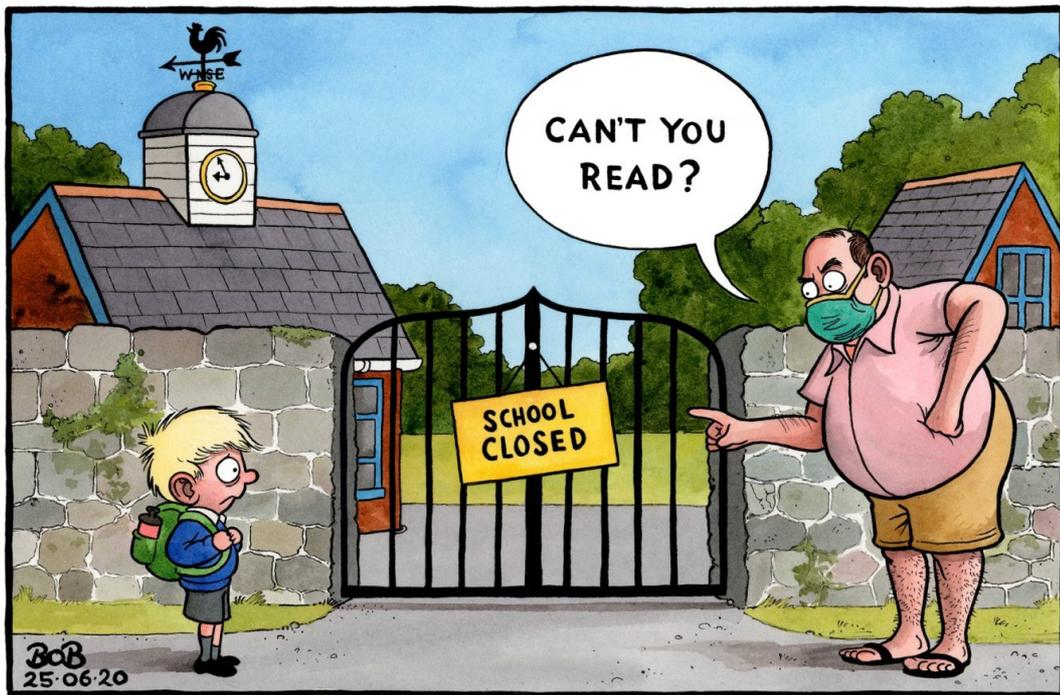


Hancock's Willing Executioners



Bob's cartoon in the Telegraph on 25th June

I often receive emails from parents in despair at how their children's schools have taken it upon themselves to uncritically regurgitate Number 10's propaganda – and I'm publishing one of them below. There's something rather odd about this, given that teachers are usually so suspicious of anything the Government says, particularly if they know something about the subject, e.g. education policy. Aren't these the very people that pride

themselves on equipping their students with critical thinking skills? Why the willingness to lap up everything they're told about "the crisis" by politicians they wouldn't dream of voting for?

One theory is that it's an instance of Gell-Mann Amnesia – a phenomenon identified by the physicist Murray Gell-Mann – which his friend the novelist Michael Crichton described as follows:

Briefly stated, the Gell-Mann Amnesia effect is as follows. You open the newspaper to an article on some subject you know well. In Murray's case, physics. In mine, show business. You read the article and see the journalist has absolutely no understanding of either the facts or the issues. Often, the article is so wrong it actually presents the story backward – reversing cause and effect. I call these the "wet streets cause rain" stories. Paper's full of them.

In any case, you read with exasperation or amusement the multiple errors in a story, and then turn the page to national or international affairs, and read as if the rest of the newspaper

was somehow more accurate about Palestine than the baloney you just read. You turn the page, and forget what you know.

No doubt there's an element of this going on, but it doesn't explain the zeal with which most teachers have taken up the authorities' Covid narrative and appointed themselves enforcers of "safety" protocols, often going much further than required by their local councils or the Department for Education. And it isn't just schools, obviously, but any person or institution that enjoys some power or authority – doctors, vicars, counsellors, civil servants, scientists, MPs of all stripes, journalists, broadcasters, etc. Look at Piers Morgan, a man I know and like and whose willingness to call out looney left nonsense I admire. He seems to have been driven quite mad by his desire to enforce Covid orthodoxy.

I'm not sure I understand the psychology here, but I imagine this behaviour – people in authority energetically promoting the narrative that has enabled a group of politicians to suspend civil liberties and assume dictatorial powers – is a

liberties and assume dictatorial powers – is a common feature of all countries that sink into authoritarianism.

It's a commonplace of left-wing intellectuals that the greatest danger to liberal democracy is posed by conservative enthno-nationalists – Trump, Orban, Bolsornaro. But even though there's a right-wing populist in Downing Street and he certainly bares his share of the blame for the ugly turn our society has taken, it's been the liberal left that has embraced the Covid narrative – and what it regards as the necessary suspension of our liberties – most enthusiastically. Witness the recent call by the Labour Party, along with the Royal Society and the British Academy, to criminalise anti-vaxxers. Who would have thought, prior to the pandemic, that it would be scientists demanding that a Tory Government be empowered to decide what can and can't be said in the public square? Now that they have tasted the wine of power, they have forgot themselves.

Which reminds me. I must read *Hitler's Willing Executioners*." Editor everyone should also read "Defying Hitler" by Sebastian Haffner. He escaped

in 1939 to England.” Written in 1939 and unpublished until 2000 by his son, Sebastian Haffner's memoir of the rise of Nazism in Germany offers a unique portrait of the pressures and lies that were encountered by everyday Germans as the Nazis locked down the people and ensured compliance.”

Roger Wright-Morris.

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