

Letters from our readers

24 September 2009

On “The global jobs crisis”

You note that the World Food Program’s \$3 billion shortfall in its budget to feed 108 million people is “less than one one-hundredth of one percent” of the amount thrown into the maw of finance capital.

The contrast—and connection—between the real hunger that millions of people suffer and this insatiable, inhuman hunger of the banking system stirs a deep revulsion in me. In fact it is impossible to look at any of the ills plaguing the world’s working class without now comparing such pricetags. For the multitude of our problems whose solutions are “less than one one-hundredth of one percent,” as most of them are, one cannot but draw a direct line of blame to the financial sector.

Naomi

19 September 2009

On “California: Kaiser Permanente workers protest reductions in force”

This should be no surprise. Kaiser has been on an anti labor rampage all year. In March they laid off 860 IT workers. 700 of those were due to an outsourcing agreement with IBM. Over 300 Kaiser employees that accepted positions with IBM were denied their severance pay. Kaiser management used wording that was secretly changed in the severance agreement just a matter of weeks before the announcement to justify the denial.

A

19 September 2009

On “Ethnic violence and mass deportations of immigrants in Libya”

Illegal immigrants are deceived when the Western media portrays the West as a land of milk and honey, while Africa is presented to the world as a place of torment, wars, poverty, disease and AIDS.

Migration is not new. America and Australia were

developed by migrants. In the UK, Indians, Pakistanis, Caribbean blacks and some African migrants have made the UK their home. Therefore, migration is not a crime. If the EU wants to prevent Africans from migrating, then making an unholy accord with the Libyans will not work. If Libya is blocked, they will create other routes.

What is needed is a global solution where African governments that are corrupt are not encouraged and supported by the West to oppress their citizens. Also, the western media should attempt to portray some of the good things in Africa and also opportunities that can be harnessed.

What amazes me is that CNN and other foreign media never go to the developed part of Africa to make a story. What is “sweet” is to make stories in Africa are stories showing AIDS, starvation, poverty and wars. During Hurricane Katrina, many blacks in “rich” America were abandoned also. I hope it is not a Black man’s thing.

Tony B

Nigeria

22 September 2009

On “US assassination in Somalia”

Chris Floyd also wrote a good piece recently on Obama’s support for cold-blooded murder in Somalia. Sorry to be a purist, but just a small point: it says here that the US military was driven out in 1993 “following the ‘Black Hawk down’ incident”.

I’ve been irritated to read several times the exact same reference to that “incident” in *The Guardian* and other newspapers. Irritated because that isn’t a historical reference: “Black Hawk Down” was instead the name of a Hollywood *film*. I didn’t expect to see such a sloppy description repeated on WSWs.

Annie M

22 September 2009

On “Britain: Leeds refuse workers strike against pay cuts”

Congratulations to Barbara Slaughter for an excellent article. I wish the mainstream media in the UK would report on the unions' complicity on these life-altering pay cuts they are accepting for their members. I've tried to interest the *Guardian's* Helene Mulholland, but without success.

The unions' complicity is actually worse than Barbara has reported. Unison, the GMB and the TGWU actually promised, before their members voted for the SSA, that "Many will win gain *and nobody should lose*" in pay and grading reviews like the one carried out at Leeds. This promise was made in the guide to the proposed SSA sent to every member and by union leaders as they went around the country persuading members to support the agreement.

Unison activists at local level have actually been prohibited from raising the issue of pay cuts arising from pay and grading reviews at the union's meetings and conferences.

I have been trying for years to warn council workers and their representatives about the potential for life-altering pay cuts and how these cuts aren't required to achieve equal pay.

As Barbara suggests, most union members weren't aware of the potential for swinging pay cuts and adverse changes to their conditions of service when they voted for the SSA. In promoting the Agreement, the unions concentrated on the 37-hour week and only the positive aspects of pay and grading reviews. They were actually dishonest about the potential for loss of pay.

John F
UK
23 September 2009



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