

# Protecting through enhanced propaganda and restrictions

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PPT has been having a tough time keeping up with all the news of late. There are many that we won't get to. However, a snippet in the Bangkok Post (26 May 2010) caught our attention.

In the story, the Post reported that the Basic Education Commission seems to have decided that a cause of the red shirt protests has to do with failed propaganda ... sometimes known as "education." At least they are not just blaming the devil Thaksin Shinawatra. The solution to these problems is seen to lie in placing "added emphasis on unity, loyalty to the royal institution and democracy in school curriculums."

PPT is somewhat surprised by this need to put more emphasis on these issues. Anyone who has a kid in a Thai school knows that they are bombarded with propaganda about the monarchy and unity. Maybe BEC means more insidious propaganda rather than more of it. On democracy, we can only assume that this will be about the non-democratic Thai-style democracy.

The plan, according to the BEC is to emphasize these changes at all levels in the next round of curricular "improvements."

Meanwhile, the Royal Institute, which is populated by the most yellow of royalists, including ASTV propagandist Chai-Anan Samudavanija, is said to be "considering including new words such as *sumsieng* (vulnerable) and *korkarnrai* (terrorism) and others used in last week's rioting and arson attacks in a new dictionary." This is part of normalizing the barbaric acts of a military-backed government.

Perhaps more worrying are various attempts to restrict and constrain political activity. In addition to surveillance, outright repression, censorship and so on, a senate subcommittee - made up of the yellow-shirted senators, mostly appointed under the post-coup military regime - is reported in the Bangkok Post (26 May 2010) calling for a referendum so Bangkokians can decide whether it is necessary to introduce a decree to regulate public gatherings in the capital.

The aim is to have a referendum because the senators assume that such a move would be approved by the frightened middle class and the elite and would be "faster than the usual lengthy law-making procedures in parliament." Relatively few of the working and service classes can vote in Bangkok as they remain registered in their provincial communities.

Senator Paiboon Nititawan of the subcommittee on public participation in fighting corruption and monitoring the government - why this committee? - said it had agreed on a referendum. Senator Paiboon said the "decree was aimed at preventing a repeat of the riots last week in Bangkok" and added that the decree would "ban public gatherings on all streets of Bangkok."

Think of this for a moment. It would ban red shirt gatherings. It would ban unions, students, consumer associations, peasant associations, and many, many more from rallying except in designated places controlled and allocated by the authorities.

Senator Paiboon, who was supportive of rallies by the People's Alliance for Democracy, said "Bangkok residents did not want to experience a repeat of the recent riots which had wreaked havoc in the capital."

Remarkably, this senate sub-committee also includes Tul Sitthisomwong, the self-proclaimed leader of anti-red shirt rally groups, made the completely laughable comment that the "proposed decree would not restrict the rights of protesters."

In many ways, little has changed under the military-backed Abhisit Vejjajiva government - more propaganda, more royalism, more restrictions, and more lies. The ruling class is more vulnerable and thus wants more repression.

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**P.S.**

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