

# Letters on US politics, history and the media

24 August 2006

*Below is a selection of recent letters to the World Socialist Web Site.*

*On "William Jennings Bryan and the rise and decline of the Progressive Era"*

Just read your review of the new bio of William Jennings Bryan by Michael Kazin. Nicely done.

I found this observation in your review particularly profound:

"It is highly symptomatic of the mood prevailing in wide sections of the formerly liberal intelligentsia that the most reactionary features of Bryan fascinate Kazin. What about the question of public ownership, the redistribution of wealth, opposition to militarism? The Democratic Party rejects these Progressive Era goals, but this is of little concern to Kazin."

A century ago, nothing united progressives—of all stripes—more than the conviction that concentrating wealth posed a mortal danger to democracy. Thanks for highlighting this aspect of the Bryan legacy.

Sam Pizzigati

Editor, Too Much, an online weekly on excess and inequality

12 August 2006

Just wanted to send a note of validation for your review of Michael Kazin's book on Bryan. I am a U.S. history prof (a lowly adjunct) in the Midwest, and, while I have not read this book, I agree with your assessment of the dynamics of this sort of "liberal" interpretation of history. I have always been troubled by the "whiteness" of the Progressive movement—this is still seen in liberal publications like *The Nation*—so it was refreshing to see someone "call a spade a spade," as it were, as you did in your review.

On a broader note, I have enjoyed reading the WSWs for years for its willingness to say what needs to be said. Your drumbeat of an internationalist movement of the working class is one that resonates for me. Keep up the good work!

DH

Lawrence, Kansas, US

11 August 2006

*On "After defeating pro-war incumbent Lieberman, Lamont reassures Wall Street"*

"Lamont called his business success 'a quintessentially American experience. Here, entrepreneurs have the freedom to be successful in ways the rest of the world admires.'"

I love these stinkweeds that were "born on third base and think they hit a triple." The message is that if you work hard

and have some basic talent, you, too, can "succeed." Well, Ned, I got news for you: The rags-to-riches routine went out with whalebone corset stays. You may think you "succeeded" on your own merits, but it was the inherited millions that gave you the real leg-up on the rest of us.

The Republicrat Party still lives.

BS

Springfield, Oregon, US

17 August 2006

*On "Bush administration seeks changes to War Crimes Act"*

Is there anything that these degenerates will not do to escape their obscenities? They must have studied every despot in history, it seems, as every day exposes another example of their cruelty. Is there something inherent in Christian Military culture that is obsessed by the sexual? If these actions were not so abhorrent one could see how crazy they are, and these people have such power, too.

It seems to me that this new style of barbarism can only increase under a system of government which is in existence only to increase the wealth and power of a group of monsters. For that is what they are, and there is no need for moviemakers to imagine characters for their films; they need look no further than the actions of their present masters.

FH

Perth, Western Australia

16 August 2006

*On "Northwest Airlines to laid-off workers: rummage through the trash"*

I have started this letter three times already. My mind stutters in response to the astounding lack of sensitivity displayed by Northwest toward their soon-to-be former employees. To paraphrase for this new age of corporate greed: "Let them rummage through the trash for cake."

CMS

Portland, Oregon, US

18 August 2006

*On "US media disgraces itself once again: Rush to judgment in the JonBenet Ramsey case"*

If one needs yet one more example of the US power structure pandering to the über-class, this story should suffice. Recall that at the beginning, the Ramseys were treated with the lightest of kid gloves by the police of upscale Boulder, Colorado. If the Ramseys hadn't been well-to-do, would Mom and Dad have been allowed to avoid "an interview" as long as they had? In

fact, the very word “interview”—not “interrogation,” or even the milder “questioning,” but “interview”—makes it sound as if they were going to sit down for tea with Regis and Kathie Lee. How thoughtful.

And how different the story would have been, had the family been the Washingtons of Harlem, the Rodriguezes of East LA, or the Hatfields of West Virginia. In any of those cases, the mainstream media would likely have had no problem placing the blame on the parents.

Whatever the case, I see a “Made for TV” movie coming out of this. Which is one of the many reasons why I’m glad I don’t watch television.

BS

Springfield, Oregon, US

19 August 2006

Excellent article! When I first saw the pictures of the “suspect,” I couldn’t get over how much he reminded me of Lee Harvey Oswald (even the dumb expression on his face) when he was surrounded by Dallas Police and proclaiming “I’m just a patsy” on that day in November 1963.

DB

19 August 2006

The media’s obvious lack of any etiquette is only a reflection of the low caliber of the populace it serves such lies; their gullibility is such that they believe anything put in print. Thanks for your excellent overview of just “how low they can go.” It’s purely Pavlovian.

TG

19 August 2006

Dumb! Dumber!! Dumbest!!! This is the most beautiful and one of the best short articles I have ever read. The media is a piece of trash and lies and propaganda that will and has already destroyed our daily life in this society. It’s a sad reality, but it’s the truth

LO

19 August 2006

Well, you hit the nail on the head. It is sad that so much of the media is of this nature, maybe because Murdoch owns so much of the media. I found the constant repeating and online interviews so irritating. It only gave a break to the terrorist airplane issue a short break along with the Middle East. Can’t let it stay still too long, have to keep the spin going so they can keep it moving. Back to the Ramsey case, even when the prosecutor projected the need for some time for further facts and clarity, they kept going. This guy could have been looking for a free trip home. With all of that media coverage, where are they going to find an unbiased jury? He’s guilty, guilty like everything else. Their tactics are unbelievable, they are doing the same with Lebanon and every conflict out there, protecting the American public from what they just won’t be able to handle. Good article, it is refreshing for me to come to read the WSWs reports.

SJ

Kansas City, Missouri, US

20 August 2006

On “A new week: US media frenzy over JonBenet murder carries on”

“All JonBenet, All the Time.” In your report on the network news obsession with the JonBenet Ramsey business and John Mark Karr, you include the following quotation:

“People really do enjoy the more heinous details of a crime,” opined the segment’s guest, Dr. Casey Jordan.

Do they? Are they enjoying, for example, the heinous crime committed in South Lebanon, with piles of dead people—mostly women and children—incinerated in basements where they’ve gone to hide from Israeli shelling? Or perhaps they are enjoying the bombing of ambulances and fleeing civilians? How about the heinous results of the use of white phosphorus and depleted uranium? Or the heinous deaths of working class young men and women economically drafted into the armed forces and sent to the Middle East on the basis of lies to die or be horribly maimed while trying to kill and/or horribly maim other young people?

Further, are the American people enjoying the heinous crime of torture and extraordinary rendition?

It seems to me that people are being very selective about what they consider heinous. Then again, it may be that Dr. Jordan is describing what is enjoyable to him.

CZ

San Francisco

22 August 2006

I am 63, from a long line of social activists, and consider your site to be superb. I have introduced many acquaintances to you as an example of what media coverage should be, but overwhelmingly is not. Occasionally, I do read mainstream media’s verbal vomit just to see how it is being presented.

But, now here comes the “however”: I feel that the time WSWs spent writing the JonBenet article and the site space used to present it could have been used more constructively for presentation of a subject more worthy of WSWs’s usual high standards.

Peace.

BP

Tennessee, US

22 August 2006



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