

Letters from our readers

26 July 2011

On *"The slaughter in Oslo"*

It is surely no coincidence that the day before Anders Breivik's attack on the youth camp at Utoya, the participants there declared their support for a Palestinian state and for an economic boycott, and urged a stronger stand against Israel's treatment of Palestinians. I understand also that Norway's Foreign Minister visited the camp on its second day of rallies and addressed the group. So, in killing over 90 people at the camp, Breivik wiped out a considerable number of people who had potential to be future leaders of a more socialist-oriented Norway.

I note also that the police took 90 minutes to reach the camp and offered feeble excuses such as not being able to find a suitable boat or helicopter even though they only had to cross a few hundred metres of water.

Jennifer H

25 July 2011

On *"The voice of the ruling class"*

I enjoyed Kate Randall's article "NY Times' David Brooks on 'Death and Budgets': The voice of the ruling class". Ms Randall did an absolutely excellent job elucidating the creepy attempt by Mr. Brooks to normalize genocide of the working class through the systematic withdrawal of health care access that underlies health care "reform" in America.

One thing I found remarkable about Mr. Brooks' article was his statement that: "The fiscal crisis is driven largely by health care costs". This is an obvious fallacy. In fact, the current fiscal crisis was created by the irresponsible speculation of Wall Street investment banks, the subsequent unprecedented looting of the public treasury in the form of bailouts, and the resulting huge piles of public debt. On top of it all are the phenomenal amounts of money spent on multiple wars, unprecedented levels of military weapons procurement, tax cuts for the wealthiest few, and subsidies and handouts to corporations. I would think America's health care costs are relatively minor by comparison.

I also take issue with Mr. Brooks' supposition that Americans are afraid of death and wish to spend whatever it takes to forestall it. I have personally met many individuals who do not wish to have their lives extended by artificial means, and who often go to great lengths to spell out their end-of-life plans in thoughtfully crafted advanced directives, etc. While these people would not want to continue living if it meant intense suffering or existing in a persistent vegetative state, they also would not like to be metaphorically pushed in front of a bus at the first sign of the sniffles.

I hope for the sake of Mr. Brooks' intellectual and moral integrity, that were he confronted with a terminal illness of his own, he would have the courage to face death rather "marginally extend" his own life.

RW

California, USA

22 July 2011

On *"New York State employee union surrenders to layoff threat"*

Thank you for such an accurate assessment of the struggle that we working people of New York are facing. I read every day your articles and find them balanced and as truthful as your information permits. You are a voice for the working people. I and many other workers are appalled at how the rich elite are trying to crush the standard of living of the working people. They lose money in the gambling casino of the rich—Wall Street—and they expect us to foot the bill. I am fighting this and explaining to my fellow workers the plight we are facing. Hopefully many will respond and just say no to this disastrous contract.

Gregory P

25 July 2011

On *"New York City slashes aid to homeless"*

While the ruling elite claws more of society's wealth by driving people out of homes and shelters, the injustice of their own privileged position was revealed in a *New York Times* article of July 6, 2011, detailing how many apartments are just one of two or more homes for the rich class:

"In a large swath of the East Side bounded by Fifth and Park Avenues and East 49th and 70th Streets, about 30 percent of the more than 5,000 apartments are routinely vacant more than 10 months a year because their owners or renters have permanent homes elsewhere, according to the Census Bureau's latest American Community Survey.

"In one part of that stretch, between East 53rd and 59th Streets, more than half of the 500 apartments are occupied for two months or less. That is a higher proportion than in resort and second-home communities like Aspen, Colo.; Palm Beach, Fla.; Virginia Beach; and Litchfield, Conn.

"And the ranks of part-timers are growing. Since 2000, the number of Manhattan apartments occupied by absentee owners and renters swelled by more than 70 percent, to nearly 34,000, from 19,000....

"Among all of the 845,000 apartments and houses in Manhattan, 102,000 were identified as vacant in the 2005-9 American Community Survey. Of those, about 33,000—or about 1 in every 25 Manhattan homes—had an owner or renter who lived there less than two months of the year.

"The proportion of part-time apartments in the borough peaked at nearly 4 in 10 in 2007, then dipped with the recession and has been rising again."

The *Times*, a voice of big business, merely tries to cast this off as a problem of "out-of-towners" instead of as a reflection of the global capitalist center that New York is. Social inequality is much too mild a term for this nauseating denial of the basic right of secure shelter testified

to in the WSWs article.

HL
New York, USA
21 July 2011

On "Ferndale, Michigan residents speak on power outages"

DTE and news reporting agencies are not telling the truth. Many of the articles do not tell when the blackout started and tried to infer that it did not last long.

My power was out almost 60 hours, yet reports try to tell people it was only for a day or so. Additionally, DTE refused to pay for my spoiled food and stated they are not to be held responsible for any damage caused but the blackout—even when it is done on purpose! This leaves many of us in Ferndale angry and frustrated at a company that has no accountability.

Karl R
Michigan, USA
23 July 2011

On "The Murdoch scandal"

The denials of culpability and the pandering of the establishment to Murdoch and his son during the farcical inquiry were a truly repellent and nauseating spectacle. A cursory rummage through any of the *News of the World* publications reveals their fascist orientation and that the phone hacking, blackmail, etc., flow organically from their class position and their influence and self interest within that class.

All of the media debates following the inquiry centred upon Murdoch's "performance" at the inquiry and how it would impact on the financial viability of his media empire. There were no calls for charges to be laid and for all those responsible to be held accountable. Who in the establishment could make such a demand without fear of compromising themselves...certainly not the P.M.?

David D
Melbourne, Australia
23 July 2011

On "British media quick to dismiss death in Murdoch phone hacking case"

"Democracy Now!", a left-liberal US radio show and purported defender of freedom of the press, has also proved alien to the concept of actually investigating the facts surrounding the death of a journalist situated in the middle of a far-reaching scandal. Despite the show's frequent reporting of violence against journalists worldwide, it has hardly delved into the matter at all, let alone offered its own investigative reporting, and reveals uncritical acceptance of the ridiculous snap judgment of the police.

On July 19, host Amy Goodman reported, "Police say Sean Hoare appears to have died of natural causes, but that hasn't lessened suspicion of foul play," yet such suspicion, if it can be called that, has been short-lived. During an interview two days later, Goodman asked *Guardian* journalist Nick Davies, who apparently knew Hoare, if the death was suspicious. Davies responded, "I'm afraid that unless somebody comes up with some evidence to contradict me, the sad fact is that Sean, who was many years younger than me, died because his body was ruined by alcohol and cocaine and ketamine."

This proved a good enough treatment of the issue for Goodman, "the

exception to the rulers," who offered no follow-up and allowed Davies the last word, which he used to further muddy the waters: that the Murdoch newspapers paid Hoare to do the drugs and that he enjoyed doing them. On the other hand, Hoare was the only journalist to go public in blowing the whistle on a powerful international criminal organization closely connected to the government and, as the WSWs reports, no facts surrounding his death have been released.

This case is on its face suspicious, significant, and in need of critical reporting, yet no outlet outside of the WSWs can offer such, let alone any pretense to the protection of basic democratic rights like free press.

Mitch M
Michigan, USA
24 July 2011

On "UK Parliamentary Select Committee continues cover-up of Murdoch scandal"

Murdoch pere's and fils's responses to the current Parliamentary inquiry raise three extremely disturbing questions. At least one major corporate component of Rupert Murdoch's media operations is incorporated in the United States. Federal law makes any form of electronic surveillance (wiretapping, phone hacking however that term is defined) not explicitly authorized by the judiciary a criminal offense. Evidence has emerged that Murdoch's "reporters" routinely used electronic surveillance to hack into voice mail and other e-communications. Why has no prosecuting authority in the US convened a grand jury to determine whether Murdoch's business operations are racketeering enterprises which routinely engage in a pattern of illegal activity in their quest for "news"?

Secondly, several years ago the Delaware Chancery Court, which is generally regarded as possibly the most authoritative court in the US when dealing with matters of corporate governance, promulgated a definition of "best practices" for corporate directors. When confronted with a decision involving fundamental corporate policy, a board of directors must specify in its corporate minutes the rationale for its decision, the experts it consulted in arriving at its decision, and the advice those experts provided to the board.

Why has no one asked either Rupert Murdoch or his son whether they consider multimillion-dollar payments to former employees and others matters of fundamental corporate policy? If the Murdochs deny the importance of these payments, they are obviously in breach of their fiduciary duty of competence to the corporation; if they admit the importance of the payments but failed to follow "best practices" in leaving detailed corporate minutes explaining why they made the payments, then they have breached not only their duty of competence to the firm but their duty of loyalty, since the only explanation for their actions is to protect themselves, *not* the firm.

Finally, one is left with the question: what use to society at large and Murdochs' shareholders in particular are laws which impose civil and criminal liability for racketeering activities and breach of fiduciary duty if the political governing class will not enforce them?

Sincerely,

Peter L
Connecticut, USA
20 July 2011

On "Europe's crisis"

Dear Comrades,

The Perspectives statement in today's WSWs makes many relevant and correct points. But as seems to be the consistent position of the ICFI, it

suggests that the crisis emanates from the greed of the capitalists. In *Capital*, Marx stressed throughout that what is at stake is that there is too much capital chasing too little profit. This is fundamental to the periodic crashes that have been integral to the capitalist mode of production. The bigger the ratio of capital to profit the greater must be the crash. Hence it follows that this time the crash must be the biggest ever in the history of capitalism as this boom has lasted for a long time and the accumulation of fictitious capital is proportionally huge. The crisis that is now in full swing will be greater, more profound than that of the thirties. The destruction of life and property will be on a scale never before seen.

John U
23 July 2011



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