

Letters from our readers

29 January 2013

On "Letter from a school bus driver"

The mayor is saying each child is costing the City \$6,900 per year. Ok, I would like to do a breakdown of the money. We drive them an average of 40 weeks, 5 times a week round trip. That comes to \$34.50 round trip (\$17.25 each way) per child. The City right now is paying cab fare round trip twice a day (parents have to get to & from their home) an average of \$10-\$15 each way. So that would be \$20-\$30 in the morning (parents need to get back home) to take the children to school & then again to get the children home. So I'm at about \$40-\$60 PER DAY!!!! Way to save Doomberg.

The Mayor CLAIMS he cares about these kids, the kids he NEVER met! WE as Drivers & Matrons spend 40 weeks, 5 days a week, (200 days out of 365) mornings & afternoons with them. WE know them on a personal level & care about these children, NOT THE CITY & NOT MAYOR DOOMBERG...WE THE WORKERS!!!!

LA

New York, USA

26 January 2013

NYC SCHOOL BUS DRIVERS FREQUENTLY WORK A 10-HOUR DAY WHILE ONLY GETTING PAID FOR 8 HOURS. Most bus drivers get to work between 5:30 and 6:30 a.m. We do our safety check of the bus, travel to our route and start picking up kids between 7:00 and 7:30. We drop the kids off to the schools between 8:00 and 9:00 (about 2 to 3 hours of work). Eighty percent of the time, we are scheduled for a field trip. This involves going to another school to bring the kids, accompanied by a teacher, to a field trip. We pick them up at 9:30, bring them to their destination and then find a parking space (not so easy in NY). In the meantime we usually have to stay in the bus, as to not get a ticket. This is our layover time. The bus must be also be swept, because kids will be kids. We then pick up the class and return them to their school by 1:30. The bus has to be re-swept. This is about 3 to 4 hours of work. We then travel to our afternoon schools to do our p.m. runs.

Most drivers pickup their schools between 2:30 and 3:00, drop off the kids and return to the bus yard somewhere between 4:00 and 5:30. The bus must be re-swept (about 3 hours of work). Add that up and that is about 10 hours of

work. Do you know that we have a 10-hour spread in our contract, which means we get 8 hours of pay for a 10-hour work day? It is true, 20 percent of the time, we are not scheduled for a field trip or charters, but we are then scheduled for 19a written recertification, 19a driving recertification, 19a physical performance test, 19a safety courses, defensive driving courses, company safety courses, safety fire bus drills, BOE bus inspections, bus company inspections, bus washes etc.

I did not even get into the demands of driving a school bus safely in NYC, dealing with unruly children (with *no* matron for general ed), aggressive drivers, parents, management, board of education rules—which, in my opinion are counterproductive to the well-being of the children—and trying to keep focus on the safety of the children on the bus is challenging.

I am not complaining. I love my job, but when someone makes an assumption without knowing the facts, I feel the need to speak.

H

26 January 2013

On "Lance Armstrong and the world of professional sports"

Writing as a long-time cycling fan, I enjoyed your take on the Lance Armstrong affair. I would remind you, for any similar articles in the future, that professional cycling has been associated with illegal and unauthorized substances and techniques since its beginning. I think that your attempt to position Armstrong in the broader social context is a good line of enquiry.

Another issue that is not raised very often is the athlete as precarious worker. A number of Armstrong teammates have testified that their employment on his team would have been, or was, jeopardized if they did not follow his "program." While Armstrong was an athlete like all other cyclists, he was a "boss" in two senses: he was the team captain with de facto power to hire and fire and he acquired an ownership stake in the team at some point.

At the least, discussion of the work issues faced by professional athletes, and possible avenues of amelioration, could cause other workers to reflect on their own situations.

Mark S

27 January 2013

Lance Armstrong and Oprah Winfrey both bent over backwards to ensure the focus stayed on him. There was no mention of external pressure to win. There was no mention of how much the UCI and sponsors benefited from his back-to-back “victories”. There was mutual respect between Oprah and Lance, “there but for the grace of god go I”. Incredibly the “one-on one” style of the interview makes one forget that they both have armies of lawyers and accountants behind them.

The interview was designed to minimize financial settlements with a show of contrition. Obviously Armstrong was directed to not name names, to minimize legal action that would, this time, be overwhelmingly suing him.

The concept promoted that it was an “individual” matter for “individual reasons” is a farce. The entire Tour de France is built around team members, sponsors, organisers, spectators, viewers and media organisations. To say that a lead rider could “go rogue” for seven years is ridiculous.

One must recall Armstrong only stopped fighting allegations after WADA produced comprehensive and overwhelming evidence.

The interview was a result of, not so much an epiphany by Armstrong, but an admission that the jig was up. The interview resulted from pressure by lawyers and accountants that the best way to avoid future bankruptcy was by coming clean. It was an exercise in damage control. Armstrong showed a tiny bit of remorse at best, forced upon him by external pressures.

Armstrong reiterated his old claim that he had never failed a drug test during the years he won the Tour. If this is true, which is possible, it calls into question the efficacy of drug tests in all sports and the Olympics. We are constantly told “The tests have improved since then”. How long can we believe that they are effective, or that all sportspeople are treated equally in the testing? There are doubtless other Armstrongs in the Spanish Vuelta and the Italian Giro.

Stan M

26 January 2013

On “Chinese media on war footing”

Dear comrades,

This article clearly reveals the crisis for not just the Chinese ruling elite but also for the Japanese. But just as this crisis and polarization of these societies brings to the fore the dangers confronting Chinese and Japanese workers alike, so too for the whole of the International working class, indeed humanity. For a war between these two crisis-ridden capitalist countries would inevitably lead to an all-out war involving the US and its “allies”, but it also creates the very conditions for the unification of the international working

class and the overthrow of the profit system globally.

Hence, it seems to me, that the conditions are now maturing rapidly for the building of sections of the ICFI in all countries of the Pacific. The decades of absence of Trotskyism in most of Asia is coming to an end. This does, of course, necessitate a conscious worked-out strategy, something that appears to be missing from all the reports covering this layer of the globe.

Much of the focus of WWS has been on the American working class – and who can deny that without them the world socialist revolution is doomed to fail. It is also true that revolutionary struggles throughout the “far east” would help galvanize and educate the workers in every advanced, decaying, imperialist country.

John U

28 January 2013

On “SEP holds meeting in Jaffna despite military threats”

This reader is delighted to hear that the SEP defied the illegal order of the military under the defence ministry, and held the meeting at the doorstep of the hall that the party had booked for the purpose. It is a must to unify working class at the head of oppressed masses to save the people. Of course, divide-and-rule by the bourgeoisie, being supported by country’s pseudo-left, is a great obstacle for the SEP. [But] the SEP possesses a proud history of defying the island’s capitalist rule since its inception. I wish every success for the SEP in its mission, carried out in association with the international working class.

IVE

Sri Lanka

28 January 2013

On “Gus Van Sant’s Promised Land: A deal with the devil?”

Great review. So nice to know that there are at least a few attempts at intelligence in films these days.

Diane R

26 January 2013



To contact the WWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact