

Letters from our readers

11 September 2010

On "Fires burn throughout Detroit"

Fire, now there's an efficient and fast way to clear out poor, dirty people and their poor, dirty dwellings; it even has the added benefit of fertilizing the land so the grass can grow greener on the golf courses that will undoubtedly replace them.

Charles H
Houston, Texas, USA
9 September 2010

On "US ruling class prepares attack on Social Security"

I am retired and collecting SS for a couple of years now. If they want to eliminate SS, all I want back is the money I have put in put into SS through FICA taxes, adjusted for real dollar value by inflation from year of input, plus at least 3 percent interest per annum compounded on that money from year of input, less the money I've already received from SS, adjusted for recessive deflation. This would be a *lump sum settlement*.

A back of the envelope calculation indicates that if this were done for all recipients of SS, it would immediately cause sovereign default of the USA: any attempts to print additional fiat money would simply "compound" the problem, pun fully intended.

If the federal government attempts to eliminate SS, a class action suit by all SS payees in the USA would follow. After sovereign default of the country through loss of this suit, all public property should be forfeit and seized under the terms of said suit, for payment of judgment.

If there is no rule of law, and the judgment not honored, anarchy would follow, since the government would have demonstrated ipso facto its total lack of reason for continued existence.

Mary C.
9 September 2010

Excellent article on Social Security. Senator Simpson's bigotry and ruthless "logic" are more draconian than I had imagined. Locally, my friend and socialist ran for state legislature a couple of years ago. We try...

Thanks for all you do.

Lynne
Belfast, Maine, USA
9 September 2010

On "Koran-burning provocation sparks US fears over Afghanistan"

I think the smallness of the Koran-burning church is somewhat misleading. The reason Obama pleads so pitifully with this group is that it has a vocal and energetic constituency carefully nurtured by the rich and corrupt and given direction by Zionist sponsored foundations and thinktanks to act against their own interests. Just as the historian Richard

Pipes rallied the demented, know-nothing Nativist rabble against the communist menace during the "Cold War", so his kid Daniel Pipes celebrates in his widely syndicated column in right-wing and Zionist rags how recent anti-Moslem outrages testify to the success of the campaign against the so-called "Islamists" which was so hard to get off the ground.

And yet the column ends on a tone of nervousness and warm words for a religion, Islam, whose adherents and beliefs suffered so much calumny earlier. I have a strong suspicion that the Zionists yet again created a monster, a Golem, that is beginning to work against them creating a rift with sections of the increasingly assertive American military facing a version of the Sepoy Mutiny or the Arimitsar Massacre that shook the British Empire in India.

AL
Toronto, Canada
9 September 2010

On "Obama unveils pro-business 'jobs' plan"

Note with regards to Mr. Obama's Cleveland Ohio speech Wednesday September 8 that from the beginning of the Bush administration through 2006, or before the recession began, the percentage change in private sector job creation was a negative 0.4 percent. So much for the Bush-era tax cuts creating jobs and for Mr. Obama saying the private sector will. And also note that besides massive corporate cash flow of near \$1.5 trillion the total credit market assets held by private pension funds has surged. They are playing it safe and this denies funding for growth equity in the US economy. With mounting worries of a slowdown in the global economy as espoused by the ECB in its September monthly report these cash hordes are not going to be put to work. With over-capacity in the US economy and fears of an economic slowdown, corporations are not going to spend on investments regardless of the Obama economic plan.

Steven N
New York, New York, USA
8 September 2010

On "Federal appeals court adopts Obama "state secrets" doctrine to block torture case"

One should not overlook the complicity of the judges, or the law itself. This was a 6 to 5 decision, it could have gone the other way. Why didn't it? As for the state secrets privilege, it was conceived in dishonesty (see link).

I don't remember the precise remark but Machiavelli once observed, in essence, that the courts are one of the institutions to whom the Prince should turn to do his dirty work. This decision fulfils him.

C Ronk
9 September 2010

On “*The Stieg Larsson phenomenon*”

Thanks for this analysis of the Stieg Larsson series. I am a fan of the books, but have not yet seen any of the films.

I agree with your comments about the violence and also about the author’s seeming worship of the image of the “Woman Warrior” to which he alludes frankly in his chapter headings. I think he need not have leant so heavily on this motivation for the character Salander’s vendetta, although child and sexual abuse damages the psyche of its victims and can warp their sense of the nature of the surrounding society.

I am sorry that you devoted no more than a few comments on Henning Mankell’s Wallander series. I find that his thoughts about the decay of Swedish society, transmuted into the thoughts of the character Wallander are illuminative of the state of mind in many Swedes today. I find the character of Wallander to be humane and sympathetic and his flaws to be human. True, the Wallander series is of the police procedural genre, but I find his portrayals of them as no more or less than human beings in a certain situation and profession, without resorting to caricature as is the case in so many “cop” novels, to be refreshing. Mankell has a long history of working against social injustice and has obviously thought long and deeply of what is happening in the society around him. He is exactly my age—postwar, born in 1948—and has grown and matured in the same world society as I have.

Finally, I was an avid reader of the Maj Sjöwall and Per Wahlöö Martin Beck series in the 1970s. In fact, I recently re-read the novel you mention, *The Man on the Balcony*, and the book stands up well, despite the fact that it was produced when the Cold War dominated young people’s consciousness.

I think that comparing the Larsson books so unfavorably with Sjöwall and Wahlöö (although correctly identifying some of Larsson’s major thematic flaws) pushes aside the fact that the very violence of the early 21st Century has created an incubator for the ideas of violence and retribution as a response to society’s ills. Naturally, the incubation has been the result of a failure of political perspective, leaving people—particularly youth—with the sense that society and its institutions have failed them and therefore that nothing remains but to strike back (or even before) they become victims themselves.

There are plenty of reasons for this, most particularly the capitalist system and the viciousness with which it declares “every man for himself”. If entire generations have been exposed to nothing else, their desperation will become a danger to themselves and others. Henning Mankell has his Wallander ruminates on this idea many times in his stories. Wallander stands aghast at what is happening in his country. It is true that the author and his character have no (stated) idea of how to solve the problem, but they each closely observe the phenomena surrounding them.

This is a start.

Carolyn
San Francisco, California, USA
8 September 2010

Mr. Walsh writes that “The books exhibit a type of left-wing or anarchist ‘vigilantism’ that will not help anyone. Salander in particular is remorseless in exacting personal and painful revenge, and generally the

reader feels urged to side with her.”

This is the difference between action and movements, which are inactions disguised as actions. Things like consensus building, polls, trends, petitions, speeches, awareness, vigils, sit-ins and such seem to get things done, but in the end leave us wondering why nothing has changed.

Contrarily, things like invasions, shock-and-awe bombing of civilians, looting national treasures, secret renditions, drone attacks, revolutions, strikes, and riots leave us with a sense of action.

Mr. Larsson certainly doesn’t advocate a bat to the back of the head of anyone that disagrees with us, but then again he doesn’t have his characters writing letters, staging sit-ins, or putting out Facebook polls to get their point across, either.

Keep up the good work.

PK
9 September 2010

On “*The Tillman Story: An exposure of military mythmaking in the service of the US ‘war on terror’*”

This is a truly amazing film. The Congressional hearings are extraordinarily revealing. Had this part of the film been reproduced by professional actors who adhered as closely as possible to the original, the viewer would doubtlessly think it was an exaggeration and badly performed. It is an absolutely jaw-dropping self-indictment of the disgusting depths to which this government will sink in defense of an indefensible system. It should certainly be widely seen but here in the SF Bay Area it showed in exactly one theater in Berkeley in its first week out. Not one theater in SF or Marin County! I hope this is not an indication of an early death.

GC
8 September 2010

On “*Australia: Labor forms minority government with rural independents’ support*”

Patrick, an excellent summary of the events that have overtaken this country in recent times. Interesting that you put the enthusiasm for enhanced broadband down to business—I think there are a lot of community functions that would benefit from this as well....

Nick T
8 September 2010



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