

# Letters from our readers

4 August 2003

*Below we post a selection of recent letters from our readers.*

*On "Pentagon scheme for a futures market in terror"*

Barry Grey's article on the Pentagon's futures market scheme was penetrating in its revealing the Bush appointees who are convicted criminals that have demonstrated a contempt for rule of law.

When I first read the *Associated Press* story about the Pentagon setting up a futures market whereby investors could bet on terrorist attacks, assassinations, and other events in the Middle East, I thought someone was playing a cruel joke.

Between not being able to keep lies straight and outright incompetence and buffoonery, the news out of Washington these days reads like a Groucho Marx movie with a Machiavellian twist.

It is a 21st century version of Groucho's television show "You Bet Your Life," only this time it's literal, it's real, and it's not funny. Just say the secret word and John Ashcroft will drop down from the ceiling with a one-way ticket to parts unknown.

HW

Chicago

31 July 2003

*On "Bush attack on overtime pay passes House"*

Stop attacking overtime pay. I have a life other than my job and if I am at work more than I am home then I only think it's fair to get paid overtime. Why do you feel you have to change our lives? My overtime is why I can afford to buy things my children need. You take away overtime pay and you're taking away from not only my children but millions of children. When you live from paycheck to paycheck that overtime pay really makes a big difference.

BJ

1 August 2003

My father has been passing me links to your well-written articles on the state of this country and the ridiculous administrating our country is now undergoing. I must say you are doing a fine job, and if only you had a wider base for your hot ideas to catch fire, the American people would be at the point of revolt, and the army would stand on edge of a coup. Therefore I admire your poignant and brave stands on views. Because I'm sure the Bush administration knows and fears the free minded's ability to bring down what they are trying to do, and will do anything to squelch it.

Best regards,

JS

2 August 2003

*On "Bush press conference highlights government crisis"*

Great article. I especially liked this line from the article: "The administration's aversion to press conferences has two root causes: concerns on the part of Bush's political handlers about his general lack of knowledge and limited mental capacities, and an obsession with secrecy that reflects the White House's contempt for democracy." That really says it all about what we have for a president now—a moron who is a puppet of his handlers. As the Canadian prime minister said we have an idiot for a president. This is the president who told the lie that Saddam Hussein wouldn't allow UN inspectors into Iraq (along with his thousand other lies). Most of his statements show such a tenuous grasp on reality that one must wonder if he is actually sane. Yet he keeps getting away with it. Thanks for having the courage and moral rectitude to point out all the lies and shortcomings of the criminal Cheney/Bush junta.

G

2 August 2003

*On "Israel and Palestine"*

As you may know, the Israelis at the present time are constructing a physical barricade between Israel and the West Bank. They call it a security fence. About 75 miles of this so-called fence have been completed. Originally it was projected that the "fence" would run for 226 miles. Recently, however, estimates have been given that by 2005, when the fence supposedly will have been completed, it will run for 625 miles. At least, this is what Mr. Sharon would like to envision. Ostensibly the purpose of this barricade, according to the official Israeli pronouncements, is to deter suicide bombers from entering Israel.

In the first place, we should stop calling it a fence. Fences are traditionally constructed of posts driven into the ground and then strung with wire or wooden boards. Americans think kindly of fences: Fences give us privacy from our neighbors, keep the dog in and the deer out, and roses climb up and around their intricacies. Telling Americans that Israel is constructing a security fence around its border has a nice ring to it—security, like in security blanket, and fence, like in privacy and climbing vines.

I can see it now: Some public relations people in Israel or the US are sitting around a table and somebody says, "What shall we call this barricade in the Middle East?" And somebody else

says, “Well, we’ll call it a wall.” But everybody groans: “You can’t call it a wall. That has a negative connotation. Think of the Berlin Wall. And the ghettos in Poland. Wall is out!” Then somebody pipes up, “I’ve got it! We’ll call it a fence! A security fence! Perfect!” A detractor says, “You mean even though it isn’t a fence, we’ll call it a fence?” Everybody looks at him as if he’s crazy. “Of course. Isn’t that what we’re here for? To turn poison into maple syrup?” And as the meeting comes to a close, somebody says, “Good fences make good neighbors, right? Who said that, wasn’t it Robert Frost?” And everybody smiles. Great fruitful meeting.

So thenceforth everybody called the barricade a fence. On US television or in print I have never heard it called anything but a fence, when in reality it’s a huge concrete wall. Christopher Slaney in the *Mideast Times* remarked, “Calling it a fence is like describing the Great Pyramid as a tombstone.” Here and there where the land can’t support the weight of concrete there are patches of electrically wired metal fencing at the top of which are numerous coils of razor wire, but mostly the barricade consists of a 25-foot-high concrete wall. This is two times the height of the Berlin Wall, which by the way was never called a fence. When the Communists built a concrete wall, we called it a wall, but when the Israelis build a concrete wall two times higher than the Communists did, we call it a fence. Isn’t that odd?

The original construction cost estimate was \$200 million but the latest cost figure is \$1.5 billion. That’s a low estimate, and that’s just for the construction. Maintaining it will require thousands of troops to man checkpoints and the guard towers perched on top of The Wall spaced every few hundred feet, to scan the flood-lighted trenches running along The Wall that are filled with sand so as to detect sneaky footprints.

The Wall was originally and allegedly supposed to follow the line of demarcation between Israel and the West Bank called The Green Line as established in 1967, but it doesn’t. Nobody has announced where it’s ultimately going, but so far it snakes around circuitously engulfing land on which the Israelis have made illegal settlements over the years. Palestinian territory is being expropriated, houses razed, farmers are being separated from their land, ancient olive trees belonging to Palestinian farmers are being uprooted and sold in the Israeli markets, and wherever there’s a good water supply or the land looks particularly fertile—woops, the line of The Wall detours to put the goodies on the Israeli side. Untold thousands of Palestinian-owned hectares (2.47 acres per hectare) are being consumed as The Wall marches on.

President Bush had two visitors recently. First came the Palestinian leader Abbas, who, among other things, appealed to Mr. Bush to stop the construction of the wall. Mr. Abbas probably gave some convincing reasons to do so, for the next day, when Mr. Sharon was due to visit, Mr. Bush announced to reporters: “I think The Wall (he said Wall) is a problem,” and described it as a Wall snaking through the West Bank. But then

came the meeting with Mr. Sharon, who proclaimed to Mr. Bush, upon hearing of his reservations about The Wall and how it would be a drawback to establishing peace in the region, Mr. Sharon said the fence was necessary and the Israelis would continue with its construction. After the meeting, Mr. Bush reversed words and instead of referring to the barricade as a Wall, said this: “I hope in the long term a fence would be irrelevant.” (I wonder if Mr. Sharon perhaps whispered in Mr. Bush’s ear, “Hey George, didn’t you know it’s anti-Semitic to call our fence a wall?”)

One wonders what the purpose of this Wall really is. Is it really to deter suicide bombings? Can’t persons intent on blowing themselves up get through the checkpoints at the Wall? They did before. Or can’t they strap explosives on themselves from inside Israel itself or some other place? I would think so. If you’re determined to blow yourself up in Israel you don’t have to go through a Wall to do it. You’ll find a way. Mr. Sharon must know this. So what is the real reason for this Mighty Wall? To usurp Palestinian territory, water and other natural resources, to establish a brand new and permanent border? Of course.

But not only that. The purpose is to humiliate, degrade and depress the Palestinian people, to put them in a cage of sorts, a gigantic concentration camp. This is indeed a fascist enterprise, designed to erect the biggest prison the world has ever known.

The American taxpayer, of course, is paying for all of this but if you asked a hundred people on the street what they thought of this security fence, I’ll wager that 99 of them would respond, “What fence?”

P.S. Safire in the *NY Times* this morning (July 31) refers to The Wall as a wire fence with sensors and video cameras. The lies never cease.

SC

31 July 2003



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