

Driving Mum Crazy

UK TV documentary : 2000 : dir. : Channel 5 : ? min
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Guardian - 14/12/2000 - review:

"Good old Channel 5 - not one, but two unremarkable programmes on the same subject. Last year, in **"Driving Mum Crazy"**, we were introduced to hyperactive problem child Tayler Lawler and her mother Louise. Last night, in a new series of **"Driving Mum Crazy"**, we were introduced to them again to catch up on how spitting, swearing Tayler was faring now that assorted ologists had queued up to pump her with drugs and poke around her psyche.

In short, she was no better, and now faces the prospect of being sent to live with foster parents. Meanwhile, her mother and her five siblings have been placed on the "At Risk" register [*sic*]. But I think I know what Channel 5 are up to here. They're hoping that New Labour will adopt their Lawler saga as a propaganda tool for Tony Blair's "family values" onslaught, buying up millions of copies with which to bombard schools, social services, child psychiatrists and pregnant women. After all, its pitiless exposé of Louise's inability to stop

breeding children round the clock by a variety of unseen fathers is the perfect cautionary tale, spotlighting selfish exploitation of scarce NHS resources and incidentally warning the viewer that if you give your children ridiculous Sunset Beach-style names like "Tayler", then you're asking for trouble.

It would take the barest minimum of spin to build Louise into the perfect figurehead for a "How Not To" campaign on single parenting. Most mothers already burdened with five kids - including a severely disturbed one who's steadily driving them round the bend - would almost certainly conclude that what they needed was fewer mouths to feed. Not Louise, though. Now she's got six children, and lives in terror that they'll end up in care, as she herself did."
- Adam Sweeting

No further information currently available. Lucky foster parents, who are due to get saddled with such a brat. "Brat" is the Real English translation of "hyperactive problem child", "attention deficit disorder sufferers", and suchlike PC verbiage. Sweeting's tart commentary seems to wish that ugly little corners of reality like this were not drawn to our notice, since they expose the failings, not only of some parents who are quite unequal to the job, but of the social worker regime which has (among other things) abolished "corporal punishment" only to replace it by pumping children full of "behaviour modifying" drugs (without, in this case, the requisite effect). Parenthood, for the "Guardian" as much as the rest of Blairy Britain, is a sacred cow one criticises at one's peril. But why **should** a woman, with no visible means of support, be permitted to carry on blithely producing more and more children as of right, leaving society at large to pick up the tab for feeding and clothing them? Sweeting shrinks in

horror from drawing such a conclusion, because it smacks too much of right wing middle-class prejudice. But at a time when other parents across the developed world are limiting their family size in consideration of the true cost of child-raising, it is simple antisocial conduct to breed a large family at other people's expense. One doesn't need to be a Conservative Home Secretary to arrive at that conclusion.

The absentee fathers, for their part, are not merely derelicting their parental responsibilities, but rutting like steers and going their merry way as though the fallout of their sexual appetites were just little markers along the road of their rake's progress. But the mother, in these times, is no less to blame for agreeing to intercourse with men who will not deign to wear a condom. Contraception is a two-way responsibility, but so is the agreement to have sex. And to stray still further from the confines of received wisdom, one does not need to be a eugenicist to think it a Bad Thing that socially irresponsible, inept parents are avidly out-breeding the rest of the population. This is self-evidently to store up woes for the future.

As to the child with the TV soap name, is her aberrant behaviour incidental to all of this? Is obnoxiousness in a child rightly to be regarded as an illness, when in adults it would be judged straightforward offensive behaviour? By what logic is a football thug a menace to society at 20, but a problem in behavioural adjustment at 6? This is the second shibboleth we must never challenge – there are no bad children, only bad environments to grow up in. Unfortunately, there **are** bad children, bad parents, bad homes and bad environments, and the real conundrum is how to recognise which is which. I'm afraid that, in my unreconstructed reactionary view, I believe young Tayler Lawler needed a sound good hiding before being packed off to a boarding school where civilised behaviour was not an option she could choose to dispense with. And all those social workers and "ologists" would be more gainfully employed in waste recycling.

See subject index under **BRATS / SPOILT CHILDREN** and **DOCUMENTAIRIES**.