

Letters from our readers

8 May 2008

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

On "Lawyer speaks to WWS: 'David Hicks was a pawn in a political process'"

What an apt description of the political establishment as "a morass crawling with maggots." In our case one set replaced another at the top in November, but it is still a putrid cesspool feeding on lies, hypocrisy and self-interest.

I well remember Ruddock's statement on ABC TV three or four years ago stating (with a straight face) that David Hicks trained in Afghanistan on "how to kill civilians." Of course, if you deliberately kill civilians, you are a terrorist. What was evident throughout all that sorry episode was the simpering, servile attitude of the whole Australian political establishment toward its great ally. I bet even the American officials would have been embarrassed by the kowtowing of Howard, Downer & Co, but were obviously too civil to mention it.

With more damning evidence coming out now, it would be fantastic if Howard and his henchmen could be tried in a criminal court for war crimes; it would alter the political landscape, and even if they could somehow avoid a conviction. An announcement of such a trial, a fair trial they denied David Hicks, would surely cause euphoria exceeding that on the occasion of Howard losing his own seat of Bennelong! However let's not expect any political support from any of the ruling class, even from the Greens. It's not in their political interest! Still we owe it to David Hicks, to advocate and support such a trial.

Last night on SBS, there was the screening of the 2007 documentary, *Taxi to the Dark Side*, where every torture "tool" was exposed in the US "war on terror," and how the aim is to break a human being physically and mentally as quickly as possible, to provide "intelligence" as soon as possible. The only wonder is that David is in such a reasonably sound shape, according to his father, Terry.

MS

Queanbeyan, Australia

7 May 2008

On "Bush administration moves to exploit Burma cyclone disaster"

What I heard on the network news (television) last night

was that the military government of Burma was obstructing the delivery of international aid shipments. The news report implied that "conditions" were placed on this aid to ensure that it actually reached the people in need, rather than simply being taken by those in power for their own personal enrichment. Those in power refused to allow any conditions to be made on aid distribution, and they blocked shipments. The news report didn't say what those conditions were, but implied that they were intended *only* to ensure that the aid actually reached those in need.

DF

Wisconsin, USA

7 May 2008

On "Georgia inmate put to death, ending seven-month halt to US executions"

Chief Justice Roberts's uncalled for sarcastic remark that no form of execution is tolerable to those who oppose the death penalty will come back to haunt him. Executing a human being is a cruel, painful form of revenge. Judicial murder doesn't prevent crime; it can't reform a dead offender. Judicial murder by execution simply prevents the person who is executed from committing another crime or doing anything else from the grave. Chief Justice Roberts admits that there is no humane way to kill a person. That kills off calling any method of execution a humane form of execution by those who support executions.

LL

7 May 2008

On "The California budget and the crisis of public education"

As a former long-time California resident, and someone who attended public schools in the Bay Area during the 1970s and 1980s, I thank you for the recent excellent article. While Schwarzenegger's cuts are the most recent, you did a good job of bringing out the longer history of the beleaguered California school system, which has been under siege for decades.

There are thousands of teachers and support staff at every level, and many other state employees, who have at times been forced to spend their savings when the budget got tied up or the California Congress reached a stalemate and refused to release any money until the "other side" gave in.

Over the years, many teachers quit out of frustration as they were not able to meet their bills, or were let go when their school districts were not able to meet theirs. This latest round of cuts once again forces an enormous number of dedicated and vital people out of their positions. I seriously doubt that the unemployment benefits section of the California budget was expanded accordingly.

The union's response is typical, but not limited to the unions themselves. There seems to be this pervasive idea that a deluge of letters will sway a politician. How absurd. If the masses of demonstrators in the run-up to 2003 can be dismissed as a "focus group," you'd better believe that millions of letters can be dismissed as "junk mail"—Bush did not only speak for himself when he uttered that phrase, as subsequent bipartisan support for the war, for cuts to social services, and the limiting of civil rights has shown.

I eagerly await the re-tallying of the spending after the taxes have all been processed in California, and hope a follow-up article is planned.

CMS

Portland, Oregon, USA 7 May 2008

On "New York Times exposé on immigrant deaths in custody"

You report, "On February 1, 2007, after appealing in vain to see a doctor for several days, Bah reportedly fell in his cell and hit the back of his head." That is, the guards smashed his head against the wall, probably after Bah demanded some rights.

MG

Los Angeles, California, USA

6 May 2008

As a 2nd generation transnational Haitian American I would like to thank you for writing about this topic. At this time, my children's father with whom I had a relationship for 14 years is currently incarcerated for an immigration violation. In other words he returned to the country illegally after being deported. He came to the United States with his family and lived in Miami for 34 years since he was seven years old.

He was picked up during a traffic stop in Eugene, Oregon in March. Since then, he was first held at the County jail and then he was moved to the INS prison in Tacoma, Washington. After a month there, he was told that he would be moved once again because there was a concern about lack of space. Apparently there were too many Mexicans being held in Tacoma, and so they moved him to Los Angeles. He is unsure how long he'll be there but he's been told that it won't be permanent.

He expects to spend close to three years unless they release him and deport him back home as they do with most of the Mexicans whom they argue are too numerous to keep

for long periods. This stress is compounded by the fact that he has called me collect to talk about his case and chat with his four children. These calls are costly, mainly due to the fact that in addition to paying our phone service, the prison system is also charging the same or equal amount to the phone company for the service of listening on the conversation! At this time, we owe close to a thousand dollars (\$1,000) in collect calls. Our phone will most likely be disconnected soon mainly because of this.

Moreover, he compelled me to come to Eugene from Vancouver because he claimed that I would be able to get work and of course qualify for public assistance in the form of food stamps and cash as well as Medicaid. While I have been receiving food stamps as well as cash and Medicaid, things have not gone as well here for us at all. The same insidious and pervasive racism still plagues us. Transportation is really hard for us.

The utilities have been very hard to pay as well and so at this time, I have not been able to pay for the rent. I have packed all of our clothes into bins and I have written to my sister to ask for help with some money to pay for transportation to a nearby shelter.

So what is to happen to me and my children? I really don't want to give them up to social services. The situation is grim and I have no real way out. I have no family anywhere who can help me or would help me.

This is the chaos that is left when these folks are taken during these illegal raids. Families and children are left broken and fragmented. While I did not have a good and healthy relationship with their father, I relied on him to help me with the children.

I would like for you folks to dig deeper and delve into the lives of the folks that are lumped into these figures. I am a social scientist and I believe in statistical analysis. They are useful but do not present the whole picture. The qualitative depiction of these people would probably provide a more sympathetic and human picture of the situation.

Sincerely,

MNP

Eugene, Oregon, USA

7 May 2008

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Socialist Equality Party visit:

<http://www.wsws.org>