

Letters from our readers

14 July 2008

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

On the war in Iraq

I am a Kurdish person, and I live in Iraq. What I see in this country is not freedom.

AO

Erbil, Kurdistan, Iraq

11 July 2008

On "Obama's swing to right sparks warnings from 'left' backers"

A regular reader of the WSWS is tempted to tell so-called progressives who support Obama, "I told you so." Bill Van Auken catalogs and analyzes the disappointments that vex Obama's leftist supporters. You'd have to be extremely inexperienced and stupid not to expect Obama's move to the right, far to the right of the center. After all, Obama is the USA's power elite's blessed one for POTUS #44. No progressive agent of change will be tolerated by the USA's power elite.

LL

9 July 2008

It's now (since the primaries) clear that Obama was a Clinton-style "New Democrat" all along, following the same strategy utilized by the former president's administration. This is actually a merging of the two parties into one right-wing ruling party. There has been *no* caving on the part of the Democratic leadership; rather, there has been a partnership with the hard-right since the "Reagan Revolution." In simple terms, our government was hijacked, and we can either fight back or accept it.

Don't take my word for this, though. Go back through the legislation of the past quarter-century. On policy after policy, a couple of Democrats will pay lip service to the moderate-to-left majority while carefully ensuring that the most extremist right-wing policy moves forward unimpeded. The "strongest" Democrats will "take a stand" only for policies that don't have a chance of being enacted.

What sickens me most is that Obama's campaign was primarily financed with money that the poor-to-middle class could barely afford. Once he won the primaries, he "clarified" what we (ordinary and stupid) people "misunderstood" him, announcing his right-wing agenda, continuing (intensifying) the worst of the solidly hard-right agenda.

I can't say that we were fooled because we saw enough during the Clinton years to see that the Democratic Party was hijacked by the Gingrich bunch (and who's surprised that Gingrich recently re-emerged?). There has been a complete merging of the two parties into one increasingly dictatorial government body. But out of desperation, we hoped.

Tragically, both Obama and McCain have the same agenda, making our votes utterly irrelevant. Both are pro-war, pro-corporate men who will not deviate from the current agenda. Voting for Obama merely gives approval to the New Democratic Party of the hard-right.

DHF Wisconsin, USA

9 July 2008

On "A socialist answer to the global rise in gas prices"

What this, and related matters show is the real danger of a tragic sundering of the "red" and the "green," where the "green" ends up being the last line of ideological defence for capitalism, having decided that it's

easier to tackle global warming by screwing the working class rather than taking on global corporate power.

This provides the ruling classes with some sort of perverse ideological fibre, complete with rhetoric of "sacrifice," etc., produces yet another round of indirect "stealth" taxation, combined of course with even less tax on corporations and the wealthy, and carries with it perhaps, in a last-ditch nightmare scenario, of an "eco-fascism" which decides to "save" the planet by doing away with the working class altogether, although I hope we never get that far.

Confronted with the "green" being set against the "red" there is then the danger of a backlash of the "red" against the "green" where large numbers of workers start to buy into global warming denial, seeing global warming as simply yet another excuse for the bourgeoisie to screw them, which then in turn only redoubles the fervor of the deluded pro-capitalist "green" on the other side of the barricade, and then so on and so forth, in a ghastly downward spiral.

One of the challenges of the coming period has to be for the WSWS and the ICFI, building on the stances they have taken so far, to keep the "red" and the "green" bound closely together: to sound ever more clearly the manifold dangers posed to the planet by various human activities as they are presently constituted, yet to also stress ever more forcefully how revolution and socialism are the absolutely necessary first step for even beginning to tackle these dangers, and to forthrightly denounce "neopagan" (for want of a better phrase) misanthropy wherever it rears its head.

And just to add, another challenge is to repeatedly emphasise, against the smug snobbery of the middle-class protest outfits, how such groups as truck drivers are members of the working class, no matter what political views may have historically been present amongst such groups in the past, and no matter whether they are necessarily be *au fait* with all the latest trivia of campus gender identity politics. There is more joy among the revolutionary workers when some of their number flock late to the banner than with a whole battalion of smug self-righteous activists who have been at every demo since Spartacus.

AG

10 July 2008

On "Obama joins Senate vote to legitimize Bush's domestic spying"

I wouldn't say the warrantless wiretap vote was a "frontal assault on basic democratic rights." I would call it something closer to "urinating on the corpse of what was once known as democratic rights."

PK

10 July 2008

On "High-level panel urges new law to regulate how US goes to war"

No discussion about the War Powers Act should omit clauses 14 and 18 of sec. 8 of Art. I of the Constitution, which gives Congress the power to: "make Rules for the Government and Regulation of the land and naval Forces;..." and "to make all Laws which shall be necessary and proper for carrying into Execution the foregoing Powers..."

The founders not only limited the power to declare war to Congress, they also gave to Congress the power to make rules about the land and naval forces in clause 14. This power to make rules about the armed forces stands in addition to the power to make laws about them in clause

18. The founders gave Congress both a law making power and a rule making power about the armed forces.

It is commonly stated that a Congressional resolution withdrawal would be an unconstitutional legislative veto. However, in the case of armed forces, clause 14 gives Congress a unique power not applicable to other areas of government to regulate them, other than by a law approved by the President. With respect to art. 1, sec. 7. cl. 3, I would say a “rule” is not an “order, resolution, or vote.”

AS

10 July 2008

On Charlie Rose’s interview with Ted Koppel

It will serve you and your readers well if you can review a copy—video or transcript—of PBS’ Charlie Rose’s interview on July 9/10 interview with Ted Koppel. Koppel was there to promote his discovery channel series on capitalist China.

To Rose, Koppel declares the cynical truth that the only real reason for the Iraq invasion/occupation is to militarily secure control over Persian Gulf oil production and distribution. He says it’s a continuation of attempts to replace military presence that previously had been produced via the surrogate Shah in Iran and the US troops in Saudi Arabia, and so on. He basically acknowledges that the other alleged reasons—“freedom,” democratization, WMDs—are insignificant flotsam and jetsam.

On his fabled “Nightline” program Koppel never insinuated any such thing. When he served as an embedded reporter—with absurd Dukakis-like posing on tanks—he carried out the complete freedom/WMD/terrorist line on “Nightline.” He was there when US military shelled the hotel housing Western journalists—and he kept his mouth entirely shut about that, and all else he has now acknowledged with Rose. (I clearly recall the hotel shelling and his self-censorship, because as a fellow reporter, I complained to him and his “Nightline” in an email at the time.)

GW

Lodi, California, USA

11 July 2008

On “Specter of a police state: Mexican torture videos reveal ties with military contractors”

Good article. What is missing is the complicity of the “human rights” organizations who testify in Congress about it, signal support, then later offer tepid criticisms when it is passed and the time they could have rallied their members is ... gone. Also, Obama actually wants to increase aid to El Salvador, where now it is revealed US sought to intervene in the election there.

JT

11 July 2008

On “Mongolia declares state of emergency following violent protests”

Excellent article. By far the best international coverage that any media outlet has bothered to give about this subject. In my mind it is a tricky issue because there are a lot of different threads involved and it’s hard to label exactly who the bad people are.

I am a Westerner but I married into a Mongolian family and my father-in-law, before his passing was a very powerful member of the socialist revolutionary party. I would like to talk a bit about his history because it is of interest to this discussion. My father-in-law, we will call him Dorjbaatar, grew up in a wealthy family, a family who had a lot of cattle, and political contacts. They had enough contacts for him to study in Moscow where he excelled in Marxism and economics. His excellent studies allowed him to pay his own way and actually send money back to his family (which I find an excellent policy, by the way, giving a certain amount of money for good grades).

When he returned to Mongolia he took the important job of head secretary for the Communist youth club in the much poorer Southern Gobi province. This job gave him a great deal of positive influence within the provincial government structure, but in a very poor area such as it was it

also came with many burdens. Because he was the representative of the government and that Mongolia has such a strong expectation of hospitality and repaying debts, people would constantly come to him for favors.

My wife recalls that as a child people would come into her house at all hours, whether they actually new her father or not, whether her father was there or not and would drink and eat anything they could. As an important government official, he could never complain. The best they could do was lock the door and try to ignore the people banging on it for hours (looking for favors, money, or vodka). Dorjbaatar was also the primary breadwinner for his extended family of around 12 people.

In Mongolia a boy never becomes a man until his own father passes away. Dorjbaatar’s father was alive and well and demanded a daily account of everything that he did. It was in this difficult situation that Dorjbaatar made the decision which altered the long-term economic fortunes of his family. After the democratic transformation of Mongolia in ’92 Dorjbaatar quit his government job, even though it usually would have meant a lifetime of stability, and used the family savings to buy a large truck. He did this in the face of the protests and crying of the entire family.

He filled the trucks with a waste component from the state owned flour factory and drove through the recently opened Chinese border. He returned loaded with Chinese goods and profit. After a few months he had seven trucks going across the border. When everyone started doing it he stopped and used his position to retake his old job...

That was his story, he used his position as a good communist to become a good capitalist. I can’t help seeing his story as one of a man who pulled himself up and took the opportunities when they came. It is hard to not see people like this gaining power, even in the strongest of a socialist nation, because any form of distribution has the potential to create social influence, which is a form of power. I believe that as this story shows social influence, in the right hands, can be quickly converted into capitalist gains, in fact the two are not different.

Notice too that Dorj’s original influence started by his ability to decipher Marxist literature. Even a small thing like having an intellectual advantage over a neighbor is another form of economic advantage in a capitalist nation. I see Dorjbaatar as a good person who used his abilities to his and his family’s advantage; he also helped many others in the process. But whether good or bad, he did all this by converting one form of influence to another.

Thank you.

OC

Mongolia

11 July 2008



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