

# Letters from our readers

26 February 2008

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

*On "An exchange on Australia's 'Sorry Day' "*

I would like to say that if the Rudd government were truly "sorry" about what has been done to the indigenous Australians in the past, then should it not also be "sorry" for what Australia has done to East Timor over the last few years? Should it not renegotiate the international border between the two countries so that finally the East Timorese may lift themselves out of poverty and political instability?

JH

22 February 2008

Thank you for annoying the unbelievably tepid Australian left with your pretty sensible comments about the apology. The whole thing is such an absurd farce that it hardly merits comment. But since you keep getting hate mail about this, here is some support.

The apology is directed towards a minute fraction of the crimes committed against Aboriginal people. The fundamental crime on which Australia is founded is dispossession. Without recognition of this fact and negotiations of reparations, no serious debate can be had about the role of the Australian state.

Were this a matter of an apology to be followed by some kind of compensation package, that would be only a bare minimum. Without it, it just cannot be taken seriously. It is instead an apology given together with the extension of new forms of demeaning control and humiliation.

No doubt the whole thing has been calculated so that we spend the next four years talking about compensation, which suits the government just fine. It is a grand opportunity to seem reasonable, and for the Aboriginal leadership to continue their demeaning, embarrassing quest for recognition by a state that has no legitimacy.

The episode is revealing in a number of ways. For instance, although a few Liberals appear to have been

genuine racists, most of the party turned on a dime on this issue. What that indicates is that there probably never was any serious commitment to racism on their part. Really, the refusal to say sorry was just a particularly shameful part of managing the Howard brand for the Hansonite market. Or consider the hysterical reaction by "the left" to anyone who fails to be properly amazed by the wonderful character of our new maximal leader, who the previous week was some nonentity. Without any change of policy. That's truly remarkable.

But it is hard to justify spending any more time on the issue. It is transparent manipulation.

TCO

Sydney, Australia

25 February 2008

*On "Trevor Griffiths' These are the Times: A Life of Thomas Paine—A great film yet to be made"*

Thank you so much, Ann, for this piece. I am forwarding it to all should-be Thomas Paine supporters I know, including our organization, Thomas Paine Friends. For several years, now, I have been advocating in my small ways for this script and for it to be made into a film. I hope your article here reaches even more people and, most importantly, reaches some people who can make the film happen.

JC

21 February 2008

Thanks again to the WSWs for publishing this very informative article on the Tom Paine screenplay and the equally informative interview with Griffiths. I believe that Brian Taves in *The Romance of Adventure* mentioned that the American Revolution was rarely treated in Hollywood cinema because it represented an embarrassment. This is due to the fact that it showed that America once had a revolution, the implications of which it wished to forget. Soon the Federalist reaction occurred, leading to Paine's marginalization.

The same thing has happened to Trevor Griffiths, as a

comparison of his work on television before Thatcherism and after shows. However, like Paine, Griffiths has not become silent and continues as a key oppositional voice as this screenplay shows. It is also shameful that his *Bill Brand* is not available on DVD while countless TV adaptations of Jane Austen and “safe” historical dramas are. The same is true of Ken Loach’s four-part series *Days of Hope* dealing with English political history from World War I to the 1926 General Strike. That, too, has been safely buried. However, these alternatives do exist, and it is to the credit of WSWS that it has supplied us once more with access to another creative voice denied expression by the corporate forces controlling contemporary cinema and television, but still available to those who seek them out.

TW

22 February 2008

On “Citizen of the world: a brief survey of the life and times of Thomas Paine (1737-1809)”

Brilliant and highly informative article and I am glad you keep posting it. Also, concerning her last line, “we still live in many respects in the Age of Paine,” I get the pun, especially since her opening lines mention that his father’s surname was Pain, not Paine.

Meanwhile, I had not been previously aware of the friendship between Edmund Burke and Paine. Somehow, Burke reminds me of Christopher Hitchens! An intellectual turncoat of the Royalist persuasion if ever there were one. Who financed Burke, and who finances Hitchens today? Talk about building Iron Bridges....

To conclude, I take issue with the idea that iron was at the time of Tom Paine a new metal. It had been used for many centuries prior to his effort to use it for a bridge, and it was known to be ductile, flexible, and subject to oxidation, also known as rust, similar to most ideas. I suspect that what he was demonstrating was that iron could be used to overcome distance, having to do with angles of impact and stress, which could not be done with wood, as Talbot may have alluded to.

DS

24 February 2008

On “Obama’s Texas speech: Populist appeals with reassurances to big business”

I very much appreciate the WSWS coverage of Obama’s “momentum.” One thing I think is

particularly reactionary about him and other Democrats, including the “liberal” Russ Feingold, is the insistence that the working class youth give their free time to charity in exchange for an education. Education should be free in the first place, and so should social services. You shouldn’t have to force students into Americorp or military service just so they can afford an education. I agree that this “service” requirement is also a sort of backdoor draft. Thanks for preparing the working class for its coming tasks with your political exposures. Finally, I also agree that if Obama is elected, which seems likely, people who support him now will be rudely awakened, with explosive consequences.

EA

21 February 2008



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