

Letters from our readers

11 November 2008

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

On "'Strange Fruit': the story of a song"

I found the review of the film *Strange Fruit* engrossing and well written. I especially enjoyed the analysis of the film's omission of the class motivations for American racism in the South.

I also appreciated the mention of my uncle, Milt Gabler, who did not hesitate to produce "Strange Fruit" for Billie Holiday. She went to him, crying, because no other record producer would record her singing it for fear of Southern reprisals and boycotts of their labels. My uncle disregarded all these possible adverse reactions to his own label because he felt the song was important and he admired Billie Holiday as an artist. I am proud of his achievements in the annals of music, and especially proud of this decision of his.

Sincerely,

Ina Claire Gabler

7 November 2008

On "Wall Street's Great Heist of 2008"

Mr. Grey,

Thanks (I think) for detailing this absolutely nauseating picture of the true oligarchs of our times. I, like most people, find this behavior despicable beyond description. This in my view is an inevitable consequence of our "top-down" view of the economy in the United States, which I might add, is entirely fueled by the MBA programs of elite universities where the mentality of entitlement is ingrained in its students. In what other profession would such a ludicrous discussion take place as the one that was mentioned in the *Wall Street Journal* between the bank executives? It seems to me that the pretext of capitalism that makes it somewhat tolerable to people is the concept of "risk-reward." To be sure, investment banking is a high-risk business, but, the downside risk seems to be visited on an entirely different group of people than the beneficiaries of the upside risk. Here in Southeast Michigan where I live, the economy is in tatters, and while bad management or unrealistic demands from workers of the auto industry are frequently blamed, what is really behind it all seems to be this pretext that the risks of the industry are to be borne by the workers as opposed to the investment class. Its all the more discouraging to see the optimism of the election of Barack Obama viewed as the antidote to this death spiral. I wish this article could have been broadcast at Grant Park last night and followed with "And now a few remarks from the guy who was instrumental in getting the bailout passed!"

Mike T

Michigan, USA

5 November 2008

On "Obama administration begins to take shape"

I do not like the tone of this article, and I would love to stand here and say that you're way off base and wrong on all counts. However, the reality of the matter is that I have been reading this site daily for at least seven years and you're almost always correct in what you state. I was elated for a few days after the elections, but have come back down to Earth now. I hope for the best, and by the best I don't mean social equality for all and clean air and clean water and untainted food and mass transit that actually works. By the best, I mean a little more Victory Gin each month and perhaps just a bit more Victory Chocolate. By the way, aren't the pigs supposed to be out here in the barn, with us? What is that all about?

PK

7 November 2008

On "Obama reassures big business on economic policy"

Mr. Martin presents us more evidence that Barack Obama is faithfully serving his backers from the USA's power elite, aka establishment, by giving the names of those who will serve on a committee of economic advisors and other knowledgeable individuals who will advise President-Elect Obama on measures needed to recover from the meltdown of 9/15/08. The members of this body, including token representatives of formerly downtrodden minorities, are upper-class individuals who hold safe opinions that won't upset members of the power elite. Obama has cautioned all that any recovery from the collapse of the USA's and world's economies will be slow, tedious and require sacrifice by all. That means that if there are any changes, the changes won't harm the establishment—well not much harm. BHO has to keep his street cred on both Main St. and Wall St.

Those who voted for Obama because his opposition painted him as a socialist and an agent of change should note this. If you wanted Obama the socialist, agent of change, you are going to be disappointed. A president who selects a Democratic Leadership Council type as his chief of staff is committed to a right-centrist position for his administration. Rahm Emanuel, Obama's chief of staff, is a DLC rightist-centrist. If you doubt me or Mr. Martin, do a Google search on Mr. Emanuel to flesh out his biography on Wikipedia. To call Emanuel a progressive is to exaggerate. Emanuel is a Bill Clinton-style DLC type. Emanuel served in Bill Clinton's administration in addition to spending a few years making money in the private financial sector. The message from Mr. Martin is don't expect big changes from Obama or the Democratic 111th Congress. To be cynical, it's SS/DD, same stuff, different day.

Don't blame me, I voted for Jerry White and Bill van Auken.

Larry L

8 November 2008

On “Circuit City to close stores, lay off thousands in US”

The closing of over 150 Circuit City stores has negative implications for Verizon Wireless employees as well. VZW has "stores inside the stores" in over 140 of the Circuit Cities slated to close down, with approximately five employees per store. All indications are that these employees will be reabsorbed into retail stores for the holiday season, but if sales drop significantly, as most are expecting for the retail sector this holiday season, many retail outlets will be looking to cut the number of employees, including Verizon Wireless.

We also learned today that the FCC approved the merger of Verizon Wireless and Alltel, making Verizon Wireless the largest mobile provider. In the process, Verizon Wireless will accept \$22 billion in Alltel's debt.

The numbers for Verizon Wireless have thus far looked good, but it will undoubtedly suffer from recession and a slowing retail industry as other mobile providers have already begun to. No doubt more mergers are to follow in the wireless industry.

JO

San Diego, California, USA

4 November 2008

On “Three men convicted over 2002 Bali bombings set to be executed”

The prolific media coverage of the imminent executions of Amrozi Nurhasyim, Ali Ghufron and Imam Samudra has at no stage questioned this barbaric practice. Instead, coverage has sought to portray them as the culmination in the execution of the law, so providing justice and closure for the families that lost loved ones and also the Australian people in the war on terror.

Unfortunately for the government, the media coverage is disproportionate to public interest. People are far more concerned about the impending recession and the impact that it will have on their lives, and what measures the government is going to implement to ameliorate their hardship.

David D

Australia

5 November 2008

On “Archaeologists warn of Iraq war’s devastating consequences”

On a recent visit to Boston, I had the opportunity to view a special exhibition at the Museum of Fine Arts, “Art and Empire: Treasures from Assyria in the British Museum,” which runs through January 4, 2009. The exhibit, featuring artwork from the ninth to the seventh centuries BC, when the Assyrian Empire was at the height of its power, is a “must see” for anyone visiting the Boston area. I stood transfixed in front of gigantic stone reliefs depicting ancient battles, plus many small treasures from palaces of the kings at Nimrud and Nineveh. Notes accompanying the exhibit trace the disruption of archaeological work since the US invasion of Iraq in 2003: “In the chaos following the overthrow of Saddam Hussein’s regime, the Iraq Museum was looted (roughly eight thousand objects are still missing), and sites were ravaged by uncontrolled digging. In 2006 the World Monuments Fund placed the entire nation of Iraq on its list of most endangered sites.” The treasures on display in Boston will help educate viewers about the scope and importance of what has been irretrievably lost in Iraq. I recommend getting the audio tour.

Lesley J

Ohio, USA

6 November 2008

On “US, world stock markets plummet on global recession forecasts”

I have lived through many crises of capitalism in my lifetime—the inflationary spiral initiated by America’s military incursions into Southeast Asia; the oil price scare of the early 70s; the recession of the early 80s; the junk bond scandal of the late 80s; the jobless recovery of the early 90s; and the collapse of the Asian Tigers in 1997. Many optimists are taking the view that this recession, too, shall pass.

I am not in a position to study the economy the way your editorial board is. However, I can see some differences in this current crisis, differences that have their roots in the jobless recovery of the 1990s.

The all-pervasive feature of the economic rally of the 1990s was a lack of increase in productive capacity of the centres of capitalism—the so-called Western world. The only industry that saw significant activity during this period was the computer-related industry. This in turn initiated a flurry of get-rich-quick speculation, called the dot.com bubble, which eventually burst at the turn of the millennium. We have also seen other “bubbles,” such as the real estate bubble that has morphed into the current mortgage crisis. These speculation frenzies do not increase productive capacity; they are merely shell games in which capitalists bet on which market can be squeezed for the most money.

When this type of capitalist crisis originates in what was once the foremost bastion of world capitalism, the American economy, after two decades of the most rapacious conduct of capitalism—globalisation and the re-incorporation of former socialist economies into world capitalism—it indicates to me that the capitalist system has run out of options. We could well be on the verge of the total collapse of world capitalism.

Joan C

Edmonton, Canada

7 November 2008



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