

## Letters from our readers

7 May 2009

*On “Obama administration spearheads wage cuts for American workers”*

Patrick,

I'm glad you dissected Paul Krugman's "arbitrary distinctions" with regard to wage cuts. As you note, the bargaining talks transpiring between employers and union leaders are not mere "discussions"; they're expressions of managerial bullying. More specifically, they are examples of "concession bargaining," which is just a code phrase for a negotiating process whereby management issues ultimatums to workers based on a threat of reprisals (e.g., shutting down a factory or offshoring its operations), so that workers are forced to make concessions against their own interests. This is the occupational version of "gunboat diplomacy," and it would be illegal if the US were a democracy.

Paul K

5 May 2009

*On “Spanish judge launches new torture probe of Bush officials”*

As US citizens, I and everyone I know are appalled that torture was approved and used. Please continue the investigation. If appropriate, arrest the perpetrators, give them a trial, and if found guilty send them for very long prison terms.

Thank you.

Orion B

2 May 2009

*On “Questions following not guilty verdicts in July 2005 London bombing case”*

On the morning of 7th July 2007, after the bombs had exploded, I watched the BBC News conduct an interview with a private "security expert" who claimed to have been running a simulation exercise that very morning for unnamed institutions in the City of London

in order to plan for just such an attack. As far as I am aware this story has never been followed up in the mainstream media—or anywhere else that I'm aware of. Taken alone it's hard to know what to make of this. Could this just be a coincidence? More recently, I've seen material on the Internet claiming that Dick Cheney was directly involved in a "simulation" involving hijacked aircraft on the morning of 9/11. Again, it's hard to know what to make of this since nobody in the media seems to have followed this up. But if these claims are true (and I think they require further investigation rather than immediate acceptance) then are we really supposed to believe that on the very same days the US & UK were attacked by Islamists (so called), both were involved in simulations of attacks that during the very simulation became real?

Peter P

5 May 2009

*On “US: Plan to drive homeless out of downtown Richmond, Virginia”*

I was recently debating the budgeting/financing in Richmond with a colleague, and she referred to this article as evidence that our employers need to increase our wages to meet our living expenses. As much as I would like a raise, I find this data troubling.

My grievance is as follows: This article was composed in 2006, at which time I was earning \$12.50 an hour. I lived alone in a nice apartment complex in the west end, purchased a new car, made student loan payments, eat out almost every day and took several expensive vacations all without accumulating any debt. So I do not understand how this data is in anyway accurate. If I were reading this article as a person whose support you were looking to gain, you would have lost me completely.

We need to focus on legitimizing social services in order to nurture public support and improve our (social service providers') ability to fight poverty. I believe

that legitimate data acquired from evidence-based research will increase awareness, acceptance and the funding we so desperately need. So please if you haven't already; stop making dramatic claims and improve your information gathering and presentation, for all our sakes.

Good Luck.

Holly

5 May 2009

*On "US airstrikes kill scores of civilians in Afghanistan"*

This is nothing but disaster. I am sometimes so disheartened by the escalating violence and ferocity of expanding militarism that I become physically sick to my stomach. Of course, that is a minor affliction compared with the certain death and maiming of thousands at the hands of the US military, led by the demented financial elite and vicious military-intelligence who violate humanity on a daily basis for the purpose of making the rich richer and seeking to make manifest the sick power fantasies of a certain political type: the equivalent of the "mad doctor" in a particularly lurid science fiction story.

This, then, is the world becoming inhospitable for human life. This, then, is the culmination of perverted dreams of power and ruthless slaughter as the means of attaining it. This, then, is the endgame proposed enthusiastically by the scions of capitalism. It is bleak and filled with horror.

Remember the famous "War Prayer" of Mark Twain:

"O Lord our God, help us to tear their soldiers to bloody shreds with our shells; help us to cover their smiling fields with the pale forms of their patriot dead; help us to drown the thunder of the guns with the shrieks of their wounded, writhing in pain; help us to lay waste their humble homes with a hurricane of fire; help us to wring the hearts of their unoffending widows with unavailing grief; help us to turn them out roofless with little children to wander unfriended the wastes of their desolated land in rags and hunger and thirst, sports of the sun flames of summer and the icy winds of winter, broken in spirit, worn with travail, imploring Thee for the refuge of the grave and denied it—for our sakes who adore Thee, Lord, blast their hopes, blight their lives, protract their bitter pilgrimage, make heavy their steps, water their way with their tears, stain the

white snow with the blood of their wounded feet!"

Carolyn

California, USA

6 May 2009



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