

Letters from our readers

28 July 2009

On "Obama escalates assault on public education"

Dear Tom Eley,

After reading your article on education, I exhaled for the first time in a long time. During the July NEA convention, the leadership bowed completely to Obama. No longer in deeds as they had for a generation under Reagan, Clinton and both Bush administrations, but in words and with a commitment to see this awful policy followed through. Education Secretary Arne Duncan demanded that the union concede seniority in exchange for merit pay. The union, despite opposition, agreed to this since they can "organize" charter schools.

Seniority, in short, has its history in protecting teachers who dared stand up for children and human progress against political witch-hunts and race baiting. Without tenure and seniority, every teacher with an independent thought, and who dares articulate those ideas, is subject to victimization with no protection. How then do we teach our students to be creative and critical thinkers? Precisely—*we don't!* We are expected to walk lock step to the commands of an administration that has contempt for equality in general, and an education that would promote it in particular.

You explained the disparities in the money—\$27 trillion for failing banks, versus \$4.3 billion for humanity's future. When I heard this on the radio yesterday, the image of starving dogs scrambling and fighting over scraps of food was the first thought that came to mind.

So, the unions have a Democratic president in the White House and the Nation has a black man for president. What does it amount to? A dire warning and a call to arms for the working class and the hundreds of millions of poor around the world.

Obama is the leader of the most ruthless military power in the world, and the unions who poured billions into his election and have cast their lot with him have most in common with Booker T. Washington, who sought his deal with American capitalism for the aspiring black elite minority by trying to place a chokehold on the vast majority of the emancipated slaves in the South and elsewhere.

In his 1895 speech to the Cotton States and International Exposition in Atlanta (Commonly known as his Atlanta

Compromise speech), he told the exposition that the initial mistake of reconstruction could be rectified if the freed slaves would only forego intellectual pursuits and formal education and the aspirations that go with it such as political power, and accept their lot as laborers. He said, "The wisest among my race understand that the agitation of questions of social equality is the extremist folly, and that progress in the enjoyment of all the privileges that will come to us must be the result of severe and constant struggle rather than of artificial forcing." This "artificial forcing", i.e., successful reconstruction, was met with brutal suppression, and massacres of entire integrated Southern towns. This reaction was consented to by men such as Booker T. Washington to defend his new class privileges in post-slavery America. So too is the way of the NEA and the AFT today.

Educators have frequently been at the forefront of the fight for equality. We understand our role as cultivators of a new generation of educated citizens who demand equality within our society. We teach it because we believe it. Most of us are not prepared to concede these beliefs without a fight. Your article has to serve as a powerful warning (especially to those who supported Obama), and a call to educators in particular, but must be answered as a call to arms by the working class as a whole. I will print and distribute it as such for my teacher colleagues.

On behalf of teachers everywhere, thank you.

Phyllis

25 July 2009

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As an experienced, highly qualified teacher, I can't believe what I just read. Thank God I'll be retiring soon. The urban school will never be repaired if the Obama administration doesn't know the source of the problems, which are not always the teachers.

Read the news, corruption every day that teachers are forced to work under. Poverty, broken homes and the dirty little secret, a high proportion of special needs students, and teachers didn't make them this way ... that's how they enter school! You can set up all the charter schools you want, but they're not having much luck either, check the results.

Shame, shame, shame, to the administration, the schools and the union. What a disaster government intervention has

made of these schools. Funny how we all seemed to learn without it. Don't tell me about government takeovers; schools were the first to be taken over many years ago.

Sad day for teachers starting out. The best thing I ever did for my children was to refuse to support them going into education.

Susan

26 July 2009

On "Six months of the Obama administration"

You write, "When the American working class movement does develop, it will seek new channels independent of and in opposition to the entire political and social system."

I, unlike many Americans, remained skeptically cautious upon the election of Barack Obama. I hope your statement quoted above turns out to be true, but I have doubts that the American working class movement will ever develop any kind of effective opposition to our corporate controlled government.

My only hope that the entire corrupt system will collapse upon its own rotten foundations—an economic, social and political catastrophe, to be sure. One never knows the outcome of such a cataclysm, so I have a very hard time being optimistic.

Roland D

California, USA

22 July 2009

On "Once again: Iran, imperialism and the 'left'"

Not a word about the crackdown on the opposition?

Dec

22 July 2009

On "Japanese prime minister dissolves parliament and sets election date"

Why not refer to the reformist parties, the JCP (Japanese Communist Party) and SDP (Social Democratic Party)? The political break with the old reformist parties of the working class is a very important issue, while the struggle between LDP and DPJ is meaningless for the working class

Huzimoto

Japan

23 July 2009

On "Detroit American Axle plant to close"

How true this article is! The shame of it all is how we have all suffered from one man's greed. The UAW shares 50 percent of the blame; also there have been crimes committed here! The entire shop committee bailed with no explanation, just up and quit their jobs! The UAW actually called the National Labor Relation board Union Busters because we tried to inform them that the UAW was not representing us properly! We have had grievances put on the back burner; it's a crying shame! The union has changed, looking out more for the companies' interests instead of its members

interest. As we speak, the company has outside companies doing my job removing that equipment, while I sit on the unemployment line, and these people that are performing this work are not paying union dues to the UAW—Figure that one out! Where is our support when it comes to Congress or the state on unfair labor practices? This whole deal is just unbelievable!

This was a great article and a very true one. Send it to American Axle CEO Richard Dauch and UAW President Ron Gettlefinger just to let them know that we are not as dumb as they think we are! Better yet, send it to Lou Dobbs. Maybe he can get to the bottom of the greed!

Daniel H

Michigan, USA

23 July 2009

On "Obama press conference: Evasions and lies on plan to slash health care for workers"

"The biggest driving force behind our federal deficit is the skyrocketing cost of Medicare and Medicaid," said Obama.

No, it isn't. The biggest driving force behind our federal deficit is the skyrocketing cost of war and occupation, and the giving away of billions of dollars of the people's money to the banks and brokerage houses. *That* is the truth that the American people are coming to know, and that is exactly the truth that Obama wishes to hide.

These despicable lies from Obama, together with his insults directed at the very people who are suffering the most from the destruction of the economy, are revolting and shameful. The WSWS is valiantly bringing the truth to the public. We must all work to awaken the people to the danger they are in from the callous beasts of finance capital. It is a life and death matter.

Carolyn

California, USA

23 July 2009



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