

Recent correspondence to the WSWS

18 January 2002

On Enron

Dear editor,

Thank you for your excellent coverage of the Enron outrage. I wonder how long it will be until Bush's name comes into the picture and how hard the right-wing media will work to cover up his involvement. You have one term in your article that I have always found extremely grating. The term is "let go". This is a term that is used by the owner to tell you that you no longer have a job even though you are not at fault. It is a term that lets the boss off the hook since it sounds as if you have been struggling to "go" and now the boss is generously giving you the freedom you so desperately want. Like millions of other victims of capitalism I have been "let go" at times and my retirement and insurance have been "let go" as well. To be fired is just that—you no longer have employment and you no longer have an income. Why help the capitalists sanitize the results of their greed and incompetence? "Let go" is an owner's term.

In the struggle,

BM

Alamosa, Colorado

14 January 2002

Dear WSWS,

This whole sorry episode has lifted the rock under which corporate America seems able to hide its affairs from millions of decent hard working citizens. Now they are fully exposed as money-grabbing gangsters who treat their workforce with utter contempt.

Surely now, many people will start to look at the system they have been faithfully serving and demand social justice.

The whole system of corporations buying favours from politicians has eaten into the democratic system like a cancer and it will have to be removed before social justice becomes a reality.

With best wishes,

NS

14 January 2002

On the Australian bush fires

I would like to respond to this excellent article.

It is almost as if previous loss of lives means nothing to these governments, grievous tragedies keep reappearing and the damage irremediable to the ecology. As well as the debilitating loss of homes not always covered by insurance after people working a greater part of their lives to get a house. The Ash Wednesday fires of 1983 killed 76 people including 12 CFA volunteer firefighters and destroyed 2,400 homes. Since then in Victoria another 60 people lost their lives including 7 CFA volunteer firefighters and 5,000 homes. In 1994 in New South Wales there was an outbreak of 300 fires with the loss of four lives.

And then what happens, the continual insistence on cost-cutting the fire service budget and the rundown of vital fire equipment and trucks. As well, the Fire Service is increasingly relying on unpaid volunteers mostly with inadequate training having to use insignificant sized hoses

and water-throwing capacity to replace the professional firefighter and proper truck. One of the reasons for the small hose is the antiquated truck and its water carrying capability, a proper hose would quickly exhaust the water supply. Remembering these bush fires often cover a large front, change direction quickly, often 20-30 metres high and can turn into a fireball.

The volunteers are self-sacrificing, often on call, giving up their holidays and at times their lives; all the volunteers encounter burns of varied degrees. This unselfish aspect I would like to contrast to the governments of all stripes, who all have their snout in the trough filling up their pockets. These governments have presided over decades of cost-cutting that has created a set of circumstances that can only assist an unimpeded fire or tragedy. And then on TV both Labor and Liberal ministers posing and strutting like peacocks at the front line of the fire as caring men.

There have been far-reaching housing estates go up in areas where these fires reoccur with no fire station, ambulance depot, or hospital. Because of a pall of smoke lying over Sydney, public alerts have gone out to warn asthma sufferers. Could we doubt that more tragedies must be down the track, is that far-fetched?

In a recent bush fire in America there were 500 fire trucks and 93 helicopters at the scene. Firefighting requires extensive information and understanding along with the latest technology and equipment available.

JC

Sydney

29 December 2001

On the review of Ken Loach's *The Navigators*

Sir,

It was interesting to read the essay on the above subject. Although I enjoyed the film, I was certainly swayed by his criticisms.

However, I'd like to point out that my colleagues and I who have seen this film would see the intrinsic meaning, i.e., it will soon happen to us. Oh, who are we? I hear you say—we are postmen.

Yours sincerely,

MS

9 January 2002

P.S. It's ironic that this has been sent by email

To the editor:

Here are some thoughts occasioned by the recent review of Ken Loach's new film *The Navigators*. Since the rest of the world outside England isn't going to be given a chance to see the movie, it isn't possible to assess the criticisms made of it in the review, but if Loach is promoting illusions in trade unionism, then he certainly deserves to be taken to task for that. Nor am I a big fan of Loach's work on the whole, though his principled stand against commercialism and his persistence in portraying the lives of working class people is entirely admirable.

Still, it seems to me that the limitations of Loach's films raise

deeper issues than simply the problems of an individual artist. Another review on this web site, of Robert Altman's new film *Gosford Park*, rightly talks about the usefulness of a class perspective in art. Well, Loach is a major filmmaker who has dedicated his career to such a perspective, at least in the way that he understands it. If we prove that this new film of his "reeks of political disillusionment and resignation," it seems to me that we've taken on Loach as a political figure, but really that isn't so very important compared to what he represents as an artist. And probably the most important thing about that are his failures.

Yes, character is a big issue, but then the question that needs to be considered is why is it that an artist dedicated to the cause of the working class has such a hard time presenting convincing characters? Saying that he should, with an appropriate quote from a Marxist authority, doesn't really tackle the problem. (By the way, I'm not sure how relevant Stanislavsky's ideas are to this problem. What is it that we want to see—movies about working class life with characters out of Chekhov?)

It would take a lengthy essay to do justice to the subject, but here I would just like to throw out an idea. What is realism? For Loach (and, in a somewhat different way, for Mike Leigh) it is the representing of people as they "really" are. The result can be more or less successful, done with more or less psychological insight, but the basic objective is always pretty much the same. The problem with this kind of realism, though, is that it leaves out a major dimension of life—beyond what people are, there is also what they could be. How does that potential get represented? And if it doesn't, then how realistic is the art?

This is why Loach's workers seem so flat—he (and hence we) can't imagine them leading any other kinds of lives. Walter Benjamin once talked about a conception of history in which "every second of time" had to be seen as "the strait gate through which the Messiah might enter." Loach's characters (or Leigh's) don't live in that kind of world: the oppression that shapes them is a closed circle. The failure of imagination here goes beyond the problems of these individual artists: it is bound up with the political and cultural myopia of an entire generation.

Frank Brenner
Toronto, Ontario
13 January 2002

On the WSWs

Dear Editor,

I am never disappointed when I visit your web site, WSWs. Intelligent, thoughtful, and educated columns in WSWs restore my sense of sanity. Thanks.

MM
Tucson, AZ
30 December 2001
Sir:

I enjoy reading articles from this web site, as I think the only way to get an accurate picture of events is to read from a variety of sources. I have to admit that I am disappointed in your analysis of the US administration.

Instead of offering your socialist view of a remedy of the economic slowdown in the US, you merely chastise the administration for pursuing its war against terror. Do you disagree that the US economy is still by far the most dynamic and resilient in the world?

Where are your socialist havens? None have produced the kinds of innovation or technology that is produced in the US. Yet, you continue to espouse the virtues of this failed experiment. It is too bad

that you merely allow your personal biases and politics to dictate what you write. At times, I find you to be insightful, but this article was really beneath you.

I hope to see better from you in the future, because I really do enjoy reading your web site.

Best regards,
KWS, PhD
7 January 2002
Hello,

I have wanted to write and tell you how much I enjoy all of your articles. I know that I am reading the truth when I do read them. I can hardly wait until they are emailed to me to read them. Until September 11, I did not know that your site existed, but since that time, I have been informed. Keep up the good work in putting the truth out there.

Sincerely,
ZG
12 January 2002
Dear editor,

Thank god there are still people like you around. This is a great article that should be read by the entire world population.

The US is embarking on a very dangerous course that will eventually be self-defeating for the US itself.

Kind regards.
AY
13 January 2002

I have been reading your newspaper and agree with you Bush had a REASON for taking our election away from the people. The regime that did this is not going to stop until they take America under their control and do so with that smirky, smirky smile.

CLD
12 January 2002

Without your diligent and intensive research and reporting, lay-folk like myself would still be standing agog in the dust of the lies of the mainstream press. Once again, thank you and others like you for giving us an alternative to the sham media.

God bless you,
JM
13 January 2002



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