

Letters from our readers

20 October 2009

On “*Workers expose GM payoff to Canadian auto union officials*”

Just read your article on the payoffs to CAW [Canadian Auto Workers] officials. It angered me and not just because of the corruption of the CAW officials and the payoffs, but also because of the parallel shenanigans that take place at MTS Allstream, where the CAW Local 2000 “represents” technical workers in the Enterprise division.

We call those backroom secret deals “letters of understanding” or LOUs. One of the very few that leaked out to the membership at Allstream gave up the fundamental rights to arbitration and the awarding of positions based on seniority. It read in part, “The union agrees that any grievances arising from these temporary assignments will not be processed to arbitration.”

That particular LOU resulted in the hand picking of golden-boy workers by the company and the loss of 18 months of employment to highly qualified and senior workers facing layoff. A raft of related grievances were simply dropped. I still think that only a handful of Allstream workers know about the LOU. Who knows how many others exist?

The membership is deliberately kept in the dark. If they only knew, then I’m certain several Local 2000 officials would also be recalled. How could the union executive sign that thing in good conscience? And just like the collusion between CAW 1973 and GM, CAW 2000 and MTS Allstream have long worked together to ram concessions down the workers’ throats and to give the company a free hand at destroying jobs. Now the company is attacking workers with up to 27 years of seniority. They are being turfed (laid off), while the company contracts out enormous amounts of work that they previously performed. We anticipate that the company has the defined benefit pension in its sights

based on its unilateral action with the TEAM union in Manitoba where the company arrogantly and illegally implemented a defined contribution pension plan.

Unbelievably, *Macleans* magazine placed Allstream in the group of so-called 100 best employers in Canada. If one of your intentions with the CAW article was to outrage, you’ve succeeded. If another was to place into sharp focus the tight coupling between unions and management, you accomplished it—quite brilliantly.

Name withheld at writer’s request

15 October 2009

See also: “The human cost of corporate downsizing: an interview with a Vancouver telecom worker”

On “*Renewed calls for the freedom of Gary Tyler*”

I was in prison with Gary for a while and came to know him and believe him that he is innocent of the crime that sent him there. Having been through the Louisiana Justice system, I can easily understand how anyone innocent can be sent to prison.

Nathan A

Louisiana, USA

15 October 2009

On “*The American way of debt: Turning a profit by preying on the poor*”

This seems to be a well-researched and put together article. It certainly gives us food for thought here in Australia, where our own debt collection industry is expanding as consumer debt levels rise. Fortunately our consumer protection laws here seem a lot more comprehensive than in the US.

Nick T

Victoria, Australia

15 October 2009

You ought to seriously undertake investigating the debt collecting business and especially interviewing a fraction, at least, of the large number of ethical and

empathizing bill collectors that agonize everyday upon hearing the plight of their fellow Americans, together with whom they are a paycheck away from the pack of wolves you so aptly depict. Do it without bias, listen to both sides, for you have judged us in absentia, like everybody else. My blood is simmering, but is far from boiling, do not worry. You have left too many stones unturned. Excelsior.

Viorel S

16 October 2009

On "FBI raids home over use of Twitter at G20 summit"

CNN, MSNBC, TWC, etc. used hours of airtime yesterday to report a balloon escaped from its tether in Colorado. Yet a sixteen hour raid on an activist's home goes unnoticed by Big-Media? Hmmmm. At this rate, it doesn't seem that democracy has much of a chance here in the US of A.

Andrew O

16 October 2009

On "Deborah Kerr: an actor with genuine subtlety and integrity"

Just an avid fan of Ms Deborah Kerr. Today marks her 2nd year of passing. What a remarkable lady both in and out of the celebrity scene. May today's superstardom money marker machines use their talent and not their flesh.

Deborah Kerr was a true example of a real actress, very versatile, moral and down to earth human being!

Kudos!

Deborah B

New Jersey, USA

16 October 2009

On "Bailed out insurance giant AIG plans \$198 million in new bonuses"

When the interrelationship of American dollars for oil ends, Wall Street's free lunch will collapse.

Don J

Arkansas, USA

17 October 2009

On "Puerto Rico: General strike against mass layoffs"

My wife was just down in Puerto Rico visiting her mother for a few days, and was incensed when Governor Fortuno informed the 1,700 teachers he had just laid off that "there was work in the fields doing the coffee harvest".

And my mother-in-law, who as a girl grew up working in a cleaners shop using a charcoal-heated iron to press workshirts, and who has been a staunch supporter of the Munoz Marin faction or the Rooseveltian Democrats in Puerto Rico since the 1940s, replied in dead seriousness that the governor "should be shot" for suggesting such a thing.

Michael H

17 October 2009



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