

# Letters from our readers

9 April 2013

*On “Budget cuts severely impact US community college students”*

An item related to your article on community colleges: Last week, Houston Community College Chancellor Dr. Mary Spangler retired. She received a payment of approximately \$650,000 to do so.

Several years ago, Spangler forced full-time librarians at HCC to move from 12-month contracts to either 9 or 10 1/2 month contracts, with a corresponding decrease in pay. In response to this, some librarians have either found other jobs or have retired, and replacing them has been slow. The morale of those remaining has decreased. Upper level administrators at all levels of academia, including community colleges, clearly have far more in common with corporate CEOs than they do with faculty and staff who directly serve the students.

Andy H  
Texas, USA  
3 April 2013

*On “Britain: Conservatives and Labour step up witch-hunt against immigrants”*

The day that the article regarding the witch-hunt of migrant workers was published was also the day when the whole raft of attacks by the bourgeoisie upon the working class was implemented. The wholesale increase in poverty which will inevitably accompany these attacks will also run the risk of further scapegoating, unless a wide-ranging defence is organised which puts socialism at the centre of the defence. It's a waste of time appealing to either the Labour Party or the trade unions. What is needed is independent organisation from the myriad of groups that are already springing up.

If we don't stop this wholesale dismantling of welfare provision then we will face the same future that American workers face or even the future of Greek workers. No food stamps and no NHS for the very poor.

Dave

UK

1 April 2013

*On “Extreme right prison gang suspected in Texas killings”*

The morning of the day that this article was published, I heard part of a public radio program during which the host cited the FBI's designation of the biggest domestic threat: “eco-terrorists.” These are environmentalists who have set buildings on fire—at hours when nobody was inside—and done other types of property damage. Though their politics are confused and self-defeating, they have killed nobody. But the fact that damaging private property is considered more threatening than murdering human beings certainly tells us a lot about the priorities of the ruling class, its enforcement agencies and its media.

LM  
4 April 2013

*On “Atlanta testing scandal exposes fraud of anti-public school ‘reform’”*

While the convicted Beverly Hall is concerned about testing and merit pay “reform” being lost, students whose tests were changed and were therefore moved on in school without actually being ready were most likely even more lost than they had been. This scandal is an ongoing tragedy on many levels, but not the one that Hall is concerned about.

It's also interesting to note that Diane Ravitch in her book *Death and Life of the Great American School System* had basically good things to say about Hall's “positive accountability.” This shows the problem in trying to change bit by bit the way education (and all of society) is heading and in hoping and looking for patches of improvement, when, in actuality, this whole system is falling down around us and needs to be ended and replaced with socialism, a system that's based on providing the needs of the vast majority.

Jacqui P  
Indiana, USA

4 April 2013

On “*Understanding Lincoln: An interview with historian Allen Guelzo*”

I really enjoyed the interview with Allen Guelzo. I’m in my mid-60s. We were taught a lot of stuff in school about the Civil War, Lincoln, the Emancipation Proclamation, and Reconstruction—not to mention Marx and socialism—that has turned out to be the crassest of junk. It is truly as liberating as exasperating to discover you’ve been lied to about something your entire life by backward elements with reactionary agendas. I must thank the *World Socialist Web Site* for helping me undo the accumulated intellectual damage of a lifetime. The Guelzo interview has cemented another brick in my personal wall of understanding of the world as it is, not as it “should be.”

As I recall it, we were taught that a (nonexistent monolithic) “England” supported the South during the American Civil War, as a result of the English dependence on American cotton. There was a danger that England might declare war on the Union in order to assure a steady supply of Southern cotton to the English mills. That’s what we were taught. We were not taught that the attitude toward the Civil War within England was very much a class issue, and that “England” in the person of Viscount Palmerston warned against declaring war because he knew perfectly well it would have likely provoked a revolution among the English working class in the very mills that needed the cotton, for the workers in the mills were solidly for the Union, for Lincoln, and against slavery—even if it meant personal hardship for themselves—and went to extraordinary lengths to show it both to their own rulers and to the Lincoln administration.

This class perspective on British society and foreign policy of the time I only gained from the recent series of articles on Lincoln and the Civil War, in conjunction with the recent movie *Lincoln*, in the WSWS. Now, through the Guelzo interview, I learn about a certain parallel existence between the Southern planters and the Prussian junkers of the same era. I had never heard of this before.

CH

Texas, USA

3 April 2013



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