

Letters from our readers

15 January 2003

Below we post a selection of recent letters from our readers.

Dear WSWS,

I wonder if you are aware of the literary precedents to the terrorist scares of today and the earlier Reagan era "terror networks" hysteria. There is a host of writings, but one which deserves the most interest is Conrad's "The Secret Agent." That novel from a former Polish revolutionary focuses on a group of anarchists in London a little after the anarchist direct action of the last century died down with the rise of mass movements of the working class with their anti-war orientation and warnings of a coming world war.

In the novel, a group of anarchists are in exile in London, at loose ends, growing old and irrelevant. One anarchist living off an English woman turns to reporting to a foreign embassy fairly innocuous information exaggerating the anarchist's strength and influence. A new ambassador calls in the informer and tells him that he is needed to carry out a direct action involving a symbolic target, the blowing up of the Greenwich observatory on which the standardized time keeping promoted by the British empire is based. The purpose of the action is to arouse the British public that was indifferent to involvement in Europe's wars. The anarchist gets his explosives from the "Professor," a specialist in explosives who carries around explosives on his body and is ready to blow himself up if captured, surely the first suicide bomber in history.

There are also current and earlier historical precedents for the argument that a state must get the masses on its side by portraying the society as besieged by shadowy individuals whose existence is often fictitious. There is, to begin with, the Czarist forgery "The Protocols of the Elders of Zion" used to raise the Black Hundreds, the Reichstag fire and the subsequent Enabling Act giving dictatorial power "democratically" to Hitler at a time when the forces of the left outnumbered those of the right, and the "Communist conspiracies" of the Red Scare in the United States. Remember Nixon and the Pumpkin Papers or Bobby Kennedy sitting beside Joe McCarthy at the Senate hearings.

More recently the head of the Russian intelligence, Putin, gained power after a series of suspicious explosions of apartment buildings that stopped after he won the elections and resumed the war in Chechnya, only to start again when Putin's fortunes ebbed with the takeover of the theater in Moscow by Chechens who drove trucks with bombs in military uniforms into the heart of Moscow. Well, if four guys can take over airplanes with box cutters following a leader who spent the night before the attack at a bar arguing over one dollar on his bill, then packed his terrorist manual in his bag and checked it in with his luggage ...

Keep up the good work. You had given me a great deal of hope.

AL

11 January 2003

Hello,

I am a 20-plus-year employee at US Airways in Baltimore. If the debtor-in-possession decides to pull our funding, life will be difficult for a while, but we will survive. Do you know how hard it is to give voluntarily through the nose with the company's assurance they would not come back for anything more, and then have them sell the controlling interest to the Retirement Systems of Alabama (RSA) and have them then turn around in less than two months and say they need more? That is collusion. They have pissed off a lot of people that give heart and soul to make US Airways what it is on a day-to-day basis. I, like many of the workers at US Airways, consider my job to be a huge family where taking care of our passengers and each other has always been our top priority.

In recent years we have seen an influx of so-called "experienced management" come through US Airways. They have all made millions from this airline. I mean every one of them. You never hear of an executive that has made bad decisions costing the airline billions of dollars departing in the red. It's amazing they screw the airline, leave with millions and blame the workers. When the workforce comes up with an idea that can save the company money, they bury it as fast as possible because they don't want anyone to know that they are inept and incapable of coming up with simple ideas to save the company money. Everything our highly educated executive branch comes up with is so ridiculously complicated and involves so many different departments it's impossible for it to be profitable at any level.

I realize that the world has changed drastically. It has been a convenient excuse for the Airlines in general and big business overall to downsize, outsource and belittle its hardworking, dedicated workforce. In my opinion many of the big businesses have used the 9/11 events as a means to confuse and divide labor with the legal help of several politicians and the financial backing of big business fat cats.

Life has never been fair, that's just the nature of the beast. Our union's constitution prevents our union leadership from recommending a yes or no vote. They can only give the membership all the facts and let them make the decision for themselves. That needs to be changed because that is not leadership.

I will exercise my right as an IAM (International Association of Machinists) member to vote. I am not afraid to tell you I am voting NO, emphatically NO. I and my coworkers have given more than our share. If you go through our company and look at the cuts that have been taken and are proposed to be taken you will find that they are in no way proportionate based on the ability to live life

day to day. That is why I am voting NO.

Our company already has enough in cost savings from our lower paid employees to emerge from bankruptcy, in my opinion. I will stand fast with my decision and let the cards fall as they may.

Regards,

DZ

6 January 2003

Dear Editor,

I am so tired of all of this squabbling about tax cuts, money, interest rates, and so on. I say we just give all the money to a few private individuals and be done with it. Rich people are far better informed and morally superior than the workers and once the entire allotment is in their hands then I'm sure they will do the right thing. After all, spending all of this money on education, health care, roads, bridges, and so on is an incredible waste and only benefits the morally corrupt masses.

It is a fact that the rich are morally superior to the poor, so I'm sure that the mega-rich will be morally superior to the rich and thus know the answers to all ills. The workers of the world should just get up in the morning and go to work out of the goodness of their hearts and not have to be bribed to do so by meager wages or threatened with starvation since these are such primal motivating forces and shouldn't we just be beyond all of that? This is the twenty-first century, is it not?

A few months of not paying employees will get the money flowing in the moral direction and after that a few more months of not paying suppliers, subsidiaries, CEOs, and management will finish the job. In the end a few people will have it all and they can bestow upon us the moral clarity that comes from being rich.

PK

11 January 2003

Hello, great article ["Inquest indicts Ontario Tories in welfare death"]

I am a British Columbian youth on income assistance and I thought I'd share an experience of my own regarding mistreatment of welfare recipients. One day, about one-and-a-half months ago, I received a letter in the mail explicitly telling me I must show up for an appointment at a place called Jobwave BC and seek full-time employment (enslavement). Now, I'm a grade 12 student trying to graduate so this presented a few major problems ... but I needed the check, otherwise I would waste away. I was quite frightened at the prospect so I complied.

Something that especially bothered me is that I knew they knew I was a K-12 student under age 18 working towards graduation, as I kept them up to date on my major doings and beings. I was convinced that there had been some mistake, so I asked, and emphasized my circumstances, but my tale fell on deaf ears, and they shooed me off, restating the letter sternly. They also explained to me that I wasn't permitted to attend school on welfare (heart starts pounding). "Okay ... so maybe this is legal, ugh," I thought, and so I looked for work, and looked ... the whole ordeal seemed SO nonsensical ... educated individuals tend to get a promising job and all that, and they pay a lot of taxes, which I thought should be a pretty good incentive for them to let me graduate.

I was getting kind of depressed. This lasted for a bit over a week,

through which time I didn't attend school, I couldn't. Through some stroke of luck, my school counselor decided to investigate my peculiar absence, and she even knocked on my door.

I explained and she said that the Ministry of Human Resources had made an "error" and that she had encountered another student in a similar dilemma. I soon found out that it was a mass-produced letter to all able non-pregnant recipients. I was assured that she could make things right. To make a long story short, she succeeded, though that absence really killed me academically, forcing me to drop a course—I had a large course load at the time.

I am fortunate, though, because I now know that many students were harassed, frightened and seemingly forced to drop out, and they did, and they are probably working at some repugnant place like McDonalds or the Gap, completely screwed by the inconsiderate elite during their prime.

12 January 2003

P.S. Your site is one of my favorites. It's so very refreshing to see honest, faithful journalism for the majority in this insane era. Keep up the good work.

Just as the mainstream media tend to neglect British foreign policy implications, so they ignore the dismantling of the National Health Service. There has been only token opposition from Dobson and other Labour back-benchers. A key announcement on the special private fast-track centers was made during the Christmas break so as to be virtually unnoticed. Despite the public's great affection for the National Health Service, the finest surviving piece of the postwar settlement, it will be slowly privatized and destroyed without much fuss. The new talk of diversity is just camouflage for inequality.

Thank you very much for one of the only articles to properly address this topic, which is so crucial for ordinary people.

JL

6 January 2003



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Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact