

The Progressive Scottish Gender Bill



Nicola Sturgeon

by Theodore Dalrymple

It's often difficult to distinguish the cunning from the stupidity, the foolishness from the evil, of the political class.

In Scotland, a bill has been passed to make it easier for 16-year-olds to change their gender on official documents and to be recognized as their chosen gender (the word sex has, of course, been expunged from the discussion, and will soon be as redundant as the word "unhappy," which has now been replaced in common parlance by "depressed").

According to the bill, all that an adolescent would have to do to change his or her "gender assigned at birth" is to say that he or she wishes to do so and then live in the new gender for three months. No medical evidence or medical treatment, hormonal or surgical, would be required; in essence, you would

simply be the gender that you said you were. And you would have an official certificate to prove it, which it would be an offense for others to disregard.

The multiple confusions of all this need hardly be pointed out. The term "gender assigned at birth" makes it sound as if the sex inscribed on a birth certificate was decided by the flip of a coin, that it was completely arbitrary and had no basis in objective reality independent of anyone's will (it's sex, of course, not gender, that's assigned at birth). Moreover, to live as someone of the chosen different, that is to say opposite, gender suggests that there's an essential difference between male and female, which difference it's the ultimate object of transgenderism as an ideology to deny. If there weren't such a difference, how could it be recognized that someone had lived as either of the genders? There would be no need for certificates.

The British government has vetoed the legislation of the Scottish Assembly on the grounds that it represents a threat to the safety of women. It isn't difficult to see how this might be: Indeed, the opposite is the case, it's difficult to see how anyone couldn't see it.

The bill is the first passed by the Scottish Assembly vetoed by the British government since it was set up a quarter of a century ago. The leader of the Scottish nationalists, Nicola Sturgeon, is presenting the veto as an outrage against democracy, in her campaign to present the British government as oppressive and dictatorial, and separate Scotland from England. The problem for her is that the great majority of the Scots population opposes the bill, which she's determined to push through and implement. Some people, therefore, suspect that her real object all along hasn't been to make the lives of transgender adolescents easier, but to create a rift with the British government so that she might present the latter to the Scottish people as tyrannical and undemocratic. If so, she hasn't chosen a very good subject on which to make a stand:

She's succeeding in uniting opposing factions against her. It's she who appears tyrannical.

But why did she alight on this question above all others to potentially try to provoke an existential rift between Scotland and England and demonstrate the malignity of the British government? Statistically, the question is of very minor importance, though with constant reiteration and the thirst of modern adolescents for self-dramatization as a means of individuation in mass society it's growing in importance.

Probably it's an attempt to present herself as progressive at a time when most intellectuals who think of themselves as progressive consider that nationalism of her kind as regressive, a throwback to the bad old days, a doctrine that excludes people rather than includes them. After all, she wouldn't pass a bill to the effect that someone is Scottish merely if he thought he was or wanted to be, though it's surely easier to change nationality than sex.

Therefore, she tries to square the ideological circle by means of the transgender issue. By making it easier for youngsters to change gender, she's proclaiming her credentials as a progressive, though what progressives think they're progressing to always remains unexplained. Perhaps Gomorrah.

Naturally, not everyone in Scotland is opposed to the bill and there have been demonstrations (not very large ones, it's true, but noisy and attention-receiving) in favor of it. I think this must be the first time in recent history, at any rate, that there have been demonstrations demanding what amounts to the abrogation of adult responsibility towards, and manipulation and abuse of, immature young people.

The most important question, perhaps, is what's next on the progressive agenda, once the right of children to change gender (with present technology, they can't yet change sex) has been granted? There will surely come a time when

progressives will grow bored with the issue and seek another to give meaning to their lives.

My money for the next stage in the total liberation of Mankind from all restraint in sexual conduct is on the legalization of incest. Everyone knows that it sometimes takes place: surely (the progressives will argue) it's better to have everything out in the open rather than have it hidden and furtive? Think of all the unnecessary guilt and suffering of those who have committed incest who must currently hide what they have done! Some even kill themselves because of it—not because of the incest itself, but because of the threat of exposure, which itself is the consequence of the irrational social taboo against it. In the name of harm reduction, therefore, incest should be legalized.

What harm (the progressives will ask) does incest really do in these days of prenatal testing and termination of pregnancy? Not only are there many means of avoiding pregnancy but there's little to fear from the increased risk of genetic diseases in the offspring of incestuous sexual liaisons, a risk obviated by a combination of DNA testing and abortion. Indeed, the word incest should be abandoned, since it has only deeply negative moral connotations. It should be replaced by intrafamilial love, or some such. Thereby, the sum total of human enjoyment and happiness (the same thing, of course) will increase.

Yes, there's much work still for you to do, progressives.

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