

UK schools required to actively promote “British values”

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The elimination of personal and political freedoms under the guise of anti-terror legislation has become commonplace. Injustices ranging from enormous state surveillance programmes, to Orwellian laws and police violence are all justified in the name of the so-called “war on terror.”

In recent years, the process has been extended to restrict political activity and discussion on UK university campuses. Standard practice is to scaremonger—often with the enthusiastic support of the media—about the threat of “Islamist” radicalisation on campus. This is then used to introduce new policies or enact new laws, which clamp down on political “extremism.” Needless to say, extremism is defined as any political understanding that challenges British imperialism in any form or threatens to disrupt the status quo.

After the deeply questionable Trojan Horse investigation into allegations of an Islamist take-over of academy schools in Birmingham, the same pretext is now being extended into primary and secondary levels of schooling.

To counter the supposed threat of religious radicalisation, schools will now be required to “actively promote” British values to their pupils. In truth, what will be created will be a countrywide regime of political obedience and policing of “values” dictated by the Education Secretary, currently Michael Gove.

The core values will be based on the government’s 2011 Prevent Strategy—responsible for many of the assaults on political freedom on university campuses and listed by the BBC as:

- An appreciation that living under the rule of law protects individual citizens
- How citizens can influence decision-making through the democratic process

- An understanding that bodies such as the police and the army can be held to account by the people, through the democratic organs of government

- An understanding that the freedom to hold other faiths and beliefs is protected in law

- An understanding of the problems of identifying and combating discrimination

The watchwords defined by the government are democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs.

An even halfway-critical reading of these “values” shows them as nothing more than a hypocritical and fraudulent pretext for the glorification of the bourgeois state.

Children of the generation experiencing record poverty levels are to be taught to show “appreciation” for the protective powers of private property and for the laws that enshrine it. Many will have older siblings who have already felt the full force of this protection in the form of stop searches, kettling, mounted police charges and other forms of police aggression.

As for respect for the rule of law, this comes from a government and state apparatus that has been exposed as carrying out widespread and illegal state surveillance of millions of people within Britain and globally.

Furthermore, the inclusion of the armed forces and police as intrinsic to “British values” points towards the further militarisation of education. The run-up to the 100th anniversary of the First World War saw a concerted drive in schools to recast it as a great patriotic endeavour, rather than the bloody imperialist slaughter it is widely recognised to be. This falsification of history was made necessary by the widespread hostility to the wars in Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya and elsewhere as well as the need of Britain’s ruling elite to justify further imperialist crimes.

Just as the claim that the police and army are democratically accountable has been thoroughly exposed over the last period, so too has the assertion that citizens can “influence decision-making through the democratic process.”

The bourgeois parties understand that what is taken as the “apathy” of youth is in fact the awareness amongst the younger generation that the old institutions of political action are utterly bankrupt and reactionary. Their attempt to divert mass struggles born of this disillusionment into parliamentary politics has the air of desperation about it. This is because the ruling elite know that maintaining “the democratic process” is incompatible with record levels of social inequality.

The government and media repeatedly claim that these proposals represent the “depoliticisation” of education, as if the active promotion of bourgeois law, corrupt parliamentary democracy and their defenders in the form of the police and armed forces is a politically neutral act.

Behind all the talk of democratic values, the British bourgeoisie—like its counterparts the world over—are developing more and more repressive measures to police working people. Any opinion considered threatening to the ruling strata is to be quashed. The practical implications of this policy make a mockery of the supposed “freedom to hold other faiths and beliefs” listed in the core values.

Schools will be required to “challenge” pupils, staff and even parents who are deemed to be expressing opinions contrary to “fundamental British values.” The selection of school governors will also be dependent on them having “appropriate” political and religious views and the promotion of “partisan” political views is to be banned entirely. Each of these requirements will be enforced under pain of the offending staff member being fired or the school being closed down by the Education Secretary.

The indoctrination of youth into bourgeois society through the education system is not news to Marxists, but rarely in history is the process so deliberate and clear. These proposals are a reflection of deepening social and political antagonisms.

Widespread disaffection with the whole capitalist setup—from the indistinguishable Labour and Conservative parties to bloody military adventures and downright hostile unions—is becoming engrained across

vast swathes of young people.

Sensing that people will no longer be held back by trickery and betrayals alone, the government is gradually building up more direct measures of oppression: water cannon, secret courts, surveillance et al. Political censorship forms another key prop of this preparation, of which these “British values” are a significant aspect.



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