

Letters from our readers

20 October 2006

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

On “New study says US war has killed 655,000 Iraqis”

After reading the article on the estimated 655,000 deaths in Iraq as the result of this illegal and immoral war, I would like to be a traitor. The entire Bush junta needs to be sent to the dock, tried at the International Criminal Court, and thrown in prison for the rest of their lives. And if they want to arrest me for what I’ve just said, well, in the words of the smirking idiot, “Bring it on!” Of, course, I’ll be proven right.

CC

Glasgow, Scotland

12 October 2006

On “Why is the American press silent on the report of 655,000 Iraqi deaths?”

I would like to express my respect for this important and authoritative report on the 655,000 deaths in Iraq. Surely these figures speak for every family in Iraq who has lost loved ones or friends whilst whole families have disappeared. They must also speak to the international community.

Under orders from the Bush administration from day one the military has refused to release accurate, or for that matter any figures, on casualties—American or Iraqi. The military has departments that project casualties and regularly revise their figures. There is a very high level of culpability and recklessness involved. For instance, what would be the long-term implications in Bush’s schema of one war following another, or the military being in Iraq for the next decade? Or Bush’s intention to use nuclear weapons in Iran?

In Sydney the *Daily Telegraph* newspaper does not think 655,000 deaths amounts to very much, as their report of this story was buried back on page 27, giving it two and a half small lines. In contrast, nearby, 19 full pages were given over to the horse-racing supplement. Their story planted the lie that the 655,000 deaths were a part of bringing down the Saddam Hussein regime. They had nothing to say about the real intentions: the colonial plunder and rape of Iraq, especially the strategic grab for oil and territory. Not a word was written about the millions of barrels of oil that have disappeared in Iraq without paperwork, nor how this criminality has its reflection in today’s high petrol prices.

JC

Sydney, Australia

13 October 2006

Why is the media silent? Because it can’t refute the facts. Therefore, it says nothing.

CS

13 October 2006

In partial answer to your query, kindly note PBS’s “Lehrer News Hour” has quietly dropped its (almost) nightly ‘Honor Roll’ of American servicemen killed in Iraq and Afghanistan, which included photos in addition to names. This, at precisely the time American casualties, both dead and injured, have spiked pre-election. Whatever one’s view of this administration or its wars, this is the most blatant and shameful exercise of media self-censorship of which I’m aware—ever. It can have only one purpose: aiding Republican electoral prospects. I suggest the same answer to your query.

BTW

Fairview Park, Ohio, US

13 October 2006

On “Behind the UN debate on North Korea: growing Great Power rivalry”

It is sad that at present there is no effective movement against nuclear weapons. I believe in the spirit of Bertrand Russell-Einstein: that there should be a total ban on the production and use of nuclear weapons worldwide. This is the only moral principle to avoid the possibility of the human race committing suicide. The policy of big powers to maintain their own arsenal of nuclear weapons while denying others this facility is morally flawed.

SJ

Lucknow, India

12 October 2006

On “House repossessions soar amid record debt levels in Australia”

In Perth the price of homes has gone through the roof with the effect that rents are also soaring. The prospect of increasing homelessness seems to have passed the politicians’ antenna. The obscene profiteering by real estate agents and landlords is another example of the malaise that capitalism facilitates. How people can be so easily seduced by dollars is a sad state, but one which is common in most Western systems.

Anyone even half-awake must be aware of the social implosion that is escalating in one of the richest countries in the world. While CEO’s pursue their greedy agenda, the poor struggle to maintain their meager existences. While the spoilt children of the bourgeoisie obliterate themselves with copious toxins and keep the police force on high alert, no one seems really concerned that there is growing discontent and displacement happening in the suburbs. If there is a rise in interest rates and a downturn in the mineral boom it could be anarchy in a very short time.

FH

Willeton, Australia

12 October 2006

On “Kashmir earthquake survivors face another freezing winter

without adequate shelter”

Thank you for covering this issue. It is important to publicise the plight of the victims, their struggle, the corruption of the Pakistani government and the callousness of the ‘donors.’

I think it would have been useful if your article had clarified a couple of points. One of these is that, if memory serves, the lakh compensation was only offered to families where a death had occurred due to the earthquake. The amount was much lower for injuries and I don’t believe there was anything specifically for loss of accommodation or livelihood. So not everyone affected was even eligible for that pittance. It also would have been worth pointing out what a lakh is worth, both in terms of some convertible currency and in terms of what it could help to rebuild, if anyone actually received it.

Another important point is that most of the relief and reconstruction aid promised at the donors’ conference last year was not in the form of gifts, but of loans—some so-called soft loans, but mainly hard loans. It is of course, or ought to be, a great embarrassment to go cap in hand to the international community for disaster aid while spending millions on nukes and the military.

I am surprised to learn that Musharraf spoke at UAJK in Muzaffarabad, when I know the campus was utterly destroyed and relocated to Islamabad. Of course things could have changed in the month or so since I left, but the last I heard, rebuilding, even a design for the new campus, had not started.

I personally traveled the entire length of the Neelum Valley in early June. There is one small tent village near Muzaffarabad, but except for that immediate area, the valley was largely unaffected. Houses had cracks in the walls similar to what we experienced in Islamabad. Everyone I met was living in a house, so I am deeply skeptical of your 90 percent figure living in tents.

Finally, one of the great tragedies of Pakistan is that only the very richest and most privileged kids in any part of the country ever get to attend a real primary school. From my experience working with PhD students there, most of whom were teachers themselves, I can assure you that outside the elite private schools like Beaconhouse and the International School, education is a misnomer for what kids go through there. It is probably worse in educational terms than not going to school at all—which is exactly what many kids do anyway, mainly for financial reasons. Many so-called schools only exist on paper; others have students, but the teachers never bother turning up. A lot of primary teachers are purported to be illiterate and certainly few indeed are what you might want to call educated. Musharraf himself relates a story of a school he visited where the kids were taught to write English from right to left.

HF

Turkey

12 October 2006

On “Report documents the disastrous plight of Canada’s welfare recipients”

Eric Marquis’s article about the National Council of Welfare’s Report: Welfare Incomes 2005 should not be a surprise given the impact of the last two decades of government’s policy that is clearly producing in Canada what Dean Baker (Center For Economic and Policy Research in Washington, DC) calls, “the

conservative nanny state.”

Even on a health-related tax item, the Canadian government will not change the unjust and discriminatory “threshold” used to calculate the Medical Expense Tax Credit. It should be stressed that this unjust calculation is duplicated, too, at the provincial level. The result, using 2005 tax criteria for example, is that a taxpayer with \$30,000 net income compared to another with \$200,000 net income, when both have \$3,000 of medical expenses, is that it actually costs the lower income taxpayer more actual dollars for this equivalent medical expense when calculated at each taxpayer’s marginal tax rate.

In fact, the former federal Technical Advisory Committee on Tax Measures for People with Disabilities, despite the efforts of one of its member to have this committee address this unjust tax, was unwilling to deal with this unfair tax on low income taxpayers.

Government’s complete disregard for tax fairness on threshold used for the medical expense tax credit is, instead, answered with the federal government’s elimination of the 10 percent excise tax on jewelry over a five-year period at a cost to the public treasury of \$300 million when fully implemented and \$100 million a year thereafter. This clearly illustrates the limited electorate governments really represent.

And, furthermore, in Colleen Fuller’s book, *Caring for Profit*, she states on page 110: “Although the corporate sector is fond of decrying the amount of money it contributes to public coffers, corporate tax payments fell from 17 percent of total revenue in the mid-1980s to less than 9 percent today. (Compare this to the situation in the 1950s when corporate taxes made up approximately 52 percent of tax revenues.)” And since her book was published (1998), there have been more tax cuts for the corporate sector.

This report merely reflects the obvious consequences of past government policy that should not be a shock to anyone.

CS

Canada

12 October 2006



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