

Letters from our readers

24 November 2009

On “Why are women being told to forgo cervical cancer screenings?”

Another excellent contribution on the rollbacks in health care. The data on the Pap smear's reduction in the US cancer death rate among women (an astonishing 50 to 70 percent in the last 50 years) is notably absent from all other commentaries on the proposed cutbacks in care.

There is a conspicuous effort to ignore, downplay, or outright suppress the evidence that this procedure—like mammography—has led to hundreds of thousands of saved lives. This silence is one more indication of the truly terrible motivations behind such policy shifts, and should serve as a warning to the working class on precisely how the ruling powers calculate the value of a human life.

EG
20 November 2009

The media is certainly in full propaganda mode on this. I heard this story on NPR. Notice the subtext on this—“You are as stupid and backwards as someone who demands antibiotics for a sinus infection if you don't believe these recommendations.”

From *All Things Considered*:

“People Don't Always Listen To Data

“Evidence-based medicine can be used to determine how often someone should be screened for cancer, and it can be used to determine what sort of treatment is best. But people don't always want to do what the data say to do.

“As a family practitioner in North Carolina, Lori Heim sees that a lot. It comes up all the time with sinus infections, she says. She remembers one patient who demanded antibiotics for her viral sinusitis, even though multiple studies show that's the wrong thing to do.

“‘The previous doctors gave her antibiotics and she got better,’ Heim says. But that's probably because she would have gotten better anyway, even without the antibiotics.”

Chris C
21 November 2009

On “New fashions in Canadian politics: Guide for immigrants promotes the monarchy and the military”

This is a very well-written and accurate account of the increasingly frightening transformation of Canada. The new emphasis on

militarism is especially deplorable. The author brings up the importance of branding as a method of indoctrination. The brand, “Canada”, is being marketed as a substitute for any genuine participation by citizens in forming an identity based on the real work of understanding history or present reality.

There are many examples. Some years ago the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (the RCMP, Canada's national police force, which also plays the equivalent roles of the FBI and the CIA in this country) licensed the Disney Corporation to market their image. The Hudsons Bay Company, after being sold to US owners, has aggressively marketed “Canada”, along with other companies run from the US. Public utilities have been partially or completely taken over by private interests, with next to no discussion in the mainstream media. The opposition parties do not inspire any real hope, and so the Conservatives are re-elected by the segment of the population that bothers to vote—the ones who agree with their virulently anti-social agenda.

Kamilla V
North Vancouver, Canada
21 November 2009

On “Obama's public education race to the bottom”

Of “Race to the Top”, Secretary of Education Arne Duncan says, “This is going to be highly competitive, and there are going to be a lot more losers than winners.” Truer words have never been spoken by the likes of him, but this could apply just as easily to our educational system as to the economic system that it takes place under.

Loren P
North Carolina, USA
21 November 2009

I work with teachers and librarians. Even in this relatively affluent area, where a bond measure to fund schools handily passed in the last election cycle (tied, of course, to property values), we have seen massive cuts to school funding—this has affected everything from employment (most school libraries have no library assistants any more, pushing all the work they used to perform onto the librarians, whose wages have been effectively frozen or cut due to shortened school years) to supplies.

The book budgets for many schools have been cut by 2/3, and what money does come is spent in a hurry lest it be revoked, as we saw happen in January of this year when half of the purchase orders for books were cancelled overnight. The teachers and librarians are deprived of the ability to plan long-term, and many have requested we

supply used books where possible so as to stretch the meager dollars as far as they can go.

Things as basic as paperback copies of classics are hard to come by for some teachers, to say nothing of the more expensive texts.

Music classes are practically non-existent, and most extra-curricular activities have either been cancelled, or now have fees that are prohibitive to many parents.

We hear again and again how parents are not involved—when I have seen parents come forward repeatedly, from many schools, to make sure their kids and those in their community get as much of what they need as they can. We hear so much about “greedy” teachers when every day I see teachers paying out of their own pocket for books and supplies for which they will not be reimbursed.

Now this. This collective slap in the face of the people who work so hard to educate kids, to provide them with the tools they need to contribute to society. Obama campaigned on Change—turns out it’s chump change for the working people, and big bucks for the Wall Streeters and the Pentagon.

Christie MS
Oregon, USA
21 November 2009

On “An evaluation of Roman Polanski as an artist”

I want to let you know how much I appreciate your views on Roman Polanski. I am a regular reader of Salon, and have been appalled at the line they are taking on this, as on so many other issues. I’ve attempted to combat this in letters to them, but find that I only become caught up in the malevolent silliness of their discourse.

I think you have Polanski exactly right, both as a man and as an artist, and I am deeply grateful for the sanity of your analysis amid the hysteria generated by his arrest and probable extradition.

RR
Washington DC, USA
20 November 2009

I completely agree with the writer. The US is forever diverting attention from its own misdeeds.

I remember a film with Gerard Depardieu in it, which I believe was a Polanski film. It was about a man being lost, and Polanski was interviewing him. Anyways the end of the film revealed that the man had died and didn’t know it. I never forgot how the film affected me. When I think of Polanski, I think of this film. [The writer is referring to the film, *Una pura formalità*, starring Polanski and Depardieu]

Dawn D
20 November 2009

On “Aesthetic choices: Aleksandr Sokurov’s The Sun”

A comprehensive and sterling review. One naturally expects some form of artistic reaction against the stifling effects of Stalinist cultural policy on the part of Sokurov and Tarkovsky, but not the type of deliberately blinkered reaction that appears in this latest travesty.

Having only seen *The Russian Ark* and *Moloch*, I was forearmed when reading this review. Obviously Sokurov does not know (nor cares to know) the various historical studies that condemn Hirohito for his complicity in the worst atrocities of wartime militarism. Both Takemae’s *The Allied Occupation of Japan* and Dower’s *Embracing Defeat* provide reliable evidence of how MacArthur knew this and stage-managed the rehabilitation of someone who deserved to be tried as a war criminal. I wait with urgency this director’s next project, perhaps his version of Nicholas II that will differ from the historically accurate picture of a criminal and pathetic tyrant that appears in the opening chapters of Trotsky’s *The History of the Russian Revolution*.

Tony W
20 November 2009
On “As US debt tops \$12 trillion, Obama calls for austerity”

“Austerity” means “cut aid for the poor.” The problem is that this has already been cut to the bone. Meanwhile, corporate “tax relief”, a system whereby ordinary people get stuck with the tax bills of the rich, continues unabated; this, too, has proved to result in fewer jobs, deeper poverty.

I would suggest practicing austerity in the area of military spending instead, to focus on rebuilding this crumbling country. For the past half century, we’ve engaged in horrendous serial wars that have protected/resolved nothing whatsoever, and merely served to spur increases in military spending. The US, and the world, is far worse off because of it.

We already have the capacity to destroy all life on Earth several times over; I would suggest that once would be entirely adequate. We should consider outlawing war profiteering, putting reasonable restraints on military spending, and discontinuing our “war first” strategy in favor of mature, reasoned diplomacy.

Dianka F
Wisconsin, USA
19 November 2009
On “Civil liberties attorney Lynne Stewart ordered to prison”

Re the upcoming trial of Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, I know that you eschew (non-official) “conspiracy theories,” but you should look into the fact that the government has produced no proof that any hijackers were aboard the planes on 9/11. David Griffin has a chapter on it in *New Pearl Harbor Revisited* and Elias Davidsson has also done excellent research on the subject. How can KSM be tried, much less found guilty, for helping these non-existent “hijackers”?

Michael M
21 November 2009



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