

# Letters from our readers

16 July 2008

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

*On “US government bails out mortgage giants”*

If the US government assumes direct or indirect—full or partial—responsibility for Fannie and Freddie’s \$5 trillion in mortgages, including hundreds of billions that are going sour, what’s going to happen to the credit of the US Treasury? The assumption is that the credit of the US Treasury is strong enough to prop up the likes of GM, Fannie and Lehman. But what makes people so sure these sinking companies aren’t heavy enough to pull down the credit of the US Treasury?

A far-fetched question requiring a far-fetched answer? Not exactly...

You may not know this, but General Motors, Fannie Mae and Lehman aren’t the only ones sharing the shame of surging premiums for insurance contracts on their possible or probable demise. There are also actively traded credit default swaps on US Treasury securities—bets that the United States government itself may default some day! As remote as that possibility may be, it doesn’t stop institutional investors from seeking protection—or placing bets—on that highly unlikely event.

But here’s the clincher: Last week, the cost of those tiny premiums surged far higher than their average levels. Why? Primarily because of speculation that the US government might assume at least some responsibility for the giant debts of Fannie and Freddie.

MG

Los Angeles, California, USA

14 July 2008

*On “Reactions to Iranian missile tests underscore danger of war”*

Concerning the passage, “Despite Iranian denials, the US and Israel allege that Iran is actively building nuclear weapons—contradicting a National Intelligence Estimate produced by 16 US spy agencies.” Readers may wonder why did the author not mention what seems to be the most important evidence supporting the conclusion that Iran’s nuclear work is in agreement with the provisions of the NPT—i.e., IAEA reports. No country is being investigated as thoroughly as Iran by the IAEA. It also seems evident that even if Iran gave up its rights under the NPT, the US will maintain its accusations and find new ones.

TF

12 July 2008

*On “Jesse Jackson’s self-criticism and the state of American politics”*

Love it! Your observation about Jesse Jackson saying that he wanted to “cut his [Obama’s] nuts off”—that “He [Jackson] could have made the point that he was obviously speaking metaphorically, meant Obama no physical harm and, from a political standpoint, there really was nothing there to cut, in any case”—made my morning! I believe that that particular physical condition is the first requirement for any establishment candidate to qualify for permission to run for office and succeed. It certainly is the requirement for any media pundit. And the fact that the media expressed a phony horror at Jackson’s statement makes them all sound like a flock of bible-school virgins twittering about “nastiness.” Great article.

CZ

San Francisco, California, USA

12 July 2008

*On “Australia: Labor government introduces draconian police powers for Pope’s visit”*

One thing that I enjoy and value the WSWS site and its contributors for is that they are almost always on the ball with their analyses. This piece is no exception. However, for full comprehension, one must look to the historical context. The development of the Catholic Church mirrors that of social relations; and so, until the third century, it was largely underground, persecuted under a series of Roman emperors, displaying “primitive communism.” This situation changed dramatically under Constantine, when Christianity became a State religion, and began to identify itself with the power centres of the Empire. With the advent of feudalism, it metamorphosed into a feudal power, with the bishops having standing armies, ruling towns and villages and collecting taxes.

At its height of power, under Pope Innocent III and his followers, it sent crusades to the Middle East, carried out wars and massacres against threats to its influence, and instituted the Inquisition, wreaking havoc throughout most of Europe. As feudalism gave way to capitalism, the Church also mutated, giving ideological props to the status quo, and diverting the aspirations of the population at large into the utopia of justice and peace in “afterlife.”

Marx was certainly correct in his assessment of religion as “opium of the people.” Fast forward to the twentieth century, and we have Pius XI and XII supporting Hitler, Franco, Mussolini and assorted power elites, John-Paul II leading an

anticommunist crusade, developing the reactionary Opus Dei as a tool to defeat (with the support of CIA) the Liberation Theology movement. Vatican II was an attempt by the hierarchy to allay the social ferment during the post-war decolonisation era and to “modernise” the Church in an attempt to widen its influence. It did not work, and the Church, as with capitalism, finds itself in crisis.

World Youth Days, instituted under John Paul II, are a further attempt to stem the tide of secularisation and moral turpitude. Benedict XVI continues on this trajectory, adding Islamophobia and the “war on terror” to his armory along the way.

The above thumbnail historical sketch reveals that the Catholic Church (like other dominant faiths) has been and continues to be a handmaiden and, frequently, the dominant partner of the ruling class and of the powerful. Today, the Church is not only a supporter and apologist for capitalism, but a capitalist power in its own right and, like capitalism itself, organically incapable of reform.

In conclusion, it is just a modest gesture of gratitude that \$300 or so of our money that Lemma’s put “on the collection plate,” those police/legal measures, that Draco himself would be proud of, for the services rendered to capitalism and imperialism. Issues, such as condoms, stem cell research, gay marriage, etc., only divert and obscure the main game of aiding and rationalising the capitalist system.

MS

Queanbeyan, Australia

12 July 2008

*On “Germany: The campaign for euthanasia”*

This article about the unremittingly controversial issue of euthanasia is intelligent and well-proportioned. Unlike many editorials on the ethical merits of physician-assisted suicide, Mr. Henning’s does not use the recent case in Würzburg as a springboard to “zoom out” on the “bigger issue” of an individual’s right to determine the time and manner of their death—as though ethical dilemmas exist outside their social and political contexts—but rather, dives into the behaviors and motives of former justice minister Kusch in his right-wing campaign to enshrine individualism as the antidote to social decay.

While upholding the view that dire life circumstances, foremost a protracted and painful death, warrant the availability of medical interventions up to and including euthanasia, Mr. Henning thoughtfully explores the difficulty in drawing boundaries on the use of this procedure, especially in cases in which the individual’s desire to end her life is bound up with frustrations over her social circumstances—a situation that, unlike a terminal medical prognosis, is totally addressable. But the author does not dwell on abstract arguments nor give comfort to Kusch for a superficially similar position on the issue; rather, he uncovers the latter’s political campaign to place the onus of society’s shortcomings on the individual—both financially and socially.

Thus, Mr. Henning demonstrates that only the fight for genuine socialism can resolve the immense social inequalities that abandon so many to depression and suicidal tendencies while truly protecting individual rights over life decisions against the machinations of the state and church. A well-written piece!

OG

Tel Aviv, Israel

13 July 2008

*On “Germany: Unemployed man starves himself to death”*

Thank you for that moving story. At the age of 58, I was fortunate enough to secure a steady job. It is only a low-paid job in a warehouse, but the difference between having it and not makes a great difference to my self-esteem as well as my pocket. Unemployment and under-employment are two of the most pressing reasons for getting rid of the utterly inhuman capitalist system.

DF

14 July 2008

*On “Palestinian political prisoner now charged with criminal contempt”*

Gratifying to see this travesty being exposed more and more. The US and its ally Israel have for too long conducted this kind of persecution. When will the torture, imprisonment and assassinations of Israel be exposed? The tie between the US and Israel cannot be dismissed in this case, either. Once known, to tolerate this is complicity. Once known, to tolerate this injustice is a crime.

However, suppression of these crimes has been well practiced. Manipulation of reporting by the kept press is something that must be exposed more than in the past. Manipulation by the US government must be exposed, and the manipulation done by Zionist interests, also. The evidence is so great as to be too much to put forth in this letter of thanks for picking up on this case.

That there is freedom of discussion/press in the US is one of the last best hopes against the forces of fascism, unquestioning alliances and war profiteering/militarism.

MS

Santa Rosa, California, USA

14 July 2008



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