

Newspaper of the Revolutionary Communist Party of Britain (Marxist-Leninist)

The National Rights of the Scottish and Welsh Must Be Upheld!

It is being raised by Jack Straw, as Justice Minister, and others as to the possibility of a written constitution for Britain. At the

same time, Gordon Brown and the whole government are suggesting that the union of England with Scotland and Wales is sacrosanct, and in fact

should be strengthened. In this connection, the "think-tank" the Institute for Public Policy Research, in two reports published on February 25,

called on the Prime Minister to set up a commission as part of a consultation on the constitution, examining the

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GREETINGS ON INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY!



On the occasion of International Women's Day, March 8, 2008, RCPB(ML) sends its warmest greetings to the women of England, Scotland and Wales, and to women around the world. At this time, women in Britain as

around the world affirm themselves as having a leading role in the struggle for a new society.

In this defining moment what actually is the situation for women? Where do women stand in the struggle for another world?

As in all countries under the

sway of neo-liberalism, women in Britain are facing the brunt of the anti-social offensive. The objective reality for women means that as a collective they are facing oppression, and a society that does not recognise their rights as human beings or as women, par-

ticularly as regards their being workers or mothers. As the reproducers of life, women are faced with bringing up children as their responsibility and not the responsibility of society. Women are

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Commentary

Raising the Question of Education

THE PRIMARY REVIEW, AN INDEPENDENT ON-GOING ENQUIRY INTO THE CONDITION and future of primary educa-

tion in England, published a group of four reports on February 29. The reports covered the policy frameworks for English primary education specified as governance, funding, reform and quality assurance. The reports are set in the context of the 11-year period since New Labour came to power with the slogan beloved by Tony Blair, "education, education, education". The reports assess over 200 published sources of evidence on the matters under review, both official and independent. The reports respectively, in the words of Primary Review: set out the financial framework and funding trends

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The National Rights of the Scottish and Welsh Must Be Upheld!

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governance of England, so that English public opinion would not threaten the future of the Union.

To call for strengthening of the Union flies in the face of the national rights of the Scottish and Welsh peoples. If this is the case then the Scottish Parliament and Welsh Assembly can be considered no more than a sop to the national aspirations of the respective peoples, and not a step on the road to the affirmation of the sovereignty of these peoples. Equally, the issue is not that these are "regions" of Great Britain that deserve peculiar treatment. The countries of Wales and Scotland fought many battles with England before being incorporated into a United Kingdom by force or by guile.

Context of democratic renewal

In fact, the institution of the Scottish Parliament and Welsh Assembly has given an impetus to the objective reality of national aspirations and steadily underlined the issue of national rights. The demand for modern sovereign states is thus posing itself once more, in the context of how the people's struggles may find reflection in a modern constitution based on modern definitions, and not imposed on the whole polity from the perspective of vested interests and the cartel of the parliamentary parties.

The issue poses itself in the

context of democratic renewal, and not of the "break-up of the United Kingdom". It is a class question insofar as the working class is the champion of rights, and must take centre-stage in fighting for modern sovereign states. Therefore its role on the scene of history at the present time must be to take the lead in social revolution, which in Britain necessarily includes self-determination for the nations of Wales and Scotland. This is not to preclude a voluntary union between England, Scotland and Wales as the working class takes up the task to constitute itself as the nation, vesting sovereignty in the people. Indeed, a sovereign island of Ireland might also join such a voluntary union in order to deal a mortal blow to the class in the United Kingdom which has sought violence against it for so long. But those that raise the interests of the workers as paramount as a feint to condemn or marginalise the national rights of the Welsh and Scottish people are doing a disservice to both the working class and the social progress of the peoples of Britain as a whole.

Upholding sovereignty

The question of sovereignty of nations and peoples is one of the foremost questions of our time, and it is one which is crucial to ending the criminal interference and aggression of the ruling elite in Britain and its political representatives. To uphold the sovereignty of the peoples of Iraq and Afghanistan, for instance, is to uphold the principle that



occupation is not liberation. Liberation is not a "gift" bestowed by an occupier, but is an act of a people itself. A sovereign Scotland and a sovereign Wales would be states where the respective peoples are the decision-makers. It is important that the workers in Britain take up this discussion seriously in the course of fighting for their interests, and resolving the crisis of working class representation at Westminster.

Right to self-determination

The principle is that the right to self-determination can neither be violated nor compromised. It is a vital principle to be defended in the course of fighting for an anti-war government which will uphold the sovereignty of peoples and nations, and upholds as equal all nations big or small. This runs directly counter to the chauvinist arrogance of those that claim to stand for "universal values", in the sense of attempting to advocate and impose an anachronistic and increasingly dictatorial system of "representative democracy". This system serves the interests of those who wish to block the progress of society, up to and including its own destruction, and prolong the retrogressive and

crisis-ridden life of so-called neo-liberalism, that is, the unfettered rule of the monopolies through "monopoly right".

The point is that the people have the right to determine their own affairs, be the decision-makers, control their own resources, without interference, and upholding that right for all peoples, and engage in nation-building to ensure self-reliant national economies and relations of equality and of mutual benefit with other modern nation states. It is a project that includes building one's own culture and national identity, and the flourishing of languages as part of affirming the identity of peoples and national minorities.

The people must decide

The peoples of Scotland and Wales have a right to affirm their sovereignty, and it is a right they alone can decide to exercise. In fighting to assume positions of political power and establish an anti-war government, the working class in Britain must also fight for a modern constitution that guarantees the rights of all, including enshrining the national rights of the Scottish and Welsh. The people must decide their own future!

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Commentary

Raising the Question of Education

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for English primary schooling, comparing primary with secondary and England with other OECD countries; chart the evolution and impact of the current mix of increased school autonomy and closer central direction; take a long historical look at school inspection from HMI to Ofsted; and outline major reforms since 1988 bearing on curriculum, assessment and teaching. Primary Review says, "Between them, these reports raise important questions about accountability, culpability and justice in the apportioning of responsibility for what goes on in the nation's primary schools."

The reports do not indicate a government whose record warrants following the priorities of "education, education and education". Rather they show primary education in decline, and even at primary level, a government demonstrating a "state theory of learning" with central control in key areas of educational action.

First of all, what can be said to characterise the decline in education – what Primary Review refers to as "a decrease in the overall quality of primary education ... because of the narrowing of the curriculum and the intensity of test preparation" – and what is its significance? Steve Sinnott, general secretary of the National Union of Teachers, commented: "The latest Primary Review reports demonstrate the damaging effects of high stakes testing, inspection and historic under funding on primary schools."

The attacks on primary education noted by Steve Sinnott are reflected across the whole education system right up to higher education and are an integral part of the government's anti-social offensive. It is possible to characterise basic elements of this offensive in the sphere of education as follows:

• **ideological orientation** - this turns on the issue of what education is for, what is its role in society. The government's answer clearly is "to contribute to making business competitive in the global market". Therefore arrangements are put in place to give big business a greater say in the content of education. Schools and colleges are linked to businesses and it is made explicit to them that one of their key tasks is to serve the needs of business and build appropriate links with local business to facilitate this.

• **ideological content** - not surprisingly, there is enormous pressure to transform education into an arena for indoctrinating young people with capital-centred views of the world e.g. successful business people create wealth; the purpose of life is to be wealthy; human beings are primarily consumers not producers, etc. In addition, given the country's history, education is pressured to uphold the old consciousness of imperialist chauvinism and racism

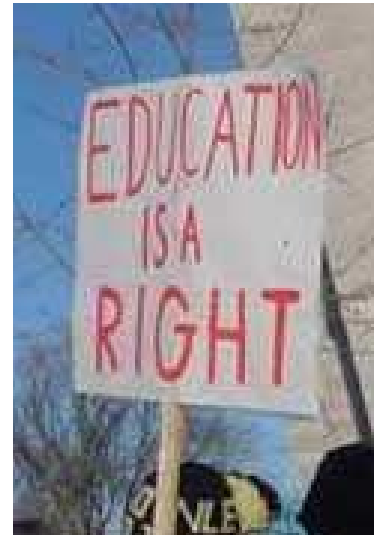
• **implementing the anti-social offensive** - this turns on the rejection of the idea that education is a right and it is the responsibility of the state to provide for all its citizens at the highest level. Thus there is chronic underfunding of all sectors, which generate various problems and difficulties. These in turn are blamed on the workers in the sector e.g. teachers through the Ofsted inspection regime, league tables, taking over of "failing schools" and so on. The impact of this process on teachers is debilitating. Lack of adequate funding leads to unmanageable workloads for educators who are then held individually accountable through the inspection regime for any organisational weaknesses. This leads to patterns of burnout and nervous breakdowns and stress-related illnesses which are widespread in education

• **paying the rich** - the opening up

of education as a field of profiteering for the monopolies on the justification that the existing educational institutions are failing. This has led to the opening of academies, the building of schools through PFI projects, and the introduction of "contestability" in the post-16 sector. This programme of, for example, putting post-16 educational provision out to tender for all-comers, including private companies, is similar to the developments in health care also.

Through the national curriculum that was introduced in 1988, the heavy testing introduced by New Labour after it came to power in 1997, and the narrowing of the range of teaching methods, the education system has become a vehicle for the interference of a state with ulterior motives. The heavy-handed approach of the government has been done under the signboard of standards, or "quality assurance". But there is considerable and widespread unease about the toll on teachers and the quality of education itself that is resulting in open distrust between teachers, parents and a government which is dictating the terms and standards. What is being encouraged is the ethos that the advancement of the individual child is paramount, as measured by questionable testing, and that "poor teachers" must be weeded out, rather than focusing on the overall raising of standards, a relation of trust between parents and teachers, and the emphasis on all-round education for the good of society. This is leading many professionals and parents to raise the question: what is the interest of the government in meddling and micromanaging classrooms?

That there is a marked "distortion of the curriculum", for instance through "narrowly-



focused inspection", is something that the Primary Review reports point out. What can be said is that the education system has become an avenue for the government to indoctrinate the children of Britain from a young age with "British values" and start them on the road to becoming citizens who will stay within the confines of the status quo, either aspiring to the capitalist ruling class leading them to "success" or becoming a "failure" at the mercy of governments attacks.

Future of education

The national curriculum and the overwhelming presence of testing can be seen as leading to the inculcation of a view of history and culture permeating throughout all subjects and having as its content the ideology and outlook of the ruling elite as codified by the priorities of New Labour. It can be said to be a design for living that is being perpetuated in schools, aiming to ensure the survival of the decaying monopoly controlled system.

In a climate in which the people are facing the anti-social offensive, where the people are being attacked on all fronts, it is clear that the future of education cannot

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Raising the Question of Education

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reside in this decaying monopoly-controlled system that aims to repress critical thinking and to encourage the fetish of competition.

A society should serve and provide for its members. Rather than reflecting the incoherence and dehumanisation of a system which neither serves the youth nor the future of society, education as a social necessity should provide for intellectual growth and social responsibility. So far from the aim of the government is this, which the Primary Review reports reflect, that it is absolutely necessary to insist on the principle that education is a right. "Decline" is not to be found in individual failings, but in the tailoring of education to the needs of the ruling elite on the one hand, and on the other to the refusal of New Labour to take up the path of increasing investments in education and other social programmes.

Modern education

In fighting for the reversal of this trend and for a modern education system and policy, parents and professionals alike, and indeed the youth themselves, are coming to the conclusion that the issue is not how pupils must be scrutinised as to how they fit the mould, but to provide the human and material resources and the outlook of rejecting dogma and embracing education in the true sense of the word. As much as anything, it is the recognition of teachers as much valued members of the society, who must be respected and not hounded, honoured and not disparaged.

Workers' Weekly calls on the working class and people to fight against the anti-social offensive, demanding that teachers and pupils must be able to partake in education in a decent environment and conditions. No to state-dictated ideology! Education is a right! Increase investments in social programmes!

GREETINGS ON INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY!

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marginalised as workers, and are expected to fend for themselves and are further oppressed as unemployed or single parents. The ruling class through its mediums such as the press, television and through various cultural forms aims to divide women on grounds of nationality, culture, belief, etc., pressing for the imposition of "British values" on women's consciousness. The prevailing culture promotes that women can "have it all", that now women can fight for these "British values", supporting interference and occupation, and seeing their children go to war to become cannon fodder for the "democratic imperative" of colonialist ambitions, as the monopoly capitalist class aims through its executive, currently Brown's New Labour government and the loyal Conservative opposition, to impose its system on the world's people.

Ruling elite distortion

This is the current objective situation for women, but it is a far cry from the way the ruling class, as it aims to distort the reality, presents the situation for women. The ruling elite presents that women in the so-called "west" have been granted "freedom" and live in a "liberal" society. At the same time, it uses the comparison of women's situation in other parts of the world, particularly in the Middle East, as being close to medieval conditions. This serves a certain purpose. The British government and monopoly media use this comparison in order to aid them in the promotion of "universal values" and the imperialist and neo-liberal agenda of making the rich richer while the poor get poorer, facing economic crisis, war, disaster and chaos.

It is in this comparison which is presented between the "advanced civilised west" and

the "uncivilised" Middle East and beyond that Muslim women are being used in a battle of ideology that seeks to justify imperialist war and interference. The ruling elite seeks to attack Muslim women for not subscribing to the "values of the west", which are presented as "universal". In particular, women in Britain are being contrasted with Iranian women to promote that women in the "west" are better off and have no reason to wage further political struggle, while women in Iran need to be "liberated" by foreign interference and occupation of their sovereign soil. This completely denies that the rights of all women by virtue of their being human and being women should be guaranteed and that women are fighting across the world in defence of their rights and the rights of all.

What is needed

Objectively, women in their various roles are marginalised, and must take and are taking stands on all issues facing them and their society. Women are fighting at the forefront in the struggles for the right to health-care and education and to increase investments in social programmes. Women have taken up with full vigour and militancy the struggle against war, organising resistance and being firmly at the helm of putting forward the alternative of an anti-war government. Women have been in the forefront in raising their concerns on the environment and waging struggle against the giant monopolies which seek to destroy it.

The ruling class through its various cultural forms is exerting pressure on women to become apolitical and to negate their rights. This has not been and is not an option for women. Women increasingly understand, in the face of the devastation of monopoly capitalism, that another world is possible. Women across the world are engaged in various



struggles and striving to make a change, defending their interests as women, workers, mothers. So the issue presents itself that what is needed is a unity and organisation that gives these courageous efforts coherence. Women are activating the human factor/social consciousness in the course of uniting and discussing with all those who are striving to build an advanced movement for change, striving for unity in action and recognising common aims. It is in this vein that women are also uniting under the banner of modern communism and within a mass communist party that bases itself on modern definitions, as one of the highest expressions of this coherence which is the order of the day. Women who are organised proclaim that there are solutions and that there is a way out of the crisis.

Taking the lead

Woman today are coming forward to take the lead in affirming themselves as a collective and in building the alternative. A new-found coherence is leading women to the conclusion that another world can be built in which they, as workers and women, can be the decision-makers. In this way, they can forge a path of renewing the democratic process. They can lead the way to activating the human being who bases themselves on advanced human principles and values, through conscious participation in the affairs of the polity.

Women throughout history have been revolutionary. There is now once more a defining moment in which women can take the path of social revolution, and with the youth, workers, national minorities, fight the same struggle, seeing the necessity for change and being at the forefront of creating this change.

**One Humanity, One Struggle!
Another World Is Possible!
Hail International Women's Day!**