

Letters from our readers

17 December 2011

On "Obama, Congress back legalization of a police state"

These measures not only seem to indicate desperate attempts to control to an unavoidable confrontation between classes. Its unprecedented nature also points out the weakness, immorality, deep-embedded fear and a realization by the oligarchy/state that they may not be able to restrain the tide of history this time around. These measures to the contrary may precipitate the same events that they are trying to avoid. Let us hope that in their desperation to keep their privileged social relation at any cost, they do not succeed at destroying everything else around them.

EB

16 December 2011

I have been sick of this country for a long time. I managed to leave this country for seven years. In the countries I traveled to in that time I found that not only was I more free in the other countries than I was in the US, but US tourists thought that the other countries should follow US laws. People in this country say we are a nation of laws and if you don't obey the law you go to jail. This is another way of saying this is a police state, do what you are told and shut up.

RD

Oklahoma, USA

16 December 2011

On "European workers face austerity and dictatorship"

Many, many thanks for this excellent article which brings the much-needed clarity which is so urgently needed on this question of Cameron and the eurozone. I have spent hours on the *Guardian* newspaper blog "CIF" over the past weeks and have observed how desperately the argument for "European unity" is being pushed at a time when objective realities show that what is meant is the unity of the den of thieves who want to coordinate their complete destruction of all the remaining social gains and democratic rights that workers have left.

The comments on the *Guardian* blog are of three main types—those who clearly see and oppose the catastrophic effects of the austerity measures (in Greece citizens already can't even get basic health treatment), those who (increasingly hysterically) maintain that European Unity is essential, and those who seek to sow the illusion that a change of government (Tories out, Labour in) is the way forward.

The working class, youth, students, pensioners, and many, if not most, salaried workers are indeed faced with a horrendous (and very near) future of barbarism and brutality. And more and more are "waking up" to this, hence the frenetic attempts of the fake lefts to divert this consciousness away from the only way out—international socialist revolution.

Thank you Julie, and thank you WSWWS, for so consistently arming the working class with the intellectual weapons we need to cut through the relentless propaganda that would have us believe there is "no alternative" to capitalism, and that the human race is not capable of overcoming it and creating something better—a rational system of production based on equality and solidarity. Socialism.

Necessity is the mother of invention indeed!

Sincere regards,

Virginia

Germany

13 December 2011

On "Cooper Tire workers expose sweatshop conditions at Ohio factory"

Dear WSWWS:

I comment about the Cooper Tire travesty. I relate to the workers' cries. I myself once worked for Firestone Steel Products in Riverview, Michigan in 1974. I was fresh out of high school, and when needing a job, I landed there with the help of the state employment office.

It was loud, dangerous labor. They had machines that would take a finger off in a second or less. That was called an "expander". The wheel would be manually placed on it, it would "expand" the inside diameter of the wheel. You had a tiny hook to extract a heavy truck rim off it. I saw at least one fellow worker missing a finger or two ... probably because of that one machine.

It was so noisy in that plant, you had to wear ear plugs *all* the time. I believe the 50 percent deafness in my right ear was caused by that factory. Drug abuse was also rampant there. When I first started, my hands were covered with blisters on every digit of my fingers from my wrist to the tops of all fingers. I can't remember how many times my arms were burned because of hot metal. I quit that job after one month.

I found another job where I worked as a temp for four years before being converted to full-time. I made \$5 per hour at Firestone. There was also a piecework type pay for production over a certain amount. Other workers would try to speed up the line as fast as possible to get that extra few pennies ... resulting in even more injuries for some people. That plant closed shortly after another arch-capitalistic corporation, Bridgestone, bought it out. I would have had 10 years seniority if I stayed. ... but no job. Thirty-four years later, I am retired from my second job. I wish the Cooper Tire workers victory in their struggle.

NJG

14 December 2011

On "Thousands protest against Kremlin regime"

I am glad that you could lend some clarification to the events now taking place in Russia. It's hard for many people including myself to separate out the various elements at work in any kind of a complex social situation such as the one that now exists. My first impulse would be to take a close look at the covert connections of the Western imperialist plunderers and see who the new "Reilly-Ace of Spies" might be.

However, there is much fertile ground in terms of genuine social discontent for the imperialist plunderers to exploit. Once again the question comes into play in regard to US/Western meddling in the affairs of a nation that still has on its territory thousands of functioning nuclear warheads. Is such meddling really in the interest of the American people or is it actually just one more threat to our lives posed by an out of control ruling class hell-bent on total and complete world domination?

Charles

Florida, USA

12 December 2011

On “West Coast demonstrations target port operators”

“For their part, the various unions have made clear that the last thing they wanted was for their members to connect their struggles with the working class in general. On December 6, the International President of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU), Bob McEllrath, wrote a letter to the local unions which bluntly stated, ‘As the Occupy movement, which began in September 2011, sweeps this country, there is a real danger that forces outside of the ILWU will attempt to adopt our struggle as their own.’”

Speaking as a former ILWU worker, I can say that the bureaucracy might fear the “forces outside” only a slight bit less than they fear the “forces inside”—to wit, the rank and file. I cannot recall how many times nearby locals were involved in an action and we would not only not be informed (so as to lend support), but would be misinformed about whether anything was going to happen. There was virtually no communication between the locals, no coordinated action. The only time we were asked to help was when the Borax, California Rio Tinto guys came around to help fundraise during the lockout in 2010. (Apparently strike funds were not able to be used, despite being present.)

The bureaucracy of this union is typically rotten—many contracts have “no strike” clauses in them (something which I only found out about after we had layoffs in my shop and I suggested we strike)—which is absurd. The strike is perhaps the most powerful weapon we as workers have, yet it was “negotiated” away on our behalf! Each contract is presented as “the best we can get”—and concession after concession is offered.

In the case of EGT there’s a lot for them to be concerned about—here you have one union being pitted against another, with the ILWU looking not at what the workers need, but angry that they’re not getting the dues involved. This is a common concern among the union bureaucracy—who gets the money. The last thing ILWU bigwigs would want is for the rank and file to join with the rank and file of the GCOE! In their view, this issue has to be kept isolated and under the ILWU’s thumb.

CS

Washington, USA

14 December 2011

I believe sizable numbers of people in the Occupy movement know that the unions are opposed to the social aims of the occupiers. I was talking to a Seattle occupier yesterday and we started talking about the role of the unions.

He said that unions were not joining the movement because Occupy was not still very strong. So I asked is that not opportunistic of the unions, should the unions not be helping Occupy to become stronger? Then, the occupier said that quite clearly, if the Occupy movement grew stronger then the unions would try to divert it to support their agenda, which would be of course the reelection of Obama and support of the Democrats.

It is to the credit of the Occupiers that the unions have not been able to do that at any stage of the movement so far.

The problem is that the organizers in charge of the whole setup are not of this opinion. And most of the occupiers who know this somehow still lack the political clarity to come forward. So they let the charlatans lead.

It is only a temporary situation. The next financial crisis will blow the covers off this whole thing and the ISO/union types will be further

exposed.

Thushara

14 December 2011

On “This week in history: December 12-18”

I recently re-watched Warren Beatty’s film *Reds*, in which the 1913 Armory show was mentioned several times without explanation. I found myself wondering why a show about weaponry would be so interesting to a leftist girlfriend of the famous American journalist John Reed. Now I get it. Thanks to WSWWS for shining a light on this unknown-to-me historical episode.

The story about the history of the Portuguese colony of Goa also provided a light. I knew that (a) Portugal was a client, if that is correct terminology, of Britain, and (b) Portugal was somehow able to keep its Indian and other colonies for over four centuries following its decline to utter irrelevance within Europe. But how? Somehow I had never connected the two facts until now.

This is what keeps me coming back to the WSWWS!

Charles H

14 December 2011

On “In defense of Shakespeare—a conversation with veteran Australian actor and director John Bell”

How wonderful to read the exchange between David Walsh and John Bell. I moved to Melbourne, Australia from suburban Detroit in February 1975. I stayed until 2004 when family matters brought me home. The mid-1970s were a time of a renaissance in the arts in Australia.

With bipartisan support, Australia’s film industry (the world’s oldest) was reinvigorated by government funding. Directors such as Beresford, Weir, Campion, etc., learned their craft on Aussie films. Australians embraced their past, including the convict element of it, with enthusiasm. This embrace of Australian history and culture was evidenced in many ways. The folk music scene with groups such as the Bushwackers, the Cobbers and the Sundowners as well as Aussie rock groups such as Little River Band and Skyhooks brought Australian popular music centre-stage. Australian classical music was well served by composers such as my colleague George Dreyfus.

The visual arts thrived with artists such as Cliff Pugh even producing work for children’s books. The Australian Opera and the Australian Ballet found new audiences among the young. As a person whose first love has always been live theatre, the renaissance of Australia drama and comedy was most welcome.

The Melbourne Theatre Company offered a welcome mix of Australian works by dramatists such as David Williamson as well as overseas material. The Australian Performing Group referred to in the article put on marvelous productions in a building in Carlton that was literally an old Pram Factory. It was into this setting that John Bell’s Bell Shakespeare Company emerged. True to the innovation of the period, Bell’s productions were always thought provoking. It is wonderful to be reminded of this magical period in Australia’s cultural history by reading David’s marvelous article. As usual, David demonstrates his deep understanding of the artistic soul that makes true artists such as John Bell cultural icons.

Diane A

Michigan, USA

14 December 2011

The ideological headquarters of imperialism has been as steadfast as its military headquarters, in doubting, weakening and dismantling every

progressive measure. The latest in their armory is the denial of universality—of both problems and solutions. In defending Shakespeare David Walsh correctly identifies the source of Shakespeare’s “genuine artistic genius” to be his “universality”. Not only “the contemporary social type”, but more dangerously the universities inspired by the imperialist think tanks, are also “obsessed with gender or ethnic identity” and in the Indian context caste identity.

The hostility towards the universality is in fear of a universal uprising and hence “intellectual” attempts are made to dismember whole knowledge in terms of individual components. The parts are projected as though they are larger than the whole.

David Walsh has done well once again, this time by showing that the attack on Shakespeare is in reality an assault on his plays. Years ago Arnold Kettle brought out the core of the dramatist’s genius thus: “The central subject of Shakespeare is the killing of the king”. I find DW continuing on right lines in helping us understand “Shakespeare our contemporary”.

MRC

India

13 December 2011

On “My Week With Marilyn: Another look at the postwar American film icon”

I almost swooned when I read the last lines of Joanne Laurier’s review (here, quoting Cecil Beaton): “Certainly [Monroe] had no knowledge of the past. Like Giraudoux’s Ondine, she is only fifteen years old, and she will never die.”

Laurier’s reviews are superbly insightful, and appropriately sympathetic: this one is no exception. An obeisance of some kind from the WSWS staff is in order; a nod of the head, and a lowering of the eyes from éminence grise David Walsh will suffice.

Good things to you, Joanne.

Randy R

Arizona

13 December 2011



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