

overheard at the extra-curricula café

A Sticky Business

Cappuccino: I see there has been a prumpus in Somerset, about a teacher allegedly sticking tape over children's mouths.

Latté: Don't you mean rumpus?

Cappuccino: No, prumpus is when the press is involved.

Latté: That's a new one on me.

Cappuccino: Yes, I just made it up for occasions when an incident becomes a story in the press; then it's a prumpus.

Latté: Yes, I've seen a video of poor injured children and their parents, looking hard done by. And photos of children holding up reels of sticky tape.

Cappuccino: How very tacky!

Latté: Ha, Ha.

Cappuccino: It's about time someone made a prumpus about the way teachers actions have been gummed up by political correctness for decades.

Latté: Ah, you're right. Whatever we say has to be positive. No more 'Dean is bone idle'. Rather 'To maximise learning opportunities, Dean requires a great deal of stimulation.'

Cappuccino: Teachers can't have opinions, or emotions, or any normal human characteristics really.

Latté: More like automatons.

Cappuccino: Exactly. Which is great a pity for the pupils.

Latté: Why?

Cappuccino: When I was at school it was the fiery, expressive, eccentric teachers of whom we took most notice. The bland, unemotional teachers were uninteresting, and so were their lessons.

Latté: So, when you think about it, there is one law for school teachers and another law for politicians.

Cappuccino: Ah!

Latté: Politicians can say what they want. The more outrageous the better. And our

Secretary of State for Education is a fairly good example.

Cappuccino: Meanwhile, teachers and headteachers have to be politically correct. They have had tape stuck over their mouths for years.

Latté: That conjures up a picture of a teachers with tape over their mouths – the sort which police use, saying 'Police, crime scene' repeatedly along its length.

Cappuccino: What should this 'teacher tape' say?

Latté: How about 'teacher: outstanding but not outspoken'?

Cappuccino: Or 'teacher: curriculum delivery mechanism'.

Latté: Or 'teacher: passionless pedagogy guaranteed'.

Cappuccino: I've got it!

Latté: Got what?

Cappuccino: The answer. Let's insist that every politician spends ten percent of their time in schools, talking to pupils. That would be a real dose of reality.

Latté: Politicians don't deal in reality, only rhetoric. Nikita Khrushchev said, 'Politicians are the same all over. They promise to build a bridge even where there is no river.'

Cappuccino: The youngsters would soon sort out the politicians. Five minutes being responsible for a nursery class would bring politicians to reality. James Clarke said, 'A politician thinks of the next election; a statesman of the next generation.' And other idea!

Latté: Must I hear this?

Cappuccino: Yes! Let's see if we can smuggle some hazard warning tape into the House of Commons' debating chamber. Maybe we could throw it from the public gallery and watch whilst all the politicians tangled themselves in it!

Latté: Now that would be a prumpus. Ring your press contacts to make sure that a photographer is on hand. ■