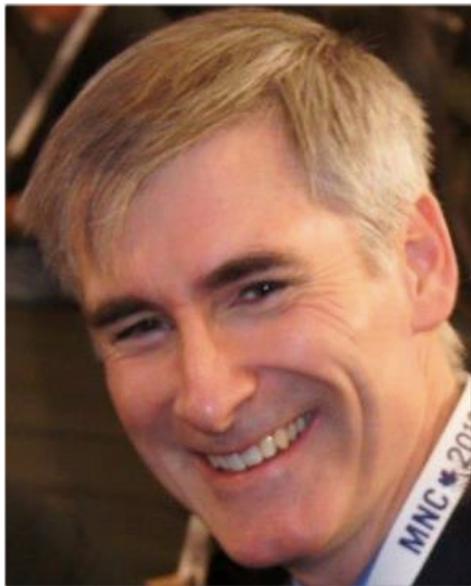


THE EVANGELICAL OFFICE OF THE PUBLIC SQUARE

Safe Grads and Other Insidious Incentives

By: David MacKenzie, January 16th, 2017

Before exploration for the Bakken oil-formation significantly raised the average home price in some rural towns of the eastern Canadian prairie,



I heard of one community where a thoroughly enlightened couple purchased a house adjacent to their own so that their adolescent children would have a “safe” place to party.

Perhaps there were already ten too many holes in their own living-room drywall from past weekend “antics” but, regardless of the rationale, that particular purchase etched itself permanently upon my memory.

This is not just one, strange familial problem. It is representative of a larger cultural enabling. Modern life has become so morally inept that it now, routinely, incentivizes foolish

things, destructive things— even evil things. And, no matter what level of society one analyzes, the tendency is the same.

Economists have frequently asked whether the rise of elaborate insurance frameworks, for example, have created a disincentive to guard against poor behavioural choices. This issue has become known as “moral hazard”.

When capitalism creates “credit default swaps” where investors can even profit off bankruptcy, the system we’ve allowed may begin to value insolvency just as much as solvency. That is terribly odd. On the other hand, when **socialism values wealth redistribution over wealth creation**, it virtually guarantees its own long-term bankruptcy. I hope it buys some “swaps”.

When tax laws reward common-law relationships while fiscally punishing marriage, they act to subsidize the absence of commitment rather than rewarding commitment itself. One of the worst things government policy can do is to punish the greater while rewarding the lesser— and yet we routinely do. We even reward evil itself. By making **adoption expensive and abortion cheap**, we manage to kill on an industrial scale, with precisely this kind of incentivized “kindness”. Indeed; few things are more indicative (or, in some cases, more damning) of our social ethics than what we have chosen to incentivize.

In the recent controversy over Donald Trump’s immigration policies, one group of people seemed to be conveniently forgotten amidst all the rancour: **legal** immigrants. Whenever a sovereign State sees no moral difference between its legal and illegal participants, it actually **demoralizes its best** citizens and immigrants **and emboldens the manipulative**. This is extremely poor political policy.

Why punish the upright?

When emergency personnel feel disinclined to intervene in crime or emergency situations within immigrant neighbourhoods in Malmo, Sweden, or gang-ridden minority neighbourhoods in Chicago, it isn't because police or fire departments believe that a healthy dose of "karma" is what these communities have coming. Rather, admittedly dangerous neighbourhood environments help produce localized forms of political appeasement. Conflict and intervention-avoidance become increasingly politically attractive inside contexts that crackle with charges of systemic racism or xenophobia, all while being spiritually inert as regards the human penchant for willful and violent evil.

The ease with which our society is more worried about moral stigma than immorality is yet another tell-tale sign of the same political disease. We deliberately confine issues like promiscuity and addiction to the realm of "public health" issues rather than examining the moral questions that are every bit as important. We'll spend millions to find the next best antibiotic and anti-viral treatment for STIs, all while investing almost nothing in exploring whether our actions are "right" and "good" or not. What, after all, is more commonly found in High School— a health class, or a class in moral philosophy?

Sometimes, the problem is not just incentivizing evil directly, but pushing most resources in the direction of the elimination of all moral risks and natural consequence. This, too, is part of the problem that makes up our culture's permissive liberalism.

We'll advocate for safe-injection sites. We'll organize parents to help facilitate our youth's drunken "safe-grads" on private property. We'll buy our kids condoms, and make sure that their HPV shots are up-to-date, not recognizing that **we are habituating them to care less about their actions than their precautions.** By such, we train our children to be thoughtless as regards the nature of virtue, and intentional as regards the pursuit of vice.

Our collective hedonism is remarkable. We are **no different** than those adults who buy the house next door so that their kids can party harder—caring little whether the occupants of the house are destroyed alongside the structure.

This isn't love. It is indulgence— the enabling endorsement of moral hazard on a generational scale. And it's past time that conservatives protest. It's high time we start demanding that our politicians think very carefully about what they are incentivizing when they dabble in everything from economic to social policy.

Originally Published by Rebel Media January 14th, 2017.

