

# Letters from our readers

30 July 2013

On “Detroit bankruptcy sets stage for national assault on public-sector pensions”

As the *World Socialist Web Site* has explained in articles such as this one, the assault on working and living conditions is not limited to Detroit. Cities and countries all over the world have taken notice and are planning their own assaults.

In a July 23rd editorial entitled “Lessons from the Devastation of Detroit” in the right-wing *Chosun Ilbo*, a major South Korean newspaper, Detroit is held up as a “textbook example” blaming workers for “unrealistic” and “over-generous welfare,” while threatening South Korean workers with the same attacks Detroit workers are now experiencing.

Workers in both parts of the world share many similarities. South Korea is a major producer of cars for companies like Hyundai-KIA and General Motors. Just as in Detroit, the wages of workers are coming under assault, which include the demand for a two tier wage system.

The *Chosun Ilbo* editorial concludes, “Korea’s public servants, regional governments, and public and labor unions must all learn the stark lessons taught by Detroit.”

As the South Korean bourgeoisie prepares its attack on workers here, workers in Detroit and South Korea must reach out to each other and stand together.

Ben  
South Korea  
23 July 2013

On “A call to action: Oppose the Detroit bankruptcy!”

Detroit’s public-sector workers are riding the “bleeding edge” of a decades-long backlash against pension/retirement plan benefits. An unbelievably large, and ever-increasing, number of US employers have opted-out of participating in Social Security. How? Because they provide an alternative employee retirement plan (Google “ERISA”, for details). While

doing so might once have appeared to be better for an employee—more productive, financially—we’re now seeing yet another face of corporate “limited liability”, and its devastating effect on workers and retirees. The assault on Social Security and other parts of our “social safety net” continues, unabated.

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Jonathon H  
Florida, USA  
23 July 2013

On “Obama’s bogus crusade for the ‘middle class’ ”

Obama’s reference to “middle classes” is flattery before deception. Many people like to describe themselves as “middle class” for aspirational reasons when, in fact, they are working class. They play this card in the UK as well. Obama really is a total fraud but he’s a narcissist like Blair and [they] are so in love with themselves they can’t see they are doing any wrong.

Philip A  
29 July 2013

On “ US expands global drone warfare ”

You omit Australia, where there is a permanent surveillance station at Pine Gap, protected by the US military, and a significant military presence in Rockhampton and a projected permanent US military base in Darwin housing up to 2,500 men.

These numbers are getting close to 15 percent of all Australian defence forces.

John J  
24 July 2013

On “Letters from our readers”

After the anti-surveillance song at the web site is an interview with Edward Snowden that was made when he was in Hong Kong. I had never seen this before and think he comes across admirably, making it clear he sees himself as allied with the not-privileged people of America and the world.

Kate  
Minnesota, USA  
26 July 2013

On “Whistleblowers expose unspeakable conditions in Australian refugee camps”

What an outstanding article regarding the latest Labor Government policy on Asylum Seekers. Finally, every veneer of humanitarian respectability has been stripped away from this Labor scum, they have finally been exposed for what we socialists new all along, as the truly xenophobic lackeys of capital and ultra-nationalism.

Only a truly democratic socialist movement which aims to raise the political consciousness of the working class worldwide can overcome this obscenity.

James S  
NSW, Australia  
25 July 2013

On “*Spanish train crash*”

Yesterday’s train crash in Spain stinks of neglecting to install safety systems on that particular route that force emergency braking if a train moves over two detectors too quickly. The curve was too tight to be running at c. 125 mph.

Such systems already exist in Britain in the form of Train Protection and Warning System (TPWS), intended to prevent signals being passed at danger by recording the train’s speed at an approach to a junction and applying emergency brakes when the speed limit is exceeded.

It appears that the lack of a forced emergency stop system on that section of track was combined with time pressure on the driver. That was the cause of a similar accident in Japan during 2005. A driver of a late-running train, approaching a curve too fast, applied the normal brake instead of the emergency one with the hope of avoiding additional disciplinary action. The “re-education” process was extremely harsh and degrading, and that particular driver had already experienced it.

Yesterday, the driver of the Talgo high speed train would have begun braking at too advanced (close to the crash site) a location in preparation for the lower speed limit around the tight curve.

Had the train been a conventional set with two four-wheeled bogies per carriage (such as Germany’s ICE involved in the catastrophic 1998 Eschede derailment) instead of a Talgo set, the destruction would have been

even greater.

Instead of conventional bogies, Talgo carriages are connected to each other by a pair of wheels each with their own axle instead of sharing one. The carriages do not sit on top of wheels; the wheels sit between the carriages.

The passenger floor level, and gangways between carriages can thus be at a very low height (50 cm), making the centre of gravity very low. A Talgo train can travel safely at a higher speed on a curve than a conventional train could.

The Talgo carriages are more likely to stay together during a derailment, whilst conventional bogied trains would suffer broken couplings and carriages would jack-knife.

Notwithstanding the emergence of Talgo carriage technology in 1942, under Franco’s fascist regime, it represented the most advanced rail technology at the time.

BH  
25 July 2013

On “*British police stole IDs of dead children to infiltrate political organizations*”

Very good. The revelation in the last 24 hours that Humberside Police tried to smear relatives of Christopher Alder, the ex-paratrooper, who died in police custody, not only makes it clear that the method is widespread but also exposes the bankruptcy of all those who say that GCHQ surveillance is nothing to worry about unless you’ve done something wrong. If, when, targeted by the police such records will be used against anyone they choose. It could be an extra-marital affair for example. Such info will be used to discredit witnesses and a very compliant press will do the dirty work for them.

John U  
27 July 2013



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