Letters from our readers

17 December 2009

On "Historians in the Service of the 'Big Lie': An Examination of Professor Robert Service's Biography of Trotsky"

Your assessment of Robert Service's biography of Trotsky doesn't surprise me. I knew there had to be something wrong with this book when I saw it so prominently displayed. Considering how objectionable Trotsky is to our "democratic tradition" (i.e. the profit system) a biography given such a high profile had to be a hatchet job.

But this is just the tip of an ugly iceberg. It's not too surprising that, as far as I'm aware, Trotsky's essay on Nietzsche is unpublished. But even many of the classic Marxist texts are not easy to come by. *Capital* and a few others can be ordered, though you'll be hard pushed to find them on any actual shop bookshelves. But take the curious case of Marx's *Eighteenth Brumaire of Napoleon*. This has been described as a brilliant monograph and one of Marx's most accessible works. It was included in a collection entitled *Surveys from Exile*, which seems to be currently out of print. You'll find it on its own in a few paperback editions, but most of these turn out to be regurgitations of a translation from 1897(!) which one Amazon reviewer described—with justification—as "unreadable."

Certainly marxist.org provide their own translation but I find it astonishing that it cannot be found in a decent paperback version in a world where Princeton are heroically publishing every last scribble from Kierkegaard. And in deluxe editions.

George M
Scotland
15 December 2009

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David North's critique of Service's book is a masterpiece.

Steve B
France
15 December 2009

On "Young mother commits suicide and kills her son after months of poverty"

A heartrending story of grinding poverty. Thank you for bringing it to light. So disturbing. This hateful system.

Finian C
15 December 2009

On "Recession drives up hunger, homelessness in US cities"

We're going to have to come to terms with the fact that the *only* solution is the restoration of a legitimate entitlement to welfare assistance, in conjunction with rebuilding the New Deal policies that enabled the US to achieve so much. In the US, we were brainwashed for a quarter of a century to regard welfare as a "failed policy," for the purpose of stemming opposition to transferring public dollars out of human needs programs, into helping to cover the costs of massive annual "tax relief"/handouts to corporations and the wealthiest. The impact of a legitimate welfare system goes far beyond directly aiding the poor and keeping families together, playing a powerful role in protecting wages and workers' protections. Now we have workfare—a bottom-wage/no workers' rights pool of replacement labor.

DH Fabian

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Wisconsin, USA
12 December 2009

On "Canada's social democrats embrace big business from coast to coast"

In Nova Scotia under the NDP Dexter government, federal equalization payments continue to be unfairly distributed pursuant to section 36 of the Constitution Act of 1982. This year the Nova Scotia government received in federal equalization payments $1.571 billion, but less than one percent ($15,050,000) was used for equalization to the 42 disadvantaged or eligible municipalities. The remainder, it seems, has been diverted into general revenues, and unentitled or prosperous municipalities (Halifax Regional Municipality being the main one) end up benefiting and increasing the economic advantage it already enjoys.

Property tax rates, for example, in Sydney, Nova Scotia are 69 percent above comparable properties in the Halifax Regional Municipality. This unfairness affects many municipalities in Nova Scotia, as the policy is to develop the capital and wait for the so-called trickle down effect. With this intentional centralization of economic development, the municipalities outside this hub are being intentionally underfunded and economic de-development is the consequence—especially for the Cape Breton Regional Municipality.

The success of this unfairness is largely due to the lack of informed political representatives, both municipal and provincial.

Currently, the Cape Breton Regional Municipality is awaiting word from the Supreme Court of Canada as to whether it will hear its suit against the Nova Scotia provincial government over this violation of Section 36. Without such a hearing, it is unlikely the NDP Dexter government will follow the constitution because it is the legal and moral thing to do.

Charles S
Nova Scotia, Canada
12 December 2009

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