

# Letters from our readers

22 January 2008

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

On "US appellate court rejects British victims' suit for Guantánamo torture damages"

One could also note that the argument that "these officers acted within the scope of federal employment" is the essentially the same as Goering's and others' main defense at the post-WWII Nuremberg trials: mainly that they were following orders. They argued that since the heinous acts committed against Jews were allowed by law, they could not be tried because that would infringe on the sovereignty of the German people. Now, it is my understanding from this that as long as we don't torture on US soil and as long as we don't torture "people" as defined by the torturers, then it's ok.

The greatest problem is that this strikes at the very heart of the concept of checks and balances, because once you give a branch of government the powers to both interpret the law and to execute it based solely on their interpretation of those laws, you effectively circumvent those principles that protect us patriots from the government. I believe this sets one more very dangerous precedent for those of us who understand that it is in not giving away our liberties and our once influential moral authority in a world that seeks leaders to address the plight of billions around the globe, that will allow us to keep our "hyper power" status as well as improve relations with those innumerable amount of groups that "we" "perceive" as threats as well as "win" in the so-called "war on terror." Unfortunately too many people do not understand let alone seek to understand and address this global crisis that in large part our government has helped to propagate in most places around the world.

EU

16 January 2008

On "US film studios and television networks announce layoffs and cutbacks"

You cite the comments of Greg Parker, a retired maintenance worker who came to express his solidarity at the Viacom rally: "I have been to a number of strike rallies. I see the writers as part of the entire labor movement. What affects them affects all workers. They should get more support. I don't know why my union or all the unions aren't

on this picket line showing their solidarity. The unions could be here if they wanted to, but I guess they feel that this struggle is not their struggle."

This is a common feeling, it seems, from speaking with a number of workers in various fields. Many of the actual workers are watching this strike with interest, recognizing themselves in the writers. Meanwhile, the unions are not even acknowledging the strike, thereby betraying their own interests as being very different from those of the workers they claim to represent. It is once again made apparent that the union movement, as far as being a means of advancing labor's rights and representation, is defunct.

As noted further along in the article, the directors' union is cutting its own deal with the studios. Again, we see worker pitted against worker by the very entities who make such hay about the Glorious History of the Labour Movement. While the History of the Labour Movement might be glorious, clearly the Present is bankrupt.

One must also look at the actors who have appeared on the picket lines. Are they going back to work themselves? This is something that I have not seen any press about.

CMS

Portland, Oregon, USA

16 January 2008

On "Bob Dylan as psychological pastiche: I'm Not There"

Just a minor correction: I haven't seen *I'm Not There* yet, but your review mentions "a London concert" at which an audience member calls Dylan "Judas." I don't know if the location has been changed in the film, but the real life Judas incident occurred not in London, but at the Free Trade Hall in Manchester. A mislabelled bootleg recording of this concert led to its becoming incorrectly known as the "Royal Albert Hall" concert.

As for Dylan's retreat from social comment in his work, I tend to believe his own explanation that he was unwilling to assume the "voice of a generation" mantle that was thrust upon him. Despite this, he continued to record occasional "protest songs" when he felt deeply about something, such as "George Jackson" and "Hurricane."

RP

Hong Kong

17 January 2008

On “Michigan primary vote shows political impact of US slide into recession” and “Clinton-Obama row over Iraq record masks consensus on continued occupation”

Towards the end of your article is the following paragraph:

“Money and media manipulation will continue to be the major factors in determining both nominations, not genuine popular sentiments. This is particularly evident on the issue of the war in Iraq, where a clear majority of Americans favors immediate withdrawal of all US troops, a position opposed by all the major candidates for the nominations of both parties.”

At least as far as the Democratic Party candidates are concerned, if you don’t listen or read at length to what they have to say, you can get the impression that they agree with the clear majority and will be working if elected to withdraw all US troops. Anyone familiar with the way that the Democratic Party operates will of course recognize this as demagoguery. The candidates will say almost anything if they think it will win the nomination for them. Still, there are probably a goodly number of people in this country who wonder if such outright lying can be done. So I wish that you would remind your readers that the democratic candidates are basically lying about what they will do if given the office of the President and also hedging about what they are actually saying.

Bill Van Auken in his article of yesterday “Clinton-Obama row over Iraq record...” in fact did show the “waffling” that Clinton and Obama are doing on their statements concerning the war. But I think that at least some of the readers of this site need to be reminded of the level of hypocrisy that commonly occurs when candidates of the bourgeois parties campaign for office.

In fact, I heard even Dennis Kucinich yesterday on “Democracy Now” qualify his call for the immediate withdrawal of all US troops from Iraq by saying that UN troops should replace the US troops. We all know whose interests the troops of the UN would represent.

PL

Maine, USA

17 January 2008

On “As Wall Street posts sharp losses, Washington promotes ‘stimulus package’”

I want to express my gratitude for your article of January 18. This site is the best source for analysis of the current economic situation available. I sure don’t enjoy reading the bad news, but I do appreciate hearing the truth. Keep up the outstanding work.

JB

Lubbock, Texas, USA

18 January 2008

On “Cholesterol-lowering drug linked to increased risk of

heart attack”

Before Andrew Weil went commercial, he noted in his book *Health and Healing* that many of the so-called “miracle drugs” on the market were not the product of laboratory research, but rather the end result of a process whereby old drugs were pulled out of the dustbin and tried in new ways. For example, the lethal drug Thalidomide, which in the early ’60s had been used as a sedative and had been subsequently found to be responsible for severe birth deformities when taken during pregnancy, was remarketed in the ’90s (need source verification) for some other ailment. The bottom line is that this kind of chicanery is an inherent feature of the profit system.

JC

Fraser, Colorado, USA

19 January 2008

On “‘Neon Bible’ by the Arcade Fire: Where to from here?”

You write an interesting review. I have always neglected to check out the Arcade Fire because I simply assumed that they were just another pre-packaged Indie band with nothing to say who made it big off of the wave of popularity for Death Cab For Cutie. Perhaps I was wrong. I will be checking them out, though.

More importantly, I think that articles like this can be very important for the socialist movement. It has the potential to catch the younger generation’s interests and connect them up with socialism. Socialists must be familiar with the cutting edge of culture and the intellectual currents behind it, and not only that, they must offer the socialist perspective on it.

I would like to see more arts reviews dealing with popular culture and bands which are extolled by young people. Personally, I would like to see an article written about the hip hop acts like Dead Prez, Immortal Technique, and Saul Williams. It’d be a treat to hear what the WSWS thinks their place in the socialist movement is.

PJ

19 January 2008



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