

Tekst 1

Ruled by the politics of the playground

Anybody who was ever called unkind names at school must be gasping with astonishment this weekend at the news that the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) has thought fit to bring criminal charges against a 10-year-old who is said to have called an 11-year-old schoolmate a “Paki” and “Bin Laden” in the
5 playground. According to the boy, the older child had called him “white trash”. But they remain good friends, say his parents.

Every word uttered by Jonathan Finestein, the District Court Judge who is hearing the case at Salford Youth Court, rang with common sense. The decision to prosecute, he said, was ‘crazy’. It was ‘political correctness gone mad’. “I was
10 repeatedly called fat at school,” said the judge. “Does this amount to a criminal offence? ... Nobody is more against racist abuse than me, but these are boys in a playground, this is nonsense ... There must be other ways of dealing with this apart from criminal prosecution. In the old days, the headmaster would have got them both and given them a good clouting.”

15 The judge had other home truths to tell, which ought to give the Greater Manchester Police and the CPS pause for thought. “This is how stupid the whole system is getting,” he said. “There are major crimes out there and the police don’t bother to prosecute. If you get your car stolen, it doesn’t matter, but you get two kids falling out ... this is nonsense.”

20 But even more breathtaking than the decision by the CPS to prosecute is the fact that so many people have sought to defend it. We understand why the police in Greater Manchester have refused to acknowledge how stupidly they have behaved. It is much less trouble for them, after all, to pursue schoolchildren for calling each other names in the playground than to catch proper criminals. But it
25 is harder to understand why the teachers’ unions are supporting the CPS and attacking the judge. They really ought to think harder about where the true interests of children lie.

Judge Finestein and the two schoolfriends whose playground quarrel provoked all this nonsense have a great deal to teach the police, the CPS and the unions
30 about growing up.

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- “Anybody who ... with astonishment” (lines 1-2)
- 1p 1 Which of the following quotations explains the thought behind this remark?
- A “the older child had called him ‘white trash’” (line 5)
 - B “But they remain good friends” (line 6)
 - C “I was repeatedly called fat at school” (lines 9-10)
 - D “There must ... criminal prosecution.” (lines 12-13)
- “have a great deal to teach the police” (line 29)
- 1p 2 Which of the following lessons is meant here?
- A Anybody who feels insulted by another party should bring the matter to court.
 - B Pupils should not be allowed to use abusive language at school.
 - C Schoolboy quarrels should be settled without the assistance of a court of law.
 - D The police should also pay attention to what they consider trivial cases.
- 2p 3 Geef voor elk van de volgende citaten aan of deze wel of niet weergeeft dat de schrijver het eens is met rechter Finestein.
- 1 “Every word ... common sense.” (lines 7-8)
 - 2 “The judge ... for thought.” (lines 15-16)
 - 3 “We understand ... have behaved.” (lines 21-23)
 - 4 “They really ... children lie.” (lines 26-27)
- Noteer het nummer van elk citaat, gevolgd door “wel” of “niet”.