

Letters from our readers

20 October 2005

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

On “New Orleans prisoners left to drown after Katrina struck”

There have been quite a few articles on the inhumane treatment of New Orleans’ jail population during the immediate aftermath of Katrina. Well what about now? I have a brother who was jailed on the 26th of August for a probation violation. Guilty of a misdemeanor, he was sentenced to seven days. He is still jailed in 1415 Highway 520, Homer, Louisiana. No amount of calls there or letters to the governor is helping. I have learned that Homer is receiving \$80 a day for each inmate. Now that one inmate is worth \$2,400 a month to Homer. If Homer is housing even 300 of those inmates—well, you do the math.

We are being told that they can’t find paperwork or the paperwork is on its way or the prisoners do not have a place to be released to. We have told them that someone will be there to pick up my brother. He has a home in Parish County, but his wife is in Michigan, where she is already working. Her support includes her extended family and my family, which has a number of police. It should not concern the county where those inmates go as long as they are not held beyond their time. Take them to Houston to the Dome so they can find their families. Or better yet put them on the web so families can locate them. I understand that no county wants criminals in their midst, but right is right. If they have served their time they need to be released.

I guess this issue is not newsworthy enough for the papers to get involved. I want my brother out!

PG

HHC, 1st Signal Brigade, South Korea

18 October 2005

On “Videotaped police beating in New Orleans”

While police brutality is certainly nothing new, the utter recklessness with which it is used never ceases to amaze. It’s not enough that the majority of New Orleans’ population has lost its homes, jobs, and in some cases, relatives. To add injury to insult, we have (for all the world to see) white officers reenacting a show of racist brutality all too familiar to the South (and other parts of North America). Of course the officers claim the 64-year-old man was drunk, which would, I guess, explain their excessive force? Excuse me, since when is it acceptable to severely beat anyone for public intoxication (which ironically, was not the case)? Better yet, when is it acceptable to severely beat anyone anywhere at any time? But I guess if the logic of the day is, “They’ve been trained to shoot to kill ... and I suspect they will,” it’s really not a shock.

As an African American man, however, I can tell you this spectacle really is too much: it’s not enough to see my fellow citizens stranded and left to die in floodwaters but, barely a month after, we’re treated to the sight of cops beating an elderly man to a pulp. Of course our media, being the corporate mouthpieces they are, will try to place the blame on the victim and protect the system with its hollow symbol of The Police Officer as a keeper of the peace and law (and not their real

job, which is the protection of property and the status quo). Disgusting, indeed.

JA

Kansas City, Missouri

13 October 2005

On “British Columbia teachers strike poses need for a working-class political offensive”

Your statement, “While the massive social spending cuts of the mid-1990s were initially publicly justified in the name of fighting the deficit,” perhaps requires some explanation.

As far as I can recall, the deficit was not the result of social spending and, therefore, was not justified in my opinion. When Mulroney took over as prime minister, he reduced the number of tax brackets from 10 down to 3. When John Crow hopped over from the IMF to be governor of the Bank of Canada, he adopted a zero inflation target which resulted in a higher interest rate policy than was necessary for the overall health of the economy. With this, combined with the cancellation of the statutory reserves of the banks, the monetary weapon left that was going to be used exclusively was interest rates. Consequently, high interest rates were used to contribute to a compounding of the debt problem in the interest of the wealthy of this country. Successive tax cuts, as noted in the article, combined with a high interest rate policy resulted in a major transfer of the country’s wealth to a small proportion of Canadians.

In my opinion, the deficit was grown on purpose in order to target social spending, which contributed only about 6 percent of GDP at that time. The Canadian public was handed a pack of lies to undermine its social infrastructure. The debt was grown intentionally also to provide a means for the wealthy to get its benefits going and coming—tax cuts and buying government bonds to finance government activity at high interest rates. The cost was paid by ordinary Canadians in cuts to social programs and more user fees.

These cuts were not justified.

CS

Sydney Forks, Nova Scotia

17 October 2005

On “London’s Tate gallery censors work citing fear of offending Muslims”

We all have to stop this sinister and slowly widening kind of censorship, since art is the only platform and should *maintain* the only platform where all opinions, from no matter whom, can be said and shown.

GT

14 October 2005

On “White House, Congress press plans for major cuts in social programs”

Your article confirms one of my greatest fears about the effect of the devastating hurricanes Katrina and Rita, a fear that arose when Bush’s response this time was compared to the one delivered after Sept. 11.

What happened after 9/11? The president used the terrorist attacks as a pretext to install totally antidemocratic legislation and to wage two aggressive wars, both planned long before the event and just awaiting a “New Pearl Harbor.” So what was the “war president” to do this time? It occurred to me that the “President” was going to use the same trick again: to use a national calamity in order to press his own right-wing agenda. Therefore I consulted the Bush-Cheney-04 election program. There was nothing there that could be remotely linked to the problems facing Americans after the Hurricanes (and before future ones)! But as your article points out: yes, he’s done it again!

The amount being spent on “Hurricane Relief” to Bechtel, KBR and other companies—which of course just happen to be politically connected—is drawn from the pockets of welfare-receivers, working poor and other people.... So even if I was not able to make the connections between the Hurricanes and the privatization of Social Security, Medicare and what else is to follow, Bush (or rather his advisers) and you have made it for me. Thank you for again exposing the real nature of the U.S. political system.

P.S. I would like to express my sympathy with all the victims of the double catastrophe of Hurricane Katrina and the Bush administration

TA

Berne, Switzerland

14 October 2005

On “Ohio Delphi workers denounce company plan to halve wages and slash jobs”

You write, “Now, a job paying as little as \$12 an hour is considered a good job by many young workers.” This quote struck me, as I worked for a temp agency in two pharmaceutical warehouses where the (permanent) wages were \$10-\$14 an hour and that was considered a (comparatively) good wage by the older workers! Overall, though, they thought it was entirely too low. It’s just in northern Delaware all the new, massive warehouses seem to offer nothing better. The temp wages were a measly \$8 an hour, and for most working for that, it was the best they could get so far. Among the younger workers, even \$10 an hour seemed good. I actually thought that too until I realized that no one I was working with seemed to have savings, and that many were working two jobs just to provide for children and rent!

JL

15 October 2005

On “Bush video conference with troops in Iraq: poorly scripted, poorly performed”

As your article correctly pointed out, this video conference was just the latest in the history of scripted events held by President Bush throughout his entire administration. So only now, October 2005, is the media finally reporting this as it occurs. The question is: What, if anything, does this new reportage portend?

MZ

Maryland

15 October 2005

On “Australia: high oil prices provoking protests and discontent”

Thank you for an excellent overview of the problems caused due to the increase in fuel prices in Australia. Another interesting aspect to this issue is the desire by many in Australia to address this themselves by producing an alternative form of diesel fuel known as bio-diesel. Bio-diesel can be produced from a simple chemical reaction between methanol and vegetable oil (both new and recycled oil) using a sodium hydroxide catalyst, and is being done so by many worldwide. There are added environmental and health-related benefits of replacing current sulfur diesel with bio-diesel in that it is a cleaner,

safer fuel with proven reduction in greenhouse and fine particulate emissions. Fine particulate emissions are increasingly being linked to respiratory and cardiovascular disease. This fuel is currently available in Europe and no restrictions on its production have been enforced in North America; however in Australia it’s a very different story. Recently, the Howard government introduced a tax of around 40 cents/litre in an effort to stifle the development of this fuel as an alternative and it has been successful at doing so, an action that can only be in the interest of the oil industry. This is yet another sad example of the interaction of government and big business in the name of profit, preventing the development of a beneficial alternative that is much needed by the majority.

Kind regards,

JB

17 October 2005

On “Microsoft and RealNetworks settle antitrust case”

The real story here is that open source alternatives exist which do not require the voluntary participation of one corporate entity in the games of another.

While your article does a great deal to expose the corrupt nature of inter-corporate relationships, it does little to expose them as purely capitalist game: the functions provided by these corporations are no longer needed by society, and the news surrounding the contradictions in their relationship is reduced to capitalist propaganda.

This is old news. The false premise of the EU case is that Microsoft violated the Media Player market by unfairly allowing access from Windows Media Player developers to its APIs, when the fact is no such market ought to exist. With the recent success of the various flavors of Linux it should be realized that media functionality on the computer *is a right of the user* and not a privilege one needs to buy into, whether that be with money or by allowing oneself to be exposed to advertisements while using the Real Player.

It goes without saying that any respectable flavor of Linux provides a full range of media functionality from the get go, and recall that Linux is a product of social progress, created without the intervention of profit. We should reject these products of profit and embrace the freedom of open source alternatives.

CG

17 October 2005



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