Letters from our readers

1 May 2004

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

On "Torture of Iraqi prisoners exposed"

Those pictures evoke the film footage of Nazi guards laughing at naked women prisoners as they were forced to run. It's the logical outcome of having demonized an enemy in order to justify an aggressive war, whether the victims are called "untermenschen" or "terrorist suspects." The "embedded" reporters certainly haven't been digging into stories such as these. Nor do they note that Saddam Hussein used to justify his brutality by branding his victims as "thugs," which is the exact same word that Donald Rumsfeld and others in the Bush administration are using today in order to justify new crimes against the Iraqi people.

RG

30 April 2004

On "US: Mass opposition grows to Iraq war"

Dear Editor,

In high school we would always talk about how the German people could have allowed their country to fall into the hands of a madman, and I never understood how it could happen in a democracy, but having witnessed the overthrow of a democratically elected president like Clinton and the illegal appointment of King George and his band of war-profiteers, I now understand.

PK

30 April 2004

It is probably no consolation to Mike Head and Richard Hoffman that their article titled, "ASIO Terrorism Act: unprecedented police-state measures passed by Australian parliament" is proving more dangerous than we imagined.

In recent weeks, Izhar ul-Haque was arrested on charges of training with a terrorist organization. Izhar is an intelligent, likable, decent, compassionate and thoughtful young man, who, if given the opportunity will make a great contribution to our society. He is no threat to our society.

However, it is likely he will be found guilty. The Act is worded so that there is no "mens rea" or criminal "state of mind" necessary—such that if the facts are proven, the person is guilty.

Izhar was interviewed without a lawyer and admitted to attending a 21-day course in Pakistan with the LET organization. Izhar is concerned about how the Muslims are being treated in Kashmir and attended the course to learn more. It was not at a military-style camp, it was in an environment much like Uni. Still, it is unlikely we'll hear that. When I've rung the Attorney General's office, they think he's had hand-grenade throwing lessons. It is disheartening for our family, watching a good man suffer because of this stupid "war on terror." When has there been an intelligent debate on how terrorism flourishes?

I do know one thing. Terrorism flourishes in environments where human rights are violated. I expect that this new Act will turn us all into "terrorists" if we disagree with the authorities.

Cheers,

FD

New South Wales, Australia

28 April 2004

Mr. Van Auken;

I read your article "Iraq crisis spurs call for US military draft" and I wanted to commend you for your work. This news should have been the lead story, possibly behind on the news of the three newest deaths in the war, yet conspicuously it went widely unnoticed and unmentioned in any news forums. I feel like this is just a continuation in the press's inability to examine the real issues and problems facing our country. Thank you for doing your a duty as a member of a constitutionally protected institution in this country.

AT

Detroit

25 April 2004

Dear Comrades,

I have just read "Forty years since the Frankfurt Auschwitz trial—a belated inquiry". The article is excellent and explained a lot to me about Hitler, fascism and the Holocaust.

In my hometown, the British National Party has just recruited its first member, who recently sent a letter to one of my local papers saying that the BNP was not racist.

I am deeply worried about the prospects for the growth of the BNP in my hometown.

In my Parliamentary Constituency, there are at least 10,000 self-employed people out of an adult population of 70,000. House prices have doubled and in some cases even trebled in the last five years.

Could the coming crash in house prices lead to the thousands of homeowners with mortgages, including the self-employed, turning to the BNP if an alternative is not put forward?

Yours comradely,

JS

27 April 2004

On "California guts workers' compensation system"

Dear Editors;

I read with interest Mr. Knowland's essay regarding California's workers' compensation system. In Canada, there was a recent decision from the country's Supreme Court that may be of interest. In the "Martin" decision, the Court found that provincial legislation in Nova Scotia limiting compensation benefits for

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injured workers claiming chronic pain was found to be discriminatory and in violation of Canada's Charter of Rights and Freedoms. As a result, Nova Scotia will have to either rewrite or omit these sections affecting Nova Scotia workers suffering from chronic pain and related syndromes.

This is a significant step and should benefit injured Canadian workers in other provinces. Perhaps a similar constitutional challenge could be launched on behalf of injured workers in California.

Best wishes and regards,

DP

25 April 2004

Dear WSWS editors:

I appreciated David Walsh's critique of Noam Chomsky's support of the Democratic Party candidate. ("Professor Chomsky Comes in from the Cold"). It reveals the predicament of the Democratic Party and its leftist supporters in the 2004 presidential elections, in which they find themselves being forced to denounce the right-wing policies of George W. Bush while being unable to offer an alternative. The agreement between the two candidates is most evident in John Kerry's support of Bush's imperialist foreign policy and the occupation of Iraq.

This development represents one more rightward step in the political leadership of the United States, a step that has its precedents in the impeachment of Bill Clinton, Bush's theft of the 2000 elections and the recent recall vote for governor in California. It is a predicament, furthermore, that is a symptom of a crisis in the two-party electoral system and the further degeneration of democracy under capitalism in the US.

Likewise, I laud and welcome the publication of those letters from WSWS readers strongly criticizing Mr. Walsh's article ("Letters and a reply 'Professor Chomsky comes in from the cold' "). These letters were a valuable contribution to the kind of political discussion that is sorely lacking in the media today. In fact, the vehement reaction of these readers to Mr. Walsh's criticism supports the latter's contention that Chomsky's endorsement of the Democratic candidate at this particular juncture is highly significant.

Unfortunately, it is not very clear what objections these readers are making to Mr. Walsh's article.

Those arguments defending Chomsky's anti-imperialist credentials are unnecessary and simply miss the point of the article. While Mr. Walsh criticizes particular aspects of Chomsky's politics, which have led him to support the Democratic Party, his intention is clearly not to diminish or disparage Chomsky's critique of US imperialism, but rather his value as a political leader.

Also missing the point were those arguments defending Chomsky's right to free speech, which was never called into question. No one seeking political clarity as Mr. Walsh is doing in his article would deny Chomsky's right to express his opinions publicly.

Finally, those letters arguing that Chomsky can somehow not be held responsible for his own comments were either being disingenuous or themselves disparaging the importance and significance of Chomsky's comments and views.

Unless Mr. Walsh's critics are willing to admit that Chomsky was in error in supporting the Democratic Party, the only relevant argument they can be making is one in defense of the Democratic Party itself. But even this is not clear because they, like Chomsky himself, do not defend the party on its own merits but rather resort to largely extraneous considerations such as the necessity for "realism," "pragmatism," "strategic voting," etc. These arguments contend that there is no real choice for those who oppose Bush but to support the Democrats and that anyone proposing an alternative to the Democratic candidate is only paving the way for the possible reelection of Bush.

As Mr. Walsh rightly points out, this is nothing but the old, threadbare, bankrupt logic of "Lesser Evil" politics. But it is a logic that has different implications for different people. For the Democratic Party and its supporters, it is the logic of opportunism by which they have justified and perpetuated their own political existences for at least the last 70 years. But for working men and women in the United States who suffer from and repudiate the policies of both the Republicans and the Democrats, it is the logic of despair, defeat and inaction.

It is time for working people in the US to realize that the Democratic and Republican candidates are both at the service of one and the same political establishment and corporate elite. It is time for working people in the US to realize that the "Lesser Evil" arguments of the Democrats and their supporters only demonstrate that the Democrats are not an option to the greater evil of the Republicans but a capitulation to it. It is time for working people in the US to break the stranglehold that the twin parties of capital in the US have on the two-party system and to build a political party that truly represents their own interests.

For all these reasons, I support the SEP candidates, Bill Van Auken and Jim Lawrence, for President and Vice-President of the United States in the elections of 2004.

Sincerely,

RR

29 April 2004

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