

Letters from our readers

6 June 2005

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

On "Senate 'compromise' on judicial nominations: Democrats prop up a crisis-ridden administration"

When the Democrats in the US Senate reached an agreement with the Republicans to approve the appointment of Priscilla Owen, a rabid opponent of the worker, to the federal bench, the two-party system in the United States died. I have sent Howard Dean a letter withdrawing from the Democratic Party because today it is nothing more than the junior branch of the Republican Party.

AH

Aurora, Illinois

1 June 2005

On "US child poverty on the rise—statistics mask depth of crisis"

The tragedy of the US government's mistreatment of children in poverty is that it is virtually hidden from the general public. The news media simply ignores these issues. After years of conservative propaganda, I think the general public really believes that ending welfare ended poverty, and all the former welfare recipients have "been nudged" into economic self-sufficiency. People were simply refused desperately needed aid. Only a fraction of those thrown off welfare were able to secure child care, housing and family-supporting jobs; only a few of those were able to obtain medical insurance/access to medical care. The government then claimed that this "welfare reform" was a great success because welfare rolls dramatically and rapidly shrunk.

A primary factor in our determination of poverty levels was the number of people receiving welfare. The government then simply threw people off the welfare rolls, and used the caseload statistics (showing the declining number of welfare recipients) to prove a dramatic decline in poverty!

The US boasts that it is a world leader of human rights protections. I was struck by the irony of the US observation of the anniversary of the UN's Declaration of Human Rights, taking place at the same time that the government was enacting policies that directly violate this declaration. We will be paying the price for these anti-poor policies for many years to come.

DF

Fort Atkinson, Wisconsin

1 June 2005

On "US military recruitment crisis deepens"

Great piece. The crisis may be worse than the statistics indicate. Rumsfeld has been "increasing" the size of the military through outsourcing of specific specialties such as administrative and other support functions. This increases the cost of operations and makes more men available for combat without going to Congress for an authorized increase in manpower.

There is also the extensive use in Iraq of private firms to supply guards and other personnel. All of this greatly increases the cost of operations and it becomes difficult to track the true cost of the war or the manpower requirements.

The hesitancy to reestablish the draft goes to the very heart of the quest for world domination. As long as there is no draft, the majority of the public will ignore what is happening and not do anything about it. Were they to bring back the draft there would be much more scrutiny of the plan for world domination and much more resistance to any wars at all.

There is also the built-in problem of the draftee as protester. In a professional force there is less likelihood of people coming out and reporting on what is actually taking place. Once you introduce draftees, there will always be a significant percentage of them that will be willing to challenge what they are told to do and to go to the media with their complaints.

Drafting people means more people paying attention to what is really going on, and we certainly don't want that, do we?

BR

Orange Park, Florida

1 June 2005

On "Three trials, three whitewashes: US military ratifies murder of Iraq prisoners"

Excellent article. I wish it made headlines in mainstream, corporate press. You say the US ratifies murder in forgiving three men, but doesn't it justify murder whenever it starts a war? If a war is as senseless as the one America started, then is not the entire enterprise a murderous operation? What

moral grounds are there for anyone to die when the invaded country posed absolutely no threat at all? It's bloody insanity.

War dehumanizes invaders and the invaded, so this should be no surprise. Here's the ironic lining: at least the government did not find their troops guilty. Troops follow orders and policy, and policymakers must be held accountable because they created the condition for troops to act like madmen. Rumsfeld, Cheney, and even their dupe, Bush, need to be held for murder (implied in this war), and this would absolve the soldiers of their legal responsibility.

What soldier is there who would violate the policies of his or her commanders? If they've been brainwashed to believe the war as virtuous, they have no integrity for life's sanctity, and hence, they cannot be expected to violate commands. If they exercised reason and common sense, they would not have volunteered to fight this war in Iraq. If they followed their conscience, they would disobey orders, but, in this war, as in Vietnam, they do what they do to simply survive.

At stake is the alignment of thoughts in persons' minds. Morality and virtue have been suspended in favor of hysteria. Terrorists are the new bogeymen, and they could be anyone the policymakers name. As long as people believe lies of propaganda, this country is in deep spiritual trouble.

WB

Fresno, California

31 May 2005

On "The third episode, or the sixth, or is this merely a zero?"

I lived for a number of years in Marin County, California, most recently on the side of a hill in San Anselmo, the top of which was crowned by [George] Lucas's ever-expanding home compound. For all of his pro-little-people hoohavery, he was a mighty force (ahem) in the community.

To wit: he hired many College of Marin computer and art students at slightly above minimum wage (you worked for the glory of working for Lucas, never mind paying your rent); he insisted on dealing with only one labor union; he expanded Skywalker Ranch and did quite a bit of terraforming, including the diversion of streams—which used enormous amounts of water for upkeep—this in what was mostly farmland until fairly recently; he got a sweetheart deal on a massive amount of land in the Presidio after it was demilitarized.

My favorite though was the 30-day eviction notices sent to my friends in the rent-controlled apartment building that he bought which abutted his property in San Anselmo and which he demolished to expand his yard—in what is arguably the tightest housing market outside of New York City. The only reason my own building was spared is that there was a public street which ran through the parking lot.

To hear him mouthing off about totalitarianism, given the way he treats his employees, is laughable. But then, he can afford it, can't he? His movies ring hollow because he is hollow.

CMS

Portland, Oregon

31 May 2005

On "European Constitution rejected: the political consequences of the French 'no' vote"

Thank you for recognizing the true dimensions of the recent "plebiscites," the classic term used, whether the vote is over the European constitution, German elections, Turkish entry to the Common Market, Chavez in Venezuela or Arnold Schwarzenegger out in California. The "plebiscite" in all its forms is a two-edged sword, and only desperate gamblers rely on it—those hustlers who have to prove their credentials, say like Hitler, Mussolini, Kerensky, Sharon, Quebec Nationalists, Kronstadt anarchists and the CIA in Venezuela, Georgia, the Ukraine—wherever this "democratic" instrument is applied.

Regrettably for the ruling class, this is a hard instrument to control, and when it goes haywire, as it is doing, the world-historical question of legitimacy, without which no class can raise an army, is raised. Very important changes will happen, as you warn.

Thank you,

AL

Toronto, Ontario

1 June 2005

On "A dark and complex beauty—Caravaggio: the Final Years"

Thank you for the lovely, thoughtful review of this exhibit, purely in terms of art, with no politics attached. I am so used to the (usually) scathing film reviews. It was a pleasure to read something that was, for once, "art for art's sake." The links to the Web Gallery were especially helpful. I enjoyed it immensely.

SBP

Boston, Massachusetts

31 May 2005



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