

Letters from our readers

13 February 2007

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

On “Democrats’ ‘Out of Iraq’ caucus puts on a show for its radical friends”

Great article. It’s hilarious when people so involved in politics don’t even research the people they seek support from. This is a nice demonstration that a little research shows those senators are total hacks. I have been enjoying the articles out of DC lately—great job.

EA

Tallahassee, Florida, US

6 February 2007

On “Unanswered questions about the Karbala raid”

Don’t forget the instances of American and British soldiers being caught disguised as Arabs and carrying explosives, as well as the dubious circumstances regarding the Golden Dome explosion and various car bombings, with people being told to show up at a job location and then call their employer, only to see their car blow up when they dial the number. I am sure the list of black op type operations in Iraq are endless, the Karbala attack among them.

UK

6 February 2007

On “US Federal Reserve chairman issues warning on social inequality”

Bernanke’s comments—what a hoot. Education as route to social/economic success? Tell that to the part-time wage slaves of academe, who often have PhDs, are paid mouse wages and have no benefits whatsoever. Include in here truly indigent graduate teaching assistants, whose prospects for a university career are less than zero in the majority of cases. Beyond the ivory towers, it’s the same: an engineer or middle manager is just as subject to downsizing and a ruined life as a wrench turner. (No, I’m not going to use a euphemism here like “economic dislocation” for the truly awful damage the movers and shakers have done to the rest of us Americans.) David, thanks for covering this. The events are truly explosive, as you mentioned, and while the ruling class lets leak its concerns from time to time in a muted fashion—keeping the fog of obfuscation going—their concerns necessarily must be real at this point, or they are, truly, idiots.

RM

8 February 2007

David, a fine article. Yes, there appears to be a growing nervousness among the ruling elite in the global empire—including its US central office. Perhaps, Bernanke and others in the imperial court have noticed that even their own CIA identifies countries with GINI indexes in the US range (mid 40s and climbing) as candidates for “civil unrest.”

However, a very important other topic related to the gross scale of inequality which you addressed is the damage being done to the global economy because of the methods by which the super-rich elite make their disproportionate incomes. Here, I am speaking about the intentional ‘gaming’ of the well-known economic ‘market-failure’ of one-way private profit pumping by socializing massive negative externality costs.

It seems to me that as much as the gross inequality of incomes has increased in the last 20 or so years, that the propensity of the ruling class to make their income through this destructive ‘gaming’ of negative

externalities is at least as great.

Just as you recount the somewhat egalitarian days when CEOs ‘only’ made 35 times a worker’s pay, the companies of the 1970s were often normal operating companies that actually produced goods, and that had not yet learned how to turn a profit by merely externalizing social costs. Don’t get me wrong. Business executives of earlier years were no saints. They would build dangerous cars and burn coal as well as treat workers with contempt. But it is somewhat unique to the past 20 years that predatory CEOs and private equity pirates would literally promulgate their central business strategy purely on negative externality dumping—be it pollution dumping or dumping of healthcare and pension liabilities through phony bankruptcies.

In any case, your article about how increasing levels of inequality and the massive incomes that the ruling elite are securing is one side of the same coin with the increasingly nasty and anti-social means by which they are producing private profits and public damage.

Keep up the great articles.

AM

Sanford, Maine, US

8 February 2007

When the United States of America was first established, equality in all things was its watchword, and this was a sheer novelty for the rest of the world. America’s boast was that every citizen had an opportunity to become rich, and as time went on the boast became reality. The United States became the residence of choice, and the peoples of the world beat a path to Ellis Island, until the depression of 1929.

Today the US has a preponderance of the world’s wealthiest persons, but equally a growing force of those that are unable to earn an adequate income. The experience of the US parallels that of the Roman Empire that had inequality built into its constitution. At the height of that Empire’s power its success was based upon the contribution of the three classes of society, the Senatorial, Equestrian and Plebeian. It was the plebeians that manned the Legions and produced the essential military power, the Equestrians that occupied the responsible administrative positions, and the Senators that ruled and earned and enjoyed the wealth and luxury of a great power. Throughout its history, the policy of a frequent census and inexorable taxation, borne chiefly by plebeians, contrived to depress and impoverish that class. The rich got richer and the poor got poorer until there no longer were Romans to man the legions.

Socialism has been given a bad name, particularly in the great United States. It is, however a system that that seeks a better sharing of wealth, and unless the US learns to appreciate this its Empire will fall, and much more swiftly than the Roman, which lasted 600 years.

GW

Ottawa, Ontario, Canada

8 February 2007

On “Jimmy Carter’s book on Israel and Palestine touches a raw Zionist nerve”

I just wanted to let you know how much I appreciated this article. Your web site is a breath of fresh air. I can’t tell you how refreshing the honesty and accurate reporting are compared to the news here in America. Keep up the good work!

JK

6 February 2007

When the Pope quotes a few lines describing Islam as a violent and aggressive religion, its followers immediately begin burning, looting and killing to prove his point for him. When Jimmy Carter explains that Zionists try to intimidate and stifle any legitimate discussion of their policies, they immediately begin a well-orchestrated and deliberate plan of intimidation and censure, thus proving his point. I don't believe there are two better examples in the world against organized religion or religion of any sort. How can free-thinking and rational people seeking peace possibly accommodate the sort of self-centered and short-sighted brutality of these two sides of the same tainted coin? It is now the twenty-first century in most areas of the civilized world, but in parts dominated by religion it's still the dark ages. You would be hard-pressed to come up with two better arguments against religion.

PK

6 February 2007

On "US auto union tells members to 'expect sacrifices' in new contracts"

If there's such a thing as "freefall" in the labor movement, the UAW in the US is in it. In essence, they've become a "company union"—doing not only the dirty work of management, but preventing any other union from taking its place on the shop floor.

What will it take for both management and labor to work together and promote a single-payer universal healthcare system? In fact, I can think of neither a better time nor two organizations in a better place to do this. All three US automakers have healthy care funds that are solvent for now. So why are they cutting their employees off at the knee and abandoning their retirees? The answer is the *high cost of health care*—especially the cost of drugs.

Double-digit inflation in the healthcare industry has only been fueled by the Part D Medicare drug coverage that was written virtually *in toto* by the Big Pharma lobby. You'd think the UAW and the carmakers would be sitting on legislators and the Bush administration about the effects of this on their own healthcare costs. Instead, they're sitting on their hands. It's ridiculous.

As for wage cuts and job buyouts, all three automakers make money just about everywhere else they make automobiles, cars, and trucks. Ford has done well with its Volvo investment despite paying workers comparable wages in Sweden. (Volvo makes about 20 percent of the heavy trucks and cabovers sold in Europe.) Ford UK is also near the bottom in quality ratings (by JD Power's measures) in Britain, yet shows a profit at its UK subsidiary. And the name DaimlerChrysler speaks for itself.

Domestic auto and truck makers continue to have the same *management* problems that have plagued them for years. Overall customer satisfaction with their products reflect (1) a tendency to center production on higher-profit margin products; (2) conservative design philosophies (less "flashy" or "sleek" than their foreign counterparts); and (3) "bugs" in engineering and production in introducing new makes and models. Although by the same assessment customer approval more often leads eventually to higher marks than in the past, it means that the Big Three are about always two or three years behind foreign competition. With unpredictable gas prices, it's no wonder they're still making gas hogs and losing their once commanding lead in passenger truck production.

Just ask the UAW. You think they don't know all this?

BR

St. Louis, Missouri, US

7 February 2007

On "Australia: police officer faces charges for killing Aboriginal prisoner"

Not only indigenous people are outraged. No one has a licence to kill, and the police reaction to an enquiry is disturbing. Their duty is to uphold

the law, not make exceptions due to misguided loyalty perceptions. This case should be made known to everyone in the country.

RH

Launceston, Tasmania, Australia

3 February 2007

Currently, Queensland Police Union and numerous Queensland Police officers are attempting to threaten the democratically elected Queensland Government and achieve an uncontrollable and self-ruling status. They actually demand immunity from any form of public, political and judicial control. This situation seems to be socially and politically dangerous and requires urgent and adequate response in the interest of Queensland democracy and people.

I am sure there are many honest and professionally responsible Queensland Police officers, who understand that Chris Hurley's case has nothing to do with industrial relations and "political interference." It is the Queensland Police Union (QPU) that is attempting to interfere in legal judicial proceedings and operate outside its responsibilities. I believe honest and professionally responsible Queensland Police officers appreciate that QPU vice-president Mr. Fitzpatrick acts irresponsibly and provocatively, actually discrediting Queensland Police. The current situation indicates that the professional quality of Queensland Police is questionable and raises doubts about its public reliability. Minister for Police Judy Spence and Police Commissioner Bob Atkinson are personally responsible for this situation. I am calling on them to resign.

Police and prosecution cannot be uncontrolled in a democratic society, and the Queensland Government is acting lawfully via the attorney general. I invite anyone spreading the opposite opinion to provide exact references to appropriate legal acts in support of their view.

Finally, I would like to stress that the current situation with the Queensland police and prosecution suggests that it is vital for democracy to strengthen political and public control over police and prosecution and to initiate a new Parliamentary investigation into the Queensland police and prosecution functioning—a successor to the Fitzgerald Commission.

AB

Palm Beach, Queensland, Australia

3 February 2007

On imprisoned journalist Josh Wolf

I think that you should address the issue of Josh Wolf. At midnight on February 6, Wolf entered his 169th day behind bars for refusing to hand over a videotape of the 2005 anti-capitalist rally against the G-8 summit. Since Wolf caught the burning of a police car partially paid for by the federal government on tape, prosecutors claimed that this made his case federal, which precluded him from the protection of California's law that journalists needn't hand over their material to police.

"No, this case is not about a videotape and it's not about justice," says Wolf on his in prison blog. "This entire matter is about eroding the rights of privacy and those of a free press. It is about identifying civil dissidents and using members of the news media to actively assist in what is essentially an anarchist witch-hunt.

"How many of the freedoms promised to us in the Bill of Rights are still intact? How many more liberties will be eroded away? The future is uncertain, but at present the military continues to wage war in Iraq in the name of freedom. I don't know whether to laugh or cry at the tragic irony of it all."

Wolf refuses to hand over the tape.

JC

7 February 2007



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