

Oh Alan, the yoof of today and yesteryear are the same — wayward until sacrificed

Education Minister Alan Tudge goes for the culture war hat-trick, complaining that woke black-armband history will stop the kids of today from becoming the soldiers of tomorrow.

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Education Minister Alan Tudge

Today in a speech to the Centre for Independent studies, Education Minister Alan Tudge returns to a familiar refrain — the best way to celebrate the freedoms of this great nation is to shut down certain avenues of thought about important moments in our history. Going for the culture war hat-trick, he added that all this woke black-armband hand-wringing over Anzac day would compromise national security:

We should expect our young people leaving school to have an understanding of our liberal democracy and how it is that we are one of the wealthiest, most free, most tolerant and most egalitarian countries in all of human history, which millions have immigrated to. If they don't learn this, they won't defend it as previous generations did.

Tudge is really demonstrating what a traditionalist he is here — we've despaired over the Yoof for most of recorded history, way back with Aristotle's complaints that the young are "high-minded because they have not yet been humbled by life, nor have they experienced the force of circumstances".

Our personal favourite comes from a letter in *Town and Country* magazine from 1771: “Whither are the manly vigour and athletic appearance of our forefathers flown? Can these be their legitimate heirs? Surely, no; a race of effeminate, self-admiring, emaciated fribbles can never have descended in a direct line from the heroes of Poitiers and Agincourt...”

And this should give Tudge a bit of reassurance — shortly before they shipped off to fight the Nazis, the greatest generations’ parents were being critiqued for having “frequently failed in their obvious duty to teach self-control and discipline to their own children” (from “Problems of Young People”, *Leeds Mercury*, 1938). Meanwhile the youth who were about to give their lives to defeat the spread of fascism were apparently apathetic and apolitical on account of all that (cinema) screen time:

Cinemas and motor cars were blamed for a flagging interest among young people in present-day politics by ex-Provost JK Rutherford... [He] said he had been told by people in different political parties that it was almost impossible to get an audience for political meetings. There were, of course, many distractions such as the cinema...

“Young People and Politics” Kirkintilloch Herald, 1938

On average, 80,000 people apply to work in the ADF annually, and about 8,000 of get accepted. This surged during 2020 — applications went up by 42% compared to the previous year, although that trend reversed this year.

We’d also argue that maybe it is the long-term culture issues in Australia’s military and the apparent failures and delays of reform attempts, the horrifying revelations of the Brereton report and the defamation case Ben Roberts-Smith brought against Nine that are having an impact on kids’ views of how sweet and fitting it is to die for one’s country.

Perhaps growing up shadowed by the forever wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, a cataclysmic waste of hundreds of thousands of lives and trillions of dollars, a failure based on lies and shoddy evidence that achieved precisely the opposite of its stated aims, has had a bigger impact than being told the observable and undeniable fact that Anzac Day is and always has been a contested idea?