

Letters from our readers

27 August 2011

On “The betrayal of the Verizon strike”

What in the world is the purpose of the AFL-CIO? The IBEW where I live has done very little (if anything) to advance the well-being of its members. It has, however, sought to provide good labor for AT&T and others. Do unions now exist (as institutions of worship have in the past) simply to give workers some sort of false sense of hope and security?

Please enlighten me.

Rob V

Georgia, USA

24 August 2011

On “A letter from an auto worker to Verizon workers”

I would like to endorse this very objective letter and agree fully with what you have said. The crisis within the trade unions is becoming evermore transparent, as they defend the interests of company bosses and the interest of finance capital. I was one of the workers who fully supported you in your dispute and still do. It is important, as you have said, to unite these struggles as one, because in isolation this can only lead to defeat—a job that the unions do very well.

If I may quote from Trotsky’s notes on Marxism and trade unions: “Monopoly capitalism is less and less willing to reconcile itself to the independence of trade unions. It demands of the reformist bureaucracy and labour aristocracy who pick the crumbs from the banquet table, that they become transformed into its political police before the eyes of the working class”—we have seen this in many strikes of late internationally. One betrayal after another.

The rich tell us we’re in this together only when there’s a crisis and when we are asked to pay for that crisis. But a worker is never in it together when the

profits are rolling in; we don’t share in the opulence that the idle rich enjoy. All workers must understand what the old organised leaders of workers have become, read Trotsky on these questions. Many decades have passed by since Trotsky but his and Marx’s legacy to workers is evermore relevant today.

Malcolm

UK

26 August 2011

On “The ex-left and the British riots”

Great stuff! I really wish some of our left-wing media over here, like the *Guardian* newspaper, were writing like this: absolutely no-one seems to be recognising this as the return of the historically repressed, and it is far worse than that. These kids have their needs, capacities and desires utterly denied and negated, and are expected to get the most miserable, exploitative jobs, on a salary on which renting a place in London would be impossible, so they are subjected to completely hopeless situations—what the f. do we expect is all I can say. Anyway innervating read, thank you.

Aaron A

25 August 2011

On “Indian government seeks compromise with anti-corruption campaigner”

The corporate support for Hazare campaign is direct response for Indian government’s recent reserve bank rate hikes.

This struggle is not between people and corrupt government; instead, this is being used by big businesses as a tool to pressure government.

Now, the Congress-led government has only two

options: either it should compromise big business or it should bring CPI & CPM in front to control the situation.

This situation is correctly stated in the WSWs article, “Europe’s economic crisis spins out of control,” dated August 20, 2011, in its first paragraph: “The crisis of the world’s stock exchanges and financial markets is increasingly spiralling out of control. Governments are being driven by developments which they are unable to influence.”

Thanks & regards,
Vijay
Tamilnadu, India
25 August 2011

On “The magical allegory of Harry Potter: Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows, Part 2”

Usually the literature and movie reviews on the WSWs are of a caliber beyond what one would find elsewhere. Adam Haig’s recent review of the final installment of the Harry Potter films is not one of these, however. First, the review begins with an error when it identifies Harry as half-human. No doubt this alone will provoke hundreds of breathless letters from Potter fans.

The review in general is also a gross simplification not only of the world and characters of Harry Potter but also of the social reasons it has proved so popular. To say that Harry Potter became popular because people wanted to “escape from reality” is the kind of estimation one might hear from a fussy spinster aunt appalled by the “escapism” of the fantasy genre. But as most readers and critics of literature have long come to understand, fantasy and sci-fi are never about their self-contained world. In fact, they provide a means of examining the contradictions of contemporary life.

If we look at the fan base for the Harry Potter books, we will see that many of these people came of age in an era of enormous uncertainty, beginning with the 9/11 attacks. Harry Potter is a fantasy about ostensibly ordinary children who discover, through magic, that they have an ability to not only alter their world but to understand it. As any reader of the series will know, the world of Harry Potter is not one of simple allegorical duality (though it may be depicted this way in the

movie). In many ways it challenges notions of good and evil; the characters of Malfoy and Snape, as well as Harry’s own struggles illustrate this.

Class is also very much a part of the series (the wizard’s use and abuse of house elves?! Harry’s mudblood family with all of their middle class pretensions?! The Weasley family and their struggles to make ends meet?!). Good and evil are not inherent qualities to the series’ characters but rather the result of the choices they have made. The entire series, in fact, follows Harry as he discovers how similar he is to Voldemort and how Voldemort’s choices led to him to develop into the person he became. Indeed, many of the characters blur the lines between good and evil—Snape, Malfoy, Dumbledore, even Harry. These internal contradictions within many of the characters make them interesting and real for many readers, although this is obviously not enough for Haig.

I agree that some parts of the book are not well-written or well-rendered in the movies. And the idea that who one becomes is a largely a matter of choice is a rejection of the role of social conditions in individual development. I do not think the series is perfect, but I do think it explores themes of friendship, death, etc., in a way that struggles to make sense of a very volatile world. This, obviously, is why Harry Potter has struck such an emotional chord with an entire generation. Clearly Haig, in his dismissive, snobbish review has failed to understand the series’ resonance with masses of readers and moviegoers the world over.

JF
Michigan

25 August 2011



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