

Letters from our readers

20 August 2003

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

Re: John Christopher Burton, socialist candidate for California governor, demands full investigation into eastern US blackout, 16 August, 2003

Dear Mr. Burton (and editors of the WSW),

I've just sent a contribution to the WSWS expansion fund and was particularly motivated to do so by the appeal for financial support in the SEP endorsement of your candidacy to make it possible for the WSWS to provide an appropriate level of coverage and political analysis of the California recall election.

Also, having just experienced the recent electricity blackout in New York (all the best to your supporters in Detroit and elsewhere, where power may still be out), I appreciate your article in today's WSWS on the blackout. It is extremely important to tie California's experience to the increasing privatization of the utilities on which modern societies rely. It is not only the ownership of such utilities—worldwide—which has increasingly been taken out of public hands, but also, as in the case of the US, any public regulation and oversight of their operation. The hardships for workers and the unemployed can only be made more severe by the anarchy of this "free market" for energy and every other commodity on which our societies depend. Your calls for a full public investigation into the blackout, for a rollback of deregulation, and for the transformation of energy corporations into truly public utilities are extremely important demands to advance in the context of the recall election.

Will the SEP be considering running candidates in other elections in which such issues can be brought to the foreground and the possibility of a base of local and national support be built? One such might be the city council elections in New York City. Now that term limits have been imposed, the field is opened for many new candidates. And the experiences of New Yorkers in the past few years—9/11, increased crackdown on freedom of assembly, restricted personal mobility, the burst stock market bubble, high and rising unemployment, mass demonstrations in opposition to US militarism, the recent blackout, the growth of the social forum movement, and so on—have created a climate in which people are going to be more able to draw connections between the needs of capital and their own hardships. In any case, good luck in your campaign.

In solidarity,

SB

New York City

16 August 2003

A well-reasoned, logical and truthful disquisition. What can prevent this calamity from recurring? Why, nothing of course, given that the political system that permitted it to happen is irremovably entrenched.

Most Americans, I believe, are unaware of the underlying causes of the massive power failure, a disaster unthinkable in any other industrially advanced nation. Minor twiddling and tweaking of legislation and regulation will occur to pacify the more damaged of your citizenry, but no more.

And, as you so succinctly point out, the major organs of mass information are in the hands of the very class of power-holders whose inattention to their social responsibilities and immense regard to the maximisation of profit led directly to this affair.

State governments here in Australia are "privatising" major public utilities: gas and water reticulation, electricity production and supply, Qantas the national airline, etc., etc. I have no doubt that when important newly privatised undertakings in Australia begin to collapse, the general consensus will be act of God, inexperience of management, or any reason which precludes the systemic inability of the capitalist ethic to recognise and deal with obligations to the wider community.

Still, you over there get ten out of ten for even daring to make statements adversely critical of your appalling political circumstances. Mazeltov! Parenthetically, I must mention a paragraph in today's *Sydney Morning Herald* to the effect that the Australian government is about to bring down legislation invoking penalties for flag-burning. What price freedom of individual opinion?

Fraternal regards,

E

19 August 2003

Re: Al Gore attacks Bush on Iraq War, 14 August, 2003

Dear WSWS,

Excellent and timely article! Gore's attacks on the Bush administration, which would be welcome news if he represented a political party that really intended to take back power for working people, represent an attempt to advertise himself as the sleeping beauty of American politics who has just been awakened by the kiss of the California recall election. Suddenly the facts about the far-right have coalesced in his mind! Are we now to believe he has been reborn on the road to the White House by the startling vision of a truly Burning Bush?

Your article should be sent to every Democratic apologist and nose-holding "lesser of two evils" voter in the country. But, of course, they will by now all be standing in line to get tickets to the Gore Bandwagon, sighing with anticipation, enflamed by hope that calls to mind that engendered in family members at the bedside of a comatose loved one upon perceiving the slightest flutter of an eyelash. This is a dreadful manipulation of the emotions of a desperate population, burnt out and agonizing in a world where their jobs, their homes, their schools and their health care lie upon that bed.

CZ

San Francisco

13 August 2003

What the hell good is it to live in a democracy or to try to convert other countries to democracies, if the government does not listen to the people, as in this country, as well as the UK and Spain. The biggest percentage of the people in all democracies did not want to go to invade Iraq. It really makes me wonder if we really live in a Democracy at all.

TH

14 August 2003

Re: Spanish troops in Iraq to wear Christian badge, 12 August, 2003

Terrific article. Wearing this obscene insignia on their military uniforms, the Spanish soldiers will be targets for enraged Shia persons.

SM

13 August 2003

Re: Iraq: No letup in anti-US riots and guerrilla attacks, 19 August, 2003

In another excellent report, you quote the NPR program on casualties

arriving at Andrews AFB. The difficulty in tracking casualties is that the injured, wounded, and sick may be treated in any number of facilities.

Some are treated locally and returned to duty, others sent to Kuwait or Qatar. The more seriously afflicted are often sent to Landstuhl, Germany. Some apparently are sent directly to other installations in other countries or to Walter Reed in Washington. Some may pass through more than one installation. Therefore, the only accurate count would be at the point of injury in Iraq and that is a figure that we are not going to get.

The only thing that can be done is to read between the lines of press reports. For instance, the coalition may report two wounded, but the story will report that Iraqi witnesses report two or more who appeared to be dead. Or a soldier being interviewed may reveal that there have been "many" attacks that night on the same road. The press would be reporting only one.

There have been stories from Landstuhl indicating up to 140 daily admissions for injury, wounds, and sickness. These are all casualties. There are those seriously and perhaps permanently disabled by the war and lost to the military. Whether losing a leg to a mine, or in a Humvee turnover, or dying of a "mysterious illness," they are war casualties.

Here for instance is a quote from a story on a blood drive at Landstuhl, "Landstuhl blood drive tries to fill emptying coffers":

"One such example occurred a month ago when an injured soldier coming from Iraq required so much blood that his need alone drastically decreased the donor center's supply. 'We've been getting quite a few who have lost their limbs and really need blood,' Colon said." [<http://estripes.com/article.asp?section=104&article=17045>]

Our wounded, with exceptions such as PFC Lynch, are pretty much ignored by the media. It's as if they are unimportant and do not count. The same can be said for the sick and the injured.

The media often quotes the number of dead in Gulf War I, or the number wounded, less than 500 in all. It sounds pretty benign as wars go. Unfortunately, in the last 11 years, of the 700,000 Americans or so who served in that war, over 200,000 have filed disability claims with the government. The number who have died is not readily available. There are also, as with the Vietnam veterans exposed to Agent Orange, many reports of birth defects in their children. Britain is another nation having the same problem. Considering the massive amount of DU used this time, there is no telling what the ultimate casualty count will be 11 years from now.

I cannot discuss Iraqi casualties since they don't count. Just as Secretary of State Powell indicated in Gulf I that he had no interest in a count of Iraqi casualties, so too in Gulf II. We know that we used fuel bombs on the Iraqi positions, but there have been no reports in the media, and certainly no photos covering the carnage. No doubt, there are thousands of Iraqi families searching for those who went to war and never returned. As in Gulf I, they went uncounted—becoming, as our troops refer to them, "Crispy Critters," there would be little to ID them for a casualty list.

What my country has done and continues to do is monstrous. We should have sanctions against us and should have been condemned by the world, along with the rest of our so-called coalition.

Currently there is a movement in this country to try to get Grand Juries to indict some members of the Bush administration for the crimes committed in our name. Bush would be targeted when he leaves office. [<http://www.indictbushcheney.org/>]

RR

Orange Park, Florida

19 August 2003

Re: Verizon negotiations continue as unions reject strike, 18 August, 2003

Just wondering... We have heard some wild stories about the CWA "strike fund"...

It was stated by CWA that it was \$250,000,000, but many rumors have floated around stating that there wasn't even that much available to the

members... Just curious if you ran across an "official" figure somewhere... If they made some more bad investments, maybe the real dollar amount is considerably lower? If true, I would have to say that it would be a considerable deterrent to authorizing a strike. We are completely left in the dark here and we are starting to get a little edgy...

Thanks, either way,

M

CWA 1123, Syracuse, NY

Re: Australian government tries to muzzle national broadcaster, 16 August 2003

Dear Editor,

This is just another reason why government should not have control over TV stations. The ABC is or was popular viewing, they brought out the facts that government want concealed. It was a well-known fact about the war, how many Australians felt. Howard knew he would never get it passed in a full sitting of parliament. To top it off, he had the audacity to say he spoke on behalf of the Australian people, which was totally untrue. He wouldn't know or care about what the people want.

AG

17 August 2003

Is Australia a democratic society? The present Howard government, with Senator Richard Alston attacking the ABC, seems to say that Australia is under a dictator government.

Where is the freedom of speech if the ABC can't report their independent information?

If the ABC is anti-US, then they have they right to do so under free speech. The US diplomat has no right to interfere with any form of Australia's political affairs. George Bush should not interfere with Australia's domestic affairs. I think that Australia needs to have an urgent change of its regime.

Yours faithfully,

JB

17 August 2003

Dear Editor,

I am saddened and very concerned by your story.

As an American, I have seen firsthand what I believe to be the ongoing erosion of even-handed national and regional TV news coverage. I would refer you to America's FOX News Network's coverage of the bombing of Baghdad accompanied by a Wagner-like musical score as an excellent single example of what can happen to news coverage under government influence. The FOX news editor, as I understand it, is the former Press Director for Bush, Senior.

In America today, in my opinion, only a few news outlets remain that present unbiased news, and only a few newspapers. I must warn you to garner as much public support as possible, as fast as possible, to prevent the loss of even-handed coverage by your country's national news agencies.

You have already lost so much in state-provided funding, is it possible to ask the Australian public to contribute to your efforts? In America, our Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) network is privately funded by ongoing donations and bi-yearly televised appeals for funds. They remain evenhanded. Perhaps that is a road you should explore, and based on experience, I urge you again to take action very, very quickly.

Good luck to you,

FL

Boston, Mass.

18 August 2003



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Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact