

Letters from our readers

1 March 2005

The following is a selection of recent letters received by the World Socialist Web Site.

On “Recruit’s death highlights brutality of Marine training”

You did an excellent job of getting to the crux of the problem concerning the treatment of young Jason Tharp, who was forced to endure the brutality, and as you so well stated, also inflict that brutality on others. I think your description of Jason as a young sensitive boy was absolutely right on. We can’t afford to lose these beautiful, innocent and sensitive souls. It just diminishes our own humanity when we lose them.

You also wrote that young Jason was “unprepared” for the rigors of boot camp. I think you are quite right in that assumption. I think we need better safeguards for these unprepared kids. They either become prepared, or are found to be physically or emotionally or psychologically unfit before they are sworn in as members of the military. They do make it extremely difficult to “quit,” and when you are dubbed a “quitter,” your problems are going to get worse in a hurry from overt harassment from the drill instructors and your own fellow recruits.

I speak from experience having gone through Army basic training during Vietnam. Thanks so much for your insightful article. And God bless young Jason Tharp and his agonized grieving family. Such a tragedy, and probably an avoidable one at that, which makes it all the worse.

BB

26 February 2005

On “30 years in prison for crime committed by 12-year-old”

My nephew was 16½ years old and had been driving for three months when he caused an accident that resulted in the deaths of two teenaged girls who were riding in the car he collided with. My nephew had no prior record (had never even been in trouble at school) but was tried and sentenced as an adult. He was on the honor roll from 1st through 10th grade. The accident occurred in June between his 10th and 11th grade.

Although juvenile sanctions were recommended by two agencies that did extensive interviews with my nephew, he received a nine-year sentence in the Florida Department of Corrections that he began serving in June 2003. Can anything be done about changing these laws that allow prosecutors to make the decision of trying children as adults as if they were hardened adult criminals?

My nephew was charged with two counts of vehicular homicide and now spends his days with gang members in a very dangerous environment. There are no opportunities to further his education except to get a GED. Attempts he has made to learn trades offered by the institutions have never panned out for various reasons (the instructors quit, he gets moved to another facility, etc.). Why have a Juvenile Justice System if we aren’t going to use it?

AT

Clewiston, Florida

26 February 2005

On “‘High Ideals, Low Pay’—how the University of California exploits its employees”

Kevin Kearney’s enlightening article about the attacks on both workers and students made a powerful synthesis of the effects of corporate control in the state and federal government as well as over the universities themselves.

How outrageous that workers involved in the education of our youth are not paid enough even to be able to take care of their own children. It shows the lie used to decimate the welfare system when, with President Clinton’s reforms, they claimed that it was necessary to stop preventing those “lazy” people from exercising individual responsibility. At the same time, the cheap exploitation of student research while fees are increased continues the trend toward a divided system of education preventing poorer students from developing themselves. Once again under capitalism, those least able to afford it are asked to bear the greatest burden.

The increased narrowing of the purpose of higher education to the aims of the profit system also has its effects on all the primary and secondary levels of

education. Claiming the desire to get every child into college, curriculum is either sacrificed to testing or students are driven toward “escaping” into low-wage jobs, often even if they have some skills, while the same corporate control forces budget cuts for public schools.

The crossover of business to the academic world is parallel to the even more significant crossover of business to government. Just as the article points out that one third of biotechnology companies were founded by UC faculty, there is a constant exchange of business and government leaders. There truly is an elite, ruling class of the owners that must be ended by the turn of students, as well as workers, to socialism.

Regards,

HL

New York, New York

26 February 2005

On “Town Hall meeting on Social Security: Michigan Democrat seeks to contain popular anger”

I thank you for an insightful article into the popular sentiments of ordinary people living under attack from the right within the United States. It is interesting to read some of the comments made by quite ordinary people, and to note that these are not simply attacks on Bush and his cronies, but on the basis of a (potentially) wider social critique, including criticism of the Democratic Party. Your portrayal of the Democratic representative for what he truly stands for is quite simply masterful.

VS

Norway

26 February 2005

On “Australian government’s ‘terror alert’ in Aceh backfires”

Thank you for the article on Aceh that draws attention to Howard and his minions’ deception. It was obvious to any thinking Australian that Howard is in deep trouble again. He followed his usual pattern when such scandals (e.g., Cornelia Rau, Habib and torture, troops to Iraq) surface: To drum up some kind of supposed national threat to take the media focus off him.

What is more troubling is that Howard’s method of dealing with any scandal is to ignore it and that the Parliament has not held him accountable.

Howard was interviewed by Tony Jones on “Late Line” February 23 on his decision to send 450 troops to Iraq. Howard of course did his usual thing of not answering the questions put to him. However, another point of interest to me is that Howard was in Perth at the time of the interview and I wondered what Government business

required Howard’s visit to Perth at this time. The only obvious reason is to support the Liberal Party bid for power and return to government following the coming election.

The next question is who paid for Howard’s trip to WA—probably in his personal jet? As a taxpayer who along with many others, pays for his travel around the country and overseas I object to paying for Howard’s personal trips.

When it comes to wages for the ordinary working class people, the Howard government cries poor and accountability—yet at the same time, I believe, they are not placed under scrutiny for their own use of taxpayers’ money.

AG

Canberra, Australia

24 February 2005

On “UK charities say Blair government contravening children’s rights”

As appalling as Blair’s disregard for the United Nations Convention of the Rights of Children is, the US takes this one step further by extending the death penalty to include children.

DF

Wisconsin, USA

24 February 2005

On “Extraordinary security measures for Bush visit to Germany”

I was shocked at the way Bush ensured his security for his visit to Germany. But it makes sense now—Bush trusts nobody. He doesn’t even trust his own troops. Did you see what happened after his speech to thousands of US soldiers on 23 February? He spent 15 minutes shaking hands with soldiers with two “men in black” to his left, two to his right and four at his back. None smiled. Most scanned the crowd for danger and some were tasked to check the hand movements of soldiers immediately in front of Bush. This “great leader” is even scared of “his” American soldiers.

JH

24 February 2004



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