Letters from our readers

10 January 2008

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

On "US poor and uninsured suffer substantially worse health outcomes"

One would think it something of a "no-brainer" that people without health insurance are generally less healthy than those with. Sadly, there are many for whom even proof such as the studies cited in today's article by Ms. Spencer will be written off. As someone who has had spotty insurance coverage, though rather younger than 65, I can attest to the reluctance of getting moored down in the medical debt that could come about from a simple visit to the doctor (as if it were simple to *get* a doctor to see you).

What if they find something? What if they find something very expensive? What if they run expensive tests and find nothing? It's almost enough to make you wish they would find something—if only to "justify" the expense of taking care of yourself.

Matters are made even worse if you have a pre-existing condition. Oftentimes even coverage through a job will have a waiting period before anything relating to the condition (no matter how long ago it existed) is covered—therefore you have to pay for the insurance and treatment or upkeep as well. If you can, of course. Naturally, massive cuts have been made to the government-funded safety net that would have picked up that slack.

It amazes me every day that we live in a society where people—working people—cannot even afford their own bodies. That is yet another injustice perpetuated by this system.

CMS

Portland, Oregon, USA

5 January 2008

On "Sharp rise in unemployment rate: US jobs report shows slide into recession"

Having a degree in economics, I attended seminars regarding the economics of government. They have never reported the truth, the same as the number of dead soldiers in Iraq.

If they say the unemployment rate is 5 percent, then the real unemployment rate is would be 20 percent. Rationalize that thousands of companies are either closing their doors, or laying off thousands of workers—e.g., GM, Ford, Chrysler, the US government, etc. The few people who find jobs are in the lowest pay scales—e.g., restaurants, etc. It would be great to get an honest report occasionally.

PW

5 January 2008

On "Britain: Gifted young footballer fights deportation"

The thrust of your piece is well argued, but I'm not sure you can say that John Cruddas is the "most vocal representative" of "a tendency in the Labour Party that calls for stronger measures to curb immigration." It's fair game to criticise Cruddas for overemphasising the problem caused by immigration, as you do later in the paragraph, but from what I can remember he has been pretty careful not to call outright for curbs on immigration. If I've missed something, apologies.

Also, I'm not sure which "tendency" you mean? If it's the leadership's or the party's long-term drift rightwards on immigration, asylum, etc., then he's clearly not the "most vocal." If it's something more like a leftish faction, probably you should have named it.

Anyway, keep up the good fight.

DC

4 January 2008

On "The art of Oscar Peterson: legacy of a jazz piano virtuoso"

For a news service that is excellent (agree with the critiques or not when it comes to film) you miss the point when it comes to Oscar Peterson. Comments such as those of Marian McPartland (that Peterson was "the finest technician that I have seen") and Miles Davis

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(that Peterson "makes me sick because he copies everybody. He even had to learn how to play the blues") should have led you in the right direction. For all his virtuosity he was no innovator musically or stylistically, innovation being a critical aspect of "Jazz." His main style, hard bop, in some ways represented a retreat to known forms on the heels of the brilliant explorations of bebop. During the sixties and seventies, Peterson was often wheeled out as a symbol of "tasteful" conformity in the wake of the major creative forces represented by the likes of John Coltrane, Ornette Coleman, Cecil Taylor, electric Miles Davis, later the Art Ensemble of Chicago. These artists have left a legacy still being explored not only in "jazz," but also in world music, new European classical music, Electronica and more. Yes, Peterson was a great musical technician and player, but historically Peterson represented complacency in a period of social revolt.

LB

4 January 2008

On "Netherlands: the grand coalition and the role of the Socialist Party"

Thank you for your realistic comment on the Dutch Socialist Party. Since you wrote the article, the SP lost about eight seats in parliament according to two reliable polls. There has been a lot of commotion between party members about the dictatorial regime of Jan Marijnissen and the censorship the members were subjected to. Because all problems are still being denied and marginalised by the party's 'elite,' thousands of members cut their membership card in half, and regional and communal politicians ran away.

Anyway, one little remark. You write: "The SP had even hoped to gain departmental posts as a result, declaring immediately after the elections that it was prepared to participate in a future government. Its leader Marijnissen signaled the party's "readiness" to participate to the PvdA and even to the conservatives of the CDA. However, to its great disappointment, the SP was not included in the current coalition negotiations."

But that is not a real fact, but merely the official party explanation. The PvdA (Labour) has a totally different opinion and states that Marijnissen refused to cooperate, and took off in the middle of negotiations. Marijnissen's explanation was simply: they don't want me, so what can I do? What really happened in the negotiations is still unresolved. Marijnissen's attitude was not appreciated by the members, and in fact started the radical decline.

AA

The Netherlands

4 January 2008

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