

Letters from our readers

25 March 2010

On “An attack on health care in the guise of reform”

Thanks, Kathryn, for this cogent description of the morass of a bill passed by the Democrats and their friends (and now sure to be lauded as the greatest accomplishment in US history). As a person who finally escaped the US and relocated to sunnier and saner climes, I am wondering if the US government will force me to buy health care insurance from one of the miscreant companies? I have better medical care here in Mexico at a tenth the price in the US than any insurance company will ever allow me. Can I refuse to pay? Will they put me in the Big House? I'd like to see them try.

Charles D
Mexico
22 March 2010

Bravo! For your perspective on the healthcare farce. Brilliant evisceration. Thank you.

Doug T
22 March 2010

I applaud Kate Randall's assessment of Obama's health care bill, so cynically misrepresented as “health care reform,” and I can only hope that Ms. Randall's views represent those of the entire WSWW editorial board. As Ms. Randall says, this bill is just one more in a series of attacks that the Democrats and the Obama administration are carrying out against the poor and working people of the United States.

From the very beginning, this health care “debate” has been falsely and narrowly framed as one between right wing pro-abortion and free market Republicans and

libertarian tea party populists, who oppose the bill, on

the one hand, and the false Democratic leftists who have been labeled socialists, communists and collectivists, who support it, on the other. Some of the few real opponents to the bill on the grounds that it dismissed the public option, such as Dennis Kucinich, revealed their pragmatic opportunism by finally voting for the bill rather than to break ranks with the Democrats and jeopardize the future of the Obama administration. This reveals that ultimately working people have no representation in the US Congress.

The crisis of health care in the United States, like the ecological and the economic crises, is very real, but any true reform, however urgently needed, will be difficult and complex and nearly impossible to achieve under capitalism, in view of the present rapidly deteriorating economic situation. It is high time that elements of the left and true socialists openly expose the fig leaf of left cover that the Obama administration and the Democrats are providing for one of the most ferocious offensives against the American working class in recent memory. It is time that such socialists raise their voices and break the stranglehold that the right and center right are exerting on political discourse in the US in these times of unprecedented crisis. Ms. Randall's article is a welcome step in this direction.

Raul R
Mexico
22 March 2010

On “British soldier jailed for refusing to redeploy to Afghanistan”

Allow me to say that it takes a lot of conviction and courage to do such a thing as to refuse orders from one's army superior. I congratulate this British soldier for his stand and many more should follow his steps. In such case, wars would be a thing of the past or at least a lot shorter.

JLV

Quebec, Canada

22 March 2010

On “Martin Scorsese’s *Shutter Island*: Mysterious and sinister, but headed where precisely?”

Although I would agree that Scorsese often tends to adopt a “religious” attitude towards questions crying out for a social analysis, I think there are crucial elements in *Shutter Island* that can be read against the grain of your review.

From the outset the DiCaprio character is disturbed by the resemblances between the penitentiary and the concentration camp, and you have rightly highlighted the significance of setting the film in 1954. The film thus sets up a parallel between Nazi crimes and a whole panoply of repressive measures in the US in the early 50s, especially so-called liberal Hubert Humphrey’s call for camps to house Communists and other “suspects.”

For DiCaprio, it is the lighthouse that symbolises monstrous experiments on helpless inmates, and the film shows, quite unambiguously, that the lighthouse is in fact the signifier of the kind of experiment carried out by the Max von Sydow character, a symbol of the Nazi past and a psychiatrist whose methods are diametrically opposed to those of the more enlightened Ben Kingsley character (seen by his colleagues as an eccentric refusing to face the “facts” of mental illness). The last shot of the film, one of the lighthouse, surely shows that repression (and torture, I might add, which lends a certain urgency to the film) have won out.

By chance I saw *Shutter Island* and the documentary *The Shock Doctrine* on consecutive days. This latter film includes footage of experiments carried out by a psychiatrist in the early 50s in Canada and financed by the CIA; they bear an uncanny and truly disturbing resemblance to the shock treatment and lobotomy practised by von Sydow in the Scorsese film. So the ways *Shutter Island* implies links between Nazism, HUAC and the destruction via institutions of human identity in the name of a necessary social order and docile human subjects surely give the film a grounding in history that is welcome today.

Sincerely,

Reynold H

France

11 March 2010

On “Chinese report documents human rights disaster in the United States”

I think this only touches the proverbial tip of the iceberg when it comes to the disregard for human rights in the US. Although we still measure social issues in terms of race, economic status is actually a greater determinant of one’s treatment in the US. We simply don’t regard the poor as having fundamental human rights. Whether one talks about the horrendous abuses that take place in children’s and women’s prisons or the absence of legal protection for the homeless, the determining factor is economic status. We have yet to even acknowledge the existence of our rural poor, who have so few (if any) legal rights and protections; we prefer the rather charming picture of a farm family gathered around the kitchen table (in reality, we have a sub-population of rural poor living and dying in the woods, abandoned barns, cars, etc.)

DH Fabian

Wisconsin, USA

21 March 2010



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