

Letters from our readers

4 January 2014

On “Half a million in the UK deprived of social care over the last five years”

Dear comrade Robert,

This report of course only deals with what might be termed “day to day” care. The savage and deepening cuts are having a much wider impact. The stated aim of successive governments has been to keep the elderly and disabled in their own homes. Of course the reality is very different; their homes will increasingly not meet their physical needs.

The local councils are “working under extreme budgetary constraints” and Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG) are now tightly prioritised. No matter how urgent, delays are guaranteed. Those not deemed urgent will be given lower priority. Provided the person can “access their property” and “can use the toilet” then the application is given priority B.

What this means is that a delay of 18 to 24 months can be expected in just being assessed for DFG. Then plans are drawn up, put out to tender and finally completion of the work. This process can easily take in total three years, assuming that assessment takes place within the two-year time frame.

Everyday those discharged from hospitals with very limited mobility are being sent to homes whose structure fails to meet their needs. Falls are more likely, health problems more common, prolonged and severe. Those already at home but whose condition has changed to such an extent that a higher level of building adaptations is needed are left to suffer a poorer quality of life. Where homes are old and poorly insulated—very common in the UK—not being able to move around ones home will lead to an early death.

As you highlight, it is the bailing out of the banks to the tune of one trillion pounds and the ongoing and worsening crisis of global capitalism that is driving these cuts. All aspects of social care face yet another round of “budgetary constraints” in the next financial year, as further “reforms” are imposed and willingly

carried out by local governments and implemented with the aid of the whole of the trade union apparatus.

Welfare programs and production for profit are no longer compatible. A century or more of struggle by the working class that forced the ruling elite and their parliamentary representative to make concessions is now being clawed back. The race to the bottom is not just about wages but every aspect of life. What might be deemed the essentials for life and all that makes us conscious, cultural social beings can only be safeguarded by overthrowing the profit system and the nation state upon which it is based.

John U

27 December 2013

On “Crackdown on UK student protests”

Excellent article. Thanks for connecting the dots and showing the pattern of growing state repression of youth. I think the article correctly identifies the false choices currently facing “radical” students and young people in Britain—either the SWP, or anarchism, and identity politics. The appeal of anarchism for young people derives to a large extent from the problems with the pseudo-left—especially in Britain the SWP—which the WSWs has identified. The opportunism of the SWP and their boring and stultifying approach to politics, turns people away from Marxism and often towards anarchism, which on the surface appears more “radical”. Anarchist groups in general do present themselves as anti-capitalist, and some present themselves as a truer form of communism (anarcho-communist or left-communist groupings). It is important to recognise this aspect of their appeal. However, it is absolutely true that these groups generally downplay class struggle, have a simplistic analysis of capitalism and the state, are prone to jump on all kinds of postmodern bandwagons (Deleuze etc.) and are therefore strategically totally naive and inept, resulting in often well-intentioned young people being led into a political blind alley. So-called “class struggle

anarchism” is also inadequate since it tends to put forward a very simplistic workerism, essentially treating working-class as an identity politics category, without attention to questions of leadership and organization (I’m thinking of the now-defunct magazine *Class War*). In all these forms, anarchist politics tend to be a kind of political theatre (as another article in the WSWS put it), presenting a spectacle of opposition (waving black flags, breaking windows), without building any viable, lasting form of struggle.

Charles T

26 December 2013

On “The Crime Films of Anthony Mann: A comment and a conversation with the author—Part 2”

Without dismissing Max’s excellent work on several neglected crime films of Anthony Mann (accompanied by David’s fine interview) I wish to take issue with the demotion of the westerns and the epic work. Mann’s progressive ideas certainly *do* continue in the western despite the loss of distinctive noir urban elements. The corruption of the Oregon riverboat town by capitalism in *Bend Of The River* (1952) could only be treated in an historical context rather than a contemporary one so as not to raise the attention of HUAC. With the exception of *Strategic Air Command* and *The Glen Miller Story*, Mann’s collaborations with Stewart aim at destroying the masculine myth of the 1950s, something he could only do in the Westerns, a goal that reaches its peak in the magnificent *Man Of The West* (1958). In the Mann-Stewart Westerns, the director can do something subversive with the actor that contemporary set films such as *Strategic Air Command* and *The Glen Miller Story* did not allow him to do. Stewart was one of Hollywood’s most reactionary conservatives who off-screen made John Wayne look like a liberal. Reading genre in a non-literal manner is very important here. The critique of bankrupt militaristic values is also a key element in *Men In War* (1957) set in the Korean War.

Finally, although the epics did take a physical toll on Mann (similar to Nicholas Ray), they are not totally devoid of interest. In *El Cid* and *The Fall Of The Roman Empire* (a film Mann compared to contemporary America in interviews), honest men allow weak and corrupt establishment figures to take control of their societies due to deference to hereditary authority. Parallels to the Kennedy Myth as well as today’s Bush and Clinton succession cults are not too

far away. (“Are you Ready for Hillary?” etc).

In both films, disaster results. Rodrigo ironically becomes a lifeless martyr little better than an empty religious icon on whom the audience and infidels led by a pre-Bin Laden Herbert Lom can project superstitious meaning on to (note the “heavenly chorus” on the soundtrack!) in the climax of *El Cid* sacrificing himself for an incestuous and worthless ruler. Characteristically, the dead Rodrigo rides away unnoticed by everyone at the beach in the final shot of the film so ignore the climactic voice-over. The end of *The Fall Of The Roman Empire* sees the Boyd and Loren characters escaping from a now-totally corrupt and unredeemable society with victims burning at the stake in the background (several of whom are Senators who have ended up on a “blacklist” and alien foreigners who were duped into believing the false promises of the “Roman Dream”). Both heroes make the fatal mistake of “respecting their betters” and allowing the divine rule of kings and emperors to continue.

In an era where *Downtown Abbey* (the heir to the pre-Thatcherite ideologically-motivated *Upstairs Downstairs*) is so popular where my local community held a tea party (note the irony there!) before a new season preview, it is important to recognize certain critiques that occur in Mann’s epics as well as the role of hackers who reveal that the heir to the British throne wanted to be a tampon within his mistress and his successor calling his wife “babykins.” These are not our “betters”, neither should we “respect” them. Such subversive critiques characterize all Mann’s films and it is a mistake to privilege one corpus at the cost of missing important progressive features that exist within others.

Tony W

21 December 2013



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