

Letters from our readers

Noauthor

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On “Nine candidates vie to lead Canada’s NDP”

I wish to thank the WSWs for the excellent article on the nine candidates who are presently vying to become leader of the New Democratic Party in Canada.

From the year I became eligible to vote, until recently, I have been a supporter of the NDP. Growing up on a farm in Nova Scotia, I watched the labourers digging ditches lose their jobs when the government changed hands. In those days, the only candidates were Liberal and Conservative. And when the Conservatives were elected, all the Liberal labourers digging ditches were sent home and replaced by Conservative labourers, and the reverse of this happened when the Liberals were elected. So there was not much choice.

The WSWs synopsis of the NDP leadership race shows clearly there is not much choice in choosing among the candidates. Each to some degree is anxiously professing that they will support the status quo of supporting the right wing elite in Canada. It sounds like voting for “Harper Lite” and the continuation of Canada’s role in support for the USA and its imperialistic wars.

It used to be said that Canada held the USA’s “coat” as the USA did all the fighting. Now Canada is adopting the USA’s policies (like more and bigger prisons, even though the crime rate in Canada has been falling for years), and the planned purchase of state of the art fighter jets, so Canada can follow and support the USA (and Israel) in its wars, indiscriminately slaughtering thousands of civilians.

Before Jack Layton became leader of the NDP, I had hope that the NDP would be the saviour of the middle class and the poor in Canada. The first time I met Jack Layton was in Moncton, New Brunswick, when he was one of the candidates in the leadership campaign. My first impression was that Jack was too bright and shiny, and as glib as a snake oil salesman. However, after he was elected I, like a good NDP supporter, suppressed all my doubts and applied my full support to the NDP. However, as Jack Layton put his brand on the party I began to find my doubts coming back strenuously. At first, I allowed my NDP colleagues to convince me that Jack Layton had to “play politics” until he managed to bring the NDP up to scratch and make it a viable

contender to become the government in Canada.

And, as Jack Layton’s brand of NDP became more and more like the Liberals and Conservatives brand of government, I abandoned all hope .

If, back when I attended the leadership debate in Moncton, New Brunswick, I had been able to have a synopsis like the WSWs has written about the current NDP leadership race, I would have had the data I needed to assess Jack Layton that night. And it would have saved me time, blood, sweat, and tears, not to mention all the money I invested in monthly contributions to the NDP (alternatively at the federal and provincial level). Instead, my resources were wasted.

So, I thank the WSWs for this current excellent assessment of the nine candidates vying to fill the vacancy left by Jack Layton’s passing. I will watch the process with little interest, knowing it doesn’t matter, because all the candidates are the same and offer nothing much different than the destructive road that we are currently following.

Raymond C

New Brunswick, Canada

10 November 2011

On “Southern Illinois University faculty strike”

The Department Representative Committee decided to call off the strike last night since two-thirds of its requests were met, the most important being the recognition of professional standards governing tenure and distance learning not being compulsory. The decision has to be ratified by the union membership, and despite the headlines in today’s student newspaper with its picture of a gloating Chancellor, this is not a victory for the administration that has caused deep toxic divisions on this campus. However, during the period of the strike the most positive aspects were newfound solidarity between civil servants, non-tenure track faculty, and graduate students whose unions had no trouble negotiating their contracts by an administration set on destroying the faculty union. Close bonds were formed between faculty from different departments on the picket lines who are usually divided into disciplinary straitjackets by the administration. Unions such as the Teamsters and UPS delivery were also very positive, as were community members who realized that the administration was to blame

for provoking this strike—despite the rabid editorials in the right-wing *The Southern* newspaper that syndicates Ann Coulter every Sunday. But what was so uplifting was the student support given at various stages of the strike by their demonstrations and recognition that their qualifications were being threatened by an administration wishing to change a research university into a degree mill little different from the University of Phoenix.

Students were provided with very shoddy substitutes such as a dean from another college who taught history because he was a history buff, civil servants who felt uncomfortable about being there, and administrative groupies who lied about their fellow faculty on strike. Despite this, our chancellor, whose actions resemble those of the Dowager Empress in the final years of the Ching Dynasty, has claimed that many students prefer these substitutes to sorely missed faculty (many of whose students walked out in protest at incompetent substitute teaching). When asked to provide evidence of this, the university spokesman invoked aspects of privacy making this place more of an Orwellian nightmare than it already is.

Although many of us will work hard to get students back on track, an appalling atmosphere has now been created that will divide union members from those who acted like scabs for some time. We are expecting various forms of retaliation from certain chairs, deans and higher administrators in the near future that will not heal this now toxic environment. This situation was deliberately created by a union-busting chancellor. Although it is common to stereotype academia as an “ivory tower”, universities are now experiencing the harsh atmosphere of what is called “the real world”, one documented in other instances in the pages of the WSWS.

Tony W

10 November 2011

On “Italian Prime Minister Berlusconi announces his resignation”

So the court jester is going. This man has turned Italy into a laughing stock. What the Italians now have to worry about is not only who is going to get elected next, but how deeply austerity measures are going to bite, and also are they going to lose their sovereignty to the IMF and others. They may find state assets which belong to them and not to the government being sold off for peanuts.

David G

10 November 2011

On “US off-year balloting shows mass opposition to right-wing policies”

As one who has witnessed the mainstreaming of white nationalism in the West, I cannot interpret the recall success in Maricopa County as either significant or any repudiation of white nativist chauvinism. The referendum in Maricopa

County was not one directed at party politics or policy. It was concerned with appearances only. As alluded to in the article, extremists like Pearce and Joe Arpaio, and their lust for nationwide media limelight, are simply bad for business. Arizona, and Maricopa County in particular, rely on a \$20 billion per year out-of-state tourist industry to fund everything from parks to politics. Nationwide calls to boycott Arizona, especially those aimed at large corporations and professional sports organizations, could negatively impact the state’s income from that industry. So Pearce, and his ability to create scandal and bad press, was, in effect, thrown to the dogs, abandoned by the big business interests that power the state so that every progressive organization, PAC and neoliberal Democrat could run to the national media and proclaim Arizona’s victorious return to the fold.

It’s BS. Those people are being played like cheap violins. Tea Party nationalism and the white nativist chauvinism at its core still rules the day in Arizona politics, as it does in most western states. Pearce knows it. Lewis knows it. Tea Party Republicans know it. Big Business knows it. Every person of color in Arizona knows it. If they don’t, Sheriff Joe and any of the numerous white nationalist organizations and institutions flourishing in Arizona will be there to help them see the light. (Like the white nationalist US Border Guard group that has attached itself to the Occupy Phoenix action.) Only now with a kinder and gentler media response.

NW

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