

National Affairs by Claire Hoy ? ?What?s the hurry here??

You just knew it wouldn't take long.

At the first sign of criticism by a social conservative of Premier Kathleen Wynne's new sex education policy, you knew they'd scream ?homophobe? from the rafters.

And you also knew that the media, with rare exceptions, would buy into, thereby conveniently shutting off any serious debate about a topic which will undoubtedly have a profound impact upon several generations of children.

But that's the way ?liberal tolerance? works. Applaud and you're terrific. Disagree and you're obviously a bigot. You must be. After all, what other explanation can there be somebody not immediately ready to accept their enlightened view of the world.

And so it came to pass ? predictably ? that two Tory MPPs made comments they would have been better not to have made, when criticizing Wynne's new policy.

Leadership contender Monte McNaughton told a group of protestors at Queen's Park that ?It's not the premier of Ontario's job ? especially Kathleen Wynne ? to tell parents what's age-appropriate for their children.?

Wynne immediately jumped on that, saying the only reason he would say she wasn't qualified was because she is a lesbian and therefore McNaughton ? and apparently, given the subsequent coverage, all the Tories at Queen's Park ? are homophobes.

To make things worse, backbench Tory MPP Rick Nicholls took the opportunity to announce that he does not believe in the theory of evolution. Now that's an odd belief to be sure, but given the constant bleatings of liberals about the importance of the right to believe whatever it is you wish to believe, one might have thought an eye-roll or two would suffice.

Instead, several Liberals showed up in the Legislature waving National Geographic magazines with the cover ?War on Science.? As Toronto Sun columnist Christina Blizzard pointed out, nobody mocked one of Wynne's own backbenchers who came in on Ash Wednesday with an ash cross on his head. ?I didn't hear them laughing at him,? she wrote.

?Nor should they. Religion is a personal thing and we should respect the freedom of folk to worship anything any way they want.? It was all enough to prompt the Toronto Star to write an editorial saying the Tories aren't fit to govern. This is because they disagree with two MPPs. Yet the same paper is generally supportive to a government which is currently undergoing several OPP investigations. That's all right, apparently. But stray from liberal theological/political doctrine and you're doomed to political hell. The fact of the matter is that the Liberals only introduced the sex-ed stuff when they did in order to deflect attention from their ongoing scandals.

The two Tories are under no obligation to change their views to seek a formal blessing from Wynne and Company, but they should have known better than to give their opponents the opportunity to heap scorn upon them, thereby muting legitimate criticism of the sex-ed bill and helping undermine their future electoral chances.

As regular readers will know, your humble correspondent is an unapologetic social conservative and, as such, I am concerned with some aspects of Wynne's brave new world order.

Nothing wrong with presenting certain realities to kids, i.e. that some people prefer sex with their own gender rather than the opposite gender. But is this really something that eight-year-olds are ready to understand and appreciate? What's the hurry here?

Those of us on this side of the ledger often worry that instead of the teaching of a curriculum it can ? and often does ? turn into outright advocacy.

There are many Ontarians ? not all of them social conservatives ? who are not happy about the notion of telling eight-year-olds that essentially the moral values which have persisted for thousands of years are of no consequence whatsoever and in fact everything is essentially a moral equivalent.

Nothing wrong with believing in that, but kids at eight aren't exactly ready to appreciate the distinction between teaching a reality and advocating it.

My favourite column on all this was written by Andrew Coyne in the National Post, who points out that the cardinal sin of many social conservatives is not just that they actually hold those views ? which, for the most part, Coyne doesn't ? but that they dare to express them. And when they do, of course, they're immediately ridiculed and labeled as extremists, or worse.

??lots of social conservatives aren't extremists? They have a right to their opinions, a right to be different, however disquieting it may be to uptight party grandees and squeamish members of the press.?

Amen to that.

