

Family Education Trust

(Family and Youth Concern)

A Company Limited by Guarantee No. 3503533; Registered Charity No. 1070500

Jubilee House, 19-21 High Street, Whitton, Twickenham TW2 7LB

tel: 020 8894 2525 fax: 020 8894 3535

e-mail: info@familyeducation.plus.com web-site: www.famyouth.org.uk

UN Committee persists in seeking to impose its radical social agenda on the UK

3 October 2008 - For immediate release

The United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child has consistently taken liberties with the text of the Convention and its latest report on the UK is no exception, according to the independent research charity, Family Education Trust. The Committee, which has gained a reputation for adopting extreme interpretations on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, is once again seeking to impose its own view on the discipline of children by demanding that the UK government introduces legislation that would criminalise parents for the mildest of smacks.

In its 21-page report on the UK, the Committee recommends that the government 'prohibit as a matter of priority all corporal punishment in the family, including through the repeal of all legal defences'.

Family Education Trust director, Norman Wells, commented:

'The Committee has strayed way beyond the bounds of any natural reading of the Convention in its determination to force all parents to conform to its own unproven philosophy of parenting. It never crossed the minds of the original framers of the Convention to make it a criminal offence for parents to employ a moderate disciplinary smack; and very few governments would have signed up to the Convention had it been put to them that they would subsequently be required to introduce such a draconian measure.'

The truth is that present legislation throughout the UK is entirely compatible with the requirement of the Convention that states protect children 'from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse' (Article 19). All such treatment is already prohibited by law. As far as moderate parental discipline that causes no injury is concerned, the Convention is completely silent.

Trustees: Arthur Cornell MEd F.Coll.P (Chairman); Betty, Lady Grantchester; Dr John Guly MB BS DMJ;
Eric Hester BA (Vice Chairman); Dr Joseph Lim BPharm, MRPharmS, PhD; Simon J Ling MA FCA (Hon Treasurer);
Mrs Valerie Riches (Founder President); Dr Trevor Stammers BSc FRCGP; Robert Whelan MA Director: Norman Wells FRSA

Sponsors: Professor John Bonnar MA MD FRCOG; The Viscountess Brentford OBE; Peter Dawson OBE BSc FRSA;
The Baroness Elles; Michael McKenzie CB QC; The Duke of Montrose; The Baroness O'Cathain OBE; Professor Dennis O'Keefe

The Committee is not consistent in its view of children. Norman Wells observed:

‘There is a strange anomaly in the report in that at the same time as calling for an absolute ban on all physical correction of children, the UN Committee is also pressing for a considerable rise in the minimum age for criminal responsibility. It seems that in one breath they want children to be treated exactly the same as adults, while in the next breath they want them to be treated differently. They want children to have adult rights but not adult responsibilities.’

The extreme and inconsistent views of the Committee give rise to serious concern about its proposal that the Convention should be incorporated into UK law. Norman Wells remarked:

‘The Convention itself is framed in very broad terms. The problem arises when the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child comes along and presumes to give a definitive interpretation of its meaning and then reserves the right to change that interpretation at whim. It needs to be kept in mind that the members of this Committee are unrepresentative and unaccountable and their interpretations are not binding.’

‘We need to appreciate that family relationships are very personal and individual matters, and each family is shaped and influenced by social, cultural, religious and philosophical factors which are not common to every other family. Values and standards will therefore differ from family to family and this will be reflected in the way children are brought up. To introduce the language of “rights” into family relationships runs the risk of engendering a spirit of conflict and turning parents against their children and children against their parents which can be very damaging.’

ENDS

Family Education Trust is an educational charity committed to promoting stable family life and the welfare of children and young people.

Trustees: Arthur Cornell MEd F.Coll.P (Chairman); Betty, Lady Grantchester; Dr John Guly MB BS DMJ;
Eric Hester BA (Vice Chairman); Dr Joseph Lim BPharm, MRPharmS, PhD; Simon J Ling MA FCA (Hon Treasurer);
Mrs Valerie Riches (Founder President); Dr Trevor Stammers BSc FRCGP; Robert Whelan MA Director: Norman Wells FRSA

Sponsors: Professor John Bonnar MA MD FRCOG; The Viscountess Brentford OBE; Peter Dawson OBE BSc FRSA;
The Baroness Elles; Michael McKenzie CB QC; The Duke of Montrose; The Baroness O’Cathain OBE; Professor Dennis O’Keeffe