

Letters to the WSWS

15 February 2001

Dear Sir,

I am a Korean worker who is interested in reading your grand articles every day. I want to send my greetings to all WSWS reporters for the nice information.

I think this is the one of the most kindhearted workforces in the world. You are standing upon the side of poor citizens or laborers for the protection of their human rights.

Please be cheerful and happy because many humble men or women all over the world are sending you their ovations.

Yours faithfully,

PJH

Seoul, Korea

14 February 2001

I've tried to enjoy many of your articles that I have linked to through another site, but am usually confused because I have no basic understanding of socialism. What can I read (not too wordy!)? Also, how do you differ from the Green Party?

I am 46 years old, and the reason I need something simple to read is that so many ideas about capitalism being good, and socialism being bad, have been pounded into my head and reinforced by constant propaganda about our "democracy" that I am thinking from wrong premises to begin with. It is hard to identify this wrong thinking as it crops up ... hmm, hope I'm making myself clear.

I'm beginning to believe that if our country was socialist, my physical existence wouldn't be much different, but the lies would be gone, so I wouldn't be confused. After the last "election" I have been thrown into a strange state of mind, am fearful of living in this country, and the only way I've been able to rebel is by pathetically hanging my American flag upside down.

Senators answer my mail with form letters, or not at all.

My husband is a laborer, I am an artist, and we have a gross income of \$50,000 per year, but are poor, often having trouble keeping food in the house and paying our utility bills. Our roof leaks, our toilet is falling through the floor, and we have two 10-year-old vehicles. I wear used clothing.

It's time to stop talking about it. I can accept our social status. The only thing we ever wanted was the security of knowing that if we had an economic crisis of our own, we wouldn't lose our home and car, and would be able to get food, etc. We can't afford all kinds of insurance for this security. The stress lets up from time to time, but always comes back.

... The land of the free, and the home of the brave ...

NK

14 February 2001

I am a third year undergraduate at Liverpool University (UK) reading politics. I am currently undertaking an essay regarding the similarities between Pinochet's and Thatcher's policies. Until I read two articles on your web site relating to this issue, both by Chris Marsden, I had made only economic links. I am extremely interested in the opinion given in these articles that further links could be made. I would be grateful if you could elaborate on these ideas or suggest where I could find similar information.

Yours faithfully,

LM

14 February 2001

Brilliant piece by Kate Randall, "Another workplace shooting in the US: five dead at Chicago Navistar plant." After working 26 years in US industries, as sheet-metal worker, and today as a supervisor, I have witnessed how downsizing, layoffs, cost-cutting, lean mean production, Kaizen, none value-added, cost of quality, and other imposed ideas upon American workers to intensify their work hours to meet overloaded work schedules with minimal labor has affected the lives and degree of frustration among guys on the shop floor. This is especially true for welders, punch press and press brake operators who have seen the number of work-related near misses and injuries go up by as much as 30 percent. At my plant among the 56 machine operator and assembly workers, reported and recorded injuries affected 50 people over the past year.

It is evident that our corporate shareholder "heritage" and their delegated powers—CEO and COO and upper executive management—are busy making policy that only creates the lion share of wealth for their corporate owner and themselves, by cutting benefits to employees, increasing employees' insurance coverage cost, and many other tactics. This in turn puts workers at a further disadvantage. They are told to work on holidays and Sundays, and most policies are made behind closed doors.

Middle management constantly misrepresents workers especially if they are of another ethnicity. Workers have nowhere to turn. Safety committees deal with issues unrealistically, with no analyses.

On behalf of the guys on the shop floor, the welders and machine operators, thank you, Kate Randall for such objective observation with accuracy and thorough examination and great work. Looking forward to reading more of your writing on the WSWS.

AP

12 February 2001

Kate Randall's article on workplace shootings in the US is well researched, thorough and cogent. She deserves congratulations in exposing the connection between worker alienation and union and political disinterest. Some workers feel they have nowhere else to go and become savages.

The article is yet another instance of the high caliber reporting on this web site.

It remains difficult, however, to make that leap of faith to the conclusions Ms. Randall asserts will inevitably take shape.

You people have courage.

Regards,

SR

11 February 2001

Dear WSWS,

Regarding the article, "Whither the Coen Brothers?" Mr. Walsh quotes a *New York Times* critic before making his concluding remarks in his insightful analysis of the film *O Brother, Where Art Thou?*:

"O Brother, Where Art Thou?" similarly offers a fairy-tale view of an America in which the real brutalities of poverty and racism are magically dissolved by the power of song."

I can't but disagree with the critic too, but also feel Mr. Walsh has sold the film somewhat short in going some way to considering the film along

these lines. As with Mr. Walsh, I do not particularly care for the film—it seems to belong to that Hollywood annex of films that are designed to play to the middle classes, receive awards and so on, and are therefore all the harder to watch since they must be watched in the knowledge that we are expected to like or empathize or be moved by them.

The film was released in some European regions before the recent US election, and in the US after that event. This struck me as a great pity, since the film plunders—partly for satire, partly for colour—that same collective fairy-tale of the “Old South”—in a very general sense—that George W Bush also draws from. This was especially apparent during the inauguration ceremonies and we can expect more of it in the personal “spin” around the new president. I remember one photo of a protester with the slogan on his poster—“America Needs A Cowboy.” The same strategy of subversion “from within” was put to a similar (and perhaps more effective) use in the 1980s with Reagan's myths of 1950s small-town security.

The Old South is a particularly poignant myth in American cinema. Since *Gone With the Wind* it in itself has come to denote the time “before the revolution” and, in that film, defined many facets of popular American cinema: history as character-driven, escapism, unreality, ideology as rooted in childhood experience, idealism as remaining untarnished and the peculiarly thin sense of the “historical sweep” of the backdrops for romances.

O Brother, Where Are Thou? offers a “slight return” (and mainly a troubled liberal one), to these revisionist themes and perhaps, indeed, its reworking of the myth of the Old South is swamped by its comedy and happy ending ... but in its subversion, the film does deliver a number of extraordinary scenes. I am thinking primarily of the Ku Klux Klan scenes, the hangings, the flood and the brutality of some of the violence. It is necessary for the viewer to remind him or herself that the film is a “comedy” during these moments: their intensity is often anything but comedic. And what does this tell us? The impression is that beneath the Old South there are forces incomprehensible in their capacity for destruction, harnessed, and *released*, by man—behind the bumbling caricatures of the political subplot. The full-on way in which the Coens shoot, say, Klan members, has the intensity, the f***ed up-ness, of some of the more troubling recent American films, such as those from Harmony Korine, which make no concession to the mainstream. These moments represent the opposite of *American Beauty*, which reduces rebellion and dysfunctional characters to the familiar and with a sense of “higher things” and life going on. These moments bring to the viewer a sense of the actuality of organised and institutionalised murder and its relation to the myth of the Old South. In this respect, *O Brother's* subversion is of a particularly interesting political nature.

But they are only moments and, of course, moments do not really redeem a film—especially one with such a sense of self-importance. But they do, I believe, offer the kind of filmmaking that the *WSWS* seems now to be interested in. In a recent interview with Robin Wood, Jean-Luc Godard's contemporary work was quickly dismissed on the grounds of being unintelligible. In light of your recent coverage of the American election, you talked about the need to analyse and inform the current wider socio-political situation, in which you believe there is a revolutionary potential. Surely between these two points of view, you should remain aware of those elements of populist films that touch on uncomfortable and very contemporary truths?

Yours,

BH

11 February 2001

Dear *WSWS*,

Astonishment. That is the primary emotion I feel as I find at long last an entirely honest, accurate, dispassionate, and integrated appraisal of the Pacifica battle in general and the WBAI fight in particular. After reading

(and responding polemically) to a series of preposterously biased analyses in *The Nation* (with the sole exception of McChesney's words, which, however, are hobbled by the politeness of classic liberalism and the desire to negotiate with other upper class elements in the impossible name of reasonableness), and generally supporting the passionate but also awkwardly self-conscious descriptions of those fragmented elements of the Pacifica family themselves, who certainly know what is being done to it but find expression as to why only in inchoate and half-formed analyses, yours is the first in print to pull all the threads together.

Bravo! Bravo!

DB

Cornell University

I can't believe the majority of American media doesn't want to report the truth of the election. Are they owned by the Republicans or what? And I'm beginning to question why I'm affiliated with the Democratic Party. They are not representing my interests or even standing for truth, justice and equality. If they can't do that then I am afraid that they are basically as worthless as the other party. None of them seem interested in supporting justice for the citizens who they supposedly represent. They are only interested in their own agendas. It is sad that the proof is sitting right in front of our faces and our leaders are turning a blind eye to the truth. I want leaders who will stand up for the people and for truth for a change. I just feel frustrated. I don't know what to do anymore. I vote and the people I vote for don't follow through. Who do they think they are? It is time for some major changes but how to effect those changes is beyond me right now. I pray that media and leaders find a backbone soon or else our country will not have one either.

TJ

Gates, Iowa

6 February 2001

I appreciate your coverage. The only other place this news kind of news is getting out here in Portland, Oregon is on a small independent radio station KBOO. The powers-that-be are bent on forcing Bush down our throats one way or another. Even the priest keeps on insisting that we pray for this guy! Keep up the good work.

LP

6 February 2001



To contact the *WSWS* and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact