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**RADIO 4**

**CURRENT AFFAIRS**

**SCHOOL OF HARD FACTS  
TRANSCRIPT OF A RECORDED DOCUMENTARY**

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**Taking part (in order of appearance):**

**Annaliese Briggs, Principal-Designate of Pimlico Primary School**

**Professor E D Hirsch**

**Daisy Christodoulou, Managing Director of The Curriculum Centre**

**Nick Gibb MP, former Minister of State for Schools**

**Professor Andrew Pollard, University of London Institute of Education and University of Bristol. Member of expert panel reviewing the National Curriculum.**

**Professor Sir Michael Barber, Chief Education Adviser at Pearson and former advisor to Tony Blair**

**Ruth Wishart, Chair of the Creative Learning Group (jointly managed by Education Scotland and by Creative Scotland).**

**ARCHIVE OF 1990 SERIES OF TV QUIZ SHOW *TOP CLUBS*:**

**Quiz master:** Who during the Eisenhower presidency led Senate investigations-  
Michael.

**Michael Gove:** Err Joe McCarthy.

**Quiz master:** -into the Communist infiltrators? Yes

**FRAN:** A point to Michael Gove there! These days he's the Education Secretary, but back in 1990, he was a contestant in a Grampian Television quiz show.

***TOP CLUBS* ARCHIVE CONTD:**

**APPLAUSE +**

**Quiz master:** Welcome Back. Well we go into a sequence round with the...

Now that Mr Gove's got a bit of power - he's running the schools in England - he'd like *young* people to be a bit more – well - like he used to be: brimming with answers on American history, World War I, even religion.

***TOP CLUBS* ARCHIVE CONTD:**

**Quiz master:** What's the job of a nuncio? Michael.

**Michael Gove:** He's a Papal Ambassador.

**Quiz master:** He is indeed! Who devised the system of naming plants with two Latin names? Michael.

**Michael Gove:** Lineas

**Quiz master:** Lineas yes! What are...

**FRAN:** Of course, the Education Secretary doesn't really want to turn us all into a nation of quiz contestants, but he does think it's crucial that *all* children should learn a set of core facts.

Plans are afoot for example to issue a list of 200 key events and personalities that every child should know about. Mr Gove's apparently convinced that acquiring the right cultural knowledge is central, not just to education, but to social mobility too.

But where's this theory come from? Well, its champion is a retired American Professor called E D Hirsch. And if you live in England his ideas *could* be coming to a school near you, *very* soon.

**INSERT 1: PIMLICO ACADEMY ACT. I**

**Teacher:** Stand behind your chairs, get your books out.

*Fade up on voice of teacher, peak on children's greeting and fade as directed into next script link*

**FRAN:** This is Pimlico Academy. And the new intake are learning grammar.

## **INSERT 2: PIMLICO ACADEMY ACT. II**

**Children:** Good Afternoon Mr Boardman

**Teacher:** Please have a seat.

**FRAN:** The syllabus at Pimlico is a bit different. It's based on facts and knowledge, rather than on skills.

{INSERTS FOLLOW}

## **INSERT 3: PIMLICO ACADEMY ACT. III**

**Teacher:** Okay, so if I say to you to run the first person singular – Lydia?

**Lydia:** I like to run.

**Teacher:** Well you added a little bit of detail there, but that's nice, but it was the first person singular. Thank you very much!

**FRAN:** And as of next year, it won't just be these eleven year-olds who'll be learning it.

This Academy's about to open a new Primary School and its curriculum will be built around the ideas of E.D. Hirsch. It's going to be run by Annaliese Briggs. She's 27 years old and she doesn't yet have a teaching qualification. But all the same we might be well advised to listen to what she has to say!

## **INSERT 4: BRIGGS**

**Annaliese Briggs:** Unlike most primary schools that focus on a skills based curriculum, which I think is more useful actually to think of as a content light curriculum. Pimlico Primary will be focusing on a knowledge led curriculum. That's not to say, that we don't want pupils to leave school with the same skills that other schools have aspirations for their pupils to leave with. We certainly do. What we're doing is rethinking how we achieve those ends and we recognize based and grounded in Hirsch's principles that children need to have a very broad knowledge base in order to get those skills.

**FRAN:** E.D. Hirsch Junior. Anyone out there heard of him? If you haven't, and I have to admit I hadn't until a few weeks ago, you might want to look him up. His full name's Eric Donald Hirsch. He's 84 years old, and he's a former English literature Professor.

Hirsch has two big ideas. The first is that we all need something he calls 'cultural literacy.' That in each country, there are certain touchstones, facts, ideas, literary works that people need to know about, in order to operate effectively as citizens.

And the second idea is that schools need to deliver those cultural touchstones to children in a highly organized, structured way. You might say that we all need a kind of ‘back to basics’ education.

The story of ‘cultural literacy’ starts about twenty years ago. Back then, the man himself was working as a College Lecturer in Richmond, Virginia. As it happens, it’s close to where Robert E. Lee surrendered to Ulysses S. Grant during the American Civil War. Hirsch was struck by something about the students he worked with, particularly those who came from poorer backgrounds.

### **INSERT 5: HIRSCH**

**Hirsch:** The critical reason that I got into education reform was the strange inability of some community college students, most of them black, to comprehend- to read simple passages about the American Civil War. The black students could do very well when the topics were about why I like my room-mate and why I don’t like traffic on Route 29 and so on! But they, he did very badly when it came to Lee’s surrender to Grant at Appomattox Court House, which was shaking to me, because it took place in the City of Richmond, which was of course the capital of the Confederacy, it was very disoriented and that experience changed my life.

**FRAN:** How did it change your life? What happened next?

**Hirsch:** Well the next thing I did was to write an essay called Cultural Literacy. And the point of the phrase ‘cultural literacy’ was that that’s what these black students lacked of course was the unspoken background knowledge necessary to understand a passage on the Civil War. It wasn’t that they lacked reading ability; it wasn’t even that their vocabularies were excessively small; it was just basic factual information they lacked, which would enable them to understand what they read.

**FRAN:** What Hirsch had hit upon was a notion, which is now pretty much universally accepted at least by those who’ve had the opportunity to think about it for a bit.

While some people grew up in homes where all sorts of cultural knowledge was common currency - history, art, literature - others didn’t. So when they found themselves in the midst of a conversation about the American Civil War, or Rodin’s sculptures, they felt lost.

Hirsch started working on the fine detail of what *he* thought American children needed to know.

### **INSERT 6: HIRSCH**

**Hirsch:** What’s really needed is a compendium of the most important background knowledge that’s needed, so that the have nots so to speak become *haves*. And that’s the origin of the book Cultural Literacy.

**FRAN:** And what happened when the book came out, what was the reaction of the general public to this idea that in effect American Schools were failing a large number of young people?

**Hirsch:** Well what happened was that it touched a nerve and it did stay near the top of the best seller list for about 6 months. It was very heady for a time, because it made me optimistic that something would actually be done in the schools.

**FRAN:** Having caught the public imagination with this first book, and with his lists of words and facts that every well-rounded American should know, Hirsch then started thinking about how he could use this impetus to change what schools actually did.

Surely, he thought, the education system should be acting as a social leveller. He began to argue that while schools saw themselves as agents of social change, they weren't actually doing a very good job, because they weren't focusing on this core, cultural knowledge. And he started to think it was all about sequencing and structure.

### **INSERT 7: HIRSCH**

**Hirsch:** In the early grades, which are the critical grades for social justice, the idea that literature can do without the substantive knowledge is a dominant idea. And the focus has been on literature, fiction and poetry. So there were all these paradoxes in the schools that on the left were the people who were defending greater admission of people into their capacious American culture, but neglecting the things that would actually be enabling knowledge, for those very people. To my mind, the only really promising way of closing the gap between the intellectual *haves* and *have nots* is to do it through more systematic schooling and more content oriented schooling. Because content or general knowledge is the source of verbal ability, vocabulary size is a proxy of course for knowledge, but it's the single most accurate proxy for whether or not you have achieved educational equality of opportunity.

**FRAN:** And for instance, you lay down lists of words that children might be learning. I think there's a lesson about the Boston Tea Party in there isn't there and there's a list of vocabulary that accompanies it, harbour representatives and so on. It's quite prescribing!

**Hirsch:** Your main job as an early classroom teacher is to familiarise students with the overall context. And once they understand that overall context, then their learning words many times faster than they otherwise would. But on the other hand, if you do have a coherent curriculum, which is highly specific and cumulative, then vocabulary inherently is being built up faster because the context in which words occur are being understood much more and being learned much faster.

**FRAN:** The debate about what American children need to know, in order for social justice to be achieved, has been going on across the Atlantic for a couple of decades, but now it's starting to have some traction here, as well.

A couple of years ago, the right-leaning think-tank ‘Civitas’, decided to publish a series of books, based on Hirsch’s thinking: *What Your Child Needs To Know in Year One* for instance. Now the process has moved on a stage further.

### **INSERT 8: CHRISTODOULOU**

**Daisy Christodoulou:** If you look back through the historical conserves of this debate, generally it’s the left who realise that knowledge is power and that equal access and entitlement and knowledge is so important.

**FRAN:** Daisy Christodoulou’s, the Managing Director of the Curriculum Centre. And it’s working to promote these ideas in schools across England. She’s working with the Pimlico Academy Primary School. And she talks with great passion about the way in which, for her, Hirsch’s work fits with a proud, working class tradition.

### **INSERT 9: CHRISTODOULOU**

**Daisy Christodoulou:** Plenty of Trade Unionists and plenty of the early members of the Labour Movement recognise this too. Robert Tressell in *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropist* said this: “What we call civilisation, the accumulation of knowledge which has come down to us from our forefathers is the fruit of thousands of years of human thought and toil. It is not the result of the labour of the ancestors of any separate class of people who exist today. And therefore, it is by right the common heritage of all”. And if you look at the language that Tressell uses there, I think you see very clearly the similar ideas that Hirsch is talking about that there is a common heritage of knowledge and every pupil, every citizen in this country has a right to sharing that knowledge.

**FRAN:** I think I have to come clean at this point. I’m really attracted to these ideas. There *is* a long history of working class movements in this country, who’ve seen knowledge as a route to empowerment and it strikes a real chord with me.

My great granddad was a cooper, a barrel-maker and he was an early member of the Labour Movement. He used to take his kids to the Ancoats Brotherhood in Manchester, to hear classical music or poetry on a Sunday instead of going to church. That’s how my granny grew up to be a teacher.

And I love it that Daisy quotes Robert Tressell! All those images of horny-handed sons of toil, sitting on upturned buckets reading political tracts, seem to do something for me.

Am I being a cliché? Well, if I am, at least it means I’m not on my own. Actually, I think there are thousands of people out there who’d have similar stories to tell. Daisy has this in her family, too.

### **INSERT 10: CHRISTODOULOU**

**Daisy Christodoulou:** My father was, his father was an immigrant from Cyprus and his mother was also an immigrant from Italy. And he remembers going to school in the East End using the school mostly with indigenous British kids. And he remembers going into school very often and not knowing what they were talking about. He remembers once going in and the newspapers were all talking about Khrushchev and Mr K and Kennedy and Sputnik and he didn't really have an idea about anything of these things. And just generally you know when he was at school that he felt that there was a conversation going on he was excluded from, and he could go home and ask his parents, but his parents didn't have the answers either. And he didn't want me to have that experience at school; he wanted me to be able to go into school and to know what was going on.

### **INSERT 11: UNIVERSITY CHALLENGE SIGNATURE TUNE**

### **INSERT 12: UNIVERSITY CHALLENGE ACT. I**

**Jeremy Paxman:** What two verbs follow 'reduce' in the environmentalist slogan, sometimes called the 'three 'R's'?

**Voice over:** Warwick - Christodoulou.

**Daisy Christodoulou:** Re-use, recycle.

**Jeremy Paxman:** Correct. Another starter question. In March 2006, which newly formed party led by Ehud Olmert became...

**Voice over:** Warwick - Christodoulou.

**Daisy Christodoulos:** Kadima.

**Jeremy Paxman:** Kadima is right.

**FRAN:** Daisy's certainly an embodiment of Hirsch's idea that factual knowledge is the route to educational success. In 2007, she was on the winning team in Granada Productions *University Challenge*.

### **INSERT 13: UNIVERSITY CHALLENGE ACT. 2**

**Jeremy Paxman:** What literary form did Kant say was the art of conducting a free play of the imagination as if it were a serious business of the understanding?

**Voice over:** Warwick - Christodoulou.

**Daisy Christodoulou:** Poetry.

**Jeremy Paxman:** Poetry's correct.



**FRAN:** In fact, she answered so many questions right over the series that headlines in the papers asked: “Is Daisy Britain’s Brightest Student?”

Of course, not everyone had agreed with her about Hirsch being the product of a long, proud, left-wing tradition. Far from it. In fact, according to the man himself, people on the left started to *attack* his ideas, almost as soon as *he’d* started to articulate them.

#### **INSERT 14: HIRSCH**

**Hirsch:** Oh, well, I was the evil empire and I was wanting to preserve the claim was ‘white Anglo Saxon male dominance’ in American life and culture. And of course that was paradoxical because that’s precisely what I was working not to preserve.

**FRAN:** If there was a problem, what was the political philosophy or the educational philosophy if you like that that was causing the problem?

**Hirsch:** That philosophy goes back of course to the romantics that learning should be natural. That book learning was somehow inferior to practical knowledge.

{SEGUE}

#### **INSERT 15: GIBB**

**Nick Gibb:** An approach to education came in the 1920s with education academics such as John Dewey, based on a romantic Rousseauian philosophy that said that children can learn by self discovery, that didactic teaching wasn’t necessary, that they learn their developmentally ready, that life skills are more important than actual academic knowledge.

**FRAN:** Until the recent reshuffle, Conservative MP Nick Gibb, was the Schools Minister in England and the right-hand man of the Education Secretary, Michael Gove.

How current are those left-wing ideas in this country at the moment?

#### **INSERT 16: GIBB**

**Nick Gibb:** Oh they are very current. They have dominated the educational orthodoxy in Britain, really over the last four or five/six decades and they’ve become increasingly dominant during that period.

**FRAN:** Nick Gibb’s just been overseeing a major review of the curriculum in England. And he’s a true believer in the philosophy of E.D. Hirsch. So much so, in fact, that when I met him, he arrived with a little pile of Hirsch’s books all well-thumbed, and adorned with yellow Post-it notes.

Let's be honest. Most modern-day followers of Hirsch aren't really trade unionists, or political campaigners. They're much more likely to be found, like Mr. Gibb, on the right of the political spectrum. He sees Hirsch as a kind of antidote to left-wing romanticism, a type of thinking he believes has really got a grip on the national curriculum.

### **INSERT 17: GIBB**

**Nick Gibb:** If you just look at for example, the history curriculum it's all about skills, chronological understanding, change in continuity, causes and consequences, it's not about...

**FRAN:** Let's have a look it's err this is the current national curriculum for history?

**Nick Gibb:** Yes. The key stage.

**FRAN:** Key Stage 3.

**Nick Gibb:** Yeah, so if you look...

**FRAN:** And we're looking at the headings that young people would be following.

**Nick Gibb:** Yes, key, key concepts so...

**FRAN:** Yes.

**Nick Gibb:** So chronological understanding, cause and consequence, analyzing and explaining the reasons for the historical event. If you go through this curriculum, you won't find a reference to William the Conqueror or Bill of Rights or the Civil War or...

**FRAN:** No because I mean there are schemes of work aren't there you know within that, I mean this is the kind of overriding list of sort of skills that are being taught, but there are schemes of work, which which would spell out more detail.

**Nick Gibb:** Yes of course are not statutory. I've seen a lesson, a history lesson where they had a portrait of Henry VII on the interactive white board and they had to intuit from that piece of evidence things about Henry VII. And children were coming up with things like 'oh Henry VII must have been rich', 'he was full of himself, look at his clothes'. And really I don't think that's a very good use of time in a tight timetable at school, they really ought to be learning the actual knowledge, the story of the history.

{SEGUE}

### **INSERT 18: POLLARD**

**Andrew Pollard:** I'm sure you can find examples of that sort just as you can find examples of cramming of of knowledge. And I think there's no doubt either that

more emphasis on knowledge and facts and so forth, is not necessarily a bad idea. But I don't think caricatures of practice help us greatly.

**FRAN:** Professor Andrew Pollard's a curriculum expert, and he doesn't agree with the former Minister that lessons in English schools are 'content light' and neither do I, actually.

As a former education correspondent, I've probably sat through hundreds of lessons over the past twenty years or so. The over-riding impression I'm left with is that most of them are rich in knowledge. In fact, there's been an increasing focus on knowledge, as English schools have become ever more exam driven.

But this debate's not really about whether schools are teaching enough facts or not, it's a bit more philosophical. On the one hand, you have people like Mr. Gibb who say lessons should be all about knowledge and that children will pick up the skills as they learn. And on the other, you have people who say the lessons should be all about skills - and that knowledge can be built in around that.

Professor Sir Michael Barber used to be Tony Blair's Chief Adviser on Policy Implementation, and he's now Chief Education Adviser at Pearson, one of the world's biggest educational publishers. He says there *is* a third way.

### **INSERT 19: BARBER**

**Sir Michael Barber:** The road to Hell in education is paved with false dichotomies. If you think of knowledge as two aspects: knowing what, knowing content, knowing information about history or literature or whatever or mathematics for that matter and then also, knowing how, how to do something. So take Pythagoras Theorem and is that knowledge or skills? Well actually it's knowledge cos you don't know how the theorem works, but it's skills, cos unless you can actually apply it in real situations it's not very useful. So knowing what and knowing how knowledge and skills go together. And we have this pretty absurd debate in my view of separating knowledge from skills, when actually a lot of the time they go together there in an integrated whole.

**FRAN:** Sir Michael's right, but it does seem that across the UK the debate's becoming more polarized, rather than less.

In England, the knowledge-based Hirschians seem to be in the ascendancy.

In Scotland, they're more keen on the skills-based approach. They've introduced something called the 'Curriculum for Excellence'. It's built around what are called 'capacities' and it's all about moving children on from being 'successful learners' to being 'confident individuals' and then from being 'confident individuals' to being 'responsible citizens'.

When I met Mr. Gibb he'd brought a copy of it with him and again, he alighted on the history section.

### **INSERT 20: GIBB**

**Nick Gibb:** You could actually teach anything to fulfill the obligation in this curriculum: "I can evaluate conflicting sources of evidence to sustain a line of argument." Well they could teach that in the context of the English history or another subject altogether. We've seen a lot of that in the English curriculum where that does seem to have been in recent years an over emphasis on the Tudors and the Second World War and very little else in-between, and I think that is a huge error.

**FRAN:** It sounds almost though as if part of this philosophy is that obviously we can't know all the facts, but the facts we do know, we all have to know the same ones, so that we can converse about them.

**Nick Gibb:** I think that is the essence of what Hirsch is talking about. He says and if I could just quote, he says 'its not just any knowledge, it's only that knowledge which constitutes the shared intellectual currency of the society.'

**FRAN:** So, Mr. Gibb's problem isn't necessarily that children aren't learning facts, but that they might not all be learning the right ones? Hmm, this is starting to sound a little bit scary to me.

I do buy the idea that knowledge is really central and important, but I'm not sure whether we really have to teach it in *quite* such a regimented way. The Scottish curriculum's a lot more free and easy than the version Mr. Gibb would like to see in England. And it's starting to look like a repudiation of all that's Hirschean.

Ruth Wishart's the Chair of a Group, which is drawing up a plan to implement the new Scottish Curriculum. What does she think distinguishes Scotland's approach, from England's?

### **INSERT 21: WISHART**

**Ruth Wishart:** The difference is that the teachers are encouraged to impart the knowledge in their subject matter in more creative ways. And one of the ways in which we've been trying to do that is to feed creativity and indeed all the expressive arts through all of the curriculum, so that when your teaching history or English or science or any of these very important core subjects, you're teaching them in a way that allows the learner to be creative, be imaginative, be innovative and to think for themselves because employers are wanting people who can work in a team, who can be imaginative, who can be innovative, who can think laterally. And you know we, when I listen to Mr Gove explaining his new curriculum, it almost seemed to me as if he was ordering a new load of bios in an age of the laptop.

**FRAN:** Ruth Wishart's talking about the ongoing review of the national curriculum in England, which actually has E.D. Hirsch at its heart. Michael Gove, the Education

Secretary is certainly keen to inject more of Hirsch's ideas into English schools. He told MPs earlier this year that far from seeing this as old-fashioned, he expected schools to embrace it as the Pimlico School I visited already has.

### **INSERT 22: GOVE SELECT COMM. PARL. ACT.**

**Michael Gove:** I think if I tried to apply an E.D Hirsch style curriculum across the board in every respect, they will be a lot of pushback from some schools. But there are some schools that are already doing it for themselves, for example, Pimlico Academy has created or is in the process of creating its own very very knowledge based curriculum and it may well be that the success that that generates lead other people to look at what's happening there.

**FRAN:** Mr. Gove said he didn't want to force schools to adopt Hirsch's ideas. But some members of the expert panel set up to provide advice on his curriculum review, think that's just what he *is* doing.

Professor Andrew Pollard was one of its four members. It came up with a perfectly sensible conclusion, so sensible in fact as to be completely unremarkable. Education, it said, is 'The product of interaction between knowledge and individual development.' Well, of course it is.

But Mr. Gove and Mr. Gibb *didn't* entirely agree with that, they wanted more of the knowledge and less of the individual development and they wanted it laid out as Hirsch recommends in specific, year-by-year detail.

According to Professor Pollard, the notion that teachers should have the freedom to decide *when* children should learn what, and how, was rejected. He's deeply disappointed by the outcome.

### **INSERT 23: POLLARD**

**Andrew Pollard:** I do think that Ministers have a responsibility to to do no harm and I think at the present time, there is some risk that what they're proposing will actually reduce the quality of learning and reduce the breadth of education that's available in primary schools. I think also that despite the rhetoric about opportunities, it's quite possible that what is proposed will increase inequality and the disadvantaged will become more disadvantaged. And the system that is being created is very likely I think to make it very hard for teachers to exercise that judgment.

**FRAN:** Of course, things have changed a bit in the government since Professor Pollard's group did its report. Nick Gibb's been replaced as Schools Minister by David Laws. Would the new, Hirsch-inspired curriculum, survive, I wondered? Mr. Gibb's answer was pithy.

**{INSERT FOLLOWS}**

### **INSERT 24: GIBB**

**Nick Gibb:** Well, I hope so I know the Secretary of State read the book. And at every stage as we've drafted the primary curriculum, he has been deeply engaged in it and has its own views and they have not differed from my view.

**FRAN:** So, it looks as if the curriculum will survive. Is that a good thing? Actually, I have my doubts about both sides in this debate. I'm not entirely convinced teachers have really been swept away on quite such a tide of Rousseauan philosophy as Mr. Gibb would have us believe. But I do find all this stuff about children needing to be taught things like enthusiasm and self-respect a bit, well, woolly.

What I'm really feeling at this point, a need for some hard evidence. Sir Michael Barber's just published a paper on schools around the world. Some of the best-performing countries are actually not in Europe or the Americas, he says, but in Asia.

### **INSERT 25: BARBER**

**Sir Michael Barber:** What we see in those systems is very clear standards of what is expected of children at different ages, particularly in maths, the national language and English. We see very high quality teaching in every classroom, so very very consistent. We see very good school leadership. We see increasing amounts of devolution of responsibility to the school level within that context and we see very passionate committed parents who believe that their children can succeed regardless of their background.

**FRAN:** What Sir Michael's found is that the people, who think the curriculum's the answer, are asking the wrong question. It's a tired old left-right debate, he says, and it's time we moved on. But he doesn't dismiss Hirsch, for all that.

{INSERT FOLLOWS}

### **INSERT 26: BARBER**

**Sir Michael Barber:** This division of the facts on the right of the political spectrum and the skills on the left of the political spectrum, there's certainly a truth in it, but it's one of those false dichotomies we really need to get over. In specific Asia, they get more children making more progress and they have a less of an equity gap than we have in Britain or has been traditionally the case in the United States.

**FRAN:** Yes I mean I think that's probably the big discovery that Hirsch felt he had made isn't it? Hirsch felt that what he had learned from working with young people who didn't come from intellectually rich backgrounds if you like was that the children who were assumed to lack talent, were actually children who lacked cultural capital.

**Sir Michael Barber:** Right and I think Hirsch made a big contribution to our collective thinking around the world through precisely that in the same way that literacy with words or mathematical success is important, cultural literacy is

important. So if I thought about the next steps whether in Britain or any other country around the world, the gold standard is not somewhere lost in the past, its out there in the best countries in the world.

**FRAN:** So, a more fact-based curriculum isn't necessarily the way to help children from the poorest backgrounds to achieve.

But what Sir Michael Barber points to is a kind of route towards pulling out what's good about Hirsch, without pandering to what's not. What's not, in my view, is the idea that children have to learn facts in a rigidly structured manner. And what's certainly not, is this notion that the central problem in the education system's got something to do with teachers being steeped in Woodcraft Folk-style romanticism. But there is something right at the core of Hirsch, that's really worth hanging on to. It's a belief that most children are capable of achieving that cultural literacy, he talks about so eloquently.

*If* what came out of all this was a growing consensus that knowledge matters, and that we all - parents, teachers, politicians - need to do more to ensure children get it, that *would* be progress.

**END OF SCRIPT.**