

Letters from our readers

4 May 2010

Text:

On “Greek government agrees to deeper cuts in return for expanded bailout”

Since the announcement of the tripling of the loan to be made available to Greece, other figures are circulating from an unnamed source quoted yesterday in the French daily *Le Monde*: a total of €500 billion for Greece, Portugal and Spain combined. Since this source claims Spain alone will need €350 billion, it is legitimate to ask where such figures are coming from.

Either they represent what European leaders are saying behind closed doors, or they are an example of the propaganda of fear, destined to increase psychological pressure on European citizens/taxpayers, worsen relations between the “thrifty” North and the “profligate” South—and hence prepare the ground for attacks on jobs, pensions and living standards far more stringent than currently touted.

This sort of propaganda is already functioning in Britain, with warnings that the cuts being planned fall far short of what will be necessary. It shows that you are absolutely right in your warnings, except that entire sections of the lower middle class—and even of the middle class itself—will also be hit by measures yet to be announced.

Sincerely,
Reynold H
Paris, France
30 April 2010

On “Obama seizes on Arizona law to push repressive immigration overhaul”

Tom Eley reported that this new legislation makes it, “a crime for any person, group, or community to shelter undocumented workers, and requires local governments

to enforce its measures or face lawsuits.”

This is strikingly similar to provisions of the Fugitive Slave Law enacted by the U.S. Congress as part of the Compromise of 1850. This was part of an assault on personal liberty laws passed by free-state legislatures to guarantee civil protections for African Americans living in the North from slave state bounty hunters.

The reaction in the North was sharp and protracted; the arrest and return to slavery of runaway slave Anthony Burns set off riots and protests in Boston, Massachusetts, when abolitionists, among them Thomas Wentworth Higginson (best known for his association with the poet Emily Dickinson), stormed the jail in an attempt to free Burns.

The Arizona legislation is setting up the potential for such responses in our own day.

Randy R
Oregon, USA
1 May 2010

On “Britain: SEP candidate barred from hustings by Manchester University Students Union”

How times have changed from my day! Long ago in the era of grants that freed student minds from any fears of re-paying loans and mortgage worries, that Union Building flourished with Community Action, Socialist Society (affectionately known as “Soc Soc”), International Socialists, International Marxist Group and all sorts of societies designed to complement culturally one’s area of study. When I re-visited after over thirty years, I found the old Film Society no longer in existence, as were the above-mentioned societies, making me feel like the ghostly presence of James Jones when he re-visits Hawaii at the end of *Viet Journal*.

If not seeing students carrying teddy bears like Sebastian in Evelyn Waugh's *Brideshead Revisited*, I noticed well-dressed ones who looked as if they would be auditioning for the UK version of Donald Trump's "The Apprentice" and certainly not confined to the beans and toast diet that I and my scruffily-dressed contemporaries once were. I'm not surprised at this attitude. It resembles the Old Labour fear of trouble-making "Trots" that temporarily barred some of us from the balcony when Harold Wilson was to speak until a future member of Gordon Brown's Cabinet vouched for our reliability. The SEP candidate should recall Groucho Marx's comments about elitist clubs with integrity and pride.

Tony W
2 May 2010

On "Gulf oil spill threatens economic, environmental catastrophe"

What are SWAT teams going to do to the spill, shoot it? An insane and typical response. This is going to be a colossal catastrophe for the Gulf Coast, much on the order of Katrina.

Rob M
Alabama, USA
30 April 2010

On "BP oil spill hits Gulf coast"

It hasn't been that long since Sarah Palin and the right-wing element of this country were all chanting "Drill, baby, drill!" and encouraging more and more of these offshore rigs. As I recall, Obama adopted their point of view in his energy policy to help sew up the votes to become president. One can't help but wonder why so many in this country will voluntarily put on blinders and ignore the historical damage of the Exxon Valdez and other spills in order to further their own political ends. Nobody seems willing to make small sacrifices for the common good, whether that entails driving smaller vehicles or slowing down to the speed limit. People seem to have a built-in disconnect that disassociates themselves from the inevitable catastrophes of relying on oil as our chief energy source.

Troy J
Arkansas, USA
1 May 2010

On "On the road to ruin: The Runaways"

Well-written article but I take exception to Hiram Lee's question: Why the Runaways? I say: Why not the Runaways? Their music might not have been good, but that in itself is no reason not to make a movie about them. The movie could have been an eye-opener about how the music industry exploits women, but it seems to be a formulaic flick about rock musicians caught up in the rock 'n' roll lifestyle and its excesses, the implication being that it's all their choice and their fault.

JH
30 April 2010



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