

University of Manitoba student newspaper apologizes for plagiarism of WSWs articles

The Editorial Board
6 April 2002

The *Manitoban*, the student newspaper of the University of Manitoba in Winnipeg, in western Canada, has publicly acknowledged that one of its regular contributors plagiarized at least ten articles from the *World Socialist Web Site* between December of 2000 and March of this year.

The current issue of the *Manitoban* carries a statement on its editorial page, headlined “Clarification,” that lists the articles plagiarized from the WSWs by *Manitoban* columnist Krishna Lalbiharie and gives the dates of the issues of the *Manitoban* in which they appeared. This is followed by a list of the original WSWs articles, with their dates, authors, and Internet links.

Lalbiharie, a graduate student at the university and outgoing Manitoban delegate to the Canadian Federation of Students, published the articles under his own byline and gave no attribution to the WSWs or the actual authors.

The newspaper’s statement also lists two articles that appeared under Lalbiharie’s byline that previously appeared in the *Green Left Weekly*, an Australian publication. In these instances as well, Lalbiharie gave no attribution and no indication that the articles had previously appeared in a different publication and under a different byline.

The *Manitoban*’s clarification concluded: “The *Manitoban* sincerely regrets any confusion this may have caused, and we offer our apologies to the above authors, the *World Socialist Web Site* and *Green Left Weekly*.” (The web version of the *Manitoban* can be accessed at www.umanitoba.ca/manitoban).

The newspaper has removed all of the articles plagiarized from the WSWs from its web site, and inserted links to the original articles as they appeared on the WSWs. It has publicly denounced Lalbiharie’s

actions and barred him from contributing to the newspaper in the future.

The WSWs editorial board first learned of Mr. Lalbiharie’s plagiarism when we received an email on March 22 of this year from the editor-in-chief of the *Manitoban*, Bernice Pontanilla, alerting us to the fact Mr. Lalbiharie had on April 4, 2001 published under his own byline an article that appeared March 30, 2001 on the WSWs (“Ralph Nader’s political olive branch to Bush,” by Barry Grey). Until then, no one on the WSWs editorial board had ever heard of Mr. Lalbiharie. Our publication has never had any relations with this individual, never collaborated with him in any way, and never gave him authorization to publish our material.

Ms. Pontanilla maintains that neither she nor anyone else on the *Manitoban* editorial board were aware of the plagiarism carried out by Mr. Lalbiharie, a well-known campus figure who for some time wrote a regular column for the newspaper. We have no reason to doubt that she is telling the truth. The *Manitoban* editorial board has acted in a principled manner to the discovery of Lalbiharie’s offenses. It carried out an investigation and identified the ten articles lifted from the WSWs.

Mr. Lalbiharie, however, publicly maintains that all allegations of plagiarism against him are false, without offering any explanation for the voluminous record of plagiarized material published under his byline. He has apparently told the *Manitoban* and associates at another publication, *Canadian Dimension* magazine, that he was a collaborator of the *World Socialist Web Site* and made use of its articles with the knowledge of the WSWs editorial board. There is no truth to any such statements or suggestions.

Lalbiharie further seeks to discredit the charges of plagiarism against him by characterizing them as part

of a political witch-hunt launched by right-wing and Zionist elements at the University of Manitoba. Mr. Lalbiharie has, in fact, been targeted by such forces. They responded to a column published under his byline in the March 13, 2002 *Manitoban* entitled “For Outstanding Achievement in Terrorism, the Winner is Israel” with a campaign to suppress the column, smear Lalbiharie as a purveyor of “hate speech,” and intimidate both the university administration and the *Manitoban* editorial board.

In the course of this controversy it emerged that Lalbiharie’s March 13 column had been copied from a commentary originally published in the *Green Left Weekly* under the byline of Rob Miller. Further checking revealed the other instances of plagiarism on the part of Lalbiharie. (Lalbiharie claims that Rob Miller has substantiated his claim to have actually authored, or co-authored, the *Green Left Weekly* article. Even if true, however, this does not alter the fact that Lalbiharie published, without attribution, an article that had appeared in another publication under a different byline.)

The *World Socialist Web Site* is opposed to the right-wing Zionist forces who are seeking to institute political censorship at the university and intimidate those who speak out against the predatory policies of the Israeli state. Our political opposition to Zionism and defense of democratic rights do not, however, oblige us to tolerate plagiarism and the thoroughly opportunist and dishonest methods that underlie it. On the contrary, Lalbiharie’s practices provide a text-book example of how such methods play into the hands of reactionary forces.

In a March 30 letter to Lalbiharie, demanding that he issue a public statement acknowledging and apologizing for his plagiarism of WSWs articles, Barry Grey, in behalf of the *World Socialist Web Site* editorial board, wrote:

“This is a shocking and contemptible record of intellectual theft. There is, and can be, no excuse for this kind of behavior. You are stealing the intellectual work of others to enhance your own reputation. This not only injures our publication, it discredits the *Manitoban* and grossly deceives its readers.

“I have been informed by various people that you have replied to questions about your misuse of WSWs articles with the claim that you have some sort of

relationship with the WSWs, and that we were aware of what you were doing. As you know, these are lies.

“I want to stress, such dishonesty and opportunism are inimical to socialism, democracy or any form of genuinely progressive political activity. Any attempt to justify such practices in the name of political struggle for social progress is an affront to the ideals you may purport to champion.”

All of the articles that appear on the *World Socialist Web Site* are copyrighted. Nevertheless, the WSWs observes a liberal policy in regard to the distribution of our material by other publications. We have many such requests, and we generally allow our articles to be reprinted by reputable and progressive publications, provided they give proper attribution to the WSWs.

We do not, however, sanction or tolerate plagiarism, either in general, or of our own material.



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wsws.org/contact