

# Letters from our readers

12 June 2012

*On "Obama hails record corporate profits at press conference on the economy"*

What a sad joke upon the American people. At this press conference, Obama calls on Congress to provide funds so state and local governments can rehire teachers, public safety officers, and others. Where was this money three years ago when a Democratic-controlled Congress could have made it available? Why, it was being used for priority number one—bailing out the banks and Wall Street. Now Obama talks jobs knowing full well the Republicans will prevent it from happening. Nothing more than a cynical campaign tactic to try to appeal to the working class voter. The American worker needs to learn that he and she is not being served, nor ever will be served, by the current major corporatist political parties.

MZ  
Maryland, USA  
9 June 2012

*On "Democrats, Republicans criticize leaks, not drone murders"*

Thank you, Patrick Martin and staff at WSWs, for expressing opposition to attempts to conceal the criminal acts of, in essence, military aggression on the part of the United States, the mainstream complicity in how the acts are reported, and the elected officials who call for those acts to be continued—and not only continued, but in secret and with disclosure deemed treasonous.

The treason, as so you state, is on the part of those who commit the crimes and those who want to keep their crime unknown to the citizenry.

That citizenry needs the moral argument made herein, to counter the rational for what is being done in its name.

Michael S  
California, USA  
9 June 2012

*On "Chinese workers storm local government office"*

Dear WSWs,

I think this is a great article, very informative. I am saddened that Chinese local government would lower itself to such dirty tactics! It's depressing, knowing how bad things are here, only to find them even worse in China, "The People's Republic"!

Bill B  
Washington, USA

10 June 2012

*On "Safety concerns after Lagos plane crash kills 170"*

This brings to mind the China [Taiwan] Airlines Flight 611 disintegration in 2002.

The jumbo jet had suffered a tail-strike in 1980 but the accident damage had not properly been repaired in accordance with Boeing's own manual! This made the aircraft structurally unsound.

One would have thought that the lessons of Flight 611 should be learned.

An aircraft's history is of the utmost importance because structural damage can lead to later catastrophe due to the combination of huge pressure differences between the interior and atmosphere, and the forces daily subjected on the structure.

BH  
8 June 2012

*On "Australian broadcaster promotes anti-refugee hysteria"*

Having just watched the above referenced "4 Corners" programme, I can only congratulate the WSWs for putting the people-smuggling issue in Australia into perspective.

When former PM John Howard first began using the refugee issue to garner votes in the post-9/11 period by playing on fear, the ALP Opposition Leader Kim Beazley and the Labor Party opposed the Howard agenda. Labor noted that as a signatory to the UN Convention on Refugees, Australia has an obligation to open its doors to people fleeing persecution at home. Labor also noted at that time that the majority of illegal migrants in Australia were (and continue to be) people from Europe and the USA who have arrived by plane and simply stayed.

It didn't take long for Labor to jettison its principles. From the late 1980s onward, branch stackers, the political equivalent of people smugglers, filled the ALP with pseudo-members whose sole allegiance was to the stacker who recruited him or her. Non-factional progressive party members left in droves, allowing any trace of progressive policy including that relating to refugee policy to be expunged. When Howard's xenophobic anti-refugee policy seemed to bear fruit, Labor hurried to catch up with Howard in demonising refugees from the very countries (Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan) that Australia was opposing as part of its American alliance.

While it demonises Asian refugees, Labor also conveniently ignores other unsavory aspects of Australia's immigration policy. Under the

so-called business migration scheme, individuals with adequate capital can gain access to Australia by agreeing to start a business in Australia. The quantum required is a relatively small percentage of the wealth of those individuals, allowing them to jump the immigration queue.

There are other avenues by which the affluent can gain ready access to Australia while ordinary people wishing to migrant to Australia go through a rigorous point system.

While the loss of innocent lives of those seeking entrance into Australia is tragic, equally tragic is the bipartisan support for a refugee policy that makes the loss of such lives inevitable. It is the White Australia Policy resurrected for the 21st century.

Diane  
Michigan, USA  
7 June 2012

*On "Letters from our readers"*

I am writing in response to Michael M, whose letter on "Letters on Obama's Medal of Freedom and Bob Dylan" was published on the WWSW July 9. I think Michael M is being a bit insincere, and for all his respect for Dylan has either failed to understand the fundamental points made by David Walsh and others who wrote to comment on the piece, or has ignored them.

Michael says: "Bob Dylan is an artist, not a politician or a prop for politicians who pose as saviors. He is a musician and performer, not a savior for men and women who need to save themselves."

He then quotes Dylan's songs "Desolation Row" (1965) and "Tambourine Man" (same year).

Speaking for myself, I was profoundly saddened to see Mr. Dylan, one of my lifelong heroes, receive a medal of honor from such a scoundrel—a liar, murderer, and political prostitute—as Barack Obama. It is apparent to even the blind that the man who wrote the verses quoted by Michael M is entirely dead.

While I don't agree entirely with David Walsh's characterization of Dylan's artistic abilities, I think he hits the nail perfectly on the head when he characterizes Dylan's place in American music and society, in the past and present. He says:

"At his best, and one has to sift through a good deal of dross to uncover that, his songs expressed hostility to the existing social atmosphere in the US, still largely dominated by Cold War anti-communism, hypocrisy and conformism. He inveighed against racism and social inequality, warmongering and other evils. Dylan also sang love songs that were more complex, open-ended and sometimes more self-critical than the usual fare. It was liberating at the time to listen to songs that were about taboo subjects in America and that went beyond the limits of the two- or three-minute pop song.

"The strength of his better work, and this is something he clearly never understood, bore a relationship both to the period and the artistic-political influences he briefly experienced...

"In the end, objective social and historical processes have had their way with Dylan."

I personally take the utmost delight in the Bob Dylan's earlier work, I think he found and expressed, as well as he could, fundamental experiences of both a social and intensely personal nature. I will always treasure his work—at least his earlier work—as the culmination of American folk and as powerful poetry. To David's comments I might add that Bob Dylan was, at his best, genuine, even if greatly confused. That is more than can be said for little more than a handful of other famous artists. There is a certain great value in simple honesty.

It is undoubtedly significant that in his recent life Dylan has disowned the artistic and political forces which forced him on the road of vagabond folk singer in the early 1960s. His autobiography, *Chronicles*, passes over this, the most artistically vibrant and dynamic part of his life, as essentially unimportant. It's obvious he'd rather forget.

Michael M concludes his letter with two more of Dylan's lyrics from the 1960s. "I got nothin', Ma, to live up to" and "it is not he or she or them or it that you belong to."

But it is precisely these words with which Michael M shoots his own argument in the foot. Neither David Walsh nor any honest, respectful fan of Dylan's music has ever wished for him to be any sort of icon or revolutionary figure, but only to look reality dead in the face, do his best to tell it like it is. He is so widely beloved precisely because he has had the courage to do just that. Bob Dylan does, in fact, have a great deal to live up to: the demands of serious, truthful art. And he does, it shames me to say it, belong now not to he or she or me or you, but to them.

Sincerely,  
Julian Q  
9 June 2012



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