Letters from our readers

27 December 2011

On "Children's reading levels determined by poverty, UK survey finds"

Having worked in dozens of schools and children's libraries over the past 20 years, in the sixth largest city in the UK, I can attest to the devastation wrought by successive administrations on youth literacy and the reading lives of youngsters.

The author collates well all the obstacles that have accumulated in the path of the overwhelming majority of children to achieve a healthy and fulfilling relationship with the written word.

The fact that almost 4 million children today in the UK do not have even one book in their possession is a crime that has been prepared by the political and economic elite—through the prism of its main parliamentary parties—over an entire historical period.

The most respected research has long pointed to the socially stymieing effect of lack of access to books and literature for young children. This early intellectual deprivation largely shapes and curtails the lives of millions young people today.

Recent data has illustrated how children in Britain are amongst the most tested in the world—some experiencing up to 100 tests and exams throughout their schooling.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, Britain has also been ranked as one of the countries where children are the unhappiest in the whole of Europe.

Having turned off a large percentage of school children by the target-driven curriculum, which reduces teachers to administrators of an ever narrower testing regime, youngsters are then further alienated by the inaccessibility or irrelevance of much reading material and the decreasing facilities available to them, as well as experiencing the general de-motivating impact of dwindling post-school prospects.

The ruling elite is at war with the notion that the next generation of workers should be literate or even have the means to strive for better than their parents.

And so an unprecedented assault is taking place on public libraries used by children, college students are having their meagre benefits taken away from them and working class youth seeking to go to university are now faced with the highest fees found anywhere in the world.

The struggle for popular literacy, knowledge and enlightenment has always been fought in the teeth of opposition from the ruling order. The British ruling class has a long history of seeking to keep the population in ignorance and servitude.

The Public Libraries Act of 1850 did not just benefit from the largesse of philanthropists such as Andrew Carnegie but the expansion of such institutions was accompanied by the emergence of the working class and the augmentation of its political consciousness.

The philanthropists of the 19th century have been replaced by a rapacious elite that brooks no limits on its enrichment. But as the course of this closing year has demonstrated, the working class has entered struggle around the world to defend the most basic of social gains and by dint already blazes a path for a brighter future.

HT
Sheffield, UK
24 December 2011

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On “The Russian Socialist Movement—a political trap for the working class”

A big thanks to Vladimir Volkov for the brilliant analysis of both RSM and current political trends in Russia, based on authentic Marxism. I do hope someday we’ll see the Russian section of the Fourth International.

Alex
Moscow, Russia
24 December 2011

On “Sri Lanka: SEP and ISSE hold meeting on political prisoners”

It is highly commendable that the SEP has taken up the question of political prisoners in the country as the Sri Lankan political organization based on Marxism. The SEP and its forerunner, the RCL, have maintained a consistent policy on behalf of the problem of political prisoners created by misguided politics of the JVP and the LTTE against the repressive Sri Lankan state.

The LSSP’s betrayal in 1964 heavily contributed to the growth of the JVP from within the disgruntled youth in the south of the island. Later, the LTTE’s birth and expansion can be explained to a greater extent by adding the factor of the UNP’s liberal economic policy in the aftermath of the 1977 election to the afore said LSSP betrayal. Hence the continuing problem of political prisoners in Sri Lanka is a historical product attributable to post-independence bipartisan politics abetted by the country’s pseudo-left and extreme communal politics of the JVP and LTTE variety.

This reader fervently hopes the SEP’s political standing as per this problem will be politically effective in the future political process in Sri Lanka.

IVE
Sri Lanka
24 December 2011

On “Letters from our readers”

Interesting to note that Hitchens’ brother, Peter, went from the left at University (SWP, I think) to the far right, yet still had a more left-wing perspective on the Iraq invasion than Hitchens himself: the right-wing brother opposed the invasion. Still, de mortuis nil nisi bonum.

Earl O
UK
24 December 2011

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