Letters on the US hurricane disaster

6 September 2005

The following is a selection of letters to the World Socialist Web Site *in response to recent articles on Hurricane Katrina and its aftermath, including* "Hurricane Katrina's aftermath: from natural disaster to national humiliation", "Bush postures while hurricane death toll skyrockets", "New Orleans and Baghdad—two sides of the same policy" *and* "Washington tries to evade political responsibility for Katrina's devastating impact".

The colossal failure of the federal government to provide effective relief to the victims of Hurricane Katrina must mark a historical low point in government indifference to the plight of ordinary American people. The cold-hearted remarks by President Bush and the heads of the organizations such as FEMA and Homeland Security are unconscionable, and unbelievably stupid. The callous disregard of life for the victims of hurricane Katrina is mind-numbing. How can anyone justify the lack of urgency by the very agencies that were "supposed to be" handling emergency response?

FEMA may be thought of as an agency meant to respond to emergencies and natural disasters, but it was created for far more sinister reasons. It was seen as an option to arrest any serious political threat. Of particular concern was the widespread opposition to the US-led wars in Central America in the 1980s. Mass arrests were not needed, and FEMA became better known for hurricane and flood relief. The shift in emphasis of FEMA after 9/11 has apparently made it forget about anything that it used to know about natural disaster planning and relief.

The introduction of new technology, such as cell phones and computers, could have made a huge difference in reestablishing communications with lost loved ones and requesting immediate medical help. Cell phone towers could have been dropped in by helicopter as well as free cell phones designed for limited usage. So much that could have been done and was not.

How can they say that the breaching of the levies was not expected? How can they say that they were unaware of the conditions in the Superdome? How can they claim ignorance of such widely known information? How dare they proclaim their innocence while knowing that their ongoing indifference is still costing precious lives?

Their rationale, "Who could ever expect the levy to break?" echoes like "Who could have ever thought that they would use planes to crash into buildings?" Both scenarios were known in advance. In both cases, failures would not justify an investigation into malfeasance or complicity. Just failure to connect the dots they say. It was just an honest mistake.

Now the victims, demonized as thugs and lawbreakers, are being sent out to various western cities. Here in Portland, the location of the unused high school where the victims are to be taken was supposed to be a secret. Post-traumatic stress disorder they claim is why Katrina's victims are to be secluded from the general public. How about the post-traumatic stress of being confronted by drawn weapons when a drink of water or offer for food would have been the proper introduction?

More and more people are becoming aware of how threadbare are the lies coming from the Bush administration. More and more are beginning to understand that the war in Iraq is being fought not for democracy, but for oil. More and more are noting how the energy companies have the consumer by the throat while they stifle any alternative energy source. And more and more are realizing the costs for the war to control oil.

First there was the stolen election of Bush over Gore, then Enron, then September 11th, Afghanistan, and Iraq, now relief to the Hurricane victims. How long can this go on?

Bush and his administration are guilty of criminal negligence at the very least. They are guilty of multiple war crimes as well. It is up to us all to make them accountable.

FS
Portland, Oregon
4 September 2005

The criminal actions of the rich in America and those worldwide become clear to all who read the WSWS. We, not only as Americans, but as an international community, must condemn the continued assault against the most basic needs of humanity in the name of corporate profits. From Iraq to Louisiana, the lies of Bush, Blair, Howard, et al., become threadbare. Our human misery intensifies, while the rich and their nation-state governments harvest our tears.

JP
Westville, Illinois
3 September 2005

I hesitate to advise the ICFI of anything: its councils are clearly deeply informed and proactive. But in regard to the New Orleans situation, allow me to say the following.

The workers and masses of New Orleans are going to be allowed to perish in their hundreds of thousands by the consciously adopted policy of the federal government. The city cannot be rebuilt and the losses of its population never

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compensated, under capitalism. To Bush and his cronies it is an "act of God" if ever there was one.

The SEP of Sri Lanka took the lead politically in the response to the tsunami. In this it was undoubtedly correct. Surely, it is both politically advantageous and historically necessary that the SEP of the US should develop the policy that the salvation of the people of New Orleans and the reconstruction of the city is the task of the working class.

Despite the small relative influence of the SEP, an initiative of this kind would rally and mobilize many sections of the working class. I recently reread "The Lessons of October" by Leon Trotsky and renewed my thinking about the social processes that give rise to the formation of soviets. Is not the situation in New Orleans precisely one in which such a process could be initiated?

AL
Randwick, Australia
4 September 2005

Thank you so much, the truth is so needed, and in this tragedy will be examined and understood.

ML
3 September 2005

You will notice they will have martial law planned and executed to a "T," but they will never manage to get food and water to dying people who are poor, working class, or of color!

PR
Omaha, Nebraska
3 September 2005

A couple of days ago the President had his plane reduce altitude to view the water damage in Louisiana—then, according to the *New York Times*, after he arrived in Washington, DC, he played a round of golf. In today's press conference at the New Orleans airport, George Bush joked that he had experienced some really exciting times here in his younger days.

As you know, the man is an idiot. Keep up the good work.

DR
3 September 2005

This article ("Hurricane Katrina's aftermath: from natural disaster to national humiliation") nailed America on its head. I know, I was born here and have never left its borders, except a brief trip to Canada in the 1980s.

To say that we are a nation parading around in oversized vehicles, consuming more than our fair share, in all respects is shamefully correct, as our GDP reveals. However, poverty is also rampant in that 51 percent of our wealth is held by the top 4 percent of the population. Mathematically, that leaves 96 percent of Americans splitting the other 49 percent of the booty. But, isn't our president somehow tied into the big business of oil (note the sarcasm)? And don't his friends reside within the big mega-corporations whose capitalistic powers have become impenetrable? Through corporate powers, they are allowed unequivocally to don their wares incessantly, even harassingly, at all moments in our homes, neighborhoods and even elementary schools without regulation and without regards to the impoverished state of the empty world of materialism.

Further, words are hardly uttered on a nationwide scale about conservation and walking softly upon our earth, and the teaching of respect is rarely touched upon concerning even our own backyard ecosystems. Bolstering this sickened system in America, education, which I feel is crucial to undoing the lack of environmental consciousness of this nation, is not available to a whopping majority of us that reside in poverty. The bursting of the bubble that the world is seeing revealed, is that a lot of us (Americans) are in poverty's lot, which is paved with a transparent haze of material goods handed to us by our top chief who knows full well of our ignorance. Catch 22. Our American eyes are shielded at a national level and blinded again by the pervasive system that is perpetuating it all at once.

BJ
2 September 2005

Please don't forget about the small neighboring towns and cities just a few miles from the city of New Orleans and the Gulf Coast. I have family in the small town of Picayune, Mississippi, 43 miles from New Orleans, 20 miles from Slidell, Louisiana, and about 30 miles from the Gulf Coast. This area has suffered a great lost as well. This is an area that has gotten no aid or attention. I just want to get the word out. Where is FEMA or the Red Cross for these areas?

I am also sad that the unfortunate people who rely on public transportation were not assisted to evacuate the city of New Orleans when a citywide evacuation was announced. The whole issue of the levee problems had been predicted for years regarding the city of New Orleans.

LH
Fairfield, Ohio
2 September 2005

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