

Letters from our readers

5 December 2007

The following is a selection of recent letters sent to the World Socialist Web Site.

On “US recession fears grow as bank losses mount”

This week I received annual reports from two Fidelity Mutual Funds: Investment Grade Bond Fund and Intermediate Bond Fund. Each is the kind of ordinarily conservative fund in which retirees would invest modest amounts. In each, the young(ish) fund manager was having to explain that the fund had suffered a small hit in the current year because of exposure to the subprime housing market. The amounts of money do not appear large (and for me personally, quite trivial). But at 80 years, I am just old enough to remember mutterings during the Great Depression about the misinvestment of widows' funds by friendly small-town bank cashiers.

DC

Guerneville, California, USA 21 November 2007

On “‘GetUp! Action for Australia’: Protest politics in support of Labor”

Excellent article, thanks! I have had a work colleague who just a couple of days previously emailed me a formatted letter by GetUp!, titled “Fwd: The stakes are too high to give up [5 days to go].” In this open letter GetUp! promotes itself, requests the recipient to join the campaign, and asks for a donation of \$50. The letter focuses on the war in Iraq and links to a video of two Australian women damaged in different ways directly by the conflict, Sam McMillan and Louise Barry, who seem to have joined the GetUp! team.

I wrote back to my friend, “While there is no doubt these are brave women who think they have aligned with a cause they can believe in, I think the war in Iraq cannot be separated from the war in Afghanistan or the war on terror. They are all three driven by the same flawed principles and serve the same interests.”

Mention one and we need to mention all three. Otherwise it kind of looks like there's a legitimate justification for being involved in the other two (Afghanistan and the WOT), which there is not.

GO

New South Wales, Australia

22 November 2007

On “Britain: The real issues in the Oxford Union ‘free speech’ debate”

Gone are the days of “No Platform for Fascists,” which British student unions used to espouse. It is not coincidental that a recent report has shown the growth of huge numbers of students from independent fee-paying schools. These students now dominate Oxord and Cambridge, as they did in those days before student grants were introduced. Thanks to New Labour's abolition of grants allowing working-class students to attend universities without the fear of accumulating huge debts, it is not surprising that these institutions are not just becoming the playground of the idle rich but also of the reactionary right. Quite obviously, the invitation offered to these two repugnant representatives of the British Right will be another step towards New Labour borrowing their type of manifesto to win future elections just as it borrowed Thatcherism. This is a very disturbing trend in British universities.

TW

28 November 2007

On “The Darjeeling Limited from Wes Anderson: It's time to do more interesting work”

This was a very good review. I thought of writing a critique of this myself, but I just didn't know how to put my impressions down on paper. You on the other hand managed to do this very succinctly. I too thought this was a step backward for Wes Anderson. I don't remember laughing that much at all on this one; maybe his style is becoming a bit strained. Hopefully, this is not the last we'll see of him.

KM

California, USA

1 December 2007

On “Edmund Wilson's literary essays and reviews from 1920 to 1950: Just in time”

Beautiful, thoughtful, well-written. We could use a few more young Wilsons today. They'd be socialists now, of

course, and be found more and more around the WWSWS.

KK

Toronto, Canada

3 December 2007

On "Los Angeles school district threatens teachers with financial punishment over payroll glitch"

Incredibly well written article. I am 25-year teacher of LAUSD and am horrified by this mess. Every teacher I know is affected adversely by the poor planning and execution of this new payroll system. Mr. Valle has his facts correct. How will this ever be resolved? How does the second largest school district in the United States get away with this kind of behavior, without accountability? Mr. Valle is correct in his assessment of the damage, as well as the length of time and effort it will take to correct the errors made on so many levels.

JF

25 November 2007

On "The filthy rich: Forbes lists America's top 400 for 2007"

Very excellent article! Right on the money. It should be read by everyone over the age of 10.

DG

Portland, Oregon, USA

27 November 2007

On "Poor planning compounds problems as drought plagues Southeast US"

Ed Hightower has written a marvelous piece on the drought in the southeastern USA. It is more complete with relevant facts, figures, and commentary than anything I have seen so far. As for the cause of this mess, well, Mr. Hightower has just about hit the nail on the head. The super-growth and general excess that we have seen down here since the 1980s is finally starting to have ecological effects that match the social ones. One can see endless examples of profit-based gluttony as he or she tours the ever-expanding metro Atlanta area.

When Sonny Purdue realized that his friends and supporters in the wealthy suburbs of North Atlanta were not going to have enough water for their manicured lawns and weekends on the lake, he panicked and blamed it on Florida and the Army Corps of Engineers. His appeal to higher powers has become something of a laugh. It is humorously ironic that his mass prayer was scheduled for the day before our first rainfall in many, many days. This rain had long since been forecast by meteorologists. That's right, it would not take much imagination to see that the Governor could well have looked to these masters of science to help him toward successful spirituality!

I only question Mr. Hightower on one point. He seems to imply that residential action would have little effect. In fact, residents' reduction of water usage has had some tangible effect. Before Governor Purdue and his lot began crying and complaining and throwing blame left and right, our home, the unified Athens-Clarke County, Georgia, foresaw a serious situation and took steps to limit our water usage. By the time most of the rest of the state had gotten used to the Governor's decree of a 10 per cent reduction, we had, with a few reasonable steps, already reduced our usage by 28 per cent. Our last reading showed a 35 per cent reduction of water usage in comparison to the same time period of the previous year. Recognition of the earth's resources as essential to our basic needs, a bit of simple foresight, and general collective action *can* work!

RV

Athens, Georgia, USA 27 November 2007

On "Mexico: Aftermath of the Tabasco floods—another manmade 'natural' disaster"

I recently happened upon the *World Socialist Web Site* and have found its articles very interesting. The stories cover information not found elsewhere.

In relation to this article, perhaps you could further investigate the operation of the Las Penitas dam. There is suspicion that the Federal Electricity Commission (CFE), which runs the dam, held back water to reduce the hydroelectric power output so that small, privately-owned power companies could sell their electricity production to the CFE. When the water rose to an alarming level, someone hastily ordered the release of a huge amount of water, which, combined with the heavy rains, caused the disastrous flooding.

This story has at least three important aspects: firstly, the human disaster caused by irresponsible dam management; secondly, the corruption of a public company favoring its private competition; and, thirdly, the creeping privatization of the energy sector in Mexico. The Mexican government denies its intention to privatize the energy sector, but, apparently, there are already over 600 private electric power companies operating in Mexico.

EW

21 November 2007



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