

Letters from our readers

13 August 2003

Below we post a selection of recent letters to the WSW.

On John Christopher Burton, civil rights attorney and socialist, to run in California recall election

This is great news regarding the candidacy of John Christopher Burton in the California gubernatorial recall election.

Mr. Burton's call for full employment and universal health coverage are particularly important to us. My wife and I need to relocate to California to be closer to family and friends. I work part-time at home and receive limited health care benefits. My wife must seek out employment in our new home state. Employers she has spoken with have nearly all required their candidates to be local. Therefore, without guarantee of work, she must resign her current position and pick up her job search when we relocate.

Meanwhile, our health coverage will convert over to COBRA. This means we will pay the full cost (plus a 2 percent administration fee) to continue our joint health coverage through my wife's prior employer. This will cost us hundreds of dollars monthly—for a maximum of 18 months.

For all the freedom people in the United States allegedly have, our freedom to relocate is greatly dependent on our ability to provide for constant employment and continuous health coverage.

Wealthy people clearly have more freedom, as they can afford private health care coverage, don't require constant employment, and can often afford multiple residences paid for without the need to get a mortgage. Film stars such as Arnold Scharzenegger—another candidate in the recall election—get paid enormous amounts of money. I once read that for someone as rich as he to purchase a \$300,000 home, it would be like a middle-class worker buying a stereo system.

I'm particularly excited about Mr. Burton's candidate statement appearing in the California Voter Bulletin. This is a big step towards raising the political consciousness of the working class. My wife and I look forward to voting against the recall and for Burton.

CK

10 August 2003

What great news that John Christopher Burton is standing in California to defend workers' right. He is an excellent spokesperson for socialism and will have a huge impact upon political development.

PB

9 August 2003

What a pleasure to arrive home from a short sojourn in Hawaii to find that Mr. Burton's decision to intervene in the California recall election has been met with his being successfully placed on the ballot as an independent candidate. This is a great opportunity to begin educating the working masses of this state, and the world, to the fact of their betrayal by the ruling classes and to the necessity of building a party that puts their wants and needs first in the massive task of converting capitalist society into socialist society.

Whether or not the recall is successful, regardless of who comes out of this election with the reins of power, it will become increasingly clear to the people of this state that the crisis being generated by the contradictions inherent to the capitalist system will continue to be borne by the working class. No other course remains but for the working class to resolve

themselves to the inexorable fact that they must seize the reins of power or see themselves annihilated as a class as capitalism continues its descent into barbarism. Capitalism is no longer compatible with society. The ruling class is unfit to rule.

While the media accountants are busy evaluating Arnold's moral authority, and Bustamante mutinies on his knees against the stalwart Davis, John Burton will undoubtedly be patiently explaining, to those poised to listen, the tasks at hand and the solutions available to bring them to fruition. His example will be one of not fawning before the precepts established by the enemy. At the Luau in Lahaina on Thursday night when the audience was asked, "Who here is from California?" the response of hands raised altered the panorama before my eyes. Not merely a sprinkling but a vast number expressed, to me, the fact that California has the largest population in the union. If we want to make the sale, now is the time to ask for it. Let's work toward giving these Californians the revolutionary insight that will give them the discipline and the courage to raise their hands to removing the material foundation which supports the dictatorship of the ruling class and with those very hands raise up the dictatorship of the working class.

HJS

Burbank, California

12 August 2003

On Washington and Canberra seize on Jakarta bombing to further justify "war on terror"

Thank you for your article. From now on, when these kinds of bombings take place, we can no longer afford not to suspect that some component of the state or military was behind them. It is not likely that any reliable facts as to who the perpetrators were will be divulged by the media. The *New York Times* reported yesterday that Abu Bakar Bashir denies that Jemaah Islamiyah even exists. This would seem to be a curious assertion, but the paper dropped it right away. Presumably his credibility is doubtful by definition. Do we really know that this group is real apart from repeated assertions by intelligence agents?

The sophistication of the attacks—the potassium chloride, the potential detonation of the bomb by cell phone—calls to mind Graham Greene's *The Quiet American*. The recent movie based on the novel showed very well how a similar atrocity was staged by the CIA in Vietnam and then paraded by the media as a marauding communist attack on innocents. Meanwhile, who were the communists? Guys on bicycles with cutting knives. We don't have all the facts, but clearly there's a lesson here.

CR

7 August 2003

On Poland sends troops to Iraq

It is indignant to send troops of Poland for the American policy of controlling the oil business. It is also proof how the former communists in the Polish government have become the servants of American imperialism. Poland suffered as a victim of German Nazi aggression and NOW this nation is used as tool for American imperialist goals, exploiting the poverty in this country, where 20 percent of the workforce is unemployed.

This is a fact. Poverty and unemployment are employed for the imperialistic policy of the war machine. The same in the USA, where they

have purposely maintained poverty and unemployment to have cannon fodder for the so-called voluntary army. A voluntary army is one where the sons of the privileged and rich class don't need to be in military service.

JP

8 August 2003

On US occupation forces attack Iraqi journalists

What in the name of God are we doing? How can we bring democracy to Iraq if we shut down the freedom of the press? I'll tell you what we need in this Great Nation of mine and that's an independent commission to investigate this Bush White House and the lies he told us about the war and why we went to war. The rule of law should apply to everyone—no matter what excuses are made by the president's defenders.

Bush in effect is acting like a selected dictator. He is destroying freedoms and destroying the position of our nation in the world. I am so sorry the newspaper *Al-Mustagila* was destroyed. I don't really know what to say except perhaps we as a nation will vote Bush out and get rid of the whole bunch that's in the White House today. Tell the paper they will see true democracy and they will be able to print whatever they want to print. Freedom of speech—freedom of the press.

VJ

Gainesville, Florida

8 August 2003

On David Waslsh's review of *Seabiscuit*, written and directed by Gary Ross

Dear David,

Thank you for the penetrating review of *Seabiscuit*.

I had no idea that Gary Ross took such deliberate liberties with the facts, but I did have the feeling that he turned his material into a trite morality play. My disappointment in the film was how flat it seemed, especially after the pointed, but awkwardly developed setbacks of the first act. The characters had no emotional conflicts, no turning points; they experienced no demonstrable growth or change. They just repeated platitudes. There were no ironies, just scene constructions that were telegraphed well in advance. But there was a horse and the inevitable horserace. It was big and grand, but not rewarding.

JB

8 August 2003

David Walsh's August 7 review of the new *Seabiscuit* film was on the money. I only wish, as an historian, he had gone beyond the film and noted that the opening paragraph in Laura Hillenbrand's preface, in which *Seabiscuit* is touted as the leading newsmaker of 1938. *Seabiscuit* came nowhere near accumulating more column inches of newsprint than FDR, Hitler, etc. The Random House editor who guided the book into print enthusiastically noted on [National Public Radio's] "Fresh Air" last week that what first interested him in the book was a statement by Hillenbrand's agent, over lunch, that *Seabiscuit* was the top news story of 1938. That bogus claim has now been refuted by both the snopes urban legend page and by my op-ed articles.

RS

9 August 2003

On Bush administration lengthens workday for US truck drivers

Dear Editor,

Upon reading the article "Bush administration lengthens workday for US truck drivers" I have felt compelled to put in my two cents. As a truck driver myself, that is about all I have.

I hear non-stop about the safety issues within the transport industry. I have also seen the widespread ignorance of the real problem with safety on US highways. Its root lies with the root of all of our other problems, money. In the case of many owner-operators I have myself spoken to, the work done legally will pay his overhead and the work done illegally will feed his family. It is quite simple.

To graze the surface, I would first question our government's idea of what exactly "rest" is. As I have myself experienced, this is defined very vaguely. In order to keep ourselves above the minimum wage level, time-waiting at the dock will be considered "rest" as we are not driving and, in principle, not working either. We are simply waiting. That will range from 15 minutes to 18 or more hours. The trick here is that one will never know when the wait will be 15 minutes or 18 hours. These are not conditions on which one can adequately sleep or "rest." In the new rules, time at the dock will be defined as "on-duty, not driving." I do not see that happening. If that were to be a reality, trucking will stop. After an extended period of waiting, one then has to "rest" another 10 hours. That, and the fact that many shippers and receivers disallow truckers to rest on their premises. This would mean that upon completion of loading or unloading, drivers may find themselves being forced to drive illegally to find a truck stop in the midst of a truck parking shortage. This would make us sitting ducks, as though we weren't already.

Unfortunately, that is only one of the safety issues at stake. I could go on forever, but the bottom line is that if we were to be compensated to justify our work and the hours we put in, then the Hours of Service regulations will have more value than the paper they are printed on. We could have a thousand proposals for Hours of Service but as long as: (1) it is acknowledged that drivers are capable of understanding the value of work versus rest and allowed to participate in the rule-making process with the "experts" who know only their desk and some graphs and tables; and (2) compensation is taken into consideration in drafting any sort of Hours of Service regulations.

These issues are straight-forward; it is difficult for me to believe that our government has simply overlooked them over the past 60 years, thereby leading me to believe that this act is done deliberately. It makes perfect sense when one takes into consideration, among other things, the millions that flow into state and federal governments from trucking penalties. The fines are easy pickings, because the truck drivers who receive these fines are left, for all intents and purposes, defenseless. Self defense would hereby require the trucker to remain in the state he received the ticket or at least maintain easy access to that state up to a few months while he waits for his court hearing. I don't need to explain what this would require.

I want to thank you for taking the time to read my message.

Sincerely yours,

RR



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