

Letters from our readers

24 August 2010

On "The 'Ground Zero mosque': Obama cowers before right-wing hysteria"

Bill,

Thank you so much for the splendid editorial. This is the most accurate assessment of the "Ground Zero mosque" situation that I have yet read. I send my very best regards,

David D

Texas, USA

18 August 2010

I sent out links to this article to contacts this morning. Your site should come with a health warning: "Not to be read while drinking strong coffee first thing in the morning".

Tomeile

Ireland

18 August 2010

On "Indianapolis GM workers face abysmal working conditions"

I used to work at a hydraulic manufacturing plant. My son-in-law works there still. In the winter, in Iowa, it is just fine at work, even though there is no heat on. The machines heat it up. By April, day shift regularly is working in over 100 degree heat. I was working night shift, on the torch cutting parts, standing over a 10 x 10 foot pool of water where they cut parts with a laser. And I was doing it all for 13.00 an hour. I got hurt at work pushing large pieces of metal with just my body weight—I got a groin pull. They sent me to their

doctor, who decided I had arthritis in my hip, and it wasn't due to work. I had to pay all of the PT and the doctor's bills. I went to my regular doctor, who ordered an MRI. It was a groin pull, my hip was just fine (and has been so for the last few years). I should have sued them, but I just got another job. These companies regularly work people in that heat, with no water, no fans, water all over on the floors, it's horrible. And now they are wanting to cut back their wages? Where is the guts in their unions:? Perhaps they should be hiring new union reps. This country is dying, on our backs. While the rich people just get richer. The rich want their bonuses, but they don't want to give back a penny. I am a nurse now and I make \$13.02 an hour. I got a raise this year after a four year hiring freeze—1 percent, \$0.13 an hour raise.

Patricia G

USA

21 August 2010

On "Indianapolis auto workers determined to resist wage cuts"

Workers have to use their heads, whether they're "low" skilled or "high" skilled.

If the plant was that hard up, the bosses wouldn't fight over it by ignoring a prior (May) majority decisive vote on the subject. The bosses would happily close the plant down. The fact must be that the bosses have computed the gain at halving the labor cost. The bosses must be making and plan on making big, big bucks at this plant.

And as appeals to nationalism and international competition go, where was love of the flag and respect for any flag, when police and thugs shot the workers down in River Rouge in the 1930s? That was the true expression of capitalism, surely seen then and now—flags are made, bought and sold, and when necessary, burned and shot to the ground.

JB

19 August 2010

Keep with the struggle and stay united!

DS

20 August 2010

On "An insider's critique of education 'reform'"

I have scoured the internet for reviews after reading this book. Ravitch tells the truth and writes well about the historical details, but cannot explain her vile historical role in providing the intellectual fodder for the decades long attack on education. She tells us that she is entitled to change her mind. Well the WWSW was entitled to tell everyone who she is, where she came from, and why she's writing now. Thank you for doing so.

Towards the end of the review you write, "It is as if an

incompetent scientist devised an experiment, in which all the extraneous variables that could possibly contaminate the results are ignored. The notion that excellent schools can be created amidst social and economic devastation; that all the current social problems symptomatic of a deeply diseased social order—chronic mass unemployment, poverty, social dissolution, cultural decline, decaying infrastructure; the social and economic context within which many urban schools are embedded—are considered to be besides the point.”

For decades we have been told to teach around, under, beside, on top of and despite these social ills such as poverty. (Which is just as great or greater in rural areas such as Mississippi!)

After the end of the Cold War, as we awaited the “peace dividends”, teachers always asked the impossible, “Can’t we abolish poverty and these other social ills that plague us so that we can actually teach and children can truly learn?” We were called idealists and put in our places by “reformers” like Ravitsch. Resources were rapidly diverted. The “peace dividend” turned into the “market and war dividend”. The rich got richer.

So, Ravitch, as one of the operators of the guillotine, actively and zealously beheading public education for 25 years has repented. Not so fast. Most of us see her for who she is. A wolf in sheep’s clothing who would deflect our attention from the sinister role the AFT and NEA are playing to keep teachers tied to the Obama administration in particular and capitalist politicians in general.

Those of us who work in education, teachers especially, are long overdue to go beyond the limitations of our classrooms and local politics, and fight for the democratic future and egalitarian society that we dream of every day—despite its having been ravaged by the political likes of Ravitch.

Trillions of dollars have been spent since 1983 on promoting inequality through testing, textbooks to improve student scores on the tests, “research” to show why schools are failing, grants to provide certain schools with certain resources, firing teachers, closing schools, opening charters, banning guns, banning bullying, zero tolerance, metal detectors, drug searches and countless measures to keep children from “failing”.

So, whatever her intentions are, the book makes one thing very clear. It’s not the children that are failing. It’s

capitalism that is failing the children.

Phyllis

19 August 2010

On “Belgium fears becoming ‘Greece on the North Sea’”

As a long-time resident of Belgium, I find your analysis, evidently based on written sources, misses some key points. Admittedly, though, these points are usually not mentioned by the press.

1. Belgium has an enormous subterranean economy, estimated at close to 40 percent of GNP, that is, structurally. VAT is massively avoided, with astonishing success. As a result, most Belgians, especially in Flanders, the richest region of the EU, have considerable amounts of cash stashed away in bank safes. It is this money that has saved many from the blows of the crisis.

2. As a result of historically being Europe’s battleground of choice and thanks to its position on the route of marching armies for centuries, Belgians have an innate distrust of government. Most Belgians jealously keep to themselves and are, to say the least, very reluctant to rely on the state for anything. The exception being the growing underclass of poor native Belgians and the swelling ranks of immigrants from the Third World, now making up some 10 percent of the population.

Many of the poorest are to be found in Wallonia, where a shocking, ancient two-tiered social system (no middle class) prevails. Wallonia is being ruled by the Parti Socialiste (Di Rupo), which exerts a mafia-like domination over that section of the country. You really have no idea how corrupt and feudal (and criminal) the PS is in Wallonia.

Hans V

21 August 2010



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Socialist Equality Party visit:

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