

Letters from our readers

11 December 2006

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

On “Iraq Study Group: a bipartisan coverup of Washington’s war crimes”

I enjoyed reading your article on the white-wash job done by the Iraq Study Group. I have repeatedly tried to find out the monetary cost of the Iraq war. I carefully searched the Department of Defense’s web site and found nothing. Then a month or two later the Department of Defense announced that it did not know the cost of the war—I’m not kidding about this! I was able to get private estimates, but I always felt that they were inaccurate. Now, inside the Iraq Study Group’s report we have such an estimate.

“To date, the United States has spent roughly \$400 billion on the Iraq War, and costs are running about \$8 billion per month. In addition, the United States must expect significant ‘tail costs’ to come. Caring for veterans and replacing lost equipment will run into the hundreds of billions of dollars. Estimates run as high as \$2 trillion for the final cost of the US involvement in Iraq.”

Two trillion dollars! A fantastic sum. This is hardly mentioned in the press, yet it is a financial disaster. Perhaps this can be mentioned in a subsequent article.

JR

9 December 2006

You write, “The Iraq war was not a mistaken policy that can be set right by adopting the Iraq Study Group’s 79-point plan. It was a premeditated crime for which no one has yet been held accountable.” Not only has no one been held accountable, but no one *will be* held accountable. It has been agreed that the incoming (Democratic Party majority) Congress will not seek impeachment. Among certain layers of Democrats, this is acceptable. “Just move on,” has been an oft-heard phrase in conversations around town here.

This report basically gives the go-ahead (presented as part of a “solution”) to what was the original aim of

this debacle: corporate possession of Iraq’s oil resources. How, I must ask, is this going to help rebuild Iraq? Surely, the infrastructure to serve the corporations will be put in place, but will this bring the electricity, hospitals, schools, and water services back to those not fortunate enough to be employed by these companies? Will it help those who do remain alive cope with the massive losses of family and friends?

Will further impoverishing the population by taking away the one globally-demanded product from their control serve to stem the tide of radicalization, or will it intensify it? If these plans are put into action, how long will it be before we are again at war there because “al Qaeda” killed an oil worker?

CMS

Portland, Oregon, US

9 December 2006

On “Bush rejects Iraq Study Group report”

If there is one thing that the Iraq War has given to various dictatorial nations around the world it is that democracy must be a sick joke. Why would any nation want to convert to a quaint democracy when they see democratic nations start a war against the wishes of the people and to topple another nation at the drop of a hat? To outsiders they must think a democracy must be a bona-fide dictatorship where the average person might have certain everyday freedoms, but the government still does what it wants when it wants.

We could say that nowadays democracies have been corrupted by power-seeking individuals, but I don’t think the average Iraqi would care to listen. Nor would anyone think much of democracy if a few power-seeking individuals can corrupt the system that easily.

SG

Australia

8 December 2006

On “Social polarization in American academia: Pay for US university presidents soars”

I teach a part-time literature class at a state university

in the American South. My whopping pay for this is less than \$300 a month—after withholdings. Of course, no benefits, no perks, are given. Like most schools, the university is in thrall to the donors and the president here has an MBA instead of a PhD—that is, not a terminal academic degree but the one you get to be a corporate fat cat. At least there's no pretense here; it's right there in front of your eyes for everyone to see.

The other little nasty not-so-secret of higher education in America is the invidious divide between regular faculty (and true, as mentioned in your article, less and less of these have a chance at tenure) and the part-timers, who are often just as talented and smart as the full-timers and are quite often the better teachers. Without these hired wage slaves—whether degreed already or teaching assistants getting their degrees—the whole system would collapse. In the midst of this, though, the suits who are in charge have no trouble dragging down their unfair share, at the expense of everyone else.

As Martin Amis said in one of his books (I forget which), “It’s a false economy,” and the corporate-capitalist paradigm rules in academe, just like everywhere else.

RM

7 December 2006

On “Massive US prison population continues to grow”

I read your article on the increasing level of incarceration in the US. It was very interesting. I completely agree with you in the fact that the increasing number of incarcerations shows a society in decay. I do not, however, agree that the reason for this is inequality of wealth. Statistics have shown that youth incarceration rates are higher in homes where the father is not present. In my opinion, the reason for higher incarceration rates is the fact that many mothers no longer have the opportunity to stay home with their children because fathers are out of the picture.

If everyone was raised in a nurturing household, then they would have less of a chance of ending up in prison. The breakdown of the family is the primary cause of increased incarceration rates, not wealth inequality.

Thank you for reminding people that there needs to be action on our part to stop this. This was an article everyone needed to hear.

DJ

7 December 2006

On “Union surrenders benefits, wages in sellout of California grocery strike”

Thank you for your coverage. I wish I had found your site when I was locked out. It was a horrible experience: the lack of support from the union and lack of media *truth*. The union didn’t even try to defend us *publicly* (newspapers or TV) with all their—oh!, all of *our* money. The hypocrisy was unbearable.

The public I encountered who crossed lines were convinced they knew the truth from the mainstream media. They scorned people who served them, servants who didn’t deserve \$20,000-35,000 a year. Now butchers and cashiers will not be people who can afford to own houses in California, nor send their kids to college. The oppression is mounting. All retail workers will be lowered to the status of Medicaid-subsidized Walmart employees.

SM

Eugene, Oregon, formerly of California

2 December 2006

On a letter on “Borat: whose pie and whose face?”



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