

Letters from our readers

29 June 2010

On “New Australian PM pledges ongoing commitment to Afghan war and US alliance”

It is with the help of articles such as this that one is able to, in conversations with fellow workers et al, attempt to show that once again people, be they soldiers or civilians, are being killed for a lie. I am old enough to remember the propaganda given to us regarding the reasons for the Vietnam War. It is sad that, except for the obvious word changes, it is occurring again in an increasing fashion. It is a huge help to be able to direct people to the WWSW web site knowing they are going to be able to read a proper Marxist analysis and not have any inculcated prejudices reinforced by petty bourgeois radical sophistry.

John H
Australia
25 June 2010

On “Beyond BP”

Well done. You write: “Indeed, in their pursuit of profit, energy companies have produced one atrocity after the next—from oil spills, to pollution and devastation in Africa, to global warming, to a series of mine explosions throughout the world, to utility shutoffs in homes throughout the US.”

They have also had much influence and much profit to be had in the wars in the Middle East past, present, and in the planning stages. These companies produce environmental disaster, crimes against humanity, and death along with their profits. Capitalism is a scourge on the planet.

EG
23 June 2010

On “The US Social Forum in Detroit”

Thanks for the spot-on critique of the Malthusian, sewer-socialist gathering in Detroit. I translate for the USSF as a matter of gaining practice with Spanish, which requires a great deal of nose-holding because of the disgusting ingenuousness and reformist groveling, but I hope to use such practical experience to good advantage promoting

Trotskyism in the continent. The alternative which many of the USSF workshops offer to capitalism and its genocide of people of non-European descent is the same as what slavemasters in the US offered chattel slaves: namely, a little kitchen garden to grow yams and collard greens. I wish the ICFI great success with their literature table at the US Social Forum! Wish I could join you there!

Bill
23 June 2010

On “Nearly one million US workers cut off unemployment benefits”

The USA spends \$12 billion each month in Iraq alone. If this money was directed at the 903,000 unemployed who just lost their benefits we could hand each one of them over \$13,000 next month and the month after and the month after that. Can you imagine the economic stimulus that would occur from this?

Of course, the idea that demand stimulates the economy is very out-of-fashion these days. The more popular view is that throwing billions at GM to make cars nobody can afford is much more comforting to those making the rules. After all, how can we trust such an important thing as money in the hands of the poor?

PK
24 June 2010

I can see unemployment benefits being cut off if there was no recession, but there is. Each week I read about more job cuts in many fields of work. If the unemployed can't find jobs, then how will they survive? This is a serious crisis that is only going to get worse. If these senators get paid big bucks to make wise decisions for the American people then they should come up with a solution that will help the American people get back to work. Cutting unemployment benefits will make our economy much worse and cause many Americans to lose hope in our government system. Plus it will give the impression that the government does not have any compassion or empathy for the unemployed who struggles to find a job that pays close to what they were

making before so that they can provide for their families.

Tracy M
New Jersey, USA
26 June 2010

On “*The Nation, Jonathan Israel and the Enlightenment*”

Reading this essay by Ann Talbot and David North motivated me to read their two references, “Spinoza revisited: a review of *Radical Enlightenment*” and “Spinoza Reconsidered,” which, in turn, motivated me to get a copy of Jonathan Israel’s *Radical Enlightenment: Philosophy and the Making of Modernity 1650-1750* (2001). Halfway through Part I, I find Israel an exciting and easy read (aside from detours to my French-English dictionary). Early on I find words of cheer for us socialists, who decry capitalism, even as it seems unassailable:

“[A]stonishingly, it was precisely when the monarchical principle was most dominant, in France, Germany, Scandinavia, and Italy alike, that this common European culture, based on the primacy of confessional theology and scholastic Aristotelianism over belief, thought, education, and scholarship, first faltered, then rapidly weakened, and finally disintegrated. From the 1650s onwards, first in one land, then another, variants of the New Philosophy breached the defences of authority, tradition, and confessional theology, fragmenting the old edifice of thought at every level from court to university and from pulpit to coffee-shop.” (pp. 17-18)

Michael S
Arizona, USA
25 June 2010

On “*When You’re Strange: A Film about the Doors—what was it about the 1960s?*”

In your very interesting and exceptionally well-written film review, you speculate about the material bases in the sixties for the emergence and disappearance within a very brief period of bands like the Doors.

Your point about the unhealthy and destructive tension between the capitalist requirements of the recording industry and the radical (in many places revolutionary) currents of the times is well-taken. It is also true that black and, in general, working class music then broke through barriers of race and class with very creative consequences. However, there is good reason why Jim Morrison wanted to devote himself to poetry and had “Jim Morrison, Poet” inscribed on his gravestone other than the pressures of touring and the demands of the recording bosses.

“When the mode of music changes, the walls of the city shake.” That is Plato as cited by Allen Ginsberg who belonged to “the scholars of war,” a generation of poets who were Morrison’s influences, and the reason why abandoning music and becoming “a poet” seemed so attractive to him. It would be easy, as an example, to find a place for Morrison’s verse, available online, in Donald Allen’s *New American Poetry* anthology published by Grove Press in 1960.

It is hard to explain how attractive in the late fifties and early sixties, a very dull time of material prosperity and spiritual emptiness, were the lives of these new poets in Don Allen’s anthology, romanticized in Jack Kerouac’s “Dharma Bums” and caricatured by Life magazine. Here were anarchists, streetniks, beatniks, junkies and mystics all convinced that they can make by their art a change in the consciousness of the times. Poetry was ruled then by a very reactionary academic current sometimes called “Southern Agrarians” (Yvor Winters, Allen Tate, John Crowe Ransom) who were influenced by the “classicism” of the late period and very reactionary T.S. Eliot, and upheld the pre-capitalist values and belief systems of the Old South along with the strict meter and form of verse. Don Allen’s gathering of poets changed everything.

For those who came of age when the cynicism and false leftism of the post-modernists ruled poetry, may I warmly recommend Don Allen’s collection. You will see how powerful art is when it reflects and shapes in form and subject matter our lives as we live it, our material existence on earth in its myriad relationships.

AL
Toronto, Canada
24 June 2010



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