

## Sick of Sleaze? Let's Talk "Just Folks"

Judith Harris (September 16, 2011)



Are you bored with bunga-bunga? We'll talk about the things that count, beginning with these days when kids go back to school, and proceed on to child care and—why not?—a bit of culture.

Are you bored with bunga-bunga? Longing for the left to get real? Ready to throw a shoe at the Third Way? Tired of Tremonti?

Me too, so let's pretend that this is a [Fox News](#) [2]feature and throw in some down-home news from here and there all over Italy. We'll talk about the things that count, beginning with these days when kids go back to school, and proceed on to child care and—why not?—a bit of culture.

SCHOOL DAZE: The song went, School days, school days,/ dear old golden rule days. This autumn in Rome it's being rewritten so that the second line goes, Bring your own stool days. In one junior high



school here, the [Istituto Manzi](#) [3], the principal says that they need some forty more chairs, and that in the science lab has only three chairs in all. Students sit on the desks. In another school the desks themselves are lacking. And elsewhere children are being advised to bring their own toilet paper. Students are planning a demo in Rome for early October.

In the Veneto Region a law has been passed in commission, if not yet by the regional parliament, that says that absolute precedence for school entry is to go to families resident in the region for at least fifteen years. Not everyone in the Northern League, sponsor of the bill, is enthusiastic. Opponents, who call the pending bill "racist," include the former Socialist mayor of Venice Nereo Laroni, now a member of Silvio Berlusconi's Partito della Liberta' (PdL).

CHILD CARE: They are a May-December couple. He is a retired minor public official, she a library employee, and they live in a hamlet of 1,000 near Turin. When they married in 1990, twenty-one years ago, they found out they could not have a baby and they applied through legal channels to adopt one. Thirteen years later their application was rejected. Four years after that they managed to have a baby through complex scientific advances. The mother is now 57 and Daddy, 70. Problem is that busybody neighbors were horrified.

Noticing that the baby was left unattended in the couple's car, they called police. Never mind that the baby was asleep in a crib, and that the parents explained that the baby had been left for exactly seven minutes because they did not want to wake him. A judge seized the child and has put it out for permanent adoption. The four juvenile court judges (three women, one man) added that the baby had been born thanks to the couple's misgotten exploitation of modern scientific techniques. That is, the couple did not have the moral right to have a baby at all. "The parents never asked themselves serious questions regarding the fact that the baby will be orphaned at an early age and before that will be obliged to care for elderly parents, who could have more or less handicapping pathologies just when as a young adult the child would need the support of its parents." The last word was that the parents paid more attention to "the repayment of a narcissistic right to have a baby."

CULTIVATING CULTURE: Three years ago a huge Roman villa was discovered at San Cesareo in Puglia during excavations for construction of an apartment building complex and a shopping mall. The new Culture Minister Giancarlo Galan, who replaced Sandro Bondi this summer, explains that, "Although very important from the historic point of view, including for the presence of poorly conserved but handsome mosaics, the villa structure is relatively poorly preserved." The villa will therefore be reburied so as to protect it. Fortunately, an adjacent nymphaeum (fountain garden) will be left intact.

At the [Ministry](#) [4] in Rome meanwhile the Superintendence has confirmed that its inspectors will not be reimbursed for gasoline for their cars while they make their rounds of the archaeological sites they are to inspect. Instead of driving the employees will be given bus tickets to places in Rome the [Appia Antica](#) [5], [Ostia Antica](#) [6] and the Veii park. These sites are accessible by public transport, but many others are isolated, such as Vulci. Public archaeologists—that is, those who work for sites and are employed by the Ministry—who go on paying their own transport expenses will therefore have their salaries cut from E 1,700 monthly to E 1,300 (circa \$2,350 to \$1,800). The ruling is retroactive to April. The employees' reaction: "We will call a strike."

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