

On the Hurricane Katrina disaster

16 September 2005

The following is a selection of letters sent to the World Socialist Web Site on Hurricane Katrina and its aftermath.

On “The exploitation of Hurricane Katrina: remaking New Orleans for the rich”

I have recently been coming across the term “New Orleans diaspora” again and again in the media. I think it is safe to say that after forcibly removing everyone from the city, these “Old Line Families”—wait, why be so polite?—these capitalist oppressors, will do everything within their power to make sure that the poor who have been shipped out across the country do not return.

ED

Bangor, Maine

12 September 2005

On “New Orleans and poverty: a damning admission from the New York Times”

Your final statement—“The *Times*, like the Democratic Party and other institutions previously associated with American liberalism, defends the interests of the financial oligarchy that rules America and is organically hostile to anything that could fuel the growth of political and social struggle against the existing order”—could not be more accurate. The Democratic Party has zero interest in courting low- and minimum-wage workers, and anyone who does (Howard Dean) is the victim of character assassination. They are interested only in raising money and would not be caught dead in a McDonalds or Walmart soliciting votes. Whether Skull and Bones brother Kerry or Bush wins is of little importance to the people who call the shots.

PK

14 September 2005

On “Hurricane Katrina and the meaning of September 11”

Since there is now every reason to believe that FEMA is a dumping ground for Republican patronage, I would encourage fellow socialists to check out who is directing their Regional FEMA Office.

If you live in FEMA Region VII (Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska), I’ve done that for you. The Regional Director is one Dick Hainje. His professional qualification for the position was 25 years of service in the Sioux Falls, SD (pop.117,000), Fire Rescue Department. Mr. Hainje did rise from fireman to fire chief there and holds a BS degree in firefighting from a small college in South Dakota.

However, his FEMA-related firefighting experience may be wasted in the Middle West. Major firefighting emergencies in our part of the country rarely involve the kinds of forest fires of his native South Dakota. We won’t be needing coordination of fire jumper units in Missouri, or just about everywhere else in the area.

He was also a Republican state senator in South Dakota who

worked on the Bush campaign in 2000. His bio on the www.fema.gov site also lists having worked with FEMA during the Missouri and tributary river flooding of the late 1990s in his home state. Funny FEMA mentions that. That should have rendered him qualified for National FEMA Director, considering who got the job.

Perhaps President Bush thought it was too much of a jump from Sioux Falls Fire Chief to head FEMA in Washington. But I doubt it. It’s already too much of a jump for Mr. Hainje to head this region. FEMA owes us an explanation, and I’ll bet they do in other regions, too.

BR

St. Louis, Missouri

11 September 2005

While the specter of terrorism is still fresh with the Twin Towers disaster and Katrina’s mishandled devastation, the deployment of a private-sector elite killing force called the Blackwater mercenaries onto the streets of New Orleans sends a clear signal of the type of repugnant and psychopathic tendencies the American ruling elite are capable of. These men are trained to kill with impunity in Iraq and Afghanistan—so what are their specific orders regarding New Orleans citizens? It isn’t enough to lose everything you own, or to lose loved ones, to face lethal diseases and watch the dead float down the street; now one has to watch men parading around with M-16s and other assault weapons with the hope they will not be looking your way. If their objective is to confront criminals, then perhaps we would all be more well-served if the Blackwater mercenaries patrolled Wall Street and the White House.

SN

Powell River, Canada

12 September 2005

On “US media hails martial law general in New Orleans”

I find it very amusing to compare the “heroic” General Honore with John Wayne. Don’t people get it that John Wayne was never a hero to anyone except the bosses of the Hollywood studios for whom he made tons of money, not to mention for himself? He never served a day in uniform, but America still doesn’t get it. No wonder Chickenhawks like Bush and Cheney are looked upon as the best leaders in the phony “war on terror.”

CF

Titusville, Florida

13 September 2005

On “The politics of the ‘blame game’: Bush rejects responsibility in Hurricane Katrina disaster”

Attempts to sidestep federal accountability for needless deaths of American citizens in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina by calling

it “the blame game” and pretending it is politics as usual totally miss the point. Roughly 50 percent of Americans did not vote; however, nearly 100 percent of Americans have seen the photos and crying reporters describing the scores of dead elderly and children on the street. They are outraged, and their outrage grows daily at an administration whose only expeditious action takes place when it’s for political reasons, not to save citizens’ lives.

Take a look at the Department of Homeland Security’s National Response Plan (NRP). Then you will understand why accountability is necessary—particularly when lack of same will mean lack of preparation for a terrorist attack without warning.

The NRP, signed by President Bush, Donald Rumsfeld and Porter Goss, dictates the following: “All presidentially declared disasters and emergencies under the Stafford Act are considered incidents of national significance” (pg. 7). When a disaster or emergency is declared, according to the NRP, the federal government can and has a duty to supersede protocol when it means preservation of life and assets: “Federal departments and agencies are *expected* to provide initial and/or ongoing response, when warranted, under their own authority and funding; alert, notification, pre-positioning and timely delivery of resources; proactive support for catastrophic or potentially catastrophic incidents using protocols for expedited delivery of resources” (pg. 6).

Further: “Notification and full coordination with States will occur, but the coordination process must not delay or impede the rapid deployment and use of critical resources.”

None of this was followed. Not a bit of it. As of Monday, September 6, Mississippi mayors were calling CNN to state that they’d still received no help from FEMA because FEMA alleged paperwork wasn’t turned in. Ludicrous!

Furthermore, the NRP covers responsibility for troop deployment, stating, “The Secretary of Defense authorizes Defense Support of Civil Authorities (DSCA) for domestic incidents as directed by the President or when consistent with military readiness operations and appropriate under the circumstances and the law.”

And authorizes immediate action: “Imminently serious conditions resulting from any civil emergency may require immediate action to save lives, prevent human suffering, or to mitigate property damage.” Finally, the NRP gives the President a fiduciary duty during said times of crisis: “The President leads the Nation in responding efficiently and ensuring the necessary resources are applied quickly and effectively to all Incidents of National Significance” (pg. 15).

This is not some archaic law, or theory. This was their written and signed plan. What exactly do people not understand about the federal government’s Constitutional obligation to promote the general welfare and provide for the common defense?

AP

11 September 2005

Well, I certainly don’t want to point any fingers, nor, of course, does George W. Bush, *but* Mike Brown has been removed from the position of director of FEMA in charge of clearing the debris and the bodies from the disastrous hurricane. Seems Mr. Brown forgot what his previous positions had been prior to accepting the

position as head of FEMA. Now I am certain George W. Bush isn’t pointing fingers here (nor seeking a scapegoat), but Mr. Chertoff is still in his position, even though he and Mr. Bush accepted the appointment by Mike Brown’s former college roommate. I am certain that had no bearing on this appointment; after all, we do know Mike Brown had a difficult job as the head of the judging body of the American Arabian Horse Association! Now don’t get me wrong, I love horses, and Arabian Horses in particular, so I know it is very important they not be misjudged. Right on, Mr. Bush! Who should we invade over this?

SM

Granite City, Illinois

10 September 2005

On “An angry letter from New Orleans”

Dear Karen O’Keefe,

As I understand, the Bush administration and the Good Old Boys of New Orleans’s upper classes have teamed up to take advantage of Katrina by “eliminating” the city’s social problem by intentionally starving, detaining, criminalizing—not those who are to blame for it, but those whose families have in many instances been victimized by this system for more than two centuries. If I may believe the Wayne Madsen Report, Louisiana’s Republican House member Richard Baker stated, “We finally cleaned up public housing in New Orleans. We couldn’t do it, but God did.” It seems to be along similar lines that international aid is prevented from reaching New Orleans.

I wish you the very best of luck in addressing and dismantling this mind-boggling distortion of the democratic and social values of a res publica. Please keep up your work for New Orleans’s poor, be they inside or outside the city. As a lawyer, you are in a very good position to do this. I hope the overall situation and your work can be an eye opener to the American public. I hope that they will finally take the one necessary step in the political arena.

Wishing you strength, support and many blessings,

HR

11 September 2005



To contact the WWSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wwsws.org/contact