

Dr. J

Why I read the WSWS

3 June 2013

My sibs, cousins, and I were born in the immediate post war years, into families of very modest means in the rural South. Though it took the perspective of many years to more fully grasp the historical roots of our social circumstances, members of “our class” never really recovered from the Great Depression, or perhaps even the Civil War. The “social wealth” for public education was very limited. I was the first to attempt and finish college as my escape from those margins of existence.

There were a total of six books in our home, including a Bible—the same six volumes as when I departed that country.

Our parents did not conceive of historical, social or political roots of the Depression, which ruined them and their parents economically in their youth. Disoriented in their misery and terror with daily calamities and religious hucksterism, they viewed the foreclosures, losses of their farms, and deprivations as akin to an unpredictable weather event, such as a cyclone striking them and sweeping everything away without warning. Therefore, who knew? Such events might one day suddenly strike again, no matter how hard anyone worked to scrimp and save.

That the Great Depression swept across the world (certainly storm-like) as the expression of the deep crisis of global capitalism was the furthest conception from their minds, an ignorance that was not their fault.

Our families viewed Franklin Roosevelt and the reforms from that period, including Social Security, and Lyndon Johnson’s 1965 Medicare entitlements as their salvation. Our parents lived every instant of their lives with the deepest fears of the return of events similar to those of the 1930s. And they clung to the hope that yoking themselves to the constancy of hard work lessened the risk of repeat ruination. To them, “recreation” and “play” constituted lack of vigilance and irresponsibility.

In our youth, we were “loaned” out to relatives to work the farms for no personal compensation. The kids of us

did not understand that dubious arrangement very accurately until we were in our mid and late teens. Through various humiliations, our circumstances were clarified, and some of us resolved to move on.

Virtually in an altered life altogether (as though I’d settled on a different planet), and after some long years, I obtained training to be a physician. I had also learned our parents’ distrust of “play” and dedication to being workaholics. And despite a state university education, I cannot say that my conceptions of political economy much improved from theirs. I harbored all the illusions dangled ceaselessly by that big business and large ownership class instrument called the Democratic Party.

Then one day, I cannot recall the date, I stumbled over the wsws.

It was in a period of my own very deep political crisis, just after the launching of the second Bush’s Iraq war. I’d spent almost two decades on a hospital board, a medium sized general care facility serving as a regional referral center. One summer day, my giant employer’s administrators invited themselves into the hospital boardroom and, in so many obfuscating words, demanded to be handed millions of dollars in cash and capital assets for absolutely nothing. Or they, the physician company providing me a regular paycheck, would take all of their services out of the facility and financially destroy the community facility.

Of course, every board member was aghast, and then panicked. It was banker against banker, investment broker against other financial “advisors.” A precious few thought of the impact on the source of everyone’s wealth, that of the working people, including the hundreds of hospital staff. Very shortly, behavioral profiles of cowardice, corruption, and cronyism emerged. And when I publicly objected to the threats issued to the board, I was heavily fined and asked to resign. I found myself, and my family, financially imperiled.

What I noticed was not a single elected big business

party official of the city, county, state, or even the feds, despite widespread knowledge of what was going on, lifted a finger to defend the quasi-public institution packed with state and federal public health care dollars. Until many long months later, the hospital board capitulated and gave the company every dollar of the facility's accumulated wealth of several decades.

Both Republican and Democratic party operatives and politicians glossed over the extortion with platitudes of conciliation through it all, of course while extolling the virtues of free markets.

Almost every week now, I see legal notices in the regional newspapers regarding home and farm foreclosures against families by the United States' largest lenders, and very often waiting in line behind them is my former employer. Waiting to pick another group of young or old working persons clean.

And then I understood, starkly, that there existed no defense of the working people's wealth. That the "work folk," as Marx used to refer to the toilers, would have to take matters into their hands and defend themselves. Not as vigilantes in any sense at all. But rather, they had to form their own movement and political instruments to defend themselves against the biggest owners of societal assets that they the working class had accumulated. On the road to the day that they would form their own government and bring into their hands the wealth that they, the "work folk," had created. Only in that way would imperialist wars cease and senseless and preventable poverty and misery be abolished.

Wherever I have been thereafter, I have not missed a day of looking at the wsws. Once in the earth's human history, the working people have formed their own government, in 1917.

The Socialist Equality Party has taken every step and every turn in the principled, historical, and theoretical road necessary to embody that political tradition.



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