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ne of the signs of our times is that freedoms we once took for granted now have to be fought for — and against the odds. On Election Day this year, seven states will have propositions on the ballot to amend their state constitutions to include the following: "The rights of parents to direct the upbringing and education of their children shall not be infringed."

If you think that you already have the right to raise your children as you see fit, then you have not been keeping up with what has been happening in the schools and in the

social welfare agencies.

Advocates of allowing children to "divorce" parents who are strict, for example, are in effect for allowing lawyers and activists to tell people how to raise their children. Schools that give homework assignments for parents are likewise among the anointed who are itching to intrude into family decisions.

Children have been taken out of their homes merely on the basis of some social worker's suspicions, without a speck of evidence and despite the child's own denials of the social worker's allegations. One San Diego family subjected to this horror spent more than a quarter-million dollars in legal fees to get their daughter back —more than a year later.

It took a grand jury hearing to get this little girl released from the grip of the social welfare bureaucracy, which had placed her in a foster home. Moreover, the grand jury not only denounced the social welfare

Putting parents rights in writing



agency but pointed out that such tragedies were not limited to this particular agency or to this particular part of the country.

The little girl in question had been sexually assaulted but DNA evidence showed that it could not possibly have been her father, as the social workers preferred to believe. In fact, the DNA matched

that of a convicted child molester who sexually assaulted another child in the same neighborhood.

The question is not why social workers are so quick to jump to "politically correct" conclusions. This is not an occupation known for attracting geniuses. The real question is: How could we ever have allowed little fad-ridden jackasses

to acquire such power in the first place?

Once the social welfare agencies have grabbed your child, they are not about to admit they were wrong. They are far more likely to hold the child hostage to get you to admit to something — anything —to get them off the hook legally.

Parents who don't have the resources to fight back, and who are frantic to rescue their child from the hands of strangers, may be willing to "confess" to whatever the social welfare agencies want them to confess to. That will then become part of the statistics used to "prove" what a good job they are doing.

If this sounds more like a totalitarian country than like America, that is because the self-righteous anointed are more concerned with imposing their vision than with maintaining your rights. Moreover, judges who bend over backward to protect criminals are unlikely to be nearly as concerned about decent, law-abiding people who are not one of the "politically correct" victim groups.

"Child abuse" has become a magic phrase that can make constitutional rights evaporate. Convicted murderers can flood the federal court system with frivolous petitions for release under writs of habeas corpus, but parents who demand they either be charged with something in a court of law or their child be returned to them are not likely to get very far, and certainly not very fast.

This is only one of the areas in which political crusades have made

a mockery of centuries-old legal rights for which many people fought and some sacrificed their lives. From antitrust cases to civil rights cases and sexual harassment lawsuits, courts have in effect come to view some people as presumed guilty until proven innocent. People accused of child abuse are simply the latest on a growing list.

All these charges involve serious things, of which some people are in fact guilty. But even the innocent are also becoming easier to convict as the courts increasingly accept flimsy surmises as evidence, and pretentious jargon as "science."

Occasionally, however, the parents win — and the anointed are furious. Recently, after parents won a court case in New York against having their children supplied with condoms by the school system, the American Civil Liberties Union opposed the parents on appeal. So did New York Gov. Mario Cuomo's attorney general.

No one will ever understand the cultural wars of our times who does not understand that the anointed think it is their right —and their duty — to tell other people how to live their lives. Whether it is Joycelyn Elders, the Children's Defense Fund or a thousand other busybodies, that is at the heart of their creed, regardless of what pretty words and lofty visions they project.

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