

Letters from our readers

17 May 2011

On “The social counterrevolution in America and the tasks of the working class”

The commentary from Joseph Kishore on the 13th is a clear call to the working class to realize the strength inherent in it.

We know that workers’ wages and benefits have eroded.

The only solutions offered from the two-party system and unions and their big business benefactors have been severe cuts to the standard of living of the working class.

Another solution to the crisis of capitalism proffered is that through some hitherto unknown innovation that will improve worker productivity; therefore increase corporate profits that the capitalists will trickle down on those that serve them. I, for one, won’t hold my breath.

Then there are those that say we should turn back the clock to the days of Roosevelt, and re-regulate the “Market.” The so-called liberal economic reforms of the New Deal have been chipped away at from day one.

With their relentless attacks on the working class Barack Obama with help from some Clinton administration veterans and Bush holdovers may succeed in eliminating what little is left of the New Deal.

Where is the political party that’s for working people and the democratic control of the economy?

For the way forward everyone should seriously consider the program of the SEP.

Steve
USA
15 May 2011

On “Mississippi floods highlight decay of US infrastructure”

Every once in a while there is a revelation so surprising, so appalling, and so undeniably “in your face” that it forces one to go back and reread it, just to make sure one didn’t misread something.

For me, this article’s shocker is the statement that America’s rural roads in the Midwest are being de-paved and re-graveled as a cheaper alternative to maintaining proper paved highways.

I had not heard about this. I’m trying to imagine what the consequences might be.

I suppose the next step will be Detroit-built buckboards for the working class. That would mesh perfectly with the campaign to downsize Detroit. It might even allow Obama’s fascist successor to impose a further halving of assembly-line workers’ pay, to \$7.00 an hour with no benefits. Profits at Ford and GM will skyrocket.

And to think of all the imported oil that would save. The price of fuel for foreign wars would fall enormously due to the loss of domestic demand, giving the ruling class more war for less money!

Now you might think cheaper oil would help take the fangs out of US imperialism, but think again. The imperialists now will have to fight new wars of colonial conquest to secure access to the imported oats the working class will be feeding to the burros pulling their buckboards.

Whenever the domestic working class gets a little ungrateful for their working conditions and pay, wooden buckboards are all they will have to barricade their neighborhoods with. A good blast with a water cannon will not only extinguish a burning buckboard, but will blow it to smithereens, sending the resulting flotsam 10 blocks down the street. There will be no rubber tires to set alight, and Molotov cocktails will be replaced by laughable oat-bombs.

CH
Texas, USA
14 May 2011

On “Einstein’s theory of gravity confirmed by NASA probe”

I would like to make one comment regarding William Whitlow’s fascinating article regarding the confirmation of Einstein’s theory of gravity. I think that the characterization of Thomas Kuhn’s theory regarding how science develops, presented in his *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, reflects

more how others have misinterpreted Kuhn's theory rather than the theory itself. As I read Kuhn, he is not focusing on individual genius as the motive force in scientific advances. Rather, he identifies the process of increasing contradictions between an established scientific theory and accumulating experimental data which does not conform with the existing theory. These contradictions build to create a paradigmatic crisis in which the new data cannot be made to fit the old theory. Examples of this process include the Copernican Revolution, which overthrew the Ptolemaic view of the universe, and the more recent triumph of plate tectonics over the previous view of the Earth's crust as being static.

Although Kuhn does not use the term, I propose that this is a quintessentially dialectical process. It is often driven by technological advances which permit the collection of more precise and detailed data than that on which the previous theory relied—the telescope and deep sea coring, respectively, for the examples cited above.

The paradigmatic crisis is resolved when a new theory is developed which is able to more effectively explain the incongruous data and thus resolves the contradiction between it and the old theory. The individuals who develop the new theory are driven by the pre-existing contradiction. While bourgeois philosophy and popular media may characterize the breakthroughs of such individuals as the product of “pure genius,” they are, in fact, the result of the dialectic between individual scientists, theory, and experimental practice.

In politics, certain individuals at times become the embodiment of social processes and, indeed, in times of crisis are critical to the historical progress. Lenin and Trotsky played this role in the 1917 Russian Revolution. Marxists understand such figures not only as outstanding individuals but as products of the dialectic of the development of society. So in science, there is a dialectic between the individual and the contradictory development of knowledge.

Philip G
13 May 2011

On “Canada's NDP gave private assurances to Bay Street”

The question is, how much does the NDP provide a hedge against fascism? Not much.

Susan C
14 May 2011

On “India: Stalinist-led Left Front suffers debacle in state elections”

Good analysis of different party profiles and their agendas—announced vs. hidden. The Indian mainstream media

is now all praise for Mamata ‘Didi’ (sister) of TMC, whom they had scoffed at till recently. But I could not find any significant comment on their relation with the Maoists and what can be the Maoists' role now. In Tamil Nadu it is a clash of two corrupt bourgeois parties.

But in the Indian electoral system, identification of the ruling party is indirect. A candidate is deemed elected if he/she gets at least one vote more than each rival. Thus it is possible that a candidate can win with 20 percent of the popular vote. That adds to the count of seats of his party. Thus the winning party with the largest number of seats does not indicate the people's will. So is it not a bit premature to make conclusions on people's choices? I think it is possible to make a more confident assessment after the voting pattern is known.

JP
India
15 May 2011

On “Microsoft and the future of Skype”

One of the main problems with Skype has been that we are completely dependent on the company for the Skype client; the company has taken great pains to make it extremely difficult to “clone”. As a result, there are no Skype-compatible clients created by third parties. Hence all of us Skype users are now delivered into the hands of Microsoft, whether we like it or not.

Although Microsoft says it will continue to support users on other platforms (i.e., Mac, Linux, Android), it is a distinct possibility that the clients for these platforms will be quietly left to languish while the company focuses on Skype integration into Windows.

Initially this may seem a let-down for Skype users such as myself, who don't use Windows, but I believe that it will spur the open-source community to come up with a secure cross-platform solution which is not under corporate control. Perhaps the Skype takeover will be just the impetus the Gnu Telephony project needs to gain steam.

Colin B
Amsterdam
16 May 2011



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