Don't encourage teenagers to become career politicians [1]

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Do we really want more politicians? Even worse, do we really want more do-gooder teenagers to aspire to be career politicians? The UK Youth Parliament [3] is one of those things that probably sounded good in theory, but in practice has ended up a bit of an embarrassment to those involved who should know better.

I don?t really object the ?Members of Youth Parliament? themselves ? it?s all a bit earnest and precocious, but they?re young and it?s hard to justify any strong dislike towards them. But it?s important to recognise that the Youth Parliament isn?t a debating forum ? it?s a backslapping ?youth advocacy? organization. Having watched part of it today, I can attest that few of the issues discussed are really debated at all.

Few teenagers have heard of the ?Youth Parliament? ? these ?MYPs? are not representative in any way. Frankly, if the ?MYPs? were characters from the teen comedy The Inbetweeners [4], it?s pretty obvious that they would all be Will, the show?s nerdy, self-righteous narrator.

The grown-ups behind the UKYP are railroading these earnest kids into political careers. I think I?d rather that they be encouraged to read a good book [5] and figure out what it is that they believe, rather than allowing them to indulge in their adolescent tantrums about university fees and the like. It?s easy to bash careerist politicians, and with good reason: rather than doing something that people willingly pay for, they rely on coerced taxation to make a living. We should all be so lucky.

To be fair, not all politicians are bad. The good ones usually go into politics after having achieved something in the private sector ? that is, after having done something that people are willing to pay for voluntarily. And even many of the clever ones who start off well are ruined by the political system. But the ones who spend their lives working for the state are not the best, and there?s no need to try to make more of them.

Whose idea was it to encourage teenagers to go down this unproductive path, rather than to do something that people value and are willing to pay for voluntarily? If these people are ?the future?, we may be doomed to another generation of sentimental, poorly-reasoned political representatives. Let's hope they aren't.

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