

Letters from our readers

4 August 2009

On "Obama names evangelical Christian to run National Institutes of Health"

I'd like to thank the author for bringing Obama's appointment of Collins to head the NIH to my attention. Even though, as the article points out, Collins may be a capable individual, why should Obama feel obliged to pick him at the expense of more secular choices? The article states:

"The selection of Collins was generally hailed in the corporate-controlled media as a clever maneuver by Obama, a way of paying tribute to religion while selecting an individual who defends evolution against creationism and opposes restrictions on abortion rights and stem cell research."

The term "clever maneuver" seems to be the story of Obama's political life. Cynicism and appeasement are the name of his game, not a genuine concern for the masses of working people he purports to be trying to help. Instead, Obama seems intent on throwing a bone to as many right-wing forces as he can with "clever" moves like this one. This is just one more example of how supporting the Democrats is futile—none of them, even in a position of overwhelming power in which they can pretty much do what they want without Republican support, will go for broke in standing up to the right-wing.

Adam C
New York, USA
30 July 2009

Thank you for covering this issue Patrick, I sincerely appreciated your article. In the course of my own experience in dealing with religious questions, I found myself reading a book by Collins and was propelled onward to new arguments for a lack of coherence in his theories and conclusions.

I am very passionate about human health and wellness and find this appointment of Collins a devastating blow to the progress of science in this field. Evangelical beliefs can no doubt lead to a subordination of materialist principles to some form of idealist beliefs. In the field of science this contradiction is ludicrous.

TR
30 July 2009

I can confirm that Francis Collins is not just a private believer, but a public advocate of religion. In May, I graduated from Virginia Commonwealth University, and Collins was the commencement speaker for an audience of thousands. In this setting Collins pontificated that religion should be one of the four major concerns in our future lives. The other three are not remarkable enough for me to remember.

Clearly Collins will use his new position to push for the "unity" of religion and science. The article is certainly correct in noting the Obama Administration's cynical political reasons for this appointment. To those anticipating change in policy on science and religion, here it is.

Jeff L
30 July 2009

On "Obama press conference: Evasions and lies on plan to slash health care for workers"

There is a world of difference in the analysis of the health care issue coming from the *World Socialist Web Site* and what I receive as a union member, from the various electronic networks of the AFL-CIO and SEIU as these unions engage in a new round of pressure politics. Thanks to the ongoing coverage by various writers at WWS, I feel like I know what is really going on.

In recent messages from its peoplepower network, the AFL-CIO praises Obama's proposal for a "quality public health insurance option," calling it "a strong reform proposal that meets the goals of President Obama and ours, to control runaway health care costs [and] offer the American people real choices." In a message on July 28, they proclaim this "a historic opportunity to fix our broken health care system." Messages from my union, SEIU, strike a similar theme, praising Obama's proposal "to bring down the cost of health care for working families."

They warn of the difficulty of getting the "reform" proposals through Congress, with the AFL-CIO complaining: "Sadly, we cannot count on our representatives to vote for reform because it's the right thing to do, so we need to regularly remind them how important this issue is to us." If we cannot count on our representatives to do the "right thing" for the people, what use are they? And what use are the unions, who support the same profit-driven system which has caused the crisis?

These unions have not conducted any serious analysis of the health care proposals now under consideration. They have no strategy to combat the powerful special interests. They continue with the same tired strategy, giving union members' money to the campaign coffers of political representatives who cannot be "counted on," and imploring us to contact and pressure these same people. Now they are implying it will be our fault—the union members fault—if health care reform fails, because we didn't work hard enough to "remind" our representatives how to vote.

Lesley J
Ohio, USA
29 July 2009

On "Iraq veterans charged with murder and other crimes"

David, this is horrendous. Sickening. It sounds like a science fiction story, with the soldiers turned into killing machines that

cannot be turned off. In fact, there was such a science fiction story. It was an episode of the series *Star Trek: The Next Generation*. The episode, titled “The Hunted” depicted a planet that had so altered its soldiers in a war against another planet, using drugs that permanently altered the soldiers both mentally and physically, that the society had no idea what to do with the men when the war was over. So the government exiled the veterans to what was effectively a prison on one of the planet’s moons. When some of the prisoners escaped and threatened the civilian population of the planet, the government was helpless. They had given no thought whatsoever about reversing the alterations they had made to their soldiers and washed their hands.

It seems that science fiction has now become a fact in the United States.

Carolyn
California, USA
28 July 2009

I recently talked to a young Iraq veteran—US army—who told me some tales, which I believe, of putting ten of his buddies in “garbage bags, not body bags,” as in picking up the pieces. The VA has diagnosed him with “adjustment disorder.” No kidding. There’s no way the severe psychological trauma these young people are suffering from their service is not going to have some blowback. It’s truly a national tragedy, and we are truly a sick society, whose “leaders” callously ignore the oft-expressed (Republicans lose majority in Congress/election of Obama, etc.) will of the American people to, among other things, end these imperialist wars.

For some reason, I keep thinking of the “ancien regime” in France right before the revolution...the indifference—the stifling hubris—of the rulers to the circumstances which would bring them down...

Rob M
28 July 2009

On “Obama’s health care counterrevolution”

Your critiques of Obama’s health care plan would be more useful if they provided more nuts and bolts information about how the final program is likely to work. I share your skepticism about Obama and his program, but your essays on this topic are unusually short on detail.

MM
28 July 2009

On “The US and the Honduran coup”

Best news article in 2009. Thanks.

Rodney F
28 July 2009

On “Citigroup’s \$100 million banker”

The portion of the article regarding commodities speculation is something we should explore more.

The commodities bubble really put a spur to the real economy when oil and food prices spiked. It looks like any real recovery is going to be choked by speculators as soon as any real demand in the economy starts to show any traction.

In the 1970s there was still some fight in the working class to keep some wage gains during an inflationary period, part of the

reason the stock market was moribund through the 1970s.

The 1990s-2000s bubbles were fueled in no small part by the ability of the ruling classes to take a larger percentage of surplus value/profits and plow it into different forms of speculation.

Nick Beam’s articles on that aspect were very instructive to show that capital accumulation is possible on this model, but is ultimately unsustainable. A commodity bubble on the other hand would disrupt production almost immediately.

Coley O
29 July 2009

Now that is social inequality in flesh and blood! And it is bloody outrageous. You note, “It would take a minimum wage worker, working full-time without vacations, 6,269 years to earn \$100 million. Hall’s yearly pay is roughly equivalent to the annual wage of 2,000 workers in the US. He makes in an hour about the same amount most American workers earn in a year.”

But what can one expect of the degeneration of American and world capitalism. Only a social revolution of the working class internationally can rid us of this vile. Thanks WSW.

Chris
New Zealand
29 July 2009

On “Britain’s political elite and the Afghan war”

Looking at the costs to the states involved, it might have been cheaper for the Imperial Western Powers to have bought the oil on the market. That price would have contained a monopoly component. Some of the oil revenues would have accrued to non-Western interests. The risk of further political/economic catastrophe for the Western rulers would be lower. It seems to me that the ruling Western elites have been suffering from a gross ideological delusion since the end of the Cold War. One consequence has been their systematic overestimation of the actual strength of the capitalist system, and in particular the strength of its American component. I have no trouble in believing that they are innumerate as well.

Chris
Ireland
30 July 2009



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