

Letters from our readers

13 February 2006

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

On "Senate wiretapping hearing: Democrats bow to police-state threat"

From Attorney General Alberto Gonzales's statements to the Senate Judiciary Committee (not testimony, since he was not required to be put under oath), it is apparent that the Bush administration is engaged in a cheap trick. According to Gonzales, he is only there to testify as to the activity President Bush has admitted to—that is, as to intercepts of international communications where at least one party to the communication is reasonably believed to be Al Qaeda.

By so limiting what he is willing to talk about to this definition, Gonzales and the Bush administration simply sidestep discussion of domestic eavesdropping and widespread data mining.

When Senator Patrick Leahy asked Gonzales point blank if the government was intercepting purely domestic communications, Gonzales refused to answer on the grounds that he was there only to talk about something else, and that he could not get into "operational details."

Gonzales's other answers then followed from this expedient. For example, he dismissed press reports that highly placed lawyers in the US Justice Department had expressed grave reservations as to the legality of the eavesdropping by answering that the reservations were not concerning the activity he was testifying about.

Of course, the Democrats will not unmask this charade. They even let go unchallenged such provocations as the statement of Texas Senator Cornyn that the *New York Times* should be criminally prosecuted for reporting on this massive criminal spying program.

DK

Los Angeles

7 February 2006

Thanks for the article. Of course, the Democrats will mount no serious opposition. And the hearing itself, much like the 9/11 whitewash hearing, the Hurricane Katrina hearings, the Mine Safety hearings, and so on—none of these have gotten to the bottom of criminal behavior and actually corrected problems (i.e., held someone accountable other than the victims, heaven forbid!), but were meant merely to give the appearance that it's business as usual and all is under control in Washington, and these criminals can continue with this march into neo-fascism undisturbed.

It's amazing to me that Gonzo (someone giving legal justifications for torture really deserves to have a nick name) can say with a straight face that the president's authority granted to him by Congress gives him the legal justification for domestic spying and, more incredulously, locking up American citizens without charge or right to counsel. So, basically, at this point, the war is not just in Iraq or Afghanistan, but *everywhere*, and not just against Al Qaeda, "Iraqi insurgents" and the like, but *whoever* they (the administration) decides. At this point, what I'd like someone to really have is a debate

on primetime television about just what the president *cannot* do. Baseless provocation against a sovereign nation (Iran) which could result in WWII? Check. Illegal war? Check. Warrantless searches and seizures? Check. Spying? Check. Where is the bottom to all of this?

The only solace I take in all of these dark days is that, one day, historians will take note of this dark, dark time in America at which time Americans will be questioned by historians and their response will be, "I didn't know all of that was going on. I didn't know."

Keep up the good work!

DS

7 February 2006

It isn't that we've gone back "three decades," as you write. We've gone back to the days of J. Edgar Hoover. The Democrats are addicted to whatever power they have, and they don't want to lose it. It seems likely that the various political police establishments have enough dirt on everybody in Congress that they could "leak" whatever they choose and effectively smear whoever stands up to The Party. So, they love the power they have and that transcends ideology, and they're afraid.

PW

Oregon

7 February 2006

On "The Super Bowl in Detroit: the manufacturing of a 'national event'"

What you describe for Detroit could be said for many cities throughout the US. The stadiums themselves are built for the rich and famous. Take Pittsburgh, for example. When games were played at Forbes Field they were affordable—the equivalent of an afternoon movie. When Three Rivers Stadium was built, the ticket prices increased threefold, with "affordable" tickets being sold at the highest points in the stadium. Today, with our two multibillion-dollar stadiums (both of which were voted down in a "Plan A and Plan B" tax proposal, only to be forced upon us by county legislators), one has to plan on about \$150 for a family of four for the cheapest tickets to a football or baseball game. Even college football tickets are inaccessible to most families.

Regarding the escapist "tradition" that was begun at about the same time that the deindustrialization of the steel, electrical and coal industries in the Pittsburgh area and many other towns was in full swing during the eighties, it has reached a new low. Fifty-eight schools in the Pittsburgh metropolitan area, including Pittsburgh Public Schools, have called for a two-hour delay for Monday morning. One school reported in at 12:54 p.m. These delays are clearly not due to severe weather! What a disaster for working class parents who don't have the option to call in sick or go in late the day after the Super Bowl.

Last, but not least. Lynn Swann, the famous retired wide receiver for the Pittsburgh Steelers, is planning to run for governor as a Republican candidate in the upcoming election. In a way similar to

Schwarzenegger's use of his celebrity status and name recognition, he has saved millions and gotten free publicity from the media hype surrounding the lead-up to Super Bowl XL. He's remembered as the hero who made the "Immaculate Reception." His reactionary politics all but forgotten.

Thanks for the reality check and for calling things by their right name.

PS

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

6 February 2006

We have the exact same situation here in British Columbia, Canada, with the 2010 Olympics. With a "Liberal" government that lied itself into power four-five years ago, they have been very busy selling off the entire resource-filled province, while a new class of wealthy to very poor has grown in leaps and bounds. While things have never been worse for the "regular" man here, we host the next Olympics. Many people now live in poverty because of it, and it hasn't even happened yet.

JC

6 February 2006

On "Two more West Virginia coal miners killed"

I live in northwest Wisconsin. When the Sago Mine story hit the news, I watched non-stop and prayed that all the miners would be found alive. It was very disheartening when the message came out that they were all alive and three hours later only one was clinging to life. I pray that all of the families and friends will get through this. These men gave their lives for all Americans. I hope that the survivor makes a great recovery. The miners are all heroes in my book, and the big corporations that own the mines should be held responsible for their lack of respect for the safety for their employees. Nobody should have to fear going to their job just to get a paycheck. Once again, my prayers are with the families of the mining accidents.

SC

3 February 2006

On "Indian airport workers strike against privatization"

It is certain that a government incapable of running a public sector institution well will be a big failure in making the private institutions work for popular welfare, as the latter require closer control and supervision. The private enterprises, with their eye on big profits, will always try to evade rules and regulations.

MMR

3 February 2006

The hypocrisy of the Indian media is seen from the omission of "operation and maintenance" (of airports) by the private firms as the central issue in the strike. The media is projecting the impression as if the employees are striking against "modernization" of airports—a deliberate misinformation to spread contempt and ridicule against the airports employees.

JP

Hyderabad, India

3 January 2006

On militarism and the US dollar

I have been a reader for as long as you have existed and am entirely sympathetic to your overall position. I've noticed, however, that you do not seem to take seriously enough the fears among the US ruling elite over the potential collapse of the dollar as the world's reserve currency if oil is traded for euros. There were significant fractions of the financial class (whose activities involve investments in other countries as opposed to simply bombing them) who did not agree with

the crazy neo-con programme for world domination, but who nonetheless supported the invasion of Iraq in order to stop Saddam from selling oil for euros.

Since the US empire depends on maintaining the dollar as the reserve currency, the opening of a Europetrol bourse by Iran constitutes an even greater threat of 'wealth meltdown' than did Saddam's sale of oil for euros. "Regime change" in Iran will be supported overwhelmingly by the US ruling elite because of this, even though many among them know that further military adventures undermine their global interests. The choice for them is between catastrophe and extinction, just as it is for the rest of us, but on other grounds.

MG

France

6 February 2006

On "The killing of Patrick Dorsimond: New York police violence escalates in wake of Diallo verdict"

I am happy to see that someone out there realizes how big a problem these killings are. My stepfather was shot and killed by the cops three years ago, and we all feel that the cops have too much power. If a civilian kills a cop, they get the death penalty, but if a cop kills an innocent person, they get a slap on the wrist, maybe a paid suspension, and they are back on the force. There are no consequences that adequately punish such a crime. I would like to thank you for putting the idea out there that the cops can be wrong sometimes. I think they should be punished for the killings just as the regular population is. I live in NC and I have heard of killings by the cops that are wrong, and they are always cleared. Not once has a cop been sent to jail for their wrongful killings. This is unjust, and is a problem that needs to be paid close attention to. It's like the cops are above the law. Please help me to keep on getting this message out and to draw more attention to these terrible crimes.

AB

Raleigh, North Carolina

3 February 2006

On the World Socialist Web Site

I just wanted to let you know that in these dark days, I always find some comradeship on your web site. I live in the Midwestern US, and sanity is a precious rare phenomenon around here. Keep up the good work.

DH

Lawrence, Kansas

5 February 2006



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