

WSWS readers discuss health care, jobs

27 October 1999

Dear Sir,

I had recent occasion to attend the Doctor's Surgery following an "accident" at work. While he was filling the triplicate Workcover forms I noticed on the form a sentence that read: "The term stress and/or stress condition is not to be used in filling out this form." So I asked the doctor what would he put there, given a patient presented with these symptoms, and he told me the current phrase was "Adjustment Disorder with Anxious Mood or with Depressed Mood."

What this means in plain speaking is that the patient has not "adjusted" to something in their life or circumstance and is either fearful or unhappy about it. How it differs from the old term "stress" is how it places the whole fault on the patient. If, for example, I think about the word "stress", I always think of tests either on bits of metal or even parts of the body in order to find the breaking point or at least their weak points, in other words the object or whatever is exposed to a hostile environment or force in order to define its finite capabilities.

To take the term stress off the Workcover form is therefore a way of saying that there is no external pressure or hostility to the human organism in the workplace. Instead there are only recalcitrant, unworthy vessels who have failed the "challenge of change" and insufficiently "adjusted" to it. I am sure you have all heard the rhetoric: "rigid, inflexible, unable to accept change in a positive manner ... etc ," as applied to workers attempting to maintain their conditions.

Therefore if you get sacked, downsized or laid off it is your fault for not making the best of things, you should learn to adjust to your present state and certainly not go seeking the cause of your unhappiness either in your workplace or even in your social surrounds. There is no such thing as stress, you see, it's all in your own inadequate personality and physiology, and so you don't get any ideas, we will take it off the form in case any light-minded medico may become so confused as

to accept your symptoms as genuine.

So while the workplace continues to maim and disfigure humanity, physically and psychologically, at a frightful rate, the only answer the capitalist system has, is to say it just ain't happening.

Regards,

TC

Australia

23 October 1999

To the editor:

I live in North Carolina, an ultra-conservative American state. I have a middle class job and I'm paid every two weeks. \$26 is deducted out of my paycheck for health insurance.

We are told that socialized medicine is bad and that nations that have it suffer from incompetent doctors, long lines at hospitals and doctors' offices, overcrowding, etc. That's ironic considering this is exactly what we have under America's capitalist health care system.

I recently went to the doctor my HMO provided for me. The office was overcrowded and I had to wait in line to see him. Instead, I saw a "physician's assistant." She told me that if I wanted a physical, I would have to wait until next summer. I explained to her that, no, I was not here for a physical.

You would think that the nation that supposedly has the "finest" health care system in the world would at least be able to provide its citizens with MDs who know why the patients have come to see them.

RH

24 October 1999

Dear Editors :

I'd like to know just how many people cringe as I do when they listen to the media go on about "the low-unemployment rate." I'd like to challenge those who have compiled the results that have led to this determination with the following questions:

1. How many of the "job-opportunities" require a

higher education background?

2. How many "opportunities" foster long-term employment (until retirement)?

3. How many of these "job-opportunities" provide adequate medical coverage and an adequate salary for long-term financial stability?

I believe that this country is seeing the warning signs of a new industrial revolution taking form. There is very little protection for employees in these days, and the loyalty of employees has declined tremendously, resulting in poor production and/or service that is provided.

What happened to the days when you were rewarded for your achievements, and you were committed to a company that provided you with the necessary tools to meet your basic needs?

In the past year, I have been through four pay cuts, I have had half of my benefits cut for "corporate budgeting" reasons, I have been there when 60 percent of our department's staff was laid-off via telephone, my hours continue to be cut placing me at risk to lose my medical benefits, and although I search daily, there are no other full-time job opportunities for the profession I earned a degree in, even if I were to relocate. I work in the health care field, so I know that the need for my services is out there, but I am "slave" to the top of the industry ladder.

In talking with many people, all ages, all backgrounds, and in all professions, there is a common bond—no protection for the employees against long-term instability career-wise and financially speaking.

I'd be very interested in hearing other people's opinions.

PM

21 October 1999



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