

Letters from our readers

26 April 2011

On "Australia: PPG paint workers strike against 43-percent wage cut"

I am one of the striking workers and I am on strike against the two-tier wage system. Your article is spot on the money. At this point in time (22/04/2011) the union is negotiating the terms of our surrender. I do not recall anyone agreeing to a two-tier. At least, not collectively. No vote on this. The subject was brought up in the presumptuous manner that makes you think, "Oh, that's what we are thinking". Some would sell their souls for a piece of silver, and some may be under financial strain, but there was never an official time that the surrender of our one-tier was voted or even discussed.

The problem is, where to from here. It is so hard after five weeks without pay to take this to the next level. It will be hard to motivate people to fight a rather intangible battle. Rather—to fight a battle with no guidelines. The company will lose from this no matter what. The amount of skill required is rather underestimated and even after 30 years I still need help with some jobs. Most there do. The current management will eventually have a transient workforce that will never be as good as the current one. The management has, by implication at least, stated that productivity gains belong only to the executives and not to the workers. They say that they will pay us our due but not future employees as they were not a party to that gain. Yet tell that to the future execs that will get paid the same, and eventually more than outgoing execs. There is much more to tell, but you have probably heard it all before.

The management team are like little bullies tantruming that they must get their way to survive, yet they continue to make record profits year after year. The mantra is the same each time and the echoes of it are lost each time so the lies continue each time. I am very angry at the union, the management and the

government. Years of work by the union movement are being sold off, and our payment, for a mere 2 percent. We would, I suspect, return for 3 percent. *How can we win this?* Someone please tell me.

Jim M

Victoria, Australia

22 April 2011

On "Budget austerity and democracy"

Very nice summary. The continued funding needed to keep huge corporations (mostly financial) afloat will come from the working class. The administration is clearly eying all retirement programs, Social Security.

Banks themselves are even more creative, allowing people to sell life insurance before death, so that in their deaths, the bank can collect.

What is clearly happening is a desperate grab for capital, as accumulation with the normal means becomes increasingly difficult.

Along with this process, bigger firms are stripping smaller firms. Mergers, bank takeovers are happening, which serve to move large amounts of capital to fewer numbers of owners.

As the new smaller numbers of owners amass large bases of capital, a very cheap labor pool is created due to the absolutely drastic cuts meted out to the working class along with high levels of unemployment. This cheap labor can then be used to further add value to the large capitals that have been accumulated under stress.

That indeed is the plan of the capitalists and their servant state. However, a great sea of workers will inevitably oppose these unlivable measures and the outcome will depend on this struggle, the struggle of two rights—the right to live for the masses, and the right to exploit them for the few.

Thushara

22 April 2011

On "An exchange on 'Reject TUC's phoney war'"

A confession of a misspent youth: During the 1970s I was picketing the TUC conference in Blackpool with

thousands of others, being dragged along the seafront by a large banner billowing under a sea breeze. I finished up near the entrance where the TUC delegates arrived. And was still there chanting for action from the TUC (ah, the innocence of youth and the power of ignorance) when the president of the National Union of Mineworkers, Joe Gormley, turned up. I can still remember my shock when a young man broke from our ranks, ran up to the president, and spat in his face.

Only years later did I find out that this president was a Special Branch informer. And it is a matter of regret to me now that I didn't manage to overcome my bourgeois conditioning to add my sputum to that of the unknown youth. Thirty years ago or more he expressed an absolute contempt for the leaders of the TUC and the path they had chosen to travel.

Now only the dim, the dead, and the corrupt look to the trade union leadership to lead anywhere but "Back to the Future". Back to the 1930s, back to support for imperial wars, where each well-prepared TUC retreat is but a preparation for the complete and absolute betrayal of the working class its leadership intend.

P.S. Joe ended up as a peer in the British House of Lords.

Chris
Ireland

21 April 2011

On "Croatian conviction casts light on US responsibility for war crimes"

Another clear-sighted and penetrating article on the region! Local media, blinded by either pure right-wing or quasi-liberal nationalism, and pandering to the lowest denominator, would never publish an objective historical (but inconveniencing) truth like this.

It prompted me to go on and read the exchange with that reader three years ago and on to other earlier coverage. Mr. Mitchell surely is very knowledgeable on the subject of the Balkans and European politics and history at large. So much so that I suspect a serious scholarly interest in the region?

In any case, you have my compliments. It's really refreshing to come upon an obviously well-researched article that is, on top of it, placed in a wider historical perspective and political programme.

Your coverage of other matters now has even more credibility in my eyes, seeing how seriously you're dealing with the Balkans; not the easiest of topics, to

make an understatement.

Comradely regards,

Ante

22 April 2011



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