

Letters from our readers

3 May 2011

On “Canada: NDP leader Layton concedes he has no substantive differences with big business Liberals”

Glen Clark is now president of the Jim Pattison Group. If the NDP policies under Clark’s leadership were at all contrary to the interests of BC’s favorite billionaire, or the business community in general, does anyone think Clark would be where he is now? He was well rewarded by his masters for services rendered. So much for the working class hero.

Doug H
22 April 2011

On “One year since the BP oil spill: The environmental disaster continues”

I served as a fisheries technician for NOAA twenty-five years ago; part of my job was to document marine mammal mortalities resulting from commercial fishing operations in US waters. I wasn’t in the least surprised to read the following in the WSWs report: “NOAA has been disposing of dolphins or taking sick animals out to sea, rather than allowing independent scientists to analyze” them. Long before the BP disaster, and preceding the Exxon Valdez oil spill in Prince Williams Sound, Alaska, in 1989, NOAA has been running interference for the fishing industry with respect to whale and dolphin kills.

As a technician, I performed scores of “necropsies” on marine mammals. Simply put, I butchered the dead animals to collect organs and “hard parts” and preserved them. These were delivered to Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute or Scripps Institute for analysis; occasionally the Smithsonian Institution accepted whole frozen carcasses.

All this was quite routine. But in the late 1980s, I was approached by the senior data editor and told that I was “returning [from deployments] with too many reports of dead marine mammals”; he led me to understand that this was a warning from the regional operations manager for NOAA/NMFS. Apparently, NOAA didn’t care for accurate data; they wanted low kill totals. Their insinuation, of course, was that I was manufacturing dolphin deaths. I suppose the idea had never entered my mind, as I was too busy removing dead pilot whales and white-sided dolphins from the cod-ends following fishing sets. I never dignified this filthy accusation with a denial. Of course, fewer marine mortality reports improves the industry’s environmental safety record, just as concealing oil plumes from the public benefits BP’s reputation.

Perhaps some of my colleagues “knew better” than to report all the dolphin and whale kills, and simply “deep-sixed” the evidence, miles off shore, to avoid being ostracized. Nobody was talking.

Now you see why your report that NOAA is “disposing” of dead and sick animals struck a chord with me; the practice appears to have become a tradition, exacerbated by the BP catastrophe. I’m sorry to report that I recently did a Google search and discovered that the same operations manager was co-researcher on a Woods Hole/NOAA project enumerating pelagic whale fatalities in the North Atlantic. Are these researchers among the “furious officials” who denounced Samantha Joye?

Maybe Joye is on to something with this observation: “The system is not fine. Things are not normal. There are a lot of very strange things going on.... How can that just be random consequence?”

Indeed.

Randy R
Oregon
26 April 2011

On “*Tornadoes kill at least 290 in US South*”

It's good to see this important aspect of the failure of capitalism revealed: bottom dollar housing for the nation's poorest residents in tornado-prone areas. Housing built without basements or some form of storm shelter apparatus in the “Tornado Alley” should obviously be illegal. The requirement of this kind of shelter has long been recognized, and yet (as usual) it takes a disaster with major casualties to bring attention to the problem.

Of course, the other failure of capitalism inherent in this story is the matter of climate change. The warnings of thousands of climatologists on the dangerous outcomes of global warming have been downplayed, suppressed, ignored, or mocked by the political establishment and the media for decades.

These mega-storms and tornadoes are sounding an increasingly urgent alarm that the profit motive cannot sustain or protect humanity or the rest of the Earth's species and environment.

Isabelle B
29 April 2011

On “Sidney Lumet, director of *12 Angry Men* and *Dog Day Afternoon*, dead at 86”

Further to Peter L's letter excellently outlining the missing element in Sidney Lumet's portrayal of the “New Left” as compared to the often heroic face of the communist underground, including its Jewish components under Nazi tyranny, some corrections should be made. One example: The head of the heroic spy network, the Red Orchestra, which kept Stalin updated on precious, very high level information on German military planning, Leopold Trepper, ended up in Stalin's Siberian Gulag. His account is a must-read. Further, there were a group of tailors in Paris whose specialty was assassination. The son of one of its members turned up in my high school in Montreal with stories of his parents jumping out of a streetcar window

to escape the Gestapo. The son became a famed expert on capitalist management theory, and the communist underground in France, as in Italy, strew flowers on the path of the post-war American domination of the nation-state for which they fought.

It is passed over all too quickly in the review, but *Bye Bye Braverman* deals with a group of ex-communists who, having sold out, bury their old ideals as they try, and fail, to make it to their friend's burial. Lumet was right on the money in this film about the failure of the Old Left and the need of those bereft of other than material goals to find fulfillment, hence the nostalgia for the lost cause. We see about us the New Left progressives of my youth, many in “socialist” leadership, wind up the same way. It's a lesson.

AL
Toronto, Ontario
28 April 2011

On “*HBO's Mildred Pierce: A Depression-era drama aimed at a contemporary audience*”

Thanks for this most interesting article. As a fan of *The Postman...* and *Double Indemnity*, I'd love to see this series. Too bad as a partly disabled elder I can't afford HBO. (Only recently made my way through *The Sopranos*.)

It should show up in a library sometime. In the meantime, will be checking the 1940s film version.

Again, merci.

Susan C
29 April 2011



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