BOOK REVIEW

Is the Middle Class Crumbling Into the Working Poor?


Reviewed by Russell Harrison

Jeff Faux’s new book is a devastating critique of the economics and politics of the contemporary U.S. The picture Faux paints is beyond distressing, mitigated only by his breezy style, probably a necessary defense mechanism given the circumstances he faces. All the usual criminals are here: the tremendous waste of military Keynesianism, the attack on and subsequent reduction of, the power of the working class, the defunding and destruction of our public school systems, the catastrophic power of money in electoral politics and on and on.

Faux’s thesis is that given the secular trends of the 20th and 21st centuries—offshoring, computerization, robotization, and subsequent downsizing—we will (and have already) suffer a significant decline in the American standard of living. This is a foregone and unstoppable fact. Also unstoppable is the increase in the tremendous amount of low-paid workers entering the job market and the resultant loss of (good) jobs. Without exception, just about every page brings us amazing and amazingly depressing facts. As noted, he covers all the usual criminals and also as usual the Defense Department looms large whose military-industrial complex has been calling the shots for so long that we’ve forgotten how obscenely corrupt it is. The Defense Department’s budget has never been audited and so we have:

$998, 798 in transportation costs for shipping two 19-cent washers; $492,096 for shipping a machine thread plug; a subsidiary of Halliburton that charged for 10,000 meals a day it never served.

The decline in good jobs prophecy is met by its critics with the suggestion that the American economy will more and more consist of services that cannot be easily exported. In any event, Faux has a genius for locating impressive concrete details to buttress his case. Some of his more...
Local & National Events: Spring-Summer 2013

NY METRO

Hofstra Heart Health Week: Feb. 20, 11 a.m.-2 p.m. – Hofstra Health Fair in Plaza Rooms, Student Center. Free blood tests, blood pressure readings and nutritional advice from health professionals will be offered on a walk-in basis; 1-2 p.m. “Life Savers and Good Samaritan Laws – Law School, rm 242. Thursday, Feb. 21, 12:45-2 p.m. – Heart Experts Forum: ‘Is Your Heart At Risk?’ in Plaza Rooms, Student Center. Speakers: include: Cardiologist Bruce Goldner; NY COSH job stress management specialist James Pratt; young cardiac arrest survivor Tim Kiedrowski; and Melinda Murray mother of a student athlete killed by cardiac arrest. Feb. 21, 6-9 p.m.: Hoops for Heart Basketball Tournament at Fitness Center: Free intramural three-on-three basketball tournament. Donations will be welcomed for heart research; Friday, Feb. 22, 11 am-2 p.m: Student Clubs Health Fair – in Plaza Rooms, Student Center; Saturday, Feb. 23, 2-8 p.m. – Dodgeball for Heart – Fitness Center: Free intramural six-on-six dodgeball tournament. Register at Fitness Center with Hofstra ID; Tuesday, Feb. 26, 8 a.m.-8 p.m. – Blood Drive in Multipurpose Room, Student Center. This new event has been initiated by the Labor Studies Program and organized in collaboration with the Provosts Office, School of Medicine, School of Health Sciences, School of Education, Intramurals-Fitness Center, Wellness Center, Hofstra Labor and Employment Law Journal, and Office of Student Leadership.

April 4 – Charles Kernaghan speaks on “Will You Lose Your Job to Global Sweatshops?” As Director of the Institute for Global Labor and Human Rights, he is one of the best known critics of child labor, unsafe workplaces, poverty wages, and other abusive working conditions in low-wage countries. At 12:45-2:10 p.m., in 246 East Library Wing, Axinn Library, Hofstra University. Free admission.

April 9 – “Gender Gap 2013: New Debates and Policy Agendas,” is being held on national Equal Pay Day, celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Equal Pay Act. At 4:30-5:55 p.m. in the Guthart Cultural Center Theater. The 3 speakers will be Esmeralda Lyn [chair of the Women’s Policy Research, and former Hofstra Bkz School Prof.]; Beth Margolis [labor lawyer], and Jason Starr [Nassau Co. Director, NY Civil Liberties Union]. Among other topics, they will debate the controversy over the book LEAN IN, by Facebook exec Sheryl Sandberg, and Gov. Cuomo’s new ‘Equality Agenda.’

May 1 – “Mayday At The Movies: Comedy & Tragedy At Work,” the 12th annual labor film festival at Hofstra, showcases new and classic movies on work and working people’s lives. This year’s films include the new HBO documentary on the 2008-10 Great Recession’s local impacts; “Hard Times: LOST on Long Island.” At 10 am – 4 pm in the Guthart Cultural Center Theater, Student Center, Hofstra U.


June 6 – NYU Law School’s 66th Annual Labor & Employment conference. Starts 8:20 am at Vanderbilt Hall, Macdougall at East 3rd St., Manhattan. For info.: email torreywhitman@nyu.edu.

July 1 – “Congressional Night” at Long Island Federation of Labor. Annual forum at which US Senators Gillibrand and Schumer, as well as Long Island’s Congressional Representatives, speak to and are questioned by hundreds of union members. At 6-8 pm, IBEW Local 25, 370 Motor Parkway, Hauppauge. For info., call 631/348-1170.

July 20-25 – 38th annual Northeast UALE Summer School for Union Women. Five-day residential program of trainings and events at Cornell University, Ithaca, NY. For info., email: workerinstitute@cornell.edu.

Sept. 7 – Labor Day Parade. Starts at 11 am., Fifth Avenue and 44th Street, Manhattan. For info., see www.nycclc.org.

NATIONAL

April 17-20, 2013 – Annual National Meetings of United Association for Labor Education (UALE) in Toronto, Canada at Metropolitan Hotel. Theme: “What Are Workers Saying?” For info. visit www.uale.org

June 6-9 – Annual National Meetings of Labor & Employment Relations Association (formerly IRRA) at Crowne Plaza Hotel, St. Louis, MO. Theme: “The Future of Work.” For info. call: 608/262-2762, or visit www.leraweb.org

June 18-19 – Labor Research and Action Network annual conference at the Georgetown U. Law Center in Washington, DC. LRAN established in 2011 by academics, union leaders and staff, and progressive non-profits to connect scholars with organizers and worker organizations that are involved in cutting edge campaigns. For registration info. and sessions, visit www.lranetwork.org.

RELEASE DATES FOR MONTHLY LABOR MARKET INDICATORS

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NOTE TO READERS:

If you know of upcoming labor-related meetings or conferences, collective bargaining contract expirations or renewals, or other events you would like considered for our next Calendar, please send us a brief description, together with the time, place, contact person, and their telephone number. Either fax this information, with a cover sheet addressed to Regional Labor Review, to fax #: 516-463-6519, or email us at: laborstudies@hofstra.edu.

BUILDING BRIDGES

Talkin’ Labor with Local 830
AIRING ON WGBB AM1240 - Wed. at 6:30 pm
Hosted by CSEA Local 830 President Jerry Laricchia