

Letters from our readers

20 November 2012

On "Where the International Socialist Organization stands on the 2012 election results"

Dear David,

I have to tell you of my appreciation of your articles. The WSWs is undoubtedly one of the best news sources there is and your cultural comments are outstanding even by the lofty standards of the *World Socialist Web Site*!

As for the position of the ISO, I'm somewhat intrigued. Conscious liberals is one thing, but this with socialists or even "Marxists" who share the positions presented on their web site is a completely different chapter. This is a bunch of people who have totally lost their compass (assuming they ever had one).

Of course racism remains and always is a social problem in class societies. But this phenomenon has to be seen through the lens of the class perspective. And class is the fundamental division-line in society, not colour/ethnicity. For poor working class Latinos and African Americans, the onus of racism adds to the burden of already intense exploitation, and is also an ideological justification for it. But for aspiring sections of the black middle-class the idea of racism is used as a weapon in order to establish new career-opportunities for already self-satisfied people.

The WSWs often points out that non-white workers are especially hard-hit by poverty and social oppression. The postmodernist gender- and race theories of oppression presented by the ISO, however, lacks a fundamental understanding of the way oppression is tied to and created by class societies featuring certain forms of property and social institutions. By and large, this "analysis" avoids the crucial question of the "to be or not to be" of capitalism. And this leads the way to hell—to an orientation towards the Democratic Party.

Thanks,

CC

Sweden

17 November 2012

On "The SEP vote in the 2012 elections"

It is with pleasure that I read the report on SEP vote in the 2012 elections. At the same time I am sad to learn that many states do not count write-in votes, which in my view is a subtle method to protect political bipartisanship in corporate America jointly with trade unions and the upper-middle class "left."

However, the fact that a class conscious vote is reported from the US in 2012 elections is a matter for the appeasement for the working class in underdeveloped countries such as Sri Lanka.

In the immediate aftermath of the elections I find president Obama is giving unstinted support to Israel's mayhem in Palestine. Innocent people including babies are being murdered after having performed an uncalled for provocation by killing a Hamas leader. These crimes, including President Obama's kill list and president Putin's recently approved treason law, need a patient hearing in the future by a court of the international working class. Under these circumstances SEP's endeavour in the 2012 US elections is commendable. I wish success for the class conscious voters in the US.

IVE

Sri Lanka

18 November 2012

On "New York Public Library plan provokes opposition"

Thank you for your excellent report on the New York Public Library's (NYPL) restructuring plan, which as a librarian I read with great interest. Libraries everywhere are experiencing pressure to consolidate their collections and services, reduce staff, and surrender space.

New York Public Library is not unique in its reliance on

wealthy donors. Libraries throughout the US form partnerships and seek funding from foundations, wealthy individuals, and businesses.

An entrepreneurial climate has taken hold in the nation's libraries. General concepts such as "the public good" or "a culture of research" are no longer cited as a rationale for library funding. Financial support is tied to performance, as libraries utilize accountability measures to justify their worth and demonstrate value.

The entire restructuring plan at NYPL is an attempt to make the library more marketable. The controversial decision to open a research collection for wider borrowing can be understood as an "expanded borrowing opportunity"—an effort to quantify the return on investment in the book collection.

In a customer-driven library, books are expected to earn their keep and demonstrate value through high usage statistics. So-called "low use" titles are regarded as dead weight—discarded, sold, or shipped to storage facilities. This is the exact opposite of a "culture of research" wherein books are valued for their intrinsic qualities.

There is an element of hypocrisy in NYPL administration's claim to democratize the library while in the same breath planning to relocate 2 million books to a storage facility. This plan effectively places a physical barrier—a storage facility—between readers and the information they need. It is not what I would call "democratic."

As a librarian in academia, I have worked on many projects over the years, reviewing books for shipment to remote storage facilities. It was always problematic and disheartening. I remember some strongly worded faculty complaints about books and literary journals being "shipped to the ends of the earth."

For the worldwide scholarly community, storage facilities have been a bitter pill to swallow. These monstrosities developed over the past century as a solution to library overcrowding in many countries—USA, England, Australia, Germany, France, Russia, Finland, Japan, Korea, etc.

Now, in a difficult economy, storage facilities must not be allowed to become burial grounds for books, as

libraries are forced to surrender space for other purposes. Mankind's entire heritage of printed books could be consigned to underground storage in so-called "print repositories" now under development.

Our civilization is challenged to develop the newer information formats while preserving ink-on-paper collections in the public interest. Millions of books, journals and archival materials are not available online. "Online" does not mean "free." I think the biggest threat to democracy in libraries is the high cost of information in electronic formats, e.g., databases of journal articles and E-books. Poorly funded libraries and the communities they serve are information-starved.

Fred Mazelis raises concerns about "the fate of public services." I think privatization is a real danger. Earlier this year, the American Library Association (A.L.A.) published a special report, "Privatizing Libraries" by Jane Jerrard, Nancy Bolt and Karen Strege. (Chicago, A.L.A., 2012) ISBN 0838911544. While repeating A.L.A.'s stance against privatization, the authors concede that privatization may be necessary under certain circumstances. This report should serve as a warning.

The Socialist Equality Party is the only political organization calling for a massive library expansion plan as part of a broader program to address social needs of the working class.

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2 November 2012



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Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact