

Letters from our readers

23 March 2006

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

On "Washington seeks to bully UN Security Council over Iran"

As you adequately pointed out, the US ruling elite has much to gain from action against Iran while the rest of the developed world has much to lose (to say nothing of the "developing world"/"third world," which already suffers immensely regardless of Iran). What I find incredible is that the US expects that China and Japan, two of the biggest holders of US debt, will sit by and let the US affect their economies and economic interests as it sees fit. Equally incredible is that the US expects the rest of the world to let the US determine the geopolitical landscape for the following 50 years, as it's obviously trying to do by invading Afghanistan and Iraq. At some point, someone *will* put their foot down with the US and we'll all suffer because of it.

Mixed in with all this rhetoric is the US saying, "We must stop Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons," as if the US (and incidentally, all of the members of the UN Security Council) didn't have enough bombs to destroy the world many times over (and more incredibly, as if the US hadn't been the only nation to ever use nuclear weapons against civilians). What worries me most of all is the recklessness of Washington. Cornered animals often lash out when they feel most threatened, preferring to go out with one big, violent show than weakly. Remember, while Hitler was still fighting a western front he at the same time turned his attention to the east, to Russia, and we know how that turned out.

At a time when Bush & Co. are more loathed and hated at home and abroad, the infrastructure of the US is crumbling, the US is polarized in the way it was not too long ago, and the Iraq war going from tragedy to catastrophe in ways not yet fully seen or understood, we'd all do well to watch that these animals in suits don't take us to the brink.

Keep up the good work!

JH

15 March 2006

On "US auto union in deal with GM to slash health benefits"

I am a retired General Motors hourly worker. I believe we should have had the right to vote on this issue. I am on a fixed income. Now gasoline prices are higher, my property taxes are being increased, the price of heating my home is going up, the price of electricity is going up, and my car insurance is going up. I do not know what to do. I am unable to go back to work again, due to my poor health. I cannot afford to pay more money out of my pocket. My pension is only \$874.74 per month, and my Social Security only enough to pay for my house payment, the propane to heat my home, and my electric bill. And my pension pays the rest of my bills. I was unable to qualify for the heating act. This means I may have to sell my home, and there are a lot of homes up for sale in my area, so far it takes almost five years to sell. I believe our union sold us retirees out. We should have had the right to vote on a big issue like this. If I was still working I would have paid out of my check to keep our retirees benefits as they were. Hopefully the judge will say no to this agreement, since we did not have the right to vote on such a big issue that affect us retirees. I will not have the money to take care of my health. I also will have to cut things—like Internet access and my telephone.

JS

Prescott, Michigan, US

16 March 2006

On "Canadian prime minister proclaims major shift with Afghanistan visit"

This is yet another typical neo-conservative attempt to slide Canada into the muck of neo-fascism, one of the prime directives being to implement policies slowly so as the public doesn't notice this ominous slide and/or change their attitudes about something horrific. Additionally, it has now been announced that Mr. Harper will not allow his ministers to speak about anything unless reviewed by the Prime Minister's Office. Access to the press, what is left of it anyways, will also be restricted. This should spark extreme outrage and concern among citizens and among opposition parties whose absolute duty should be to expose this dictatorial, hierarchal, and dangerous turn of events. But I suspect at most, a small whimper from press and public alike.

Among the neo-conservative voters is the attitude of putting the brakes on spending (to the public) and reducing taxes (for the wealthy), both being rather shaky, worn wheels propelling forward an idea that will destroy democracy, decency, equality, dignity and any other value that sustains a life-affirming civilization.

I am not hesitant in calling what is happening across this world as evil. We think in Canada that we are a decent society, that it is a permanent given; those in Western Europe thought the same in 1939. There was no possibility that perhaps the worst holocaust in history, if for no other reason than it was well-planned, could have happened at a time of reason, at a time of relative sanity. It did. It will again if the public remains like a plump cow in the midst of wolves. The philosophy that drove the Nazi mind is exactly the same as that which drives the thinking of present-day neo-conservatives—deception, division, destruction for the benefit of a very scary elite. Our troops will not be, nor are they now, engaged in fighting for "us" any more than the German troops were for German citizens; they are there for empire whose monarchies are corporations owned and operated by families first and shareholders second. Workers may not even be last on the list since getting on the list requires some sense of respect from the elite. We are expendable. Mr. Harper's brazen disregard for future dead soldiers highlights that fact if one cares to listen. His most recent disregard for openness, honesty and freedom of speech highlights it again.

There is only one answer. If you are reading this on WSWWS, you already know what it is.

SN

Canada

17 March 2006

On "Saddam Hussein turns the tables on US-run show trial"

Reports of the huge assault on Samarra and the surrounding area—with the usual bludgeoning clumsiness resulting in civilian deaths—are careful to mention that "Iraqi troops" are participating. They fail to mention that the "Iraqi troops" are mainly Shias, who can be guaranteed to be ruthless against the Sunni population after the destruction of the Golden Mosque in that city. Making use of the sectarian divisions that it set in motion itself, the US military plays the game it knows best: divide and conquer.

I have a feeling that the latest air strikes and bombings, contrary to the

claims that they are after “insurgents,” are in fact attacks by one sectarian group of Iraqis against another at the instigation of the American occupation forces. The fact that the attacks are taking place in Samarra is suspiciously timed, to say the least.

You write: “In the end, however, there is good reason to want Hussein—or anyone else who invokes the criminality of those judging him—shut up.” Yes. The same reasons that the Hague Tribunal wanted Slobodan Milosevic to shut up: what he can reveal about Washington’s crimes against humanity in the decade of bombing of Iraq during the 1990s; the no-fly zones; the embargo that prevented the importation of vital drugs, resulting in the deaths of thousands—mostly children. On top of that, there is the embarrassing fact that Hussein’s ex-buddy Rumsfeld was only too happy to supply him with chemical weapons in the war with Iran and maintained this “friendship” in order to prevent the militant religious jihadis from spreading their influence in the region. It was only when Hussein got a little above himself and invaded Kuwait—another puppet client of Washington—that the hammer came down. The country has never recovered.

CZ

San Francisco, California

17 March 2006

Thank you for such a well written and insightful article. Below is the BBC’s article at the same time. They have consistently been very biased when it comes to this trial!
http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/4811236.stm

MP

17 March 2006

On “National Day Labor Study exposes exploitation of day laborer”

For a couple of years, temporary day labor was my only option. It was limited-time, minimum wage, factory, office or cleaning work. I very rarely encountered men doing this work, and the majority of these temp help workers were white women. The agencies have offices, and one fills out an application form. You’ll be assigned to a job that might last for one day, maybe for a few months. These people have no job security, no hope for pay increases, no benefits.

DF

Wisconsin, US

15 March 2006

On “Chikungunya epidemic on the French Island of Réunion: a ‘natural’ catastrophe”

I have noted on the UN news service that about a week ago, chikungunya was detected in the east of Madagascar. Another mosquito borne illness, dengue fever, is also present in this area. Whilst chikungunya in itself is not necessarily fatal, it severely weakens the resistance of its victims, making them susceptible to other diseases. Although the news report did not mention it, I would suspect that people already infected by HIV would be hardest hit by the virus. Madagascar is also one of the poorest countries in the world, where the vast majority of the population subsists on less than one dollar a day. Unless proper measures are instituted, the Madagascan population is going to be hit particularly severely by chikungunya.

EG

15 March 2006

On “US: AK Steel lockout enters second week”

During a replacement worker safety meeting on March 13, 2006, at AK Steel in Middletown, Ohio, Mr. Robert Short, an OSHA [Occupational Safety and Health Administration] training instructor, made this comment in front of 200 people: “When you step foot on AK Steel property democracy is out, this is a dictatorship.” I may be a scab, but I support the Constitution of the US first so I walked out to join the union on the picket line.

ML

Hugo, Oklahoma, US

18 March 2006

On “Historic showing of Viola Liuzzo documentary in Detroit”

I am a single black woman, with four beautiful children. Today, I decided to watch television for some strange reason, maybe because I was bored. As I began turning the television “Home Of The Brave” caught my attention, it seemed interesting. As I began to watch it, I really started to understand the role Viola Liuzzo played in the life of African-Americans, and understand that she gave her life in believing that everyone should be treated equally, regardless of race, gender. She also believed that we as blacks should have the right to vote. I would like to thank her and her family for standing up for what was right, and for making a *big* difference in my life.

KT

Milwaukee, Wisconsin, US

14 March 2006

On “Kentucky mine operators gear up for a coal revival”

Thank you for the article on the conditions of the mines and the proposed “improvements” being offered by the government. The very idea of relaxing English language understanding requirements in order to import more easily exploitable Mexican workers is yet another example of capital’s attempt to pit worker against worker. It is also an example of capital’s callous disregard for the very lives of the workers involved.

Workers coming into this situation from elsewhere, who will have no knowledge of the history of the area, and no idea of what the safety requirements are (or rather, should be) other than what they will be told by those in charge of the mines, will be very easy prey. Not only would they undoubtedly be paid less, but who is to say that important warning signs and manuals will be properly translated to ensure their safety? Will such dual-language manuals be sacrificed with the common plea of “not enough money”? How many of these people will be lost in the next disaster?

United in death is not good enough. Workers need to unite across borders to demand safe conditions and proper compensation for their time and skill.

CMS

Portland, Oregon, US

15 March 2006



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