

SPEECH

The right to education is such a fundamental right, it's so impossibly ingrained into our society that until I saw the topic of this speech, I hadn't actually had a proper thought about what that means to me. The vast majority of people I know would agree with me, you wake up, go to school, put your head down and do some work, talk to your friends and then go home. The one comfort in the monotony of this routine is that you get to leave. Around 40-60% of students enjoy school, but the majority of students acknowledge the fact that school is important. I'm grateful for my right to education, had I not had the right I would without a doubt be working in the mines or cleaning someone's chimney. Having an education, to me, means that I get to have a real chance at succeeding at life, by my merit of success anyways. Although it does beg the question, why aren't we ALL receiving the same education?

The Human Rights Act 1998, refers to the "Right of every child of school age to be provided with school education by, or by virtue of arrangements made, or entered into, by an education authority", and section 2(1) of the 2000 Act, which states that, in providing education, it shall be the duty of each education authority to secure education that is - "directed to the development of the child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential". By now in the big 2025 we have established the fact that we are all equal, everyone regardless of race, gender, sexuality, disabilities, and where they come from. However, there is an elephant in the room, before I address it, I just want to say that it's not a personal attack towards anyone, hate the game, not the player. I have two words for you, privatised education. We are all equal and have the same rights, we are all entitled to education and yet if you pay, you can receive significantly better education than everyone else. And while there are some kids that have scholarships to private schools, that makes up 7% of all students in private education. To put it bluntly, it's a class thing. It has always been a class thing. Now being in a private school does not guarantee a good future or a well-paying job, it does significantly increase the chances of doing so. Going to a private school increases your chances of getting into Oxbridge by 36%, and 55% of private school students pursue higher education at a russell group university. 45% of Oxbridge students have been privately educated despite only 5.9% of people going to private schools. Now I understand that what I'm saying isn't particularly groundbreaking, paying for a better education will open a lot more doors for you, it's common sense. But is it fair though? I have the right to an education, but it's not a very good one. Why would you need

to send your children to privatised schooling unless the public one is inadequate.

Onto a much more recent topic, the proposal for the school leaving age to be decreased to 14. Now 14 years old, in my opinion, is way too young to even be thinking about leaving school. I'm 14 almost 15 and I still have no idea on what I'd like to do when I'm older, and many of my peers have no idea either. Personally I do not think that at 14 you should be able to make that decision. But I'd just like you to think about what kinds of jobs or apprenticeships you could even take at that age, it's manual labour. And I'm not sure if it's just me, but giving children with very little education manual labour jobs sounds very 1800's to me. Not to mention the fact that those most inclined to drop out of school early are kids from poorer working class backgrounds. In Russell Findlays speech he says 'And for Scotland's economy, it would mean:

More skilled workers to help businesses grow.

A stronger workforce to attract overseas investors.

And fewer skills gaps which feed an unsustainable reliance on immigration.'

Now the first two sound alright to me, but that last statement raises a couple alarm bells. To me, it sounds like they want children, emphasis on children to be learning how and doing very low paid and physically taxing jobs, because enough people aren't coming over, mostly due to Brexit. It could also be because of the mass discrimination and stigmatism towards immigrants, but you never know.

Now to me, this completely contradicts the rights act as previously mentioned 'it shall be the duty of each education authority to secure that education is "directed to the development of the child's personality, talents, mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential." This doesn't sound like it's going to do that, it feels as though they're casting poorer children that don't do as well in school into the shadows, to do the jobs no one wants to do and in turn making the exam results look much better. How could I ever get a good job if I dropped out now? I would have absolutely nothing to prove my merit with, no grades, no National 5's or higher's. I could mention that I'm really good at trivia or that I took all three sciences, doesn't matter.

So, to me, MY right to education means that as soon as I step into the classroom, I'm encouraged. That I have a fair and equal shot at life, regardless of where I'm from or what my parents do for a living.

Thank you.