Letters from our readers

31 December 2009

On "Marxism, socialism and climate change"

Thank you, Nick. This is one of the most important statements to appear on the website. It factually and effectively presents what Marxism actually represents in terms of human development and nature in answer to the anti-Marxist apologists for capitalism, especially the reactionary "Greens."

I hope this will be quickly printed and widely disseminated with discussions and educationals to follow.

Gene
22 December 2009

On "Socialism and the defense of public education"

I would doubt that the current attack on public education is "unprecedented." I don't recall a time during my own lifetime (I'm 54) when public education wasn't under attack by those on the political right wing. Education is all fine and well, but an informed public tends to get pretty uppity, and they're so much harder to manipulate. This would make it the enemy of any faction that wants sole political control.

DH Fabian
Wisconsin, USA
24 December 2009

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An interesting connection was made in a recent article by Danny Weil regarding the attacks on public schools:

"One cannot but help see the analogy between the interest shown on the part of the private sector with their concentration on the for-profit management businesses as an antidote to 'low-performing schools' and 'low achievement students' and the sub-prime loan market, where people's economic situation and incomes were also deemed 'low-performing' and their activities 'less than achieving'. Both business models offer and offered tremendous profits to private entrepreneurs by capitalizing on the needs of low performing segments of the population through encouraging and profiting from new innovations such as charter schools; this is true be they low performing schools in one case and low performing credit scores and incomes in the other."

Just as an attempt was made to divert anger from the results of the financial elite's speculation by blaming foreclosures on "irresponsible" homeowners, teachers and the students mired in poverty are blamed by malicious testing so that the corporate entrepreneurs can try to find a new bubble, again subsidized through government de-regulating (this time through NCLB and Race To The Top) of the public school system in favor of private or privately managed schools.

The drive for profits, the destruction of real value (industrial or educational), are central facets of capitalism. The many critics of the attacks on public education reach a dead end and tie their hands behind their backs by limiting their analysis to the educational field. The Marxist perspective laid out by Jerry White on the WSWS in showing the need for the struggle to be part of that against the profit system itself, and the two major parties that defend it, and for its revolutionary replacement by socialism is deeply appreciated.

HL
26 December 2009

On "The crisis of the Islamic Republic and the tasks of the Iranian working class"

Hi Keith,

Thanks very much for explaining the conflicting forces in motion in Iran, and for delineating the tasks of the working people as an independent force. In conditions of the old methods of rule crumbling (under the pressure of world—and particular US—imperialism, as well as the growing dissatisfaction with the clerical regime), it is essential to draw the lessons of the past strategic experiences and explain the vital role played by the working class leadership in determining their outcome.

Only by building a section of the ICFI based on these lessons and on the perspective of a United Socialist States of

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the Middle East can the working class lead all the oppressed of the region out of the current impasse, and lessen the likelihood of imperialist military intervention.

TJ
UK
29 December 2009

On "The Power of Yes: A serious indictment of capitalism"

Mr. Stuart,

This was a fascinating article. I wish I could see this play. In many respects, this backs up many of my experiences as a graduate student in the earlier part of this decade, when I saw the frantic desire by many of my peers to use their mathematical abilities to join the ranks of the financiers who ultimately brought the system down. To see the arrogance of this class laid bare in a theatrical form is what is needed in the face of a mass propaganda effort by the US-UK media to whitewash the crisis.

One technical note: The Black-Scholes Formula mentioned in the play was not the basis by which 50-1 leverage was permitted in derivative markets. This was merely a regulatory (or lack thereof) decision. However the decision was predicated on the idea that the B-S (no pun intended) formula was in fact an accurate basis of pricing derivative securities of many stripes, when in fact it was only able to price the most basic options, and did so under assumptions of price movements that are maybe accurate over long periods of time, but hardly so over the short horizons of these contracts. To that end, there was a belief that risk could not exactly be eliminated, but monetized in the form of a "market price of risk" which was somewhat circular logic in the sense that if the market priced the risk, it was believed to be right, even though it was probably very unlikely that the market participants had a clue about the basis of the prices they were establishing.

Mike T
Michigan, USA
22 December 2009

On "Disturbing questions in thwarted US plane bombing"

I would like to caution those who suggest some type of underhanded conspiracy by security officials in the case of the recent attempted US plane bombing.

It is true that one could make a case for a more sinister view of this incident. However, it is just as true that this could be just a case of the random percentages of eventual security breaches that will take place no matter how well functioning security protocols and procedures are in place.

As a senior software engineer I deal with a lot of information regarding security of computers. And there is one thing that you learn in the security environment that cannot be refuted; there is no such thing as absolute security. It is an impossible achievement. Thus, even when exceptionally fine security measures are put in place there will always remain a random percentage of security breaches that will take place if for no other reason than the conditions for such a breach simply come together at a specific time.

Thus it is quite possible that the current airline incident could have been as easily a reflection of such percentages as it could be a result of sinister motivations.

Steve N
New York, USA
28 December 2009

On "Jennifer Jones, prominent figure in postwar Hollywood, dies at 90"

Her role in *Gone to Earth*, directed by the Archers as the victimized heroine torn between two opposing oppressive cultural forces should also deserve honorable mention. As a product of the Archers, the film saw her giving a memorable performance but unfortunately Selznick re-edited it with an opening narration by Joseph Cotton, copying that of Orson Welles in the beginning of *Duel in the Sun* and re-released it under the title of *The Wild Heart*. A very revealing passage in the second volume of Michael Powell's autobiography *Million Dollar Movie* documents Jones revealing her frustrations while under the influence of Scrumpy (a very potent form of British cider!) against Selznick's control of her personal and professional life. Again, another talent who could have done much better under the right circumstances.

Tony W
28 December 2009

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