

Letters from our readers

23 June 2009

On “Violence against Indian students in Australia: the class issues”

Very nicely written article. As an immigrant worker—an external immigrant who has lived and worked in the Arab world (Tripoli, Libya) and an internal immigrant within a country (India)—I have faced this type of chauvinism at different levels within academic institutions, and also in work and general society.

Racial politics plays into the hands of dominant exploiting powers, whether it is the right-wing Shiv Sena-type chauvinism in India or the nationalistic narrow means in the Arab world (look at the great Arab rulers).

Also, after 9/11, I have met many Arabs who have come back from the advanced Western countries, to resettle in their own country. On the face of it they say that they did it for social reasons. But under the surface, if you talk to them, there are many stories of discrimination, institutionalized and systematic and also in the general society. However, as they lack the proper perspective, they fall into similar mind-set traps when they themselves are in a dominant position in their own countries.

I think this article should be read and thought about by every worker anywhere in the world, especially in today’s globalized workspace. It provides a perspective to understand our situations, and not fall into the same chauvinistic trap ourselves when in dominant positions.

Thanks for posting.

Regards,

Prashant B,
Tripoli, Libya
14 June 2009

On “New York billionaire engineers legislative ‘coup’ ”

I would like to add that the power struggle in the New York Senate reflects the differing tactics between the Democrats and Republicans with regard to coping with the economic crisis. Governor Paterson and the Democratic majorities in the Senate and Assembly enacted a state budget that, while certainly impacting working people, was not as direct and brutal an assault as the Republicans and the business interests they represent would have liked. The Democrats used a variety of budget gimmicks, plus a range of cuts in services and increased taxes, including the “millionaires tax,” to postpone the really harsh attacks, hoping against hope that the economy will

miraculously improve by the time the next budget has to be enacted. Even Paterson’s threatened layoff of 8,700 state employees has been averted, temporarily at least, via a deal with the civil service union bureaucrats to reduce pension benefits for new hires and offer incentives for early retirement to thousands of senior employees.

The Democrats are desperately attempting to avoid an all-out confrontation with state employees and the working class in general in order to perpetuate their established role as the party of class compromise developed during better economic times. Of course, when it comes down to it, the Democrats will be just as ruthless as the Republicans when the economic crisis fails to abate. Nevertheless, sections of the bourgeoisie, exemplified by Mr. Golisano, are not satisfied that they can rely on the Democrats to unswervingly carry out this task. Therefore, they are undertaking political maneuvers such as the Senate “coup” in an attempt to ensure that the political machine is ready to unswervingly execute their orders.

PP

New York, USA

14 June 2009

On “California fiscal crisis threatens millions with ruin”

I cannot believe that this will be the way old, disabled and poor working people fall into an abyss. It is already a struggle to pay rent, utilities, car tags, insurance, food, clothing and taking care of kinship children for many older folks. The governor never thought that medical expenses for glasses and dental were a problem. Folks with driver’s license restrictions cannot drive. Diabetics won’t receive foot care and will end up in hospitals needing operations. Those in diapers will no doubt get infections that will cost more in treatment costs than the preventative items that are cut off. All folks need ID or driver’s licenses and those are more costly. You cannot cash a check or get services without ID. What about food for special diets? Will it boil down to death or further disability?

Roseanne B

California, USA

19 June 2009

On “Obama calls for cuts in Medicare and Medicaid”

This is abominable. I’m speechless! Obama has now openly admitted that he is perfectly willing to let people languish and die to preserve the profits of the insurance and pharmaceutical industries. I would like to hear, now, all of the Obama apologists explain to me how this is “change you can believe

in"! All I can envision at this moment is death creeping over the nation. Cut Medicare and Medicaid? Tax the already shrinking health benefits provided by decreasing jobs at lower wages? These people couldn't do a better job of fomenting a revolution if they tried.

Like the aristocrats in France in the 18th century, today's ruling elite cares nothing for the vast majority of human beings, who to them are just working units to sweep the floors and clean the toilets—the famous “hewers of wood and drawers of water.” Well, we all know what happened to the aristocrats of France—and of Russia, for that matter!

The combination of anger and despair washing over me at this moment surely will be felt by the rest of the working population. The Obama supporters keep repeating, “give him time.” Well, he's had time and now we see what he's done with it. How much more time are they willing to give him to utterly destroy them?

The assault on the lives of working people can no longer be tolerated. The approaching dystopia in which we are expected to live cannot be allowed to come to fruition. Workers must raise their voices as one in a loud “*Basta!*” Enough!

Carolyn
California, USA
16 June 2009

On “Sri Lankan government hands greater powers to Chief of Defence Staff”

Your story does not come to me as a surprise. If you have watched the recent events closely, then it will be apparent that denial of peace activists to the country, restrictions on humanitarian aid, militarization and colonization in vacated Tamil lands all are aimed at keeping the Tamil population in paranoia.

The United Nations has failed dismally on the Sri Lankan situation by sending corrupt envoys to that country. The long silence of the international community during the war and post-war is an indication of how divisive the world is today.

Tamils have fallen victims once again to the geopolitical aspirations of regional powers.

In 2005, the United Nations Human Rights Commission sounded the alarm. In 2009, a resolution was defeated with the support of a dirty dozen countries with spotted human rights records.

“If you are going to have reconciliation ... then there has to be some kind of look into what happened during the war,” said Andrew Stroehlein, communications director for the International Crisis Group.

“The Tamil community also needs reassurance after a spate of extortions, kidnappings and murders targeting Tamils during the war,” said Jehan Perera, executive director of the National Peace Council of Sri Lanka, an advocacy NGO based in Colombo.

“What happens with the IDPs [internally displaced persons] is absolutely essential to building up any kind of dialogue and

goodwill,” said Brad Adams, Asia director of Human Rights Watch.

It all shows the direction the modern world dreads in the 21st century.

Sandy V
Toronto, Canada
17 June 2009

On “Obama smoothes passage of war spending bill by pledging to suppress torture photos”

Since it first came to light, the issue of torture has nagged me with a persistent question: why? Why would the Bush/Cheney regime risk challenging not only the Geneva Conventions, the Declaration of Human Rights and other consensus documents, treaties and agreements as well as the overwhelming anthropologic and historical evidence of what men do to other men to carry out these practices, unilaterally asserted in name of the USA?

I cannot help thinking that, at the base lies legal precedent and the establishment of a “legal space” to allow complete and total freedom of action with regard to an individual's psychological and emotive processes in distinction to his or her material basis. Besides the significance of this in our own epoch and the pretexts offered to defend “enhanced interrogation techniques” and other euphemisms, lies a particular historical basis in universal questions surrounding the “soul-body” dichotomy and its radical division into two separate entities and the assertion of ruling classes of all ages of unilateral authority over some individual(s) when deemed autocratically justified. Instructive in these things would be the Stalin purges and treatment of “deviationists” not in accord with his and his bureaucracy's domestic/foreign policies and programs.

Our current “debates” will continue, yet at base, these practices have so far remained un-addressed, unchallenged legally either domestically or by the other core powers. It is a dangerous, barbaric and completely irrational “window” to leave open. It legalizes autocratic rule in the manner of patriarchy or monarchy resting upon idiosyncratic and ultimately irrational premises. That those who planned, designed and carried out (and I'm relatively certain they continue) these policies and practices walk free among the people is an insult to humanity impossible to translate into language.

RH
15 June 2009



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