Letters from our readers

10 January 2009

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

*On "*US ‘surge' in Afghanistan threatens wider war*"*

The efforts to create new US and NATO supply routes through central Asia also raise another ominous threat—that the US is planning on an escalation of activities within Pakistan. US attacks on Pakistani militants have already caused them to target the US supply route, but massive popular opposition to US activities might also pressure Pakistan to reduce its support.

Worse still, an outright conflict between Pakistan and the US would decisively end shipments. In this "potentiality," an alternative Central Asian supply route would become critical, and new military bases in the Central Asian republics would provide further support.

It should also be noted that the new supply routes reportedly plan to use the well-developed rail networks of Russia and Europe to reach Central Asia. Compared to the circuitous sea-route to reach Pakistan, the rail networks would allow a much faster transport of a high volume of goods. Escalation is certainly the proper word to describe it.

Jeff L

6 January 2008

*On "*New York concerts examine ‘lost music' of twentieth century*"*

Excellent article on the presentation of the works of these nearly forgotten composers! I only wish I could have attended some of the concerts. I have long loved the music of Kurt Weill. During the 1970s, I performed many of his works in a theatre presentation in San Francisco called "An Evening at Widow Begbick's," which combined songs from several Brecht/Weill productions including "Threepenny Opera," "Man is Man" and others. (I played Begbick, who was originally played by Lotte Lenya, Weill's wife.) I loved singing his music so much that I looked forward to going to the theatre every night, no matter how tired I was from working my day job. (Alternative theatre, as Brecht was considered in the 1970s, did not pay much if it paid at all!)

There was a revival of sorts of Brech/Weill during the '70s with productions like "Berlin to Broadway" and others in New York and San Francisco. Our production ran for over a year and was revived in 1979 at a club called Chez Jacques and ran for many months. I always treasure the memory of performing those songs, that music.

I also recently discovered the music of Eric Korngold, through a now-defunct BBC music magazine that every month contained a CD of the music referred to in the issue. I love this music, too. Hanns Eisler is also a favorite of mine.

Thanks so much for bringing these composers to our attention once more. Their music was full of passion as well as beauty and a solidity that seems absent from so much contemporary music, "classical" or otherwise. In fact, through watching the Tony Awards programs, I have noticed the decline in the quality of the music written for Broadway musicals. Not only is most of it bland, some of it is truly awful, and the quality of the singing is even worse. There are honorable exceptions, of course. One of them is Stephen Sondheim, whose music I also enjoyed performing once upon a time. His influence, of course, was Oscar Hammerstein, whose own influence was the composers of 19th century Europe. This is true also of George Gershwin and Aaron Copland.

Carolyn

California, USA

7 January 2008

*On "*Britain: New wave of human BSE/vCJD feared*"*

It is my understanding that, simply put, BSE occurs

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when herbivores—such as cattle, dairy cows, sheep and so on—are fed rendered animal products by corporate agricultural businesses. This is done to create bigger profits since it is cheaper to feed animals other dead animals than to buy grains for animal consumption. Thus, agribusiness turns herbivores into carnivores. Mother nature is not pleased.

The dangers of feeding rendered animal products to herbivores that are then consumed by human beings or their pets do not concern corporate agribusiness. As good capitalists, their only concern is to make profit, not for food safety or the well-being of the public. Since governments in the UK, Canada and the US exist to enhance and protect the profits of the capitalist class, they have no genuine interest in creating rules or regulations that would interfere in the making of profits. This is their "free market."

All protestations to the contrary, we should expect to see more horrific results in terms of numbers of BSE infection in humans in the years to come. Rendered animal products are also fed to chickens, farmed fish and turkeys. The well-off and rich may be able to afford organic, traditionally raised animals fed on non-GE grains, but the prices are often out of the reach of working class families. Fresh produce as an alternative is often extremely limited or high priced. The only thing many working families can afford is the cheaper junk known as "fast" or "convenience foods" which contain little nutritional value. This is why the majority of victims of BSE and health problems will come from the working class.

The crimes of corporate agribusiness in the development and sustaining of BSE in the food chain is just one more reason why capitalism has outlived any use for the majority of humanity. The time is long since past that we need to work together to get rid of it.

Gene

28 December 2008

On "Obama stimulus plan to include major corporate tax cuts"

Cutting taxes is just another way of saying "the invisible hand of the marketplace with fix everything." Well, first of all, there isn't an invisible hand. Secondly, this economy will not move an inch forward until social and economic equality becomes the #1 goal of the new administration. I don't think it's unreasonable that someone who puts the effort into going to college double or triple their salary, but the insanity of today's pay scales makes it absolutely impossible for people who work to afford to participate in the economy in any meaningful way, and our economy is not going to repair itself with lottery tickets, cheap cigarettes, cash advance parlors, and pawn shops, which are the only growing businesses among the working class consumers.

PK

6 January 2008

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