

Why are Environmental Studies not Mandatory in the National Curriculum for Schools

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By Jeff White

The question is one I have not heard asked in Parliament, the one place it should be. Both major parties have different agendas for the next election. Not so bold policies on anything from the party most likely to win, and damage limitation from the likely losers.

Conversations with grandchildren reveal an almost complete dearth of any knowledge of environmental issues, that could and should be taught in school. Apart from being a side issue in Science and Geography, and the odd visit from an 'expert', who will tend to talk about their 'pet' part of the subject, there is no all-encompassing policy regarding the biggest threat to the future of the upcoming generation. Little wonder that youngsters are taking it upon themselves to protest at the extreme lethargy shown by world leaders on the subject. This movement, I believe, will change the political landscape forever; yet our leaders just brush it aside. These are early days in my crusade to put the topic of mankind's survival at the top of the agenda, but I will be e-mailing my MP, who sadly follows the party line 'Everything is fine. Nothing to see here.' I'll also e-mail government and opposition ministers and shadow ministers in the hope of eliciting some kind of response.

I'll also be contacting Greenpeace, an organisation termed as 'Terrorist' by the current government... Greenpeace, a group who simply takes action, when for countless years, governments sadly have not. I've been a Greenpeace member for some years now, but have yet to see them start a campaign to put environmental education at the forefront of school and college courses.

So, what can we expect from all these efforts? I can only be pessimistic and say very little. However, in an appearance on a Youtube program, Greta Thunberg was asked if she ever felt despair at the lack of action. Her reply was "Despair is not a luxury I give myself."

As for a possible outcome, I would expect an increase in awareness of environmental problems at least. Given this, more pressure will be put on businesses and governments to include environmental costs on balance sheets. With the increase in the number of green jobs, environmental qualifications will be a must. Other countries will be ahead of the UK, and we must be prepared to pool green intelligence with them. The results, if we don't, will be unthinkable.

Perhaps an outcome that will rescue the natural world, and ourselves a long with it, is little more than a pipe dream – especially as almost every political party worldwide is obsessed with 'growing the economy'. This is something that is not only impossible, but totally undesirable, as it promotes growth in consumerism, which will obviously hasten resource depletion. We need politicians to be brave enough and clever enough to offer the people they serve a better quality of life, rather than just a higher standard of living. We have got to get away from the brainwashing of advertisers, trying to sell us 'stuff' we don't need and pay for it with money we don't have.

In conclusion, I would like the education of our younger generation to include environmental studies courses – and to

gleefully embrace the benefits of what the greener future will bring. Not being forced to take extreme, austere measures to merely just survive. It really isn't too late.

"Renewable energy is cheaper than that produced from fossil fuels."

Lord

Deben

(chairman of the UK's Independent Committee on Climate Change)