

Letters from our readers

21 July 2011

On “Why did UK police declare death of News of the World whistleblower ‘not suspicious’?”

Hoare made himself an enemy of one of the most powerful men in the world, is then found dead, and we are told that his death is both “unexplained” and yet “not suspicious”. This isn’t merely extraordinary, it’s a contradiction.

Greg S
New Hampshire, USA
20 July 2011

On “British Prime Minister Cameron’s position under threat in Murdoch scandal”

So at the highest level, politicians, press and police are exposed as corrupt. At the lowest parliamentary political level, politicians are already known to be corrupt small time fiddlers of their expenses. Representative Democracy in Britain has entered a phase of unstable equilibrium. Should it be swept away by an external or internal shock nobody would raise a finger to restore it.

Chris
Ireland
19 July 2011

On “The voice of the ruling class”

“Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me,
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!”

The phrase “self-enclosed skin bags” is the language of fascism. Brooks expresses the hatred of the bourgeoisie toward any member of the working class not giving enough of that skin to the wealthy. The elderly, the unemployed, the homeless, the disabled, children. He also expresses the hatred of the bourgeoisie toward humane philosophical values that America still claims to represent. Perhaps they should revise the inscription on the Statue of Liberty to

reflect this. Arbeit macht frei.

EG
Michigan, USA
18 July 2011

On “The class politics of the US debt ceiling crisis”

Really, I found this article of yours to be very insightful. The article is written from the perspective of class conflict as the ultimate driving force that is sometimes lacking in reporting at WSWS.

You say “As far as the ruling class is concerned, this is a once-in-a-lifetime chance to fatally undermine social programs, particularly Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid, which the financial elite regards as an intolerable burden.” It is unclear to me exactly how these programs are a burden for the bourgeoisie. The US tax burden, I believe, is borne mostly by the working and middle classes, and these programs are paid for from those tax revenues. Cutting back on the social programs without changing the tax structure might help to balance the federal government’s budget. In that sense, I suppose, the cutbacks would allow the federal government to be fiscally sound without any sacrifice on the part of the financial elite. At any rate, what you say concerning the financial elite would seem to imply some sort of direct responsibility for the social programs by the financial elite.

Also I would like to say that I don’t think that the connections between the present-day political and economic occurrences and the need for a transition to socialism are obvious. My guess is that many readers are left feeling like being asked to jump off a cliff upon reading your last paragraph. Explaining the connections between the decline of capitalism and how this must lead to socialism in a summary manner is, I think, needed. Perhaps you have tried this in the past and found that it did not work. I do respect the many years that the regular writers for the WSWS have put into attempting to garner support for your perspective grounded in Trotsky.

Peter L
Maine, USA
19 July 2011

On “States axe higher education budgets, hike tuition”

I was supposed to go to California State University of Northridge this year. Unfortunately my parents and I don’t have the money to pay the increased tuition. When both of my parents told me that they could not help me, I was completely devastated. Plus I am discouraged, and it makes me not want to pursue higher education. Talk about valuing higher education in the United States!

Jacobo M
19 July 2011

On “An Intelligent Homosexual’s Guide to Capitalism and Socialism: Tony Kushner looks at the decay of the ‘left’ ”

“When we agreed that some, not all, would get, we gave up the union, we gave up representing a class, we became...each one for himself.” This comment says something important about the evolution of the entire trade union movement in the post-World War II period.”

It sure does!

I was once a member of the old “international typographical union” —though when I joined at the age of 24 in 1990, it had already been subsumed under the banner of the CWA—but the same thing had happened in the 1970s with regard to my union. The “leadership” had negotiated “lifetime job guarantees” for the old timers (we called them “lifers” semi-ironically since many of them continued working well into their 70s and even a few into their 80s!).

In the ITU/CWA there were definitely age divisions since the “lifers” were getting five weeks’ vacation yearly while the rest of us got four weeks. And the “lifetime” job “guarantees” turned out to be quite hollow when the *Oakland Tribune* was closed— actually it was bought by the paper for which I worked at the time and many of these guys ended up working there or at other papers after having taken pay cuts and other concessions to keep the *Tribune* open.

The thing is, though, the two-tiered system that they set up had really ended up creating a bit of friction—not much really—the ITU was always a pretty progressive union, but over the years many of the protections for substitutes were eroded. One of the most important was that which required a full-time worker to log his or her overtime so that when they had worked a full seven hours in any given period they had

to “lay off” a day and give work to a substitute—one of us lowly non-priority workers on the sub-board. This was done away with and many other protections, and by 1992 there was talk of raising the cost for pensioners for their health care costs (I opposed this at the time as an apprentice on the principle that the union should take care of its elder workers, but later as a journeyman I came to understand the grievances of the non-lifers).

They did a marvelous job of buying “labor peace” at the expense of new hires such as myself who really were a sort of “second class” member in so far as our interests were generally subsumed under the interests of the lifers.

The most backward expression of this was the notion of “buy outs.” Many of the lifers stuck around into their 70s hoping for a buyout. They were not unknown in the past, and at one point I am given to understand that many who had received buyouts in the 1980s were actually still working in the 1990s as substitutes. The buyout system was bullshit in my opinion because these were *union* jobs and not the particular property of any one union member—but the contracts that created this were the first blow against labor solidarity in the ITU since now suddenly a situation (job) was apparently the private property of a given worker.

Anyway two-tiered systems are anathema to unions, but you already know that.

In (didactic, rambling) solidarity,

RS
20 July 2011



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