

*The Washington Socialist*  
Articles from October 2012 Issue  
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Editor: Woody Woodruff

## [Activists Protest Trans Pacific Partnership](#)

Sunday, September 30th, 2012

By Coleson Breen

**From the October issue of *The Washington Socialist***

On September 9, around 200 activists from groups such as the CWA and the Sierra Club, as well as a small DSA contingent, gathered to protest the Trans Pacific Partnership, the most important trade agreement you've never heard of. Trade negotiators have refused to release the text but from what has been pieced together from leaked documents, it has little to do with actual trade and is more of cooperate wish list designed to erode worker and environmental protections. Even members of Congress have been refused access. As the CWA [noted](#),

“The TPP trade deal would be the biggest trade agreement in U.S. history; it's NAFTA on steroids and a bad deal for workers, consumers and the environment.”

Activists demanded the proposed agreement text be released so that the public in member countries can have a chance to see it before it's signed.

Documentary Film, Discussion on Michael Harrington, DSA's Founder, coming to DC Nov. 8

Sunday, September 30th, 2012

**From the October issue of *The Washington Socialist***

DSA locals around the country are marking the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the publication of DSA founder Mike Harrington's *The Other America*. That groundbreaking 1962 book on the ways that poverty for many was masked by affluence for a few in the US was propelled to the public eye both by its embrace within the Kennedy and Johnson administrations and by its subsequent fame as the *ur*-text of the War on Poverty.

A remarkable documentary film, “Michael Harrington and Today’s Other America: Corporate Power and Inequality,” traces the mingled paths of Harrington, an activist academic, and socialists in their response to capitalism’s relentless erosion of workers’ lives and livelihoods.

The film will be shown **Nov. 8 at Georgetown University’s McNeir Auditorium at 7 p.m.**, followed by discussants who knew Harrington (who died in 1989) as well as those who fight the battle against social and economic inequality today.

*Washington Post* columnist and *American Prospect* editor-at-large Harold Meyerson (who is a DSA vice chair) is confirmed for the event. Other discussants are unconfirmed as this issue of the *WS* hits deadline.

Meyerson set an appropriate theme for this discussion in his summer 2012 *American Prospect* article on Harrington’s book: “The progressive taxation, regulation of finance, and widespread unionization that emerged from the New Deal to give America three decades of broadly shared affluence have crumbled under the subsequent 35-year assault from business interests and a resurgent right. What does Harrington’s book have to say to this newly diminished country? What’s the value of *The Other America* in an age when mainstream America is looking more and more ‘Other’ itself?”

The event is jointly sponsored by DC Metro DSA and Georgetown’s Kalmanovitz Initiative for Labor and the Working Poor, headed by Prof. Joseph McCartin.

McCartin told *WS* that “The message of Harrington, DSA’s founder, is arguably more relevant today than it was when he published his pathbreaking book. ...not only is poverty resurgent in the aftermath of the Great Recession, the distance between the rich and the poor has widened and the breadth of political discourse concerning poverty and efforts to combat it has narrowed.”

The film showing is the first of two programs on poverty planned by the Kalmanovitz Initiative. Longtime antipovetry advocate Peter Edelman will talk November 15, at 5:30 p.m., in Georgetown’s Riggs Library (for more information see the Kalmanovitz Initiative website: <http://lwp.georgetown.edu> ).

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## **[Chicago teachers go out on strike; Donate to the CTU Solidarity Fund](#)**

Monday, September 10th, 2012

After contract negotiations broke down this evening, the Chicago Teacher’s Union is officially [going out on strike](#). Teachers will not report to their classrooms tomorrow. It will be the first strike from the union in 25 years.

This is an important strike for the left. Interested parties can [donate to the CTU Solidarity Fund here](#). Donations will support strikers and help fund political outreach to counter the monied interests that continue to drive the privatization of America's schools.

## [Getting Money Out Of Elections](#)

Sunday, September 30th, 2012

### **Commentary on Jeff Faux's *The Servant Economy: Where America's Elite is Sending the Middle Class***

By Bill Mosley

What will it take to end the dominant position of corporate money in U.S. politics?

#### **From the October issue of *The Washington Socialist***

As noted left economist Jeff Faux meticulously sets out in his new book *The Servant Economy: Where America's Elite is Sending the Middle Class*, the decline of the middle class and the transfer of wealth to the upper crust (the "1%," as Occupy Wall Street pegged them) is no accident, but the outcome of deliberate effort by corporations and the very wealthy to rig the rules of the economy in their favor (see [Woody Woodruff's article](#) in the September *Washington Socialist* on a recent talk by Faux). From the Reagan-era tax cuts to the bailout of the financial sector following the 2008 crash, the elite has used its wealth to make sure it reaps most of the benefits of economic growth and suffers no harm when the economy goes sour. Corporate America spreads its influence chiefly through generous campaign contributions to Republicans and Democrats alike, ensuring that its interests remain the highest priority of U.S. policymaking.

Corporate money has long dominated U.S. politics, but the Supreme Court's 2010 *Citizens United* decision took the lid off, allowing corporations to make unlimited contributions to allegedly "independent" political groups that, in reality, are almost always aligned with one or another political party or candidate. The decision was based on past jurisprudence holding that corporations are legal persons with First Amendment rights. Therefore, Faux says, we need to amend the Constitution to declare that corporations are *not* persons, something that would overturn *Citizens United* and allow the government to regulate corporate campaign contributions or ban them outright.

Certainly such an amendment, if it could be passed (not an easy task) would be a step in the right direction, but would it be enough? Even before *Citizens United*, corporate money flowed freely into politics. Even though direct corporate spending for partisan purposes was limited, corporations were skilled at "bundling" contributions, in which corporate executives collected

numerous funds from their managers, other employees, shareholders, etc. and presented them in a “bundle” so that the candidates would have no doubt to whom they were beholden. Eliminating corporate personhood wouldn’t touch this practice.

Nearly every attempt at regulating campaign spending has resulted in a “balloon effect” – squeeze one part of the balloon and the air swells in another part. Shut off one path of campaign contributions, and corporations will find another conduit for the money. Even before *Citizens United*, the effectiveness of “clean election” laws adopted in several states – in which campaigns could receive public funding in exchange for accepting only small contributions – was limited by the ability of corporations and other interest groups to bundle contributions. And, since *Citizens United*, their ability to regulate campaign spending has eroded even further.

If progressives choose to go the difficult route of a constitutional amendment, why not take it one step further and declare that money is not speech? This would cut to the heart of the difficulty of limiting campaign spending and contributions. There is a false presumption that the First Amendment free-speech guarantee should apply to the “volume” of speech in addition to the “content” of speech. Therefore, while a major corporation and I may both be able to express our preference for a candidate, the corporation’s ability to funnel millions into the campaign trumps my ability to write a modest check. Instead of parsing whether the source of money flowing into campaigns is corporations or individuals, or whether it is “campaign” or “independent” money, strict limits on campaign-related contributions and spending by any and all entities or persons – coupled with full public financing of campaigns — would go farther in getting cash out of politics. A constitutional amendment and its implementing legislation could be tailored to address only genuine campaign spending and not, for instance, restrict the ability of media outlets to endorse a candidate.

In the end, however, no matter what solutions we may think up for ending the corrupting influence of money on our economy, nothing will change without a strong left movement to force these solutions onto the agenda. There is no substitute for the hard, day-to-day work of movement-building – the kind of work Democratic Socialists of America is carrying out every day.

## **[Maryland Ballot Measures highlight Same-Sex Marriage, Gambling](#)**

Sunday, September 30th, 2012

### **Maryland Ballot Measures highlight Same-Sex Marriage, Gambling**

Carolyn M. Byerly

Maryland voters will have (at least) two hot-button measures to decide in November that merit a Democratic Socialist perspective.

### **From the October issue of *The Washington Socialist***

#### **Civil marriage for same-sex couples referendum in Maryland**

The newly passed law allowing same-sex marriage, set to take effect in January 2013, will actually not take effect in this state unless voters approve it on November 6. “Question 6” (see language below) will ask voters to say yes or no to whether gay and lesbian couples should be allowed to obtain a civil marriage license. The law, passed narrowly in the 2012 session of the Maryland State Assembly and signed into law by Governor O’Malley, was only able to get through the House and Senate by the addition of Section 5 requiring the referendum.

The Democratic left should view the Maryland law as an extension of basic human and civil rights, as well as a move to expand gender equality. Sexual minorities do not presently have the same economic and political rights as heterosexuals in the United States. If allowed to marry, same-sex couples would gain certain benefits under the Maryland state tax code, in health care decisions, and a number of other areas of the law. Equality Maryland, the state’s gay rights lobby, has led the campaign for this measure in Maryland. These are personal matters to me. My partner Kay and I celebrate our 28<sup>th</sup> anniversary in October. We are just updating our wills and health care benefits to cover matters that married straight couples get automatically. Our lack of legal status persists in spite of our commitment and shared happiness.

Opposition to same-sex marriage both nationally and locally has come mainly from conservative Christian groups and segments of the African American community (including some church leaders), who together were able to push through the federal Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) in 1996 that defines marriage as the union between a man and a woman. This year has seen a dramatic shift, however. First, President Obama instructed the Justice Department to stop enforcing the law, which he said was unconstitutional. His announcement was followed by an announcement by the NAACP that it would support same-sex marriage. That political sea change will hopefully open the chances of broad statutory changes at the national level. Locally, in late September, Rev. Al Sharpton and several Black Maryland ministers joined to support the referendum. The Rev. Delman Coates of Clinton was reported in the Sept. 21 *Washington Post* as saying, “As African-American Christian pastors and leaders, we cannot stand on the side of those who attempt to justify legalized discrimination under the guise of religious belief.”

With no national law in sight, the gay community’s strategy has been to push state by state. Maryland has followed six other states (Connecticut, Iowa, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New York, Vermont) and the District of Columbia in passing its same-sex marriage law. We should take note that two Native American Nations – Cherokee and Chippewa – also have same-sex marriage laws. The nations of Argentina, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Iceland, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, South Africa, Spain and Sweden have federal laws allowing same-sex couples to marry.

#### **Ballot Language**

## Question 6

*Establishes that Maryland's civil marriage laws allow gay and lesbian couples to obtain a civil marriage license, provided they are not otherwise prohibited from marrying; protects clergy from having to perform any particular marriage ceremony in violation of their religious beliefs; affirms that each religious faith has exclusive control over its own theological doctrine regarding who may marry within that faith; and provides that religious organizations and certain related entities are not required to provide goods, services, or benefits to an individual related to the celebration or promotion of marriage in violation of their religious beliefs.*

Even with this momentum, conservative groups have promised to flood the airwaves with ads opposing approval of the law. Marylanders for Marriage Equality, the advocacy group safeguarding the passage of the referendum, is sponsoring phone banks in the DC-Metro area these next weeks. Please get in touch with one of the following to volunteer.

### **Phone Banks D.C. Phone**

#### **Bank at HRC**

Wednesdays

6:00 – 9:00 p.m.

1640 Rhode Island Ave NW

RSVP: [kate.kramer@hrc.org](mailto:kate.kramer@hrc.org)

### **Baltimore City Phone**

#### **Banks:**

Monday – Friday

5:00 – 8:00 p.m.

Sundays

12:00 noon – 8:00 p.m.

2400 Boston Street, Suite

101D

RSVP: [malachi@mdfme.org](mailto:malachi@mdfme.org)

### **Columbia Phone Banks:**

Mondays

6:00 – 8:00 p.m.

7246 Cradlerock Way

RSVP:

[amy@mdfme.org](mailto:amy@mdfme.org) Silver

Spring Phone bank Monday

– Friday

5:30 – 8:30 p.m.

8720 Georgia Ave, Ste. 900

RSVP:

[andrew@mdfme.org](mailto:andrew@mdfme.org)

### **Hyattsville Phonebank**

Thursdays 5:30 – 8:00 p.m.

4301 Garden City Dr.”

RSVP:

[shelena@mdfme.org](mailto:shelena@mdfme.org)

## **Gambling referendum in Maryland**

Senate Bill 1, which would expand gambling in the State of Maryland, passed the House of Delegates with the minimum 71 votes needed, and passed the Senate with 32 votes during a special session earlier this year. The legislation was presented as an omnibus bill to be considered in its entirety so that the whole package could either be passed or killed at once. The measure must now be put before Maryland voters before it becomes law. If passed, it will authorize table games (e.g., roulette, blackjack, craps), increase the number of lottery machines from 15,000 to 16,000, increase the number of video lottery machines allowed to operate in the state, allow a casino to be built in Prince George's County (probably at National Harbor), reduce taxes on casino owners, and expand casino hours of operation to 24/7.

The lawmakers who voted for the bill argued that expanding gambling would raise revenues for education in the state. Because state funding for public education, k-12 as well as colleges, has been in short supply these last years, this argument has resonated with many. Others supporting gambling (euphemistically called gaming these days) have bought the claims by the casino industry that it will create 12,000-20,000 new jobs, expand construction, and bring other great gifts to the state. Those who oppose it, led by contractors and citizen groups, deny there will be financial benefits. They point out that deals have been made to allow casino owners to circumvent the bidding process on construction, and they remind voters that tax increases for the state's residents were passed in the same year that the gambling bill was passed giving reduced taxes to casinos. The advertising campaigns on both sides of this issue are filling prime-time television ad slots, with more than \$18 million already spent by opposing sides, according to recent news reports.

Democratic socialists should raise a number of pointed concerns, beginning with the political economy of gambling. Gambling – lotteries, horse racing, casinos, etc. – exploded in the last half of twentieth century America, always with the rationale that it would bring needed revenues to communities or, in some cases, to the state as a whole. None of this escapes the fact that the gaming industry is big business that represents another example of how the 1% dominates 99% of the population. The *Baltimore Sun* estimates that the gaming industry spent close to \$4 million to “lobby” through the new Maryland law this last year and will spend millions more to persuade voters to vote yes on Question 7 through media campaigns this fall. Instead of invoking government administrative mechanisms to find ways to trim budgets, or using the legislative process to more fairly distribute the burden of taxation across income levels, the business community has advocated an economic model guaranteed to serve its own interests at the expense of those in lesser income categories. This last statement refers to those in middle and lower income levels who make up the majority of the patrons in the gaming industry. My local wine and beer store, which sells lottery and other tickets, is clogged with low-income people standing in line to buy them every afternoon. It's their money, but it's my leftist consciousness that makes me question whom that money really serves best.

State Delegate Joseline Peña-Melnyk of Prince George's County made this statement in her most recent newsletter *Grassroots Beat* to her constituents: “As I did in 2007, I was proud to cast a principled vote against expanding gambling in the State. Gambling disproportionately burdens our least well-off citizens and families, and pulls money out of our local economy. There are more responsible ways to manage the State's budget.” A Democratic socialist analysis would lead to a no vote on Question 7.

## **Question 7**

### **Gaming Expansion Referendum**

#### **Gaming Expansion (Ch. 1 of the Second 2012 Special Session)**

*Do you favor the expansion of commercial gaming in the State of Maryland for the primary purpose of raising revenue for education to authorize video lottery operation licensees to operate “table games” as defined by law; to increase from 15,000 to 16,500 the maximum*

*number of video lottery terminals that may be operated in the State; and to increase from 5 to 6 the maximum number of video lottery operation licenses that may be awarded in the State and allow a video lottery facility to operate in Prince George's County?*

## **Socialist FAQ**

Sunday, September 30th, 2012

By Coleson Breen

### **From the October issue of *The Washington Socialist***

What is Democratic Socialism? A Brief Intro

If you're a member of the Democratic Socialists of America, you have probably realized that our current form of social organization could use a significant update. Growing up, you may have noticed that your parents' social and economic status, and that of your peers, had a huge impact on your life. In school, like all American children, you were probably told that America was the land of opportunity, where if anyone tried hard enough, s/he could succeed. At some point it became clear that this and many other things were not accurate descriptions of the world we see.

Democratic Socialism is a vision to realize the partially fulfilled promises of documents such as the constitution. One of the key foundations of our country, repeated over and over in school, is that we are a free, democratic country. Yet we spend most of our lives governed by rules in which we have no say. When we enter the workplace as individuals, we give up any right to self-determination. Our lives are governed by bureaucrats who rule by fiat. Even when laws exist to protect workers from some of the worst abuses, they are rarely enforced.

Democratic socialism takes the rights our forebears gave us in our homes and public spaces and expands them to the workplace — usually through forms of worker organizations.

There are a variety of models for accomplishing enfranchisement at work. Near-universal unionization and codetermination is one way. The formation of cooperatives is another. Successful models of both [cooperatives](#) and [codetermination](#) (partial ownership by the workers' union) already exist. We only need to put them into practice.

Got a question or comment for Socialism FAQ?

Submit it to [dcdsaoutreach@gmail.com](mailto:dcdsaoutreach@gmail.com) with the subject WS Question



## [South African Miner Strikes are Spreading](#)

Sunday, September 30th, 2012

By Carolyn M. Byerly

**From the October issue of *The Washington Socialist***

In mid-September, the Marikana platinum miners' strike in South Africa ended when workers accepted a 22% pay raise and other compensations and agreed to return to work. The Marikana mine, north of Johannesburg, is operated by the Lonmin Company. Now, unrest has spread to the gold industry, with workers at the AngloGold Ashanti Kopanang mine beginning their own strike on Sept. 20. The mine employs 5,000 people and produces about 4% of the company's total gold output. In all, some 15,000 gold miners remained on strike in late September (at this writing). Those at the Gold Fields near Carletonville wanted a salary of 12,500 Rand per month, the equivalent of \$1,500. They presently make a third of that. Mine officials say they can't afford to pay them such high wages.

South Africa's economy has long depended on minerals and diamonds for its base. The nation has the world's largest reserves of manganese and platinum group metals, and among the largest reserves of gold, diamonds, chromite ore and vanadium. But these industries, still mostly white-owned, have long depended on the exploited laboring classes of indigenous Africans for their output. Over the decades, both before and after the end of apartheid, owners have been ruthless in keeping miners underpaid and under control; police have always been mine owners' allies, even today with a black majority police force. In the Marikana strike, which began Aug. 10 when rock drillers walked off the job, police fired on a crowd of strikers, killing 34 protesters and injuring another 78; a total of 45 people died in the end, including 3 policemen. The South African government and the international community are referring to this as the Marikana Massacre, and President Zuma has sworn there will be a thorough investigation.

One complication is that miners complain that the National Union of Mine Workers (NUM) doesn't represent them adequately anymore. Miners have accused the NUM leaders of being cozy with the mine owners and not caring about the low pay and unsafe working conditions they labor under in the mines. Black South African Cyril Ramaphosa, one of the nation's richest men today, owns about 10% of the Marikana mine and is the person whom workers have alleged sold them out in negotiations with their union. Ramaphosa, who was a founder of the NUM and its first general secretary, as well as a high-ranking ANC activist and colleague of Mandela, is seen as betraying the miners now. Under apartheid, the NUM was among the most "organized" elements of the internal coalition fighting against repression. Ramaphosa recently went on the South African airwaves and gave newspaper interviews denying these allegations and implied that, in fact, he fought for miners' benefits.

The degree of solidarity among striking miners in different mineral industries across the nation appears to strengthen the chances of them succeeding in securing wage increases and certain other monetary compensation. Less discussed are the deplorable conditions in which they work – unsafe and filthy worksites, long hours, etc.

The Marikana strike, which began as a wildcat protest on Aug. 10 and over the next days turned into a blood bath, is being compared to the Sharpeville Massacre in 1960 when more than 5,000 residents of the Sharpeville Township gathered at the police station to state they were refusing to carry their passbooks (required ID for Blacks and Coloreds under apartheid). Police fired into the crowd, killing 69 and injuring another 180. The two events are really not alike – in Sharpeville, Africans were demanding basic rights, in the Marikana strike, miners were demanding a fair wage and working conditions. But both seem to represent a turning point. In the first case, Sharpeville represented the beginning of the end of apartheid; Marikana represents what the *Nation* has called a wake-up call that South Africans are losing faith in the liberation movement they worked for.

For those us leftists looking in from afar, the lesson is that workers' rights (and other labor issues) are central democratic issues not to be lost track of after the revolution. Without economic justice for these miners, there is no democracy. We cannot intervene in these events directly, but by supporting miners' and other laborers' rights here in our own country, we can hopefully strengthen the broader labor network worldwide.

[Details in this article were drawn from the *Nation*, *Huffington Post*, BBC online, and other websites.]

## [Ideas on Giving \\$ to Candidates](#)

Sunday, September 30th, 2012

By Daniel C. Adkins

### **From the October issue of *The Washington Socialist***

From a progressive point of view one may want to financially support candidates who lead and expand on our views, bring up necessary issues, and also keep the Republicans from completely controlling the Congress. Since both parties have presided over transferring the GDP from U.S. productivity gains to the wealthy over the last 40 years and are making our economy and democracy a Winner Take-All\* game, how we give needs to be considered closely lest we send ourselves to the poor house. One candidate who has an interesting solution is Bernie Sanders (I-NH). He has supporters that have sent his PAC monthly donations every year! This has freed him from needing money from lobbyists. If we can find candidates who are willing to change the national debate and fight the moneyed corruption then we need to consider supporting them financially all year round.

In the past I have given to the [Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee \(DCCC\)](#) and the [Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee \(DSCC\)](#), but no more. These committees promise to match your dollars threefold. This sounds like a good idea until you reanalyze that the donors who have such money are the ones who have been leading the Democratic Party into tax breaks to the rich, will likely compromise Medicare, and are happy to play election money games. So now I will not even consider contributing to these committees until I see an honest attempt towards getting money out of our elections.

So if we contribute we need to find candidates who are willing to fight the crippling influence of money on our economy and elections and support them directly with our time and if possible money.

*\*Winner-Take-All Politics How Washington Made the Rich Richer – And Turned its Back on the Middle Class* by Jacob S. Hacker & Paulo Pierson

## **Transportation Reform Eludes Congress Again**

Sunday, September 2nd, 2012

**By Bill Mosley**

On July 6, President Obama signed a bill to fund federal highway and transit programs for the next two and a half years – passage coming three years after the previous multi-year authorization expired. These periodic transportation bills provide not only funding for construction and upkeep of the nation's transportation systems, but also provided an opportunity for re-thinking and reforming the federal approach to transportation policy. In passing the landmark 1991 transportation bill, for example, Congress finally recognized that continual highway-building was not the solution to mobility and finally gave transit its due as a critical part of the transportation mix.

Unfortunately, the new bill represents a step backward in almost all issues important to progressives: supporting transit, reducing greenhouse gases, and securing equitable funding for transportation programs. The bill was an awkward compromise between a reasonably progressive Senate bill and a rabidly pro-highway, anti-transit House bill. Both sides swallowed their principles to push this ugly baby into the world, less out of a spirit of bipartisan compromise than to make sure the backhoes keep running — laying new highway miles and preserving jobs – in members' districts.

The flaws of the bill are numerous, especially given the need to promote transportation policy that reduces dependency on the auto and attacks greenhouse gas emissions. Like most recent transportation legislation, this one is much too highway-centric. It provides no added funding for

mass transit, makes severe cuts to programs to promote biking and walking, and fails (once again) to ensure that drivers bear something closer to the full cost that cars impose on the environment. The federal gas tax remains stuck at 18.4 cents per gallon, where it has been since 1993. A modest increase in the gas tax could pay for expanded transit and smart-growth programs *and* for repair of highways and bridges – but, unfortunately, requiring people to pay more for gas has become the third rail of transportation politics.

The good news is that the current bill expires in 27 months. Advocates of a more sensible federal transportation policy need to get busy right away.

Sunday, September 30th, 2012

By Woody Woodruff

**From the October issue of *The Washington Socialist***

Those of us who are afflicted with the *Washington Post* are always ready to jump on that flicker of former glory first. As all the dead-tree newspaper organizations contracted viciously in the clutches of the recession and the competition from free Web news, the *WaPo* trimmed local coverage (simply THE franchise for any paper except the *NYT* and *WSJ*) and it became clear that the *WaPo* never had the institutional resilience to outclass the likes of Yahoo's and Google's online news aggregation.

The crash of the traditional news business is a minor tragedy for those of us who grew up holding a broadsheet paper out as far as our arms would reach. But it has provided a test of actual news practices that some have passed considerably better than others. *The New York Times*, to take the most obvious example, is still a mainstream newspaper, but has shown the breadth and depth to just plain be *better* than online news. Others haven't. But what does "quality news" mean for a radical?

Now, as socialists, we pay attention to what's *excluded* in any news-play scheme. The *NYT* surpasses the *WaPo* on depth and context in most cases, but both have pretty explicit boundaries for what Ed Herman and Noam Chomsky (in *Manufacturing Consent*) called "the limits of thinkable thought."

Watching the BBC (the US report, but especially the weekly "Newsnight" panel show) or reading the *Guardian* reminds us that there's an English-language tradition of looking critically at the cash-nexus culture under whose yoke we suffer. For our media, though, that cash-nexus culture is the river in which we, and the reporters and editors, swim, and it's almost never penetrated, let alone questioned, in widely available public discourse.

Those of us who have been around a few decades know that the center of mainstream, status quo economics has shifted far to the right since the Reagan-Thatcher years. There are mainstream writers – several, even, in the *WaPo* – who fashion at least a coherent defense against the prevailing unwisdom that makes up that river. The *WaPo*'s Ezra Klein and, in the business section, Steven Pearlstein consistently deflate the myths that are trafficked by the right-wing economists who (we must sadly note) are so much in the ascendant now that even a Democratic administration kowtows to the bond vigilantes and the confidence fairy. Pearlstein's excellent satiric portrait of the self-important, entitled-feeling "job creator" yesterday (Sunday, Sept. 30) is a good example of myth-deflation.

And the phrases "bond vigilante" and "confidence fairy" will tip you off right away that Paul Krugman ranks in this corner as first among equals in this pantheon of liberal economists and business writers who keep the foam-flecked right at bay (though not in retreat). Coach K is often joined in this group by NYT colleagues David Leonhardt, NYT bureau chief in DC and former economics writer, and even by Joe Nocera, who is still trying to live up to his elevation from business scribe to august columnist-about-everything. Among the NYT's economics writers, as distinct from columnists, Louis Uchitelle remains the gold standard for stretching the parameters of the status quo and linking evidence of social inequality to evidence of standard capitalist practices untempered by regulation.

But even Krugman is doing economics within the "limits of thinkable thought" of US economics. The envelope of possibilities outside our borders is already well-enlarged, and sharp analysts like Reuters' Chrystia Freeland are able to range much more widely among the choices unconstrained by what used to be called the "Washington Consensus." Greek and Spanish workers and consumers, chafing under the heel of the imported German variety of that consensus, would be more likely to call it the "Washington Curse."

Among these overseas observers, some genuinely radical notions can emerge. It's remarkable to note that *The Economist* is considered the voice of responsible corporate conservatism in that much more spacious realm of discourse. In the US, of course, we have to find our radical economists in the pages of *The Nation* or *Mother Jones*, or at our hometown Economic Policy Institute—not in the MSM, generally. When radical economists do appear in the big papers they are outliers, or awarded a one-off to promote a book. But the general tenor of economic and business opinion is represented by writers like the *WaPo*'s Robert Samuelson, who earns his lunch asking why anyone would doubt the deficit hawks and posing bogus questions about the status quo that get oiled-up answers.

This quick look, limited to the writer's experience, needs to be augmented by comments from the readers. What economics and business writers (or TV talkers) strike the *Washington Socialist*'s readers as fighting to expand those "limits of thinkable thought"? Let us know at [dcdsoutreach@gmail.com](mailto:dcdsoutreach@gmail.com), with "Media Mangle" in the subject line.

