

Homeschooling and the European "Third Way"

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Homeschooling Paper #2, 21 September 2009

Introduction to the European "Third Way"

¶1. Øve Juul Johannsen, EU Ambassador and Head of the EU Delegation of the European Commission to Japan, made these remarks in his opening speech on 5 November 1999:

1.1. "The "third way" is a phrase that trips from many tongues these days, not least in Europe, and it sums up an important phenomenon. What is less clear is quite what the "third way" means in practical terms. Slogans such as: "freedom and fairness", "compassion and self-reliance", or "economic opportunity and social justice", all try to give shape to the concept. But like "welfare and competitiveness"...each phrase suggests that there are two (seemingly irreconcilable) principles which the "third way" will bridge in one way or another."¹

Towards a Balanced Agenda

¶2. He continues:

2.1. "Because, on the whole, Europe has maintained its competitiveness, while - and this is the important point - continuing its commitment to social welfare. Indeed, it is almost paradoxical that countries like Denmark (my own), or Germany, have per capita outputs among the highest in the world, but also have some of the highest spending on social protection.

2.2. "So a balanced agenda is nothing new in Europe. In fact, it is far from clear that welfare and competitiveness are contradictory.

On the contrary, there may even be strong links between economic efficiency on the one hand, and social responsibility on the other. At least, that seems to be our experience." [2](#)

Equal Weights and Measures

¶3. In these observations, I am in complete agreement. The problem, as Johannesen points out, is in maintaining a "**balanced agenda**" - giving equal weights and measures to capitalism and social responsibility in the light of the need for "constant re-invention of social provision". Finally, he notes:

3.1. "...the diversity of the European Union is a source of strength, as we see what works in one Member State (such as liberalisation in the UK, or new labour practices in the Netherlands) and apply it across the Union." [3](#)

Homeschooling as a Benchmark

¶4. In my paper on homeschooling prepared for the Swedish Government [4](#) I argue for a similar balanced agenda in Swedish education that proposed creation of a clearly-defined benchmark that gives equal status to State Schooling, Independent or Free Schooling and Home Education (Homeschooling)[5](#), reminding the Swedish Government as an EU member state of its obligation to uphold Article §2 of Protocol No.1 of the *European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms*, guaranteeing the right of parents to educate their children in accordance with their religious or philosophical belief system, a convention which became Swedish law in 1995 upon Sweden's accession to the European Union, which the current government seems determined to circumvent or ignore [6](#).

Reconciliation Between the Government and Homeschoolers

¶5. Though perhaps to the current Swedish Government Homeschooling and State-sponsored education are "seemingly irreconcilable", they are in truth extremely compatible with the EU goals of the "Third Way". Britain, an EU member, has (like the United States, which is currently seeking to converge its own goals with the Third Way philosophy) a long and successful experience with Homeschooling and as my paper demonstrates homeschoolers have, in general, made excellent employees and thereby contributed to and

enhanced the job market, being much sought after for their self-discipline and creativity.

Ending Cultural Genocide

¶6. If we are to properly "bridge welfare and competitiveness", as Johannsen and the EU seeks, then in the realm of education there must be a genuine commitment to the European ideal of the "promotion of cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue" ¹ and the immediate removal of the proposed new legislation on homeschooling that amounts to a form cultural genocide, such as homeschoolers have been asking of the Education Minister, Jan Björklund, which has hitherto been denied us .

Homeschooling as a Subset of Swedish Culture

¶7. This means that homeschooling must be acknowledged and recognised as a sub-set of the Swedish culture (which it already is), in recognition of what works elsewhere (as in the United Kingdom and USA), be embraced as part of Sweden's democratic commitment to the European "Third Way" and to multiculturalism in all of its forms, and be so enshrined in Swedish law protecting the rights of homeschoolers.

Conclusion

¶8. The short-sighted proposed new education law on homeschooling:

- 8.1. Runs completely counter to European ideals;
- 8.2. Fails to recognise homeschooling as a part of Swedish culture;
- 8.3. Would move Sweden away from a balanced educational agenda;
- 8.4. Promotes intolerance⁸ and cultural genocide; and
- 8.5. Is contrary to the principles of European democracy.

Footnotes

¹ Øve Juul Johannsen, [Is the Third Way Feasible?](#) Speech 14/1999

² Øve Juul Johannsen, *op.cit.*

[3](#) Øve Juul Johannsen, *op.cit.*

[4](#) C.C.M.Warren, [An Independent Study and Critique of the Swedish Government's Proposed New Legislation on Homeschooling](#) (2009),

[5](#) C.C.M.Warren, *op.cit.*, *Recommended Government Legislation for 2010-11, F1 Important Concepts, ¶F1a. Seven Principles to Form a Working Model*, pp.96-98 (PDF version)

[6](#) C.C.M.Warren, *op.cit.*, *C1. The Law and Human Rights Conventions*, pp.28-30 (PDF version)

[7](#) Council on the European Union, Press Release 15368/08 (Presse 317), 2905th meeting of the Council, [Education, youth and culture](#), Brussels, 20 and 21 November 2008

[8](#) Consider the recent outrageous [Kidnapping of Dominic Johansson by the Gotland Social Services Department](#)