

Two letters on Thomas Jefferson

30 November 2000

We received the following two letters from a reader in Manteca, California.

I wanted to commend your authors of the Jefferson-Hemings article ["The Jefferson-Hemings controversy: In defense of history" <http://www.wsws.org/news/1998/dec1998/jeff-d31.shtml>]. I am a huge admirer of Jefferson, and their analysis was right on the money. Jefferson most certainly was a radical revolutionist and a defender of human liberty and progress. He railed against the corporate finance capitalism, which was forming and saw it as dangerous to the American Republic. I am at a loss as to why modern supposed "left" oriented modernists despise the Author of the Declaration so much. He risked his reputation and life to participate in the Revolution. His views on slavery were far ahead of his contemporaries and many of his fellow Virginians were shocked and appalled by his views on emancipation, as written in his Notes on Virginia. He was not a "racist" as he is commonly referred to. He always believed blacks should be free and never in his writings did he defend slavery, not once. His problem was coming up with a complex solution to a complex problem. It was not as easy as "freeing" slaves into a largely white society, which contained prejudices. That, in his view, would have been cruel to the slaves and dangerous to the society. It would never have been permitted. The sad thing is there is an effort in modern America to "delegitimize" the Revolution and its radicalism. Any self-respecting socialist can't be in better company than Thomas Jefferson, a consummate liberal and radical. Thanks again for a job well done.

25 November 2000

I just finished reading Mr. North's article "Equality, the Rights of Man and the Birth of Socialism" [<http://www.wsws.org/history/1996/oct1996/lect.shtml>]. It was very good and well thought-out. As a Jeffersonian I very much enjoyed the analysis of the Declaration of Independence as an Enlightenment

document, which it surely was. Jefferson being, I believe, one of the greatest, if not the greatest humanist of our millennium. To have held and expounded such principles of a radical nature in a world of mercantilism, and monarchy was unbelievable. Mr. North's analysis of Mr. Bork's frightening views should shake all defenders of humanity to their core. It is sad to see an American like Mr. Bork denouncing Jefferson and the Declaration in particular. It shows him to be a reactionary of the worst sort. The fact that the Declaration is so radical to him exposes him for what he is: a defender of the ruling elite. I appreciate the fair and honorable appreciation expressed regarding Jefferson, who sadly is under attack by major left and right elites. Jefferson was truly a revolutionary and radical, someone who should be looked to for guidance in battling the ruling class and corporate tyrants. Here he was a wealthy plantation owner who had great faith in the common man, wanted to educate him, separated church and state, abolished feudal tenure, reformed Virginia's penal code, authored several bills for the abolition of slavery, and all in the face of great opposition from his class to which he received enduring hatred. Thanks for a very good article.

26 November 2000



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