

Reader assesses coverage of workers struggles on WSWS

5 June 1998

To the Editor,

I perused the *World Socialist Web Site* this morning and enjoyed reading some of the film and book reviews. The review of Warren Beatty's *Bulworth*, while exhaustive, was particularly helpful. It managed to address traditional questions of cinematic aesthetics while confronting each and every relevant social and political question. I was quite impressed with the engaged approach of all the reviews I read.

I was most interested to examine the 'Workers Struggles' section of the Web site. It does a great job of relating the labor struggles of unionized workers here in the United States and workers abroad, but what I am unsatisfied with is its coverage of non-unionized workers here in America. As you know, the non-unionized make up about 88% of American workers, and while UPS workers and UAW and Teamsters have legitimate battles to fight with their employers, these unionized men and women are already several steps above minimum wage workers with no benefits and no hope of an empowered voice against those who exploit them. In other words, it really makes no sense to think of Northwest Airlines workers or the Teamsters or United Autoworkers as representative of the struggle of American workers against capital. These unions represent too small a percentage of the workforce to serve that function, and they also represent a kind of bourgeoisie within 'the working class.' Having grown up in Detroit, I know that a lot of the men and women who are united under the UAW are landowners, homeowners (even boat owners!), and enjoy full medical benefits for themselves and their families. I guess I'm repeating myself, but my point is that these struggles of union vs. capital, while important, can keep us from what I think is the real story: the army of unrepresented, underpaid workers in America who receive no benefits and who (unlike the unionized) have

no job security. Check out the article called 'You're either on the bus...' in the latest issue (#10) of *The Baffler* (an anti-capitalist journal printed in Chicago by Thomas Frank et. al.). It describes a busing program in Chicago that takes inner city African Americans and busses them to 'jobs' (actually temp. assignments) in the suburbs. They are paid minimum wage, and receive no benefits. What this program is, the author explains, is a brand new pool of cheap (i.e. throwaway) labor for suburban capitalists.

This is the kind of argument that needs to be made, I think. The impetus here, of course, is what Bill Haywood fought for with the IWW: one big union. While I agree that it is important to report the struggles of union vs. capital, we can't for one minute afford to think that a victory for the Northwest Airlines union is a victory for 'the working class.' Unionized workers are actually **unrepresentative** of the American worker in general. I would like to see more coverage of that kind of labor struggle in America. Don't get me wrong, I love what's going on at the WSWS, but this is my constructive criticism.

MAW

Boston

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Bulworth, directed by Warren Beatty, written by Warren Beatty and Jeremy Pikser

A little of John Reed, after all

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