

***We are a box culture,  
dominated by institutions.***

The social costs run very deep. Through the undermining of trust in human relationships, people are persuaded to invest less in love, friendship and working together, and more in self-protection, insulating themselves from the world around them, and transferring their affections primarily to material objects of insatiable desire.

Families without children are families without an investment in tomorrow's world. Children who live without a father or a mother in their lives have less chance of building bonds of empathy and trust with members of the opposite sex. The more family break-ups there are, the less we can depend on each other, and the more competitive and selfish we seem to be, in each other's eyes.

And with social alienation come voids that need filling, dependence on material wealth, drugs and other stopgaps. In a world that is changing so rapidly, it is difficult for us to adapt fast enough. Our institutions, with their long memories, and even longer timescales for real change, often seem even more rooted in the past than we are.

***Less time is available for normal human interactions, un-mediated by bureaucrats, teachers, health workers and a plethora of other professionals.***

Mass media soap opera characters replace the missing ingredients in our own lives, as we find ourselves inadequate to the task. There are few local heroes, but many who vie for the limited opportunities further up the chain. The larger-than-life personalities we see on TV seem increasingly distant, part of a celebrity culture which leaves less space for local people to shine, and which applies the economics of scale, not to objects, but to human beings as commodities.

And as we depend less on each other, we become more exposed to large-scale social engineering and institutional decision-making, less self-possessed, action-oriented and capable of making informed choices.

The artificiality of our own lives leads to an incapacity to empathize with the human beings we live amongst and by extension the natural world around us.

The Alliance  For Change

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***It hardly matters if we reduce the divorce rate if whatever number of divorced or never-married fathers are not considered, and hence not treated, as the fathers they naturally and eternally are. And why are non-wedlock children not equally entitled to both parents?***

***I'm no biologist, but I don't think one can be born fatherless any more than born motherless.***

***So long as the political rightwing pretends to espouse men's rights, and the political leftwing pretends to espouse women's rights, their polarization of these issues prevents the growth of a strong family rights movement.***

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The Alliance  For Change

Family : Environment : Society

Julian Fitzgerald  
Parliamentary Candidate  
Leeds Central  
General Election, 5 May 2005



I am standing as a parliamentary candidate in Leeds Central to bring home that:

- human society and the natural world go together,
- human nature and the environment we create for ourselves depend on our social organisation,
- human survival comes from the bottom up, not the top down,
- we must fight for our family rights, to defend our society and to protect the natural world upon which we all depend.

The start point for this is to legislate for co-parenting, for the interdependence of the human family, to give full value to children's rights to the care and protection of both their parents.

## Equal parenting – family rights

Without family rights - the rights of children to both their natural parents, treated with equal human dignity under the law, it is very difficult for children to develop a sense of their place in a human society consisting of both sexes.

### ***We learn, first and foremost, from what we experience as children***

Empathy and trust between people of both sexes becomes hugely problematic, and the uncertainty of rejection and humiliation in one's personal relationships acts as a constant thorn in the side of these relationships. And because we find it difficult to embrace our fellow men and women, we also find it difficult to connect with the wider world around us.

It is not for nothing that the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and other international instruments make it clear that amongst the most crucial rights children need are the rights to their own identity, parents, language and culture.

What is equally clear is that, specifically in regard to family rights, Western countries, including the UK, are now amongst those countries that most frequently deny these rights, in practice.

***Of the sixty million people in the UK, roughly 14 million are children. Of these, up to four million have little or no contact with their father.***

As the Canadian author, KC Wilson, writes:

The very reason the courts are such a problem is that society says, when a marriage ends, so does the family. There is no longer an integral social entity so it's up to us (society) to do what we please with the resulting parts, thus destroying that natural, real integral social entity for the child. We have made divorce into the end of the child's family, when it is the very time its family should be most actively defended.

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Family : Environment : Society

Estrangement of children from one or both their parents is not a natural process, but a socially engineered process. The blame can no more be placed on mothers than fathers, as their choices are restricted and channelled by the alienating reality of family law.

The reality is that the law itself allows judges the discretion to decide who is allowed to be a parent, and in so doing infantilises and denigrates parents themselves, as individuals, even whilst they are charged with no offence, nor found to be unfit parents. The basic law allowing judges to do this is the 1989 Children's Act.

In fact, a whole raft of provisions, including social security measures such as the refusal to divide child benefit fairly, laws which maintain the fiction that only one parent is the "residential" parent post-divorce, policies of replacing the care of mothers and fathers with the care of professionals and child carers, and policies of allowing mothers to be gatekeepers of their children's access to their fathers, all create a society of social haves and have-nots, a society governed by fear of social alienation or marginalisation.

Such is the complex of fears now surrounding having a family and having children that our population, along with many other Western countries, is hovering at or below replenishment levels. Our families are being harassed, monitored, intruded upon, modified, presided over by third parties as never before.

This is why we must say:

### ***No to the use of children's bodies to control adult behaviour***

Many thousands of people in this country are devastated by the effects, both direct and indirect, of this body of law and practice which intrudes into our most intimate lives.

We want it changed, to give children a right to be cared for by their own parents.

We wish to eradicate this use of the bodies of children to control adults, as part of our country's honourable tradition of standing for the most elemental of human freedoms:

- to abolish slavery two centuries ago
- to give women the vote one century ago
- to achieve family rights, equal parenting for the new millennium

### ***We live at the threshold between a mechanistic world view and a true scientific understanding of our place in the world***

People often confuse science with technology. Technology is what we *can* do, but science is our understanding of what this means. For instance, we *can* have children conceived artificially, but whether we *should* depends upon our understanding of the consequences.

Over the next few decades, we will increasingly be manipulating genes, soft-skinned biological organisms, even our own bodies, in new ways. As with each switch from one technology to the next, we do not need to understand what lies within the black box (or mobile phone) in order to use it. But as our power increases, we need to draw up new guidelines on how to control our use of these technologies – in advance.

Family policy and the environment may seem not to have much in common, but in fact they are joined at the hip. The more family breakdown, the more people end up living alone, avoiding co-dependence and expanding the need for housing and individual provision. This is less energy-efficient - but very useful to corporations who seek to maximise consumption and institutional dependence.

Family policy may not seem to matter to people who do not have children, but the childless society, of extended adolescence, where the most active and dynamic members of society tend to live separately from their families, is itself a mark of the degree to which we have institutionalised ourselves, almost without recognising how much this denatures us and forms a barrier to our taking up integrated social roles and duties.