

Letters to the WSWs

24 April 2003

Below we post a selection of recent letters to the World Socialist Web Site.

On "Massive wage cuts imposed on American Airlines workers"

Dear Editor,

I read the article concerning the wage concessions at American Airlines and I must add a few comments I hope will reveal in what contempt [its parent company] AMR holds its employees.

I was an employee for AMR in the early 1990s. In 1994, towards the end of the last recession, then-AMR CEO Robert L. Crandall announced that the company would seek certain work-rule changes in order to save the company millions of dollars a year. A few months earlier, Delta Airlines had made a similar announcement by saying that, among other things, it would lay off 12,000-15,000 employees. Mr. Crandall claimed at that time that he would not seek any layoffs but would give employees incentives to leave voluntarily or take early retirement. At this time, Donald J. Carty was AMR's Chief Financial Officer. But as was usually the case, Mr. Crandall did not bargain in good faith. The way that AMR reduced its workforce was not just with early retirement; management began to systematically find reasons to fire employees for no apparent reason.

In my case, a fellow employee was falsely accused of a certain transaction. The company conducted a mockery of an investigation into the matter where I was a character witness for the employee. Because my testimony refuted management's charges of wrongdoing against this employee, I was charged with lying to "protect" said employee and was told that I would have to sign a document admitting wrongdoing or I would lose my job. In effect, what I was asked to do is defame this employee or else. The company had no proof whatever that I was lying. Now I ask you, what did this remind you of? Does the name "McCarthy" come to mind? I refused to sign this document since I was not guilty of the charges against me and I subsequently lost my job, as did the other employee.

This happened to many of my fellow employees. Because this happened in Texas, a right-to-work state, to add insult to injury, AMR refused to allow us to collect unemployment insurance. In Texas, your former employer must agree to allow the state to pay these benefits and AMR refused because, in their twisted logic, we were all "fired," not laid off. But the real reason why they did this is because in Texas, whenever affected employees collect unemployment insurance, the company's unemployment insurance premiums increase. So it is to their benefit for employees to be denied such payments.

Now I realize that I cannot "prove" we were all laid off as part of AMR's effort to "downsize." After all, they will contend we "violated" company rules and were fired for that reason. But let me appeal to your logic; is it just coincidence that the number of firings at AMR increased alarmingly right after Mr. Crandall made cost-savings announcement? I realized this happened almost 10 years ago but I invite you to look at the number of appeals to the Texas Employment Commission filed by fired AMR employees during that time and they will confirm what I am saying. To sum it up, AMR treats their people in a most mean-spirited manner and this is the reason why, after General Motors, they have the worst labor-management record of any American corporation.

The way to fix the problem with the airline industry is to bring back regulation the way it was before 1980. Juan Trippe, the legendary founder of Pan American World Airways, said it best when he said that airlines should be treated like a public utility or like the post office and should be subjected to the same government protection. There was nothing wrong with the way things were then. But unfortunately, even this reversal of a bad decision will not bring back all the airlines that have folded in the past 20 years. But it may prevent airlines like American from mistreating their employees all for the sake of greater bonuses for their executives.

FH

23 April 2003

Hi:

I am writing this to the WSWs because I am concerned about the issue of our Congress working to eliminate something that socialists worked so hard to create in the 1920s and 1930s, that is time-and-a-half pay for workers who worked over 40 hours in one week. There are people in the Congress and Senate who are trying to eliminate that by giving the work "comp time" instead of overtime. At the present this is a bigger concern than the war, even though I am against the war.

It seems the war is being used to distract us from domestic issues. They are trying to pull the wool over our eyes while stabbing us in the back. I haven't read the detail of the bill but am very concerned about the issue knowing that the greedy and heartless business world has the Congress and the Senate, as well as the president, in their back pocket.

AO

21 April 2003

Dear Editor,

In all the discourse about terrorism nobody is asking the valid question of "why." If in fact "terrorists" want to disrupt the happenings in the United States why is nobody asking "why"? Personally, I believe the whole 9/11 scandal was a setup by the CIA and FBI (after all, how many terrorists rent apartments from FBI informants?) but even if this whole thing was legitimate shouldn't we find out why these people are so angry? Could it be that we have been treating their countries like gas stations for the last 30 years or so? Could it be? Nah ... they must just hate our Big Macs and large screen TVs. Yeah, that's it.

PK

23 April 2003

Re: US/Euro tensions over Iraq. Now we know what they were talking about with Dick Cheney and the energy big shots way back before 9/11. As much as conspiracy theories are easily debunked, I will never believe that the Bush administration was ignorant of the plans for 9/11. What better excuse to get the country behind the fascist takeover of the US government. Odd, not one of the teams of 9/11 attackers was from Iraq. Odder still, Saddam and bin Laden hated each other. No WMDs = US planned takeover of Middle Eastern oil. It doesn't take a rocket scientist to add up 2 + 2 to get 4nication of the world by the Bushies. Now if only they could do something about the economy ... naaaaa, they're too stupid, to quote Michael Moore. Congratulations on your work ... keep at it.

GT

St. Petersburg, Florida

21 April 2003

Greetings Mr. Martin and Team,

In our times, it's better to be informed. There are sharks out there waiting for their turn. Thank you for the detailed analysis of the situation in Iraq. We tend to only look at one side of the coin. Thank you once more for the good work. Keep it up.

LG

22 April 2003

South Africa

On "'Supporting the troops': a crisis of perspective"

Good article. Thanks for the explanation. I have asked these questions to friends and neighbors and have gotten few answers. Having served in WW II and having been called up for Korea, I would not go to war for Bush and Cheney and big business. I would refuse to fight for the simple reason our country supported this guy for years. Now we get rid of him. Bush and the CIA were wrong. When cornered he was supposed to use his WMD. Where were they?

Thank you.

HL

21 April 2003

Bravo. Excellent work. This article was a real breath of fresh air.

JH

18 April 2003

Editors,

Interesting article. One thing not mentioned is the powerful desire for many of the troops and their families to believe they are involved in a noble enterprise. This is an especially strong desire for those related to those who die. Who would really want to confront the fact that their loved one died in vain for an unjust war? A more pleasant psychological response is to glorify their memory as heroes for a worthy cause. Thus, many of the troops and those closest to them are prone to put on ideological blinders and support the war. Vietnam exposed that lie to many people, both soldiers and their families, but still some cling to the idea that the war was just.

Just a thought,

SB

18 April 2003

On "The looting of Baghdad's museum and library: US government implicated in planned theft of Iraqi artistic treasures"

Bravo to Anne Talbot and the WWSW Editorial Board. The article is one of the very best of the usual great work of the web site. It deserves the widest possible dissemination, not only to supporters of the workers movement and the WWSW but to the scholars and administrators of the world's great cultural repositories, e.g., Metropolitan Museum in New York City, British Museum and the Louvre, to name a few of the most prominent.

Congratulations on all the good work of the WWSW and the success of the recent SEP conference.

DF

New York City

20 April 2003

Kind attention: Ann Talbot,

Thank you for an excellent article on this crime against humanity. I am not sure you saw images of the Museum destruction on the Al Jazeera TV channel. What was not looted was destroyed systematically. Your account of the looted Mesopotamian treasures is accurate, but I would like to add following :

(1) The whole civilized world knows about Hamurabi's Legal System, the first laws of mankind. A museum director interviewed in Al Jazeera stated: "But what is not very well known is there are other legal penal codes predating Hamurabi by about 2000 years that have been looted or destroyed."

(2) A very rare item also looted or destroyed is what is now believed to

be a primitive electric generator of about 25 watts dating to Babylonian period. Even though I am Iraqi myself and well familiar with my country's history, this came as news to me. This revelation was again stated on Al Jazeera by Dr. Talib Baghdadi (an Iraqi archeology expert).

(3) The first ever harp, beautifully made with a golden bull's head, is gone (copy of that is in British Museum).

(4) In the view of Dr. Baghdadi, the most important items looted or destroyed are those clay and marble tablets that show the evolution of writing and how mankind made the momentous step of putting thoughts into a record. I do not exactly know the tablets he is talking about, but these were not on general display but stored in safes in the basement. Again they are gone.

(5) According to another participant in that same Al Jazeera program, an Iraqi painter said, "An American tank came first, fired a shell at the big gate of the museum and made a hole in it. The tank went away and later the looters came." I cannot confirm this 100 percent, but I telephoned Al Jazeera and requested that their reporter in Baghdad kindly photograph the gate with the tank shell hole. Al Jazeera said they are not free to shoot video because the US troops will not allow it. This is bloody shocking; they failed to protect the museum but they readily have troops guarding against recording the evidence.

Although the whole of decent humanity weeps over this destruction, you cannot understand what this means to ordinary Iraqis. I would like to relate to you following conversation I had on the telephone with an Iraqi Marxist friend who has been living in exile in Europe for 24 years. A refugee from Saddam Hussein dating back to the time Saddam was the darling of the west, my friend told me he has two brothers who "disappeared" in Saddam's jails over the past 15 years. He worries and occasionally weeps for them, but now he weeps only for the museum. He said, "I do not care any more about the fate of my own brothers, but the museum..."

Finally, please consider the following: All of Iraq's borders with Syria, Jordan and Iran are sealed by US troops. You probably read about the refugees stranded at the Syrian-Jordanian border because it is closed. If not even one man can escape through the border, how can 170,000 artifacts get through?

Humanity demands the broadest possible international campaign at least to expose this savagery, if not to recover the lost treasures.

Regards,

F

Japan

20 April 2003

Greetings,

A friend just introduced me to your web site and I am grateful for that. The immediate interest was the most current article on the destruction of the Baghdad museum, library (and the obliteration of the collection of the tablets from the relatively recent major find at Sippar).

Besides the economic and political reasons being given for the allowing of this abominable crime against humanity, I would call your attention to another facet of it. Note, as a number of more perceptive analysts have recently, that the neocons who have hijacked the administration and the Republican Party are allied with, perhaps tolerate and use would be a better characterization, the fundamentalist religious element in this country.

The Southern Baptist Convention and associated groups I understand have contributed millions to Israel and support and encourage the ravaging of Iraq and any Arab country targeted by the PNAC element because they want to see Armageddon come down on schedule, the temple at Jerusalem rebuilt, Jesus come back and reign over the planet literally, the Muslim religion wiped out—and the rest of us unbelievers consigned to their understanding of hell, and themselves validated and, perhaps, raptured.

So, with that kind of influence being paid for their vote and championed by the president, it is clear that any obliteration of the history and culture and religious and other history of Iraq (and, therefore, Sumer, Babylonia, Akkadia, etc.) as well as that of the rest of the Middle Eastern countries is “jes alright wid Jesus” The bottom line is that the accumulated scholarship of the last 150 years has demonstrated the real sources of the Old Testament contradicted the Judeo-Christian traditions and claim to Divine franchise. The Dead Sea Scrolls, kept from the public for 50 years for fear of the contradictions of the traditions contained therein also, have filled out the real history. Those of the various Judeo-Christian and Muslim religions from the Vatican to Mecca, with more than two fingers of forehead know the significance and ramifications of this accumulated information. This was a golden opportunity for the western fundamentalists to get it gone.

Best wishes and admiration for well-written and researched articles.

NF

20 April 2003

I cannot express enough the appreciation I have for your excellent web site. As a reader of David Icke, Rapaport, and Stitchin, I am alarmed and sickened about Bush's destruction of Iraq's museum and library. Sorry I didn't get to Ann Arbor. We appreciate having access to valuable information and news that your web site provides. Thank you.

NH

19 April 2003

I have only today found this gem of a site where one gets to read news that ought to be shown everywhere, especially in the United States. I shall endeavor to make sure all my friends and family become regular subscribers to it. I am grateful for the work that you do. Your efforts to present all sides are laudable. May God bless you all and your families.

S

20 April 2003

The Bush administration is quite adept at installing a nation's government without approval of its people. It did exactly that in the US after the 2000 election.

JS

Michigan



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Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact