

Letters from our readers

7 April 2009

On "The Nation and 'socialism'"

The *Nation's* recent pieces on socialism do nothing to enlighten the reader, but they do reveal something about the psychology of the social milieu from which its writers—and readers—come: Liberal upper middle class America. Among such folk one hears much bad mouthing of corporate greed, and worry about the vector of the Dow.

Lloyd G
South Dakota, USA

2 April 2009

As usual, David, you are a clear and insightful explainer of the political bankruptcy of the so-called "left" in America. A reminder such as yours of the history of the *Nation* magazine is needed to provide clarity in the current confusion of these representatives of the "left," a confusion that is taken as good coin by many of their readers.

The writers and editors of the *Nation* have no confidence in the working class and are completely enslaved by the idea that capitalism can be reformed. But capitalism as a system cannot be reformed. The entire basis of capitalism is the predation of the wealthy upon the rest of the planet, exploiting nature and mankind for the sake of making profits. The *Nation* would like the population to continue to believe that capitalism is the highest form of civilization and that a few "bad apples" have been allowed to get out of control. This conclusion and its broadcasting to the public is, I believe, the worst betrayal of the working class. Many people are searching for solutions to the disaster that has been wrought by the parasites on Wall Street and their toadies in government, and for the *Nation* to pretend that the reformist solution is the only way to go is worse than disingenuous. It is a deliberate attempt to convince their readers that socialism is an impossible dream and that the only sensible course is to back the Democratic Party. Such a betrayal is criminal, in my opinion.

Carolyn Z
California, USA

2 April 2009

Superb column on the *Nation*, to which I was a loyal subscriber for years. Interestingly, I let my subscription lapse about the same time I started reading the WSWS. You nailed the kind of squishy "clubiness" that seemed to pervade the journal.

Thanks,
Robert L

2 April 2009

As to the *Nation* and its pseudo-socialist facade, how about adding a dishonorable mention for "Democracy Now?" Some of the characters Mr. Walsh has mentioned are their regulars, which is often downright aggravating. [Tariq Ali is about an ultimate source on the Left in the Middle East as George W. Bush is on chainsaws.]

As to real socialists—when was the last time the program even had one on? They (or Pacifica Radio) seem to have some kind of policy prohibiting the appearance of socialists on their airwaves. If they do, they could at least have the decency to respond to letters that ask them this question.

Yes, I still watch them most days, but other than the days when they feature a Jeremy Scahill or a Naomi Klein—real investigative journalists if not outright socialists—I find the show's appeal increasingly on the wane.

Bob R
Missouri, USA

2 April 2009

On "Obama's 'Path to Viability for GM & Chrysler':
The ruthless language of Wall Street"

Mr. Grey,

Thank you for this startling and disturbing account of the Obama administration's assault on the workers and retirees of the auto industry. I think one other part of this program that bears mention is the orders that holders of

GM corporate bonds need to “take a haircut,” that is, receive cents on the dollar of the face value of these investments. These bonds were investment quality debt at the time of their origination, and for that reason, they were very attractive to pension funds that sought to turn short-term assets (worker contributions) into stable, long-term assets yielding a return that would allow them to meet their defined-benefit pension obligations to future retirees. Somehow, remunerating the losses of those who purchased ultra-leveraged, speculative-grade derivative securities purchased within a non-public market is an absolute priority (to the point of socializing any losses and allowing gains to remain private), but the “toxic assets” of souring GM debt are not, even with its implications for retirees outside the auto industry.

Mike T

Michigan, USA

3 April 2009

On “Media backs Obama’s assault on US auto workers”

I’m no lawyer, but it seems obvious to me that there has been a conspiracy of organized criminals within the boardrooms of the automakers, the government oversight agencies and the labor officials to underfund the pensions and healthcare accounts that are said to be causing these conditions. These should be investigated and prosecuted under the RICO laws.

The automakers diverted monies from retirement and healthcare into executive pay and shareholder dividends. They couldn’t have done this without the complicity of the labor officials and the government agencies whose very jobs are to assure that the required funding for these legacy accounts is in place. This is a massive fraud that has gone on in corporations across this country, with the taxpayer left holding the bag of funding failed pension plans. There isn’t much chance it will ever be prosecuted as long as we keep the bought and paid for politicians in office who have allowed this to go on.

Tony J

Arkansas, USA

1 April 2009

On “Israel: Netanyahu threatens war on Iran, spurns ‘two-state solution’”

Netanyahu’s interview with the *Atlantic* also revealed a remarkably skewed sense of history. There was this: “Netanyahu offered Iran’s behavior during its eight-year war with Iraq as proof of Tehran’s penchant for irrational behavior. Iran wasted over a million lives without batting an eyelash. It didn’t sear a terrible wound into the Iranian consciousness. It wasn’t Britain after World War I,

lapsing into pacifism because of the great tragedy of a loss of a generation. You see nothing of the kind.” There is simply no parallel between Iran in 1989 and Britain in 1918, and no parallel in the conclusion of their respective conflicts. As well, a quick check of the experiences of Britain’s colonies in the 1920s will lay to rest the notion of a lapse into pacifism. Yet it is this comparison which leads to his suggestion that Iran is “a country that glorifies blood and death, including its own self-immolation.”

Then this: “King Hussein in many ways subordinated his country to Saddam Hussein when Saddam invaded Kuwait in 1990. Saddam seemed all-powerful, unchallenged by the United States, and until the US extracted Kuwait from Saddam’s gullet, King Hussein was very much in Iraq’s orbit.” Hussein of Jordan witnessed firsthand the Arab summit at which Saddam’s complaints of mistreatment—demands of immediate repayment of war loans coupled with Kuwaiti slant-drilling Iraqi oilfields—were rebuffed. King Hussein complained publicly that failure to address Iraqi concerns would lead to a major crisis (which it of course did). King Hussein also suggested that there was a hidden agenda at work, a conclusion he reached by the response he received from the Saudis and others. King Hussein was correct, as events since 1990 have shown. But to Netanyahu, his comments served to “subordinate his country” to a dictator.

The *Atlantic* article is worth reading in full as it clearly demonstrates that, for all his bluster, Netanyahu—and his advisors—are operating from ill-informed and prejudicial understandings of events. And yet, from this, they hope to advise others of self-described “hinges of history.”

Jeff

Canada

2 April 2009



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