

Letters from our readers

28 January 2012

On “The State of the Union address”

As a teacher, I particularly noticed what Obama said about education in his State of the Union address, as the rest of his schools program is deeply reactionary and leading to the destruction of public education in the interests of a corporate agenda for privatization and profit.

His proposal to deal with the high dropout and low graduation rate was that every state—and he emphasized every—should pass legislation requiring students to remain in school until they graduate or turn eighteen. As laws and rules are not something that can effectively keep students in schools, especially as they are turned ever more into test-preparation factories with less and less guarantee of future benefit of livable employment—this populist rhetoric actually becomes another step in the criminalization of youth. Will they arrest students who drop out and give them a police record? Youth are already treated as criminals with common stop-and-frisk assaults by police.

As state legislators look for a way to put muscle behind this proposal, I see yet another excuse for budget cuts to be imposed by declaring that parents who cannot keep their children in school will lose welfare assistance or other public benefits, proposals that have been made in the past.

What Obama did not propose is the massive funds to build and equip more schools, train more teachers, lower class size and guarantee livable-wage jobs that can make an education attractive to working class youth.

HL

26 January 2012

One month before the State of the Union address...

Panetta: ...so that's about it. Oh, and we'll supply a little "action" to spice up the proceeding.

Obama: Yea?

Panetta: It's very cool; a rescue, we're thinking Somalia, Navy Seals, limited kills...

Obama: How many?

Panetta: As little as two or three.

Obama: A dozen would be nice, as long as you don't screw it

up. I don't want a replay of Reagan's Challenger mess.

Panetta: And it'll blunt the Republican Virginia primaries.

Obama: Right.

Moral: Obama is a murdering son-of-a-bitch.

Randy R

Arizona, USA

26 January 2012

Thank you! From the first paragraph on, you have defined that speech and its cheerleaders for what they were.

Not a different planet, not even a parallel universe for these wealthy, nicely suited applauders and applauded. Gee, they looked happy, pleased and agreeable. After the speech, watching Barack Obama among congress, the mood of all was a jubilant celebration. Who are these people? They may squabble about some things, but they advance much the same, as you are pointing out.

They are removed from the populace and its reality, as are the marble corridors and chambers where they parade themselves. And now that practically a secretive, no-limit financing for politicians and concomitant policies is in full swing, with the kept press reporting from the ever slick shows put on by the established political parties, the jubilation will be all the more an unquestioned, smug face.

Is the populace lulled by this un-reality, much the same as going to a movie, something showing how the wealthy live, and upon leaving the theater, thinks, "how handsome, how pretty, how nice... I was there"?

Michael S

26 January 2012

On “One year of the Egyptian Revolution”

Dear Alex,

Your analysis of the first year of the Egyptian revolution raises some critical issues for workers everywhere. Firstly, it puts the emphasis on understanding the different class forces at work and emphasises that it is only through establishing the political independence of the working class that the revolution can avoid defeat and make any gains. It also identifies the main obstacles to achieving this in the RS and other groups who try to tie the working class to factions of the national bourgeoisie,

in a similar way to the Mensheviks in the Russian Revolution of 1917. The current eruption in Egypt has been building up for years, but it is clear that the questions of leadership raised in your article have now become critical and cannot be postponed. The crucial lesson from events in Egypt is that a new era of social revolution is opening up, and that the lessons from Egypt will be needed to be learnt by workers the world over.

Revolutionary greetings,

Trevor
UK
25 January 2012

On “Renewed mass protests mark anniversary of Egyptian Revolution”

The soldiers did not fire at the protesters at the height of the revolution last year. That was because the order to fire was not given, due to fear that soldiers may disobey such a command. But a clear split in the soldier mass did not happen because there was no political party in Egypt that had gained their trust.

As Egyptian workers consciously start building such a party—to uphold the interests of the working class—a revolutionary moment will produce a split in the rank and file soldiers. This will make it possible for workers to preserve the gains hard won.

If such a decisive victory was won by the Egyptians, the military might and the international legal system will be ferociously mobilized to crush it. The link to preventing such a situation is building the working class party internationally.

As the working class in Europe and America increasingly find themselves struggling for bare necessities, this difficult task will become easier. The stated aim of the American state is to “level the playing field,” that is, reduce the international working class to more and more equal conditions of misery.

This will present a most urgent and pressing situation to workers—to take hold of the immensely productive engine of the international economy and to then develop that engine for human need instead of private profit—i.e., socialism.

Thushara
26 January 2012

On “Johnny Otis, R&B’s renaissance man, dies at 90”

Your obituary for Johnny Otis certainly brought back some memories. As with many fans of blues, jazz and R&B, my life was touched by his tireless efforts to promote the music and culture he lived and loved.

Of course I had no inkling of his already substantial history when I first heard and enjoyed “Hand Jive” as a nine-or-ten-year-old suburban kid. I was later to learn some of that history by reading *Listen to the Lambs*, which leavened its anger at injustice and bigotry with anecdotes, at times humorous, from his youth and years in the music business.

He had a weekly radio show in Southern California during the ‘70s and ‘80s on which he played his favorite music, including rarely heard gems (like Charlie Parker’s first recordings with Jay McShann, certainly an ear opener). He would often have guests who had played a role in R&B and jazz history. He always considered his show to be educational as well as entertaining.

Johnny Otis tirelessly advocated for other great artists, and it was from hearing on his show about their upcoming performances that I was to see Little Esther Philips, Eddie “Cleanhead” Vinson and Big Joe Turner at some of the clubs around L.A., moments I treasure. He also recorded artists who had passed their heydays—greats like Louis Jordan and T-Bone Walker—and promoted them as well.

I last heard him on the radio while visiting the Bay area shortly before his retirement from the show he had there. He was still spinning great music and talking it up in his infectious style.

Thanks.

Lary M
California, USA
26 January 2012



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