

Other letters to the WSWS

28 August 2000

Hi there!

I thought Labour stood for equity and workers' rights. Labour's New South Wales prison policy reflects that of a right wing government. I am not completely anti-gaol, but I think it will target the low-income people and the disadvantaged. There are other ways around it as far as I am concerned. How can Labour call itself a party for the low-income earners with such measures and when it works with the Howard Liberal government to reduce access to legal advice? I think the richer people will avoid prison sentences.

I heard on the radio today that the Australian National University Students Union is urging Labour to oppose the Howard's Liberal government's proposal to allow the army to shoot protesters during civil unrest. Labour is supporting the Liberal's proposal but with amendments. This will really weaken the trade union movement. Why are the unions still affiliated to Labour?

I think Labour in the past decade has been more anti-worker than the Malcolm Fraser Liberal Party.

Yours Sincerely,
PM

17 August 2000

What timing! I was just going to write a rant to the WSWS about the *Big Brother* TV show, but you beat me to it. Anyone who pays attention to pop culture should have seen this coming. *The Real World* on MTV ran for most of the 1990's, and spawned more than one spinoff, such as *Road Rules*. *The Real World* did not involve any contests or prizes. Rather, the idea was to put half a dozen *twentysomethings* into a house, their every action to be followed by a camera. It was total voyeurism, and several people who were on the show had trouble afterwards adjusting to the fact that their fame was illusory—a deceiving phantom. Perhaps most ironic was the title; the participants lived in million-dollar homes, fully furnished, with a budget that basically paid all of their bills.

Road Rules put some *twentysomethings* into a recreational vehicle. Every week they had to discover some thing or place; MTV provided a clue to help them find it. The lucky viewer got to watch them drive around the country, babbling about nothing special. The flirting, dating, and sexual relations were omnipresent.

Shows like *Survival* and *Big Brother* have upped the ante, it seems. What is most distressing is the use of the Orwellian 'Big Brother' phrase as a title. In Orwell's novel *1984*, Big Brother is the evil villain. Now that has been warped into its opposite: we are invited to be Big Brother. Rather than some fearsome, totalitarian government looking into homes, it is the home viewer who is doing so.

I think it gives people a false sense of power and control. Is this not frightening? We are already watched by cameras at the mall, in stores, at street intersections, on highways. Are we willingly being seduced into accepting, even desiring, cameras in our homes? It may sound far-fetched, but I asked the two people with whom I watched *Big Brother* one week where Big Brother came from, and what it meant. They didn't know...

P.S. It occurred to me that the money-motive used in *Big Brother* is cropping up elsewhere. For instance, the new football league, the XFL (funded by the World Wrestling Federation), is promised to be more violent. It also aims to motivate players by awarding cash prizes to the team that wins the championship. This trend is insidious. Slowly but surely, money is becoming the sole reason to do anything anymore.

P.P.S. While the movie *The Running Man* is campy, I am become more convinced that it accurately prefigures our future with every passing day. The 'Climbing For Dollars' bit is funny in the movie...but I'd bet on even odds that people would actually watch it today.

OD

20 August 2000



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