Letters from our readers

12 May 2012

On "The establishment politics of the May 1 Occupy protests"

In contradistinction to Joe Kishore's useful article on the politics of the Occupy Movement, I refer you to the recent interview with Noam Chomsky by Laura Flanders, which is not useful.

Why does Alternet persist in worshipping at the Chomsky shrine? Just one exchange reveals that Chomsky fully accepts the movement as appropriated by the Democratic Party.

Flanders asks "In the media, there was a lot of confusion in the coverage of Occupy [Movement]."

My response would be this: Confusion? The corporate media is not in the least "confused." They know very well that the Occupy organizers—as Mr. Kishore points out—have "no independent politics, and no independent leadership." Why should they be confused about that? Pleased, or relieved, as the case may be, but never confused.

Noam Chomsky, however, accepts Flander's premise, and explains the media's "confusion" as an honest failure to discern "the two different strands in the occupy movement": "policy" and "creating communities."

Chomsky considers the movement's "policy" goals as efforts to "[r]egulate the banks, get money out of elections; raise the minimum wage, [and] environmental issues." In other words, the same filthy programs of the reform that will be offered by the two big business parties, year after year, to millions of desperately unemployed and low wage workers. President Barack Obama is offering them as you read this.

The second "strand" is another left-liberal canard, and an old one. According to Professor Chomsky, American workers are benighted due to excessive TV and Internet viewing, rather than "creating communities," as he claims the Occupy events do. This sounds much like the Hillary Clinton's "it takes a village" moralizing (a village of peasants?).

Doesn't Chomsky understand that people are not watching much TV nowadays because they're working 60-hour weeks at rock bottom wages, and doing graveyard shifts, and caring for the kids? This doesn't leave much TV watching time.

People are not "atomized" as Chomsky claims—workers spend the day shoulder to shoulder with other workers on the production line, teaching school and at every kind of industry you can think of.

The "workplace" communities are a phenomenon that doesn't really exist for Chomsky. But it's where the Socialist Equality Party goes to organize people for political action and education.

Chomsky's wrong-headedness is perfectly expressed with this remark: "The Occupy movement did create spontaneously communities that taught people something: you can be in a supportive community of mutual aid and cooperation and develop your own health system and library and have open space for democratic discussion and participation."

Is Chomsky a lunatic? Why, in god's name, should people "develop their own health system and library" when those facilities already exist, operated and staffed by literally millions of working people? Is Chomsky suggesting we also plant gardens to feed our families, when agribusiness, based on workers' labor, produce massive amounts of food?

To Chomsky, there is no political mobilization, just "mutual aid and cooperation events." That's what makes Chomsky so pathetic.

Randy R
Oregon, USA
7 May 2012

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Thanks. Just to let you know, you're the best. WSWS—always on top when it comes to progressive news!

Carl C
8 May 2012

On "A lesson for autoworkers: The short lived Windsor, Ontario Dakkota strike"

Good work on the L444 betrayal. My old CAW local, L2000, has the same M.O. Tell the workers that if they don't accept the sellout it's means an even worse deal or the end of the company.

The negotiating committee recently recommended yet another concessions contract. It offers nothing except further effective wage cuts on top of 0/0 percent in the last contract, a rollback in OT entitlements, no improvements in benefits or job security and a company friendly four-year term. Unbelievably, the negotiations committee calls the past couple of agreements "successes" and "accomplishments." These imbeciles believe their own BS. Who really benefits? The CEO of MTS Allstream, Pierre Blouin, who recently became the highest paid corporate boss in Manitoba!

As expected, and with the usual self-congratulatory fanfare, the CAW announced tonight that the L2000 membership "overwhelmingly" accepted the concessions deal. This isn't because it's a good contract or a show of "solidarity." It's the outcome of years of givebacks, job losses, erosion in working conditions and job security, sweetheart deals and endless "unanimous recommendations" from those who claim to represent the workers. The reality is that, like L444, the contract ratifications are votes of no confidence in the union.

You've probably heard of CLAC, the Christian Labour Association of Canada. It has a reputation of being the most company-friendly "union" in the country. The CAW gives them a run for the money for that title.

DH
BC, Canada
8 May 2012

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On “Sri Lankan SEP to hold plantation workers’ congress”

What is planned by the SEP is in conformity with international socialism, and it is the requirement of the day as far as the Sri Lankan estate workers are concerned. They served the local economy for the bourgeoisie to have a life with conspicuous consumption. The reward for them, over a long historical period, has been impoverishment, premature death, malnutrition, alcoholism and total chaos in their community. Estate worker children are reduced to scum of the earth. What is urgently needed is to break the estate worker relationship with the moribund trade unions and their leadership that have served the Sri Lankan bourgeoisie, irrespective of its ethnic divide. I fervently hope that the SEP will have a breakthrough in the estate sector of our redundant economy. Thank you.

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Sri Lanka
7 May 2012

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Comradely greetings to the plantation workers of Sri Lanka.

The demand for even yet lower wages for and higher yield from your labor is proof that when it comes to “competition” there is no depth to which the capitalists would have compunction about sinking. They would not be satisfied even if we all were forced to pay them for the privilege of working.

Your fight is our fight—and we support you as fellow workers.

Christie S
Washington, USA
9 May 2012

On “Incoming French president signals budget cuts, handouts to banks”

Excellent analysis, but you don’t recognize the particularly French method for installing odious changes—they are done in August, when all the French, including the members of the legislature, are away on vacation. People come back to their jobs and schools to find faits accomplis—done deals. So, yes— Hollande and the PS are waiting for the legislative election in June, when it seems obvious they and the National Front will gain—but the real damage will be done in near secrecy in August.

Thanks for all your excellent work.
David R
France
9 May 2012

On “Mongolia declares state of emergency following violent protests”

Over the years I’ve contributed several letters about Mongolia and things have gotten so bad in some key ways here that I’m compelled to write again.

Since I first came to Mongolia in 2004 inflation has been around 500 percent. But basic salary has stagnated, and is around $400 per month now. There is a massive housing bubble: prices have gone up as much as 5 times or more. It was around $15,000 in 2004, now it’s 80 to $100,000 or more.

There has been a massive mining boom here so a lot of money has been flowing in, but everyone has noticed that the moment the government announces any kind of giveaway, prices of basic goods and services rise. There have been several strikes, most recently amongst teachers who were only making around $200 per month, and the moment the government announced the pay rise there was a large cost increase across the board. I’ve read that gas prices are some of the highest in the world because there is a gas monopoly.

Mongolia is the land of herd animals and last year’s census was 36 million heads, which is the highest number in history. The cost of meat is also the highest it’s ever been. One Kilo of beef is around $8.

Recently, the former Mongolian President Inkbayar was arrested for questioning. His arrest required 600 police officers. He is called the grandfather of corruption. The level of corruption is staggering. Some of the stories I know from personal experience. One small story is of a customs officer on the Mongolian Chinese border. His salary is around $500 per month, but after 6 years he has amassed half a million dollars.

Mongolia is sometimes lauded as the best capitalism in Asia, but it feels like all possibilities have been closed for the non super-rich, and life is getting worse and worse for the regular people. This is in the face of an absolute flood of money that is coming from the mining sector.

If Mongolia represents the cream of capitalism then I for one want nothing to do with it. I lack the skill set to really understand the economic trends, but I can see that there is rampant price fixing here.

Thanks

Oliver C
Mongolia
7 May 2012

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