

Letters from our readers

28 September 2010

On "FBI raids homes of antiwar activists"

I'm appalled at the break-in of antiwar activists homes in Minneapolis and Chicago by the FBI. I do not believe in the slightest the FBI's allegation that they were searching for any real evidence of "material for terrorism" but were doing the searches in order to terrorise the antiwar left and the Marxist anti-capitalist left. Unless the FBI is punished for illegal breaking and entering, we're going right back to the days of the SS and break-ins and throwing people into jail for being Jewish, Communists, etc. What force have we to jail to the FBI criminals? The regular cops, local and state, are under the leadership of the Homeland Security agency. They're not going to make any arrests so the people—workers and unemployed, have to hold huge demonstrations until the Justice Department decides to hold trials and punish the guilty—and even then only minor penalties will be administered, leaving the door open for future break-ins. So the only course open is for the people, led by the workers, to make the Social Revolution!

Steve H

26 September 2010

On "Detroit symphony musicians facing deadline for strike or lockout"

I'm told, and believe that the popular music market conditions us, by the self-reinforcing experience of consuming music in three and a half minute experiences, to assess and judge music within that time frame. When we are then presented with a symphony, which on average is only beginning its development after that very same three and a half minutes, we decide that we can't like it, particularly when we are young when music has all sorts of implications that are to do with anything but music. The mythology that says that orchestral music is for the upper classes needs to be dispelled. The fact that it never has been speaks volumes about the priorities of education under capitalism. I don't remember ever being told in any school music class, what a symphony is, why the first movement has to be in sonata form, or even what sonata form is. In my experience when a person is taught just these three things, then even music on the largest scale and in the most sophisticated detail becomes infinitely more accessible.

All the time people say that they would like to get into orchestral music but that they just don't know where to start. Culture is opulent, it belongs to all of us. There is a saying among classically trained musicians: "The world is divided into two kinds of people, those that like Beethoven and those that don't". This saying is only half true, the world is divided into two kinds of people alright—us and them. Defend the Detroit Symphony Orchestra! You may not like Beethoven today, but even if you don't, tomorrow you very probably will, especially if you have your cultural world turned upside down by the magical

experience of hearing a great orchestra performing live!

COL

22 September 2010

On "All London firefighters threatened with being sacked"

It's ironic that capitalism constantly lies to millions of people what the essence of cuts is; we were told after World War I and World War II that all the sacrifices that people have made were for the better and that things would improve for the better, soldiers have lost their lives to defend the interest of one's own country, modern warfare is now in the national interest—all lies of course, soldiers coming home with limbs blown off and then having to fight that same interest that it fought for.

Many soldiers are sacrificed in Afghanistan and Iraq, all in the national interest. But the only interest it really defends is that of those who have more to lose, the bourgeois elite bankers, financiers and the like. That's what's meant by the national interest. The reward now to millions of people are austerity cuts on a unprecedented scale, the decay of infrastructure, boarded-up shops, mass unemployment, starvation and even less going to those countries worse off than advanced countries.

Fire fighters also put their lives on the line every day to tackle fires, saving people lives. All this will stop, the reason being because capitalism says we are spending too much, the "We" being a big word in the time of capitalist crisis. Mervyn King admitted they caused the crisis, but "We" must now pay for it. People, you must wake up. Do not rely on the trade unions as they agree with the likes of Mervyn King and the government.

Malcolm

UK

21 September 2010

On "California energy giant PG&E releases list of 100 most dangerous gas pipelines"

These revelations are appalling. And what is worse is the complete lack of coverage by the area's main newspaper, the *San Francisco Chronicle*. Instead, we have had a smattering of self-serving and mealy-mouthed articles that go all around the main issue without ever naming it. Meanwhile, PG&E continue to raise rates. What is wrong with this picture?

Excellent article.

Carolyn

California, USA
25 September 2010

On “The Gates Foundation and the rise of ‘free market’ philanthropy”

Great article—this is relevant to me as I’m exploring the exceeding influence of the Gates Foundation in public education, especially in Seattle.

To me, philanthropy at this level is a way of controlling the economy in the most undemocratic fashion.

I have heard about connections to K&L Gates Law Firm and how they have a practice of supporting dictatorships. I have heard of how organic farming in Africa is under threat due to the indirect arm of Melinda Gates as it funds GMO-based practices.

There are connections to Jack Abramoff, who was a lobbyist for this law firm.

It is time to do a Marxist analysis on philanthropy by using the balance sheets and all other publicly available information.

For example, how does the charitable trust operate? Is it a remainder or a lead trust? How much is distributed yearly? Then what is the break-down of the donations? All of this data must be viewed and re-arranged the way Marx did on 19th century England, to expose the absolutely parasitic nature of modern day philanthropy.

It is time we lifted the mask of geniality from these butchers of humanity.

Thushara
20 September 2010

On “Obama at the UN: The arrogant voice of imperialism”

All I can say is: and the US delegation had the nerve to walk out on Ahmadinejad.

CW
24 September 2010

A comment on Glenn Greenwald and the Left

I am particularly distressed by the increasing prominence of the Internet commentator Glenn Greenwald (Salon.com) who has attracted a large audience and is generally (and I believe very mistakenly) regarded as a leading spokesman for the Left.

Greenwald, to be sure, has produced numerous superficially telling indictments of political fraud, hypocrisy, and treachery by both the Republican Party and the Obama administration, especially the torture and assassination policies of the latter. He has taken and continues to take a number of clear polemical positions that in and of themselves might be very welcome amid the fog of American political discourse.

But in the larger sense, I believe Greenwald is dangerously, and perhaps deliberately, misleading (if not corrupting) a large segment of

concerned citizens who might otherwise be open to a genuinely socialist views, such as those of your party.

Greenwald has ties to the Cato Institute, expresses admiration for the demagogue Ron Paul and his son, and sometimes makes reference to the Ayn Randian pseudo-concept of “tribalism” as an explanation for social and political conflict.

While he often attacks Obama and other so-called political “moderates” for presenting a false equivalence between left and right—and on these occasions, attacks the right and defends the “left”—he never addresses or even acknowledges any form of socialism more serious than that of Bernie Sanders (and then only in defense of positions taken by the latter pro or con some issue or piece of legislation). Greenwald is scrupulous in his refusal actually to characterize himself as a spokesman for the Left.

On the contrary, this commentator on at least one occasion has taken the line that both Left and Right are “obsolete narratives,” and that the way forward in the United States lies in an alliance between the likes of Alan Greyson and the egregious Dr. Ron Paul. In his less inspired moments, he merely asserts his belief in “the Rule of Law” and the US constitution, giving no inkling of the necessarily broader historical, economic, and scientific perspective in which these things must ultimately be viewed.

It’s conceivable that this commentator, for all his apparent intelligence, is merely confused, but his effect on political awareness, I believe, is becoming increasingly negative, not to say (by virtue of his wide influence) dangerous, and I for one would welcome an assessment by the *World Socialist Web Site* not only of Greenwald, but of other ambiguously “left-wing” Internet presences outside the usual “liberal” realm who I believe are serving to perpetuate the false consciousness associated with American individualism as we move deeper into the current political and economic crisis.

(I can’t avoid mentioning in passing that Greenwald was a ringleader in the recent attacks on the filmmaker Roman Polanski, who was so brilliantly defended in your pages.)

Francis G
20 September 2010



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