The working class has a history of adult learning

My uncle Malcolm, because he was in the Merchant Marine, was inducted into the US Navy during the second world war, and his job was to drive the ‘run out the iron and the rust out the roots’ canteen, Opinion, January 31). He served throughout the war as chief engineer of the USS Ancon which was the flagship of the US admiral in the European theatre. Malcolm was at all the European landings, from north Africa to Sicily, to Italy and to Normandy. He ended the war as a commander.

For a brilliant description of the vibrant intellectual life of the working class in Britain I recommend Jonathan Rose’s book, The Intellectual Life of British Working Classes. There were numerous study groups, established by working people in all parts of the country, which studied serious subjects: mathematics, history, politics, engineering etc. It is an inspiring story. I hope in the UK and here in the US that respect for and support for the working class will include an appreciation of their talent for and interest in intellectual topics.

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White House has seen the selection criteria as agreed by the board of executive directors of the World Bank: “proven track record of leadership, experience in international public sector, dear vision for the World Bank Group, commitment to multilateral co-operation and communication skill and impartiality”.

Hardly any of the named US candidates check these boxes. Their professional profile and public expectations range from complete irrelevance to developments to scepticism to multilateral institutions.

Even those with some useful experience, their profiles pale in comparison when put together with some of the names reported from the emerging markets.

Grant, the relationship with the World Bank’s largest shareholder is an important asset. Yet, for the bank to the G7 country had no influence over the rules by which it must operate.

Brexit was not of the EU’s making, but is it really in its interests to impose new rules on the UK or, if worse, be party to a disorderly exit?

The World Bank president needs to understand how politics, economies and societies function in the developing countries – the clients the World Bank serves.

If the US wants to keep the World Bank presidency with some credibility it would be better if the White House can take a hard look at its list of candidates and expand its search, this time against the selection criteria.

The rest of the world must not expect less from the US nominee.

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Brazila dam disaster should change president’sagenda

The FT’s article tells us the “treatment of Carlos Ghosn is a stain on ‘liberal’

Companies’ human rights due-diligence lacks teeth

The collapse of the Brumadinho dam led to a tragic loss of life with catastrophic damage to the environment. As the article (FastFT, January 29) highlighted, investors have responded by slashing Vale’s environmental, social and governance rating. Yet it was only a few weeks ago that Caritas Brazil and their experts accompanied a group of representatives from indigenous and fishing communities to the UK. They came to London seeking justice three years on from the breach of the Samarco dam, managed by BHP Billiton Brazil and Vale.

Global companies’ governance requirements for the largest companies have not caught up with the scale of their investment projects and their potential impacts on our world. Existing approaches to human rights due diligence lack teeth.

The process on a binding instrument with robust human rights, due diligence and reporting requirements for businesses to consider their impacts, as well as measures to increase the chances of those harmed to gain meaningful remedies. Much stronger measures are needed. Company directors and executives need to be incentivised to prevent such disasters, rather than belatedly reacting when lives have been lost and ecosystems destroyed.

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It is not the size of the bank that matters

Simon Samuel brings up some very good points about the drawbacks of potential large banks operating in Europe (“Europe should be wary of the lure of bigger banks,” January 30). To those who believe any size constraints be the strongest argument against such mergers: the lessons from the US experience are stark. Mergers among its largest banks.

The large US banks are generally more profitable than the new entrants on equity, than their smaller European counterparts, but that should not be attributed to their size. They are actually less profitable than many smaller US banks. Some of this results from higher costs for the