Letters from our readers

19 February 2009

*On "*The American ruling class*"*

Ever since the Beatles rediscovered Eastern philosophy during their sojourn in India, transcendentalist philosophy has gained ground in popular culture in the West.

Your article on the American ruling class presents a picture of people who have, to all intents and purposes, "transcended material reality", in the sense that there is virtually no material need that cannot be met for these individuals, given their enormous wealth. For them, the chain of cause and effect between personal desire and material reality is completely obscured—the concept of material barriers to the exercise of will is unthinkable. According to classical transcendental thinking, these should be the most enlightened people in the world.

But they're not.

Joan C
15 February 2009

*On "*Obama administration spearheads attack on auto workers*"*

One of the interesting contradictions in capitalist society is that a robust economy of high-wage earners doesn't produce sufficient profits or sufficient profit growth for the capitalists. We see the evidence of this problem reflected in the auto crisis.

The decline in auto sales is global, affecting every automaker all throughout the world. The decline in auto sales is not due to a lack of need or desire for new cars; nor is it due to a lack of capacity to produce new cars. Additionally, the cars of today are of a much higher quality than the cars of a few decades ago when they were expected to fall apart and veer towards the junkyard as they neared 100,000 miles.

The decline in auto sales is due directly to the inability of the world's impoverished workforce to be able to afford to buy new cars. Almost half of the world's people toil long, hard hours for less than $2 per day as they produce the goods upon which the global capitalist system rests. About 80 percent of the world's workforce toils for less than $10 per day. Those figures don't include the many millions of people who live on poverty wages in the advanced economies of the world. To any logical minded person, the obvious solution required to increase car sales is to raise global wages. But that isn't at all what the capitalist ruling class is calling for. In fact, they are calling for exactly the opposite, a wage cut. Capitalism is incompatible with a decent life for even as little as 15 percent of the world's working people. Capitalism requires massive amounts of virtual slavery in order to keep the wealthy few living like kings.

Brian M
Florida, USA
17 February 2009

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If anyone wonders why the SEP ran Jerry White as the party's candidate for president in 2008, please read this article fully and carefully. You'll know how President Obama, the progressive agent of change, and his enablers plan to change America into something less than a workers' paradise on the pretext of saving the US auto industry. For starters, forget about union contracts and workers' rights. There aren't any. If you have the stomach for it, Mr. White will tell you more on Obama's plans to change America. It isn't pretty.

Larry L
17 February 2009

*On "*The Class—inside a Parisian working class school*"*

Dear Richard Phillips,

I deeply appreciate your review of the French film *The Class* and will be watching for its release in these parts. While I agree entirely as to how the scope of the film may well be limited by an inability of the filmmaker to draw the deeper social inferences, I still believe it may be an important film if it attempts to portray the problems in the urban classroom you

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describe in your review.

As a teacher in a relatively progressive program that has been allowed to decay for several years, I have sometimes made the same sort of mistake the protagonist teacher of this film has made, and have had to eat a little crow in connection with such mistakes. All the same, it seems to me an important thing that anyone wants to portray this particular dynamic of the urban schools on film, as most of what we get in our union publications and mainstream culture is warm fuzzy crap. It does not acknowledge the particular difficulty you've described: the inability of teachers to break through a social pattern that is institutionally induced and reinforced through the harshness of urban poverty and the contradictions many immigrant families face.

As a teacher, I've long been involved in dissident factions in the NEA. And I hate to admit it, because this is at the root of a dispute I had with one of your members some years ago, but the unions themselves agree to many of the "yellow dog" conditions that have made reform of our labor organizations impossible.

We have a long, uphill and probably bloody climb ahead of us. The people who own this country are insane, and their systematic abuse of young people under the heading of public education is a crime that defies description.

Well, thanks for the heads-up on this. I'll be watching for it.

Michael H
Washington, USA
17 February 2009

*On "*The American media and the Lincoln bicentenary"

Lincoln was not perfect, but in his age he stood head and shoulders over his rivals. The corporate press carefully avoids labeling the Civil War for what it was—a war of liberation. The South was defeated militarily, but was able to win the war in the long run, by keeping intact Jim Crow laws, aborting Reconstruction, and installing the shadow government of the KKK. Nixon saw the reactionary South for what it was, and formulated his "states' rights" code words in order to win over the South. We still have the effects of this, as national candidates try to formulate a "southern strategy." Obama was carefully cultivated and selected by the corporatist power in the US. Anyone who expected him to buck the crony-capitalists has misunderstood our present day system. Bottom line is: Obama does not have any of the courage of Lincoln. Obama's selection of Clinton re-treads and corporate insiders should come as no surprise.

Lou C
17 February 2009

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