

PETER HITCHENS: It's not a Muslim issue. In our modern nation you're an extremist, too

This is part of Peter Hitchens's Mail on Sunday column (published on 14th June 2014)

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I think we would be a happier country if we had never encouraged mass immigration in the post-war era. The fact that it is almost taboo to say this simple thing is an example of the problems it has caused.

But I also grasp that the immigration has happened, that we have new neighbours, and that it is our absolute duty to get on with them and befriend them as best as we can.

And this is why I am so scornful of the windbags and panic-spreaders who now seek to make an issue out of the supposed takeover of some state schools by Muslims.

What twaddle this is. The Government quite rightly allows Christian schools in the state system – not least because it was the churches who took on the job of educating poor children when politicians couldn't be bothered to do so.

Well, now we have a large number of Muslim parents, how can we reasonably deny them the same?

I have a lot of quarrels with Islam, but I, and many traditional British Christians like me, have a lot in common with Muslims.

We dislike the pressure on teenage girls to dress as sluts and get drunk, and the pressure on teenage boys to be oafish copies of football stars. We think it's time the old were respected and cared for, not dumped and abandoned.

We'd much rather our children went on religious pilgrimages than to a Britney Spears concert.

We see nothing shocking in the idea of boys and girls being taught separately – many people pay good money for single-sex education because they think it better, and because state schools mostly refuse to provide it any more.

We don't especially want schoolteachers to undermine our views on marriage and child-rearing in politically radical 'sex-education' classes. Not everyone shares the liberal elite's views of these matters.

We believe – because we're British and we've heard of Magna Carta, the Bill of Rights and Habeas Corpus – in freedom of speech and religion. So when we're told that this is 'extremism', then we tend to think that in that case we, too, are 'extremists'. The word means nothing except 'person holding unfashionable views'. It means even less than the foggy, squelchy 'British values' Michael Gove says we must espouse.

Both Mr Gove and the Home Secretary, Theresa May, have in practice supported the transformation of this country into a borderless, multicultural, multi-faith zone. Much of what was left of Christian teaching in state schools was stripped out of them years ago by secular radicals, so that our national faith is now taught as a sort of eccentric tribal cult, practised by other people, especially old people, if it is mentioned at all.

The 'Conservative' party, true to its long record of cowardice and retreat, never did anything to stop this. Now it seeks to appear concerned by blurring the border between

religious fervour and terrorist crime. How dare either, or both, of these politicians now seek to advance their political careers by posing as the foes of 'Islamic extremism'? If there is such a thing, their party brought it here and encouraged its growth.

The main thing to note about this pair is their behaviour proves the Tory Party doesn't believe its own propaganda about winning in 2015.

They know there'll be a vacancy for Leader of the Opposition next May, when a defeated David Cameron quits. That's what they're really fighting about.