

Letters from our readers

27 February 2004

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

On "Supreme Court Justice Scalia's hunting trip with Cheney: the political and constitutional issues"

An excellently written article. Supreme Court Justice Scalia's contempt for the public disclosure of policy, a fundamental quality of democratic government, exposes the very real threat to our democracy from a court answerable to no others, not even the populace.

Upon consideration of the construction of a Supreme Court in the United States, Thomas Jefferson warned of its potential undemocratic tendency, as establishing a court of kings does not best nurture democracy.

Truly it is Congress who in immediacy are most accountable to the public, and it is (should be) their principal purpose to review the issues such as those that come before the Supreme Court, and review them again, and review them again if necessary. The Supreme Court seeks to shape society with supreme law, whereas a truly democratic government seeks to assist society in its inevitably different shapes.

Good article.

CG

20 February 2004

My wife is a subscriber to WWSW and I read the articles she passes to me with great interest. Your story on Mr. Justice Scalia was very well written, both in facts and reasoning, and I commend your excellence.

I was an attorney for the federal government in a law enforcement agency and can tell you absolutely that if I had ever gone on a private jet for a hunting trip like the one Scalia went on, the agency would, "...have my guts for garters" as one of the English kings once said. I was prohibited from taking ANY gift from ANY person that had a value of over \$25—and I am only talking here about people with whom I had NO official business. And even then, nobody liked the idea.

Here, Scalia received a gift that probably had a value of several thousand dollars—and everybody simply ignores it! A little weeny, like me, would have been shit-canned instantly! This may be a criminal offense, but very difficult to prove if intent is an element.

Actually, I don't believe that Scalia would be influenced by such a minor gratuity. He may be a whore, but he's much too arrogant to make himself into a CHEAP whore....

Keep up the good work.

WL

Nassau, New York

20 February 2004

Regarding the Supreme Court puppets, what has happened to our rules of justice? Shame on all you so-called guardians of our nation! What next? Sell America to the highest bidder?

DF

S. Elgin, Illinois

20 February 2004

On "Australian government introduces pro-business, regional-based immigration visas"

Dear author,

I am a year 11th year student at Shenton College in Perth, Western Australia. I am very passionate about the refugee crisis here in Australia, and have done many assignments on the topic. I believe that the way that our government is treating these poor people is not only cruel and completely unethical, but is against international human rights laws. I do not understand how Australia can get away with this treatment when the laws of the treaty we signed with the United Nations clearly states that almost everything they are doing to these people is against the law, starting with their arbitrary detention in the first place.

I used to think, like many other Australians out there, that these refugees were coming to our shores illegally, so therefore they should be locked up for breaking the law, or else find their own way back. Since this time I have researched the topic (using many articles from the *World Socialist Web Site*) and found that I was completely wrong. I feel guilty and stupid for my previous opinions and am so glad that I now know the truth. I'm sure that if all other Australians were told the truth that a majority of them would also change their opinions.

I believe that it is essential for this crisis to be addressed as soon as possible, and a vast improvement in the treatment of these poor people must be made. I know that the asylum seekers in Australia deserve freedom and compassion, and I would like to help see that happen.

Thank you and yours truly,

AS

21 February 2004

On "Australia: Hundreds mourn the death of TJ Hickey"

This is an excellent article about police brutality against Aboriginals. It seems as if the black people all over the world are victimized by the racist cops. I am a supporter of the SEP and socialism.

SJ

26 February 2004

On "Socialist Equality Party condemns Sri Lankan president's dictatorial actions"

Hello there,

Whoever wrote this article is a very knowledgeable person on Sri Lankan issues, and I really appreciate him for writing the truth. Usually authors, primarily Sinhalese ones, write untruths and spread racism against Tamils. The majority of Sinhalese, who are ignorant of the problem in Sri Lanka, get even further confused, just the same way many Americans are fooled by George Bush. I really admire the author for writing the truth without being biased towards any side.

Thanks.

MS

22 February 2004

Talk about "malefactors of great wealth"! What about Alan

Greenspan coming out today and telling Congress to cut Social Security benefits rather than raise taxes on the rich? It just gets more and more brazen all the time.

Did anybody but me catch the news item on Yahoo about the leaked Pentagon report on global warming? I read it on the Internet on Monday or Tuesday night, but there has been no mention of it in “the media” since then. Supposedly, the Pentagon has been advised by authors who share its mindset that global warming is real, is caused by humans, and will be catastrophic in its consequences. Anyway, the report, of course, advocates serious mobilization of military might to fight off the mass hordes that will be adversely affected by global warming. As my sister used to say, this government, and its media, treat us like mushrooms: they keep us in the dark and feed us crap.

CG

26 February 2004

I enjoyed your article and appreciate reading views that are outside of the controlled mainstream. I think that you are right about getting a movement started that circumvents the established system, but I believe that Libertarianism is the way to go, not socialism. Keep up the fight and good luck.

CY

22 February 2004

Dear Mr. Martin,

I enjoyed your review of Weir’s *Master and Commander* and agree with most of your comments. One point—in the third paragraph from the bottom, you mention that in the book *Master and Commander* Aubrey halts his ship in mid-chase to save a midshipman who has fallen overboard. If I recall correctly, the boy was not in the navy, but was the son of a prosperous merchant and Benthamite who is along for the ride. Aubrey’s fast calculation about his fortunes if the boy is lost is a swift summary of his character and his eye on the main chance. In the event, the boy is killed in the ensuing action with the enemy vessel.

No movie can equal a book, especially those as complex, human and engaging as the Aubrey-Maturin novels. I also thought that Crowe and Bettany did not and could not fully realise Aubrey and Maturin’s characters, given the need of movies to pile episode on episode with nary a sidewise glance. That being said, it was a terrific afternoon’s entertainment and I hope they make another just as good.

Sincerely,

IS

23 February 2004

On “US Navy to be sued for depleted uranium use on Caribbean island”

Hello. I read Harvey Thompson’s article on the US Navy, which contaminated the Caribbean with uranium. I live in a desert area where there used to be, and possibly still is, bomb testing/practice. It is in a pretty big city as well. I only moved here THREE years ago and decided to take a hair analysis test because I have been feeling tired, depressed and also poor memory, etc., since I moved here. I found out that uranium in my hair is in the 99th percentile. I have to wonder how many other people are affected as well out here. I doubt many people actually get this test done. But I thought mercury was affecting me because of my feelings, and I found out there was a lot more to worry about. There are also other metals high on my hair analysis test. I’d like to know what you think about this.

Thanks.

21 February 2004

On “Hospitals oppose US government effort to obtain abortion patients’ records”

Dear David Walsh,

Enjoyed reading your article on the alarming moves by Justice Department to collect patient data. However, I think your reference to Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA) requires some clarification. I don’t think it is accurate to suggest that HIPAA is the outcome of “the undemocratic and intrusive policies of successive administrations in Washington.” Nor do I think Solove’s statement that HIPAA “basically allows the government to obtain medical records with a subpoena or court order in quite a number of circumstances” should be interpreted to suggest that HIPAA was written for the purpose of undermining *privacy*—the protection of which being the law’s actual intent.

HIPAA began as a somewhat successful attempt by the Clinton administration to give Americans “portability” of health care, so that coverage of a chronic illness could not be denied on the basis of “preexisting condition” after a change in employment. Later, the government expanded HIPAA to include Title 2, which includes sections on *patient privacy* and *administrative simplification*. As it relates to patient privacy, HIPAA is quite extensive and has had a positive effect on the way hospitals, physicians and delivery networks handle protected health information (PHI), a term established by HIPAA. Hospitals refusing to turn data over to Ashcroft’s fundamentalist thugs are no doubt resting their arguments to a large extent on HIPAA.

From what I can gather, Solove’s statement in the *Washington Post* is aimed at addressing some of the law’s inadequacies, such as the ambiguity that exists when enforcing HIPAA alongside more state regulations, which are in some cases more comprehensive.

Regards,

AR

21 February 2004



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