

# THE MILITANT

A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

INSIDE

First Pathfinder book is being printed with new technology

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VOL. 62 NO. 22 JUNE 8, 1998

## New York taxi drivers stand up to city gov't

BY NANCY ROSENSTOCK AND AL DUNCAN

NEW YORK — More than 200 cab drivers and supporters rallied May 27 at City Hall in Manhattan to oppose regulations and fines proposed by the administration of Mayor Rudolph Giuliani.

Thousands of cab drivers also struck that day, an action organized by the New York Taxi Workers Alliance, the United Yellow Cab Drivers Association, the Bengal Cabbie Society, the Bangladesh Yellow Society, the Chinese Yellow Cab Association, and others.

This action was the second work stoppage of the yellow taxi cab drivers, who held a one-day strike two weeks earlier.

On May 13 the city streets were virtually void of yellow cabs. The unity and success of the job action stunned the city administration.

In response to this action, Giuliani mobilized an army of New York City police to block the cab drivers from participation in a May 21 demonstration involving the use of their vehicles. On that day hundreds of cops prevented taxi drivers from entering the borough of Manhattan unless they had passengers in their cabs, or from assembling in the Long Island City area in the borough of Queens for the planned demonstration scheduled for that morning.

Later that day a number of taxi drivers



May 27 rally by taxi drivers in New York. Collective action by thousands of drivers in standing up to city government's attack on their livelihood has become a focal point of working-class resistance.

along with a few supporters were also prevented from rallying in City Hall Park, a place where countless others had been allowed to voice grievances against the city administration in the past.

This attack included a slander campaign labeling cab drivers as "taxi terrorists."

"It's no different than if we discovered a terrorist threat and we moved to stop the

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## 'Change in Ireland comes through struggle'

CAROLINE BELLAMY

LONDON — The "Good Friday Agreement" was approved by big majorities in separate referenda in Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic May 22. The agreement "marks a phase and it is our firm intention to continue to make advances in the next phase," said Sinn Fein chairman Mitchell McLaughlin leading up to the vote. Sinn Fein is the party leading the struggle for Irish self-determination.

In Northern Ireland, 71 percent of those who voted said yes to the question, "Do you support the Good Friday Agreement?" The voter turnout was high — about 81 percent of the 1.18 million electorate. The same day, 94 percent of those who voted approved an amendment to the Republic of Ireland's constitution that incorporated the principle of consent of the majority in the British occupied six counties in the North to the unifi-

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## Protesters oppose court attack on Puerto Rican activists

BY VERÓNICA POSES

CHICAGO — As the *Militant* goes to press, emergency protests are being organized in Chicago and New York City to oppose the latest U.S. government attacks on the Puerto Rican independence movement.

Juan Marcos Vilar and Ruben Rivera, two young Puerto Rican activists from Humboldt Park in Chicago, have been subpoenaed to appear before a federal grand jury on May 28. The subpoenas are part of an "investigation" of the 1992 bombing of a military recruitment facility in Chicago, which the government is trying to link to supporters of Puerto Rican independence.

Vilar is the national coordinator for the National Committee to Free Puerto Rican Prisoners of War and Political Prisoners, and Rivera is a former student of Professor José Solís Jordán at DePaul University. Solís, an independence activist, is fighting a government attempt to frame him up for the 1992 bombing.

"This is an attack against the campaign to free the [15 Puerto Rican political] prisoners, against the independence movement, and against the Puerto Rican community," said Vilar in a phone interview. "The best thing we can do to counter these attacks is go to Washington, D.C., on July 25," he said. Vilar is one of the lead organizers for a march in the U.S. capital on July 25 to demand the release of the 15 Puerto Rican political prisoners held in U.S. jails and self-determination for the island of Puerto Rico.

One hundred people attended a community meeting here May 26 on the attempt to victimize Vilar and Rivera.

## Indonesians press new regime for rights

BY NAOMI CRAINE

In the week since Indonesian president Suharto resigned under pressure, protests demanding democratic rights and the release of political prisoners have grown. About 400 workers demonstrated outside the labor ministry May 27 calling for an end to restrictions on labor unions, the Associated Press

reported. The day before 1,000 rallied outside the Cipinang Prison in the capital, Jakarta, demanding freedom for all political prisoners, including Jose Alexandre Gusmao, known as Xanana, a leader of the struggle for independence in East Timor.

Josef Habibie, the former vice president who assumed Suharto's seat, has made some

concessions to try to gain political stability. Muchtar Pakpahan, chairperson of the illegal Indonesian Prosperous Labor Union, and former legislator Sri Bintang Pamungkas were released from Cipinang May 26. Habibie announced he will review the laws that ban most political parties and unions and promised to call elections within a year.

Meanwhile, Indonesian officials met with Hubert Neiss, Asia-Pacific director of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), who

### Teamsters to Anheuser-Busch: 'we're not for sale'



Militant/Linda Joyce

Teamsters in Cartersville, Georgia, hold April 20 rally demanding a contract from Anheuser-Busch. Workers at 12 U.S. plants have rejected employer's demands to increase part-time work and subcontracting. "The UPS strike made an impression on [boss August Busch], but it made a bigger impression on us," stated Local 1129 member Dennis Neff, referring to Teamsters victory at UPS last year.

**'Militant' editor Naomi Craine is on a reporting team to Indonesia. Firsthand coverage will begin in the next issue.**

represents the interests of the major imperialist investors in Indonesia, to negotiate the austerity conditions for resuming IMF loans.

The Suharto regime's attempt to impose such dictates was what touched off a wave of student protests over the last three months, which increasingly demanded that the president resign. When six student demonstrators were killed by police May 13, students, workers, and others poured into the streets of Jakarta and other cities in protest, including destroying many banks and stores. In face of this upsurge, Suharto hurriedly backed down from a 70 percent hike in fuel prices. These events convinced Washington and growing layers of the Indonesian bour-

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### Workers in Greece: no selloffs

Some 3,400 workers at Greece's state-run Ionian Bank began an indefinite strike May 11, demanding the government desist from selling a 51 percent stake to private capitalists. Workers at other state-owned banks are staging rolling one-day solidarity strikes. Transport and utility workers held a four-hour stoppage May 20 in response to a call for a May 27 general strike by the General Confederation of Labor (GSEE), the largest umbrella union in Greece, to protest the selloff. Yannis Papantoniou, Greece's economy minister, tried unsuccessfully to assure workers that their jobs were not in jeopardy. In the past three months the government in Athens has stepped up the auctioning off of nationalized industries in its bid to join the common European currency countries by 2001. Three more national banks are due to be sold off this year.

### Pakistan and India troops clash

Indian and Pakistani troops traded shots across the border near the disputed Kashmir region May 22 resulting in one Pakistani soldier being killed. Tensions between the two governments have escalated since five underground nuclear explosions were conducted by New Delhi May 11 and May 13.

The governments of Pakistan and India have fought wars against each other three times since 1947 over the Muslim-majority state of Kashmir. Pakistani foreign minister Gohar Ayub Khan said May 17 that his administration has decided to begin testing nuclear weapons in response to New Delhi's nuclear tests. "It's a matter of when, not if, Pakistan will test," he declared.

### Layoffs in Korea spark protests

"If I got fired, where else could I find work?" said Hyundai auto worker Lee Hyuk Hoon. "This is my 14th year here... If I have to die sitting down or die fighting, I'd rather die fighting." Lee expressed the growing sentiments among workers in south Korea under the economic crisis there. Unemployment, which hovered at 2.6 percent last year, has more than doubled to 6.5 percent and is projected to reach up to 12 percent by year's end. Hyundai bosses, for example, plan to

lay off 20 percent of the 46,000 workers there. Thousands have already been thrown out of work as businesses unable to make payments on bank loans collapse or are bought up.

The Korean Confederation of Trade Unions, a union umbrella organization, has threatened to call a strike for May 27 to protest job losses. South Korean president Kim Dae Jung vowed to take strong action against protesters. Kim had been trying to discourage mass labor action, arguing that it would scare away capitalist investors. The honeymoon was shattered in mid-April, when thousands of Kia workers stopped production to protest possible layoffs. On May 1 tens of thousands of workers protested government austerity measures.

### Fish workers strike in Nairobi

More than 250 fish processing workers struck Kendag Limited May 18 in Kisumu, Nairobi, after the company offered no response to an April 28 letter of demands. Strikers are calling for a raise, 21 days paid vacation, four days off per month, double time pay to work on holidays, and an eight-hour day. Another demand is that all temporary workers with six months on the job get permanent status. Workers also said that overtime and sick days often are not paid. A company spokesman complained that workers struck swiftly and refused to elect a negotiating committee to meet privately with bosses. Kendag bosses are trying to get strikers to return to work while negotiations are going on.

### Zambian bosses suspend strikers

Workers at Zambia National Provident Fund were demanding a 30 percent raise. When the company offered less than half of that workers rejected it and staged a protest. On May 15 the company responded by suspending 24 members of the Zambia Union of Financial Institutions and Allied Workers (ZUFIAW). Twenty-one of the 24 workers are women. The suspended workers went to the ZUFIAW hall to get backing from their union. The union halted talks on wages. "How can we even continue with negotiations when our members have been suspended?" asked ZUFIAW acting general



Some 1,500 workers rallied against government austerity in Seoul, south Korea, May 24. A general strike was held May 27 to protest layoffs and other attacks.

secretary Joyce Nonde.

### Workers in Brazil demand jobs

Workers in Brasília, Brazil's capital, held a union-led protest May 20 to demand jobs and better working conditions. Cops attacked the 15,000 demonstrators, some of whom pelted the police with rocks. Cops fired tear gas into the crowd, wading in on horseback. Meanwhile, the government reported that unemployment in São Paulo, Brazil's biggest city, reached 1.65 million — 18.9 percent — a new record.

### New York cops conduct 'no-knock' raids of homes

The New York Police Department's "no-knock" practice of busting into apartments with warrants based on "confidential testi-

mony" got special attention in early May following an unapologetic raid of the wrong house. Police officers stormed into the Shorter residence May 1. First they dropped a stun grenade into the apartment, then cops rushed in and handcuffed everyone. Eighteen-year-old Phebi Shorter was showering at the time. Her mother, Cecilia Short, exclaimed, "She's mentally retarded... please don't shoot!" fearing Phebi would misunderstand cop orders and be killed. Cops threw a robe on her and cuffed her as well. The police explained that the raid was carried out "by the book."

Issuance of search warrants to cops in New York increased up to 500 percent over recent years — 2,900 warrants in 1997 alone.

— BRIAN TAYLOR

## THE MILITANT

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# Move to establish 'euro' promises turmoil

## Capitalists in Europe face rivalry, fear labor resistance as they push austerity

BY CARL-ERIK ISACSSON

STOCKHOLM, Sweden — The European Monetary Union (EMU), now set to begin in January 1999 with 11 member governments and the new common currency, the euro, are the focus of intense debate among ruling circles in Europe. Despite rhetoric ascribing almost mystical powers to the euro, however, the debate reveals divisions, doubts, and fears, not confidence, among the capitalist rulers of Europe as they confront growing economic woes.

The employers hope the new currency will give them the strength and unity needed to inflict the kind of blows to labor that their capitalist rivals in the United States have dealt to the wages and living standards of working people there since the beginning of the 1980s. With the partial exception of the United Kingdom, the capitalist powers throughout Europe are several years behind the U.S. rulers in "downsizing," cost cutting and imposing what the employers call "labor flexibility."

Among the social democratic misleaders of the labor movement, some believe the EMU will make it possible to shorten working hours and reduce unemployment, and maintain or even extend social benefits and other gains of working people.

These high hopes surrounding the birth of the euro were shaken from the start, both with the quarrel that broke out in early May between Bonn and Paris over the appointment of the head of the European Central Bank and with the eruption of a general strike in Denmark.

As the strike by 500,000 workers in Denmark unfolded and heads of state in Europe met in Brussels to decide which governments would qualify to be part of the single currency from the start, the Swedish conservative daily *Svenska Dagbladet* editorialized in its May 3 issue, "The EMU is seen by some as a way of defending the 'European model.' Because of this, many social democrats like it." They added, "In reality, the need to shape a European labor market that is more American is now increasing. Perhaps more American than the American one."

*Svenska Dagbladet* is the main paper of the conservative party headed by Carl Bildt, who favors Sweden participating in the EMU. But the paper's editor, Mats Svegfors, is opposed to such a move. In several articles in late April, Svegfors argued that the competitiveness of Swedish capitalism has been crippled by higher wage increases over the past years than the other European Union countries, and that employers must be able to reverse this situation before Sweden joins the EMU. Otherwise, he stated, they will be unable to overcome the competitive disadvantage they face, and EMU membership will block their last resort — a devaluation of the Swedish currency.

Devaluation is a move the Swedish rulers resorted to often during the 1970s and early 1980s from a position of weakness, seeking to spur the competitiveness of Swedish goods on the world market. If the rulers of Sweden aren't able to push down labor in order to boost their competitiveness and cannot devalue their currency, then it is likely that a sharp crisis will develop.

### Danish general strike: a blow to euro

The rulers of Denmark face similar problems. In 1987 an agreement between the unions and the employers stipulated that wage increases take into account the competitiveness of Danish industry. That year the government in Copenhagen also officially pegged the Danish krone to the German mark in the European Exchange Rate Mechanism (at the time the European Monetary System).

Danish industry has been competitive relative to its capitalist rivals in Europe over the last decade. Unemployment has actually gone down somewhat and, with regard to the criteria established for participation in EMU, Copenhagen's performance is one of the most favorable in Europe. In essence the 1987 agreement has been applied, although there were signs it would not work over the long term, as in 1992 when Danish voters rejected the Maastricht treaty in a referendum. In a new referendum in 1993, the Maastricht treaty — this time with four exemptions including participation in the EMU, received a majority vote in Denmark.



Capitalist rulers are using European Monetary Union as club to go after workers, but have met stiff resistance. Above, unionists protest in Paris in 1995; banner reads: 'Save our public services.' Inset, German miners protest subsidy cuts, March 1997.

The rejection by workers in Denmark of the contract that union officials and employers had agreed on in late April exploded the illusion that it was possible to push the working class out of the center stage of politics through agreements between the union bureaucracy and the bosses.

The Swedish employers, with the union officials in tow, also want to apply what they called the "Danish model," but the general strike there has given them a jolt. In an article headlined "Concern in Sweden when the Danish model falls," *Svenska Dagbladet* wrote, "What is happening in Denmark shows that [from 1987] until now the Danish agreement could discipline the union officials and the employers — but not the workers." It asked, "What road should Sweden then choose?"

The increasing resistance of the working class throughout the continent is fueling tensions between Bonn and Paris. Bonn needs a euro as strong as the mark to be able to continue financing the results of Germany's reunification by attracting capital on the international bond markets while postponing a showdown with the workers in eastern Germany. Paris could let the euro fall somewhat to spur the competitiveness of French goods on the world market and make some concessions to workers.

### Paris fails to push back workers

The Juppé government in France failed to deal the blows to labor in late 1995 that would have put Paris in the undisputed lead in the offensive against the working class in Europe. The election of the Jospin government last year reflected the fact that workers' resistance was increasing.

Now the tensions between Bonn and Paris have heightened over the so-called stability

pact that Bonn was pushing in order to have a strong euro. The Amsterdam meeting, called to discuss modifying the European Union's constitution so that governments in eastern and central Europe could join it, was marked by sharp conflicts between Paris and Bonn over how to deal with demands by workers for relief from the economic crisis, especially unemployment.

The French rulers, with protesting workers breathing down their backs, won a fig leave — the "stability pact" was renamed "stability and growth pact," suggesting that not only price stability but also employment was a goal of the European Union. Legislation for a 35-hour workweek starting in the year 2000 was recently passed in the French parliament May 19, and strikes and other working-class protests continue.

Nor has Bonn been able to deal workers any significant blows, and it is not in the undisputed lead among the ruling classes of Europe. Eight years since the reunification of Germany, the government still must funnel about \$100 billion from the west into the east to try to postpone a confrontation with working people in the east over the attempts to reestablish capitalist social relations in that region.

In the drive to cut workers' social wage, the Christian Democratic-led coalition government in Bonn is behind even the social democratic government in Sweden. Meanwhile, protests against unemployment have been taking place in Germany virtually every month.

In Greece, workers and farmers have mobilized in strikes and demonstrations to a larger extent than in other countries in capitalist Europe against the attacks being waged under the banner of the euro. But Athens has already joined the Exchange Rate

Mechanism and promised to impose further austerity measures to be able to join the European common currency in 2001, an indication of how desperately the ruling class in Greece — as in Italy, Spain, and Portugal — needs the support of the stronger imperialist powers in Europe.

The current upturn in the business cycle in Europe lately has been mainly export-led. This means that the financial meltdown in Asia — and the next recession in the United States — will have a major impact on the European economies. Disputes within the EMU are then bound to increase over a "hard" or "soft" euro, confrontation or concessions to workers and farmers, protectionist measures, and other questions. This will heighten the centrifugal forces that can lead to the unraveling of the EMU and the European Union as the class struggle intensifies throughout the continent — east and west — in the years to come.

### 'Beware the deluge'

The expansion of the European Union to eastern and central Europe has exposed divisions among the big powers in Europe over foreign policy. The Amsterdam treaty failed to resolve urgent problems such as how to give more votes to the big powers to guarantee them a majority when more governments join the EMU.

"Agenda 2000," the proposed change in agricultural and regional subsidies to prepare the way for the enlargement, was criticized by the agricultural ministers of most of the EU countries when it was publicized in March by the European Commission, the EU's executive body.

Following the elections in Germany on September 27, the European Commission is to propose how much the different EU members must pay to finance EU budgets in the coming years after enlargement. This will cause even more tensions than the proposed cuts in the agricultural and regional subsidies. German minister of finance Theodor Waigel has threatened to block the budget if Bonn's payments are not reduced.

Meanwhile, Athens is threatening to block EU enlargement if Cyprus is not treated as a serious applicant for membership. In the European Union every member has veto power over the main decisions and, as the former British prime minister John Major did during the crisis around the mad cow disease, could block the EU from effective action.

The worries among ruling classes in Europe over the turbulence accompanying the moves toward economic monetary union were captured in the headline of an opinion column in the April 25 *International Herald Tribune*, "The euro will arrive, but then beware the deluge."

Carl-Erik Isacsson is a member of the metalworkers union in Södertälje, Sweden.

# Racist killing of Sikh in British Columbia spurs call for June 28 march and rally

BY PAUL KOURI

SURREY, British Columbia — "We expect thousands of people from across British Columbia, other parts of Canada and even south of the border to attend" a march against racism, Baljinder Sandhu told a well-attended news conference here May 25. Sandhu is the coordinator of Communities Against Racism and Extremism, a broad-based coalition formed in the wake of the racist murder of Nirmal Singh Gill, a Sikh caretaker, on January 4. Five members of a racist skinhead group calling itself White Power were arrested and charged on April 22 with second-degree murder.

The purpose of the June 28 event is to "demonstrate solidarity through the streets of Surrey, to oppose hate gangs and hate crime," explains the release handed out at the news conference. Speakers representing

labor, youth, community, and other groups announced support for the action.

Jane Staschuk, representing the B.C. Federation of Labor, told the news conference that the "Canadian Labour Congress will be calling on its affiliates from across Canada to participate. The Washington State Labor Council has agreed to send a contingent."

Nindy Nann, from the South Asian Youth Alliance, told the conference, "We expect a large student turn out." Student associations from most universities and colleges in the Vancouver area and Victoria are supporting the action. Following the conference, Nann, told the *Militant* that several student and youth groups from the United States have been contacted. "There are already groups in Los Angeles based at UCLA and in New York City such as the South Asian activist network Proxa who will participate."

Caitlin Gilroy, a high school student in Surrey, is coordinating high school outreach. A member of the Global Awareness Committee in her school, Gilroy told the *Militant*, "the fact that a high profile representative of ultraright racist groups here, Karl Nordstrom, recently graduated from my high school, together with recent events, has helped pushed some of us at my school to do something."

The march will begin at 1:30 p.m. June 28 at the Surrey Central Sky Train Station and end at Bear Creek Park where a rally is scheduled for 3:00 p.m. For further information, contact Communities Against Racism & Extremism at (604) 54E-RACE; fax: (604) 543-7620.

Paul Kouri is a member of United Steelworkers of America Local 2952.

# 'Revolution Betrayed' is back on presses

First Pathfinder book is being produced through computer-to-plate technology

BY ARGIRIS MALAPANIS

"We are putting the cover of *The Revolution Betrayed* on the presses early tomorrow morning," said Bill Estrada, a sheetfed press operator in Pathfinder's print shop, in an interview on May 27.

*The Revolution Betrayed: What Is the Soviet Union and Where Is It Going?* by Bolshevik leader Leon Trotsky is the first Pathfinder book being produced with computer-to-plate (CTP) technology. Using this state-of-the-art system, and reorganizing labor in Pathfinder and its print shop at the same time, will allow the publisher to keep its 350 titles in print with a smaller and less complex shop and at a lower cost for short runs.

The printing plates for the six-color cover of *The Revolution Betrayed* were produced at a plant in New Jersey that has CTP equipment of the kind Pathfinder's shop will soon acquire. Electronic files of the cover were used to produce the plates. Another company digitized the cover, using a method called copy-dot scanning.

One of the challenges print shop workers still face is figuring out the best method to put multicolor covers, as well as photos and graphics, in an electronic format. The copy-dot method — scanning the old film flats dot by dot — produces very high-quality digital files, said Pathfinder print shop business manager Juliette Montauk. "But it is very difficult, if not impossible, to edit these files to fix imperfections, alter or add type, or change the width of the book's spine." Other methods, such as scanning the printed covers themselves, are being tested.

## Saving labor time

Once the cover is digitized, however, preparing the job for the press is fast. "It took about eight minutes from the moment an operator pressed the button on the CTP machine and sent the electronic file through, until a plate was imaged by lasers and came out of the chemical processor ready for the press," said Lisa Rottach.

Rottach is a customer service representative at Pathfinder's print shop. She accompanied Estrada at the New Jersey plant to oversee how the plates were produced.

To strip the film manually into a flat sheet, burn the plate using a light frame, and then develop it through a processor would have taken about 25 minutes per plate — three times longer than with a CTP machine. Manual stripping of film and burning of plates is the method still in use at Pathfinder's shop to prepare jobs for the presses. This skilled and labor-intensive process will soon be bypassed.

The benefits are not limited to a reduction in labor time for production. "The workers operating the CTP equipment at the New Jersey plant are not highly skilled," said Rottach. "It doesn't take a computer science degree or years of training to run that machine."

Estrada pointed out that the use of plates produced through CTP technology will cut down make-ready time on the presses he is running and help increase productivity. "The plates produced this way are more precise than those burned manually. We won't need

to do a lot of tweaking, which now takes experience and craft to do, to register the colors properly. And the imperfections on the plates we have been using — caused by dust that leaves tiny holes when the plate is burned by hand — are no longer there. It takes time during the press run to fill these little holes on the plates with image additoner."

Press operators will be able to boost productivity and concentrate on improving quality, Estrada said. "It will also become easier to train new operators."

## Volunteers complete formatting

In the morning of May 28, as sheetfed press workers were preparing the presses to begin printing the cover of *The Revolution Betrayed*, Pathfinder received the finished electronic files of the body of the book, including the index, from supporters of the communist movement in San Francisco.

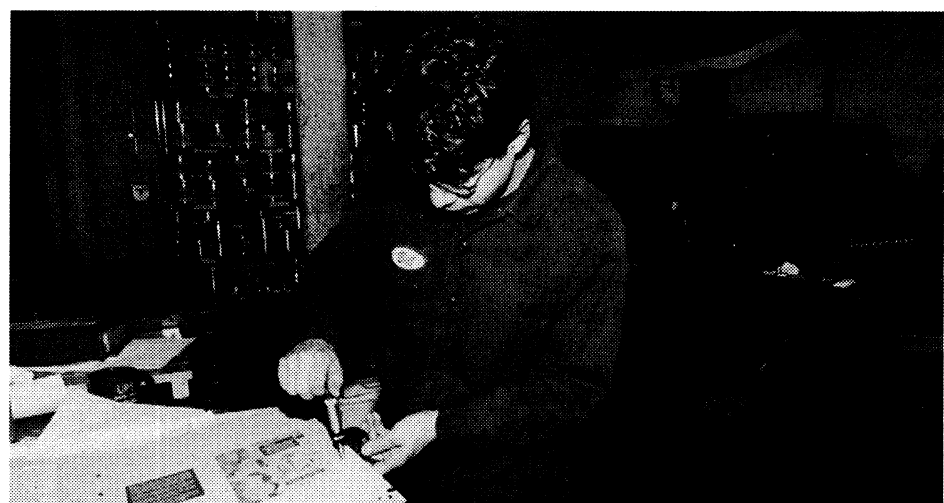
"It took us a lot longer than we thought to format the book," said Jerry Gardner in a telephone interview from his home in Oakland, California. Formatting is the last stage of preparation of electronic files of books before they are ready to be sent to printing plates. "Everything that could go wrong did, and more. But because of this it was a tremendous learning experience. We are now in a good position to get a production line going in digitizing the books."

Gardner, an electrician who learned formatting from scratch in the last three months, is one of the four members of a steering committee based in the San Francisco Bay Area. The committee, headed by Ruth Cheney, is responsible for organizing volunteers around the world to scan, proofread, and format the entire arsenal of books Pathfinder is responsible for keeping in print and distributing.

The electronic files of *The Revolution Betrayed* completed by supporters of the communist movement in California will now be sent to the same printer in New Jersey who will produce printing plates through his CTP equipment. The book's text is scheduled to be printed in Pathfinder's shop, using the digitally produced plates, beginning June 1.

The book will be ready for delivery about ten days later, according to Montauk. The publisher had only 16 copies of the book in stock as of May 27.

"Next week we will start formatting *Sexism and Science*," said Gardner. The book,



Militant/Argiris Malapanis (above); Sree Suria (right) Sheetfed press operator Bill Estrada (above) examines printing plate of cover for *The Revolution Betrayed* before press run, May 28. Selling the *Militant* and Pathfinder books at Maori rights art exhibition and cultural festival in Taneatua, a small rural town in New Zealand, May 9 (right).



by Evelyn Reed, has already been scanned and proofread. "And a party supporter in Seattle will begin formatting *Rosa Luxemburg Speaks* shortly after that."

According to Cheney, about 100 volunteers from around the world have signed up for the project so far. Those who would like to join in scanning, proofreading, or formatting Pathfinder books can contact Cheney at 102616.3037@compuserve.com

The transformation of the organization of Pathfinder's book production now under way is needed to meet the demand for the publisher's arsenal among fighting workers and youth. The current production methods require an inordinate amount of labor time and are too costly to keep pace. The need becomes clearer every day as working people around the United States and internationally are stepping up resistance to the demands for "sacrifice" by the bosses, and socialists are finding a greater audience for revolutionary literature.

## 'Action Program' in Swedish

Supporters of Pathfinder in Stockholm

publishing pamphlets in Swedish are using the initial lessons of the international project to digitize all Pathfinder books to save labor time in production.

"It might be interesting for Pathfinder to know that we produced the Swedish-language *An Action Program to Confront the Coming Economic Crisis* using computer-to-plate technique," wrote Catharina Tirsén, a member of the metalworkers union in Stockholm, in a May 24 letter. "So I guess this is the first Pathfinder book produced with this technique!"

After formatting the pamphlet in the computer, and using a software program that allows arranging the pages in the proper order for printing, "We printed it all on paper for a final check and made final proofreading. Then we printed the ready spreads directly onto the plates from the computer on our Hewlett Packard LaserJet printer, two pages on each spread, which is the way we have printed all books here...."

"This must have saved us weeks in time from when all strip-up was done on paper and later photographed onto film."

# Selling 'Militant' at beer plants, to cabbies

BY LEA SHERMAN

HOUSTON — "Get your *Militant* and let's go into the plant," said a worker at Anheuser-Busch who had just bought a *Militant*. His co-worker was also getting out his money to buy the socialist newspaper as they hurried into the brewery for second shift.

More than 8,000 workers organized by the Teamsters in 12 plants nationwide rejected the company's May 1 final contract offer. They have been working under the old contract since it expired March 27.

Socialist workers here organized two

sales at the brewery's plant gates and sold a total of 25 *Militants*. A shop steward who stopped to talk bought the paper both times saying he liked the coverage of workers acting to defend their standard of living and working conditions.

One worker who bought the *Militant* had earlier purchased a copy of *Teamster Rebellion*, the first of a four-volume series by Farrell Dobbs on the 1930s strikes and organizing drives that transformed the Teamsters union in Minnesota and much of the Midwest into a fighting industrial union movement.

Workers responded to the *Militant's* headline coverage of the increased resistance among workers around the country, particularly the struggles by the Northwest and TWA airline workers, who are working without a contract while carrying out job actions to demand a decent agreement. The bosses at those two airlines, like those at Anheuser-Busch, are all demanding concessions from the unionists.

"Four teams of supporters of the 1998 New York Socialist Workers campaign sold 92 copies of the *Militant* to taxi drivers in three days leading up to their May 1 strike," wrote worker-correspondent Don Mackle. "The teams went to La Guardia and Kennedy airports, where hundreds of taxi drivers assemble to pick up passengers every day."

The strikers, organized by the New York Taxi Workers Alliance, were protesting proposals by New York mayor Rudolph Giuliani that would make it easier to revoke their taxi licenses and other onerous measures.

The day before the strike, taxi drivers were walking among the assembled cabs encouraging others to join in the strike. In several cases groups of drivers approached the socialist campaign supporters and bought the *Militant*. Mackle remarked that the cab drivers, many of whom hail from countries around the world, were attracted to the *Militant's* coverage of working-class resistance internationally.

*Militant* supporter Ardy Blandford from Birmingham writes, "We took a big orange sign to the coal fields in Alabama that read: 'The *Militant* newspaper — read about workers' resistance around the world, 12 weeks for \$10.' Our sales team, which included activists from Atlanta, sold 23 papers to miners at seven mine portals during the week of May 17-23."

Blandford said a Black miner at the Jim Walters mine no. 7 who took an interest in the *Militant* told them, "They're killing us in there — we're working six to seven days a week, 10 hours a day."

"We also campaigned for Socialist Workers candidate for governor of Alabama, Kristin Meriam, who was speaking at a forum that week about the fight for jobs and a clean environment," Blandford added.

Another sales team sold four copies of the socialist newsweekly to steelworkers at the B.F. Goodrich plant in Tuscaloosa, Alabama, and one paper to a worker on the midnight shift at Northwest Airlines. Many workers bought the paper based on the Titan Tire workers' strike in Iowa, the coverage of the airline workers' fights at Northwest and TWA, and the general strike that paralyzed Denmark.

## FROM PATHFINDER



## The Revolution Betrayed

WHAT IS THE SOVIET UNION AND WHERE IS IT GOING?  
*Leon Trotsky*

In 1917 the working class and peasantry of Russia carried out one of the most deep-going revolutions in history. Yet within ten years a political counterrevolution was under way. Workers and peasants were driven from power by a privileged bureaucratic social layer whose chief spokesperson was Joseph Stalin. This classic study of the Soviet workers state and its degeneration illuminates the roots of the social and political crisis shaking the countries of the Soviet Union today. \$19.95

## Sexism and Science

Evelyn Reed

Are human beings innately aggressive? Does biology condemn women to remain the "second sex"? Taking up these and other biases cloaked as the findings of science, Reed explains that the disciplines closest to human life — anthropology, biology, and sociology — are permeated with antiwoman rationalizations for the established capitalist order. \$15.95

Available from bookstores, including those listed on page 12 or write Pathfinder, 410 West St., New York, NY 10014. Tel: (212) 741-0690. Fax: (212) 727-0150. When ordering by mail, please include \$3 to cover shipping and handling.



# Pathfinder issues new edition of 'Che: Economics and Politics'

BY SARA LOBMAN

Pathfinder has just published a new English-language edition of *Che Guevara: Economics and Politics in the Transition to Socialism* by Carlos Tablada. It has a new preface by Mary-Alice Waters and an entirely new photo section, containing more than two dozen photographs, many appearing in an English-language book for the first time.

It also incorporates editing done by the author for Pathfinder's 1997 Spanish-language edition. A new French-language edition will be published later this year.

The book draws on many of Guevara's writings in the initial years of the Cuban revolution. A central leader of the July 26 Movement and Rebel Army, which led the revolutionary war that overthrew the U.S.-backed Batista dictatorship, Guevara was Cuba's minister of industry from 1961 to 1965.

In that capacity he was directly responsible for reorganizing on new working-class foundations some 70 percent of industry in Cuba, while at the same time maintaining production, as former owners and most of the old management personnel left the country.

Many of the concrete questions that

Cuba's revolutionary leadership dealt with in leading working men and women in Cuba to begin the transition to socialism — transforming themselves in the process — are the subject of this book. How do workers and farmers take more and more control over the political direction and administration of the state and economy — factory by factory and in the country as a whole? What is the place of education and broader culture in building a new society? How can voluntary labor begin to change how human beings view work? What role do moral incentives play in the fight for efficiency in a workers state? What is the character and place of material incentives?

Socialism, Guevara notes, "is not a matter of how many kilograms of meat one has to eat, not of how many times a year someone can go to the beach, nor how many pretty things from abroad one might be able to buy with present-day wages. It is a matter of

making the individual feel more complete, with much more internal richness and much more responsibility."

In her preface Waters notes that the questions Che Guevara addresses remain the most important questions of our epoch.

The economic and social crises engendered throughout the world by capitalism in its death agony would not be alien to Guevara, she says. "With one important qualification: imperialism is weaker than it was

thirty years ago, more vulnerable, and the working class is a larger percentage of the population. The stakes have gone up." It is the capitalist world that will face the gravest crisis in the years ahead," Waters explains.

The new edition of *Che Guevara: Economics and Politics in the Transition to Socialism* is a valuable weapon in the hands of revolutionary fighters around the world who are determined to learn from and apply the example of workers and farmers in Cuba.



Prensa Latina

Volunteer cane-cutters in Cuba join 1963 sugar harvest. In new Pathfinder book, Che describes role of voluntary labor as essential to fight by working people to transform society and their consciousness.

## Federal court in Wisconsin upholds antiabortion law

BY HILDA CUZCO

In a blow to women's right to choose to have an abortion, a federal court in Wisconsin has upheld a law that bans late-term abortion.

Known medically as intact dilation and extraction, or "D&E," which right-wing opponents demagogically label "partial-birth" abortion, 24 state governments have adopted laws banning the procedure and many others are debating it.

U.S. Congress approved similar bills twice in 1996 and 1997. President William Clinton vetoed it both times, saying he would have signed the legislation if it had included an

exception for cases in which pregnancy seriously threatened a woman's health. The bills contained the exemption to this procedure only if the woman's life was in danger.

The law in Wisconsin, signed by Gov. Thomas Thompson, went into effect May 14. It bans late-term abortions, which it describes as a procedure that "causes the death of the partially delivered child with the intent to kill the child." According to the text of the law, a "child" is defined as a "human being since its time of fertilization until it is completely delivered from a pregnant woman."

Planned Parenthood of America and the

Center for Reproductive Law and Policy in Wisconsin challenged the law as unconstitutional on behalf of six doctors and several clinics, asking that a federal judge block it. But U.S. district judge John Shabaz ruled in favor of the law until further discussion on its constitutionality.

Citing fear that the law's language could be applied broadly to all kinds of abortions, including those performed early in pregnancy, Wisconsin doctors and virtually all abortion clinics across Wisconsin shut down May 14.

Bonnie Jones, an attorney for the Center for Reproductive Law and Policy, said she advised halting abortions to prevent prosecution and the penalty under the new legislation — life imprisonment. Dennis Christensen, one of the doctors involved in the lawsuit, said he canceled 22 appointments the day the law went into effect, and 24 the day before. Many advocates of women's rights saw the Wisconsin ban as a precedent that will be used to seek further restrictions on the right to abortion.

Right-wing opponents of a woman's right

to choose welcomed the ruling against late-term abortion. Susan Armacost, legislative director for Wisconsin Right to Life, called the ruling "wonderful." The proposal to ban late-term abortions was first introduced in Congress in 1993 by Republican congressman Charles Canady of Florida, and was supported by Democrats such as Sen. Patrick Moynihan, who called the procedure "close to infanticide."

A report released in January by the National Abortion and Reproductive Rights Action League stated that last year alone 31 states enacted 55 measures that curbed access to abortion almost four times as many as the restrictive laws enacted by 9 states in 1996. Restrictions include required parental notification, waiting periods, counseling against abortion, and prohibitions against using public money for the procedure.

The report also indicates that since the legalization of abortion in 1973, the number of abortions peaked in 1990 at 1.4 million, but in 1995 figures dropped 15 percent, the last year the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention had figures.

Monthly sales of Pathfinder books						
Countries/Cities	April			Previous months		
	Goal	Sales	% Sold	March	Feb.	Jan.
<b>AUSTRALIA</b>	36	41	114%	97%	117%	97%
<b>CANADA</b>						
Montreal	66	78	115%	79%	51%	38%
Vancouver	50	43	86%	128%	88%	60%
Toronto	80	59	74%	100%	81%	163%
<b>Canada Total</b>	196	180	91%	100%	73%	94%
<b>ICELAND</b>	8	7	88%	138%	113%	140%
<b>UNITED STATES</b>						
Los Angeles	120	295	246%	214%	120%	60%
Washington, D.C.	70	112	160%	191%	113%	67%
Miami	65	88	135%	103%	149%	125%
Boston	65	86	132%	208%	151%	120%
Atlanta	48	61	127%	100%	152%	171%
Detroit	45	52	116%	104%	89%	58%
New York	245	295	120%	122%	78%	43%
Philadelphia	55	45	82%	105%	129%	75%
Seattle	80	60	75%	45%	54%	74%
Pittsburgh	63	45	71%	73%	75%	56%
Chicago	77	54	70%	118%	125%	105%
Birmingham	45	29	64%	64%	84%	93%
San Francisco	200	123	62%	83%	87%	57%
Twin Cities	104	63	61%	39%	59%	38%
Des Moines	54	29	54%	100%	50%	100%
Newark	171	70	41%	81%	47%	12%
Cleveland	50	19	38%	62%	78%	38%
Houston	65	22	34%	80%	52%	29%
<b>U.S. Total</b>	1622	1508	94%	96%	88%	62%
<b>Goal/Should be</b>	1800	1800	100%			
<b>UNITED KINGDOM</b>						
London	150	128	85%	95%		135%
Manchester	56	30	54%	50%		43%
<b>U.K. Total</b>	206	158	77%	83%		110%
<b>NEW ZEALAND</b>						
Auckland	42	35	83%	121%	100%	31%
Christchurch	32	21	66%	81%	91%	72%
<b>N.Z. Total</b>	74	56	76%	103%	96%	49%
<b>SWEDEN</b>	60	34	57%	153%	127%	63%
<b>FRANCE</b>	30	11	37%	117%	43%	77%
<b>GREECE</b>	13	0	0%	62%		0%

IN THE UNIONS						
Unions	April			Previous months		
	Goal	Sales	Total	March	Feb.	Jan.
<b>BRITAIN</b>						
RMT	6	7	117%	150%	117%	17%
AEEU	5	2	40%	60%	20%	40%
TGWU	7	0	0%	29%	86%	29%
<b>UK total</b>	18	9	50%	78%	61%	28%
<b>UNITED STATES</b>						
UFCW	10	13	130%	90%	90%	79%
IAM	60	37	62%	42%	92%	48%
UAW	50	26	52%	14%	82%	40%
UNITE	20	9	45%	70%	105%	50%
USWA	40	15	38%	50%	88%	63%
OCAW	22	7	32%	32%	114%	23%
UTU	72	14	19%	21%	82%	17%
<b>U.S. total</b>	274	123	45%	35%	89%	37%
<b>CANADA</b>						
IAM	7	6	86%	86%	86%	29%
UNITE	6	2	33%			
CAW	8	0	0%			
USWA	18	0	0%	17%	32%	23%
<b>Canada total</b>	29	8	27%	36%	45%	24%
<b>NEW ZEALAND</b>						
EU	2	1	50%	50%	50%	
MWU	3	0	0%	0%	33%	
SFWU	1	0	0%	0%	0%	
<b>N.Z. total</b>	6	1	17%	17%	33%	
<b>AUSTRALIA</b>						
AMWU	4	0	0%	0%	0%	0%

AEEU — Amalgamated Engineering and Electrical Workers Union; AMWU — Amalgamated Manufacturers Union; CAW — Canadian Autoworkers Union; EU — Engineers Union; MWU — Meat Workers Union; IAM — International Association of Machinists; OCAW — Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers; RMT — National Union of Rail, Maritime, and Transport Workers; TGWU — Transport and General Workers Union; UAW — United Auto Workers; UFBGWU — United Food, Beverage, and General Workers Union; UFCW — United Food and Commercial Workers; UMWA — United Mine Workers of America; UNITE — Union of Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Employees; USWA — United Steelworkers of America; UTU — United Transportation Union.

# 7,500 youth march in Boston for gay and lesbian rights

This column is written and edited by the Young Socialists (YS), an international organization of young workers, students, and other youth fighting for socialism. For more information about the YS write to: Young Socialists, 1573 N. Milwaukee, P.O. Box #478, Chicago, Ill. 60622. Tel: (773) 772-0551. Compuserve: 105162,605

BY ELENA TATE

BOSTON — Some 7,500 young people marched here, May 16, for the fourth annual Gay/Straight Youth Pride Day. The event featured a rally and a march through the city. The participants were overwhelmingly high school students, many representing Gay/Straight Alliances in high schools throughout Massachusetts. Student groups carried banners and marched in contingents.

Chants included, "Gay, straight, Black, white; same struggle, same fight!" and "What do we want? Equal rights! When do we want them? Now!"

One of the groups that generated the most excitement among participants was a delegation of 13 students from Salt Lake City, Utah. The students were all involved in a fight against their school district for the right to have a gay/straight student organization. Holly Peterson, 18, the co-president of the

Utah Gay/Straight Alliance, explained that the school district banned all extracurricular activities in the fall of 1996, a year after the Gay/Straight Alliance was formed. Students protested by staging walkouts at their high schools, and by organizing three marches through the city. "The largest, with 2,000 people, was one of the largest protests Salt Lake has ever had," said Peterson. Currently, students in the Salt Lake area hold meetings off campus because after-school clubs remain banned.

Young Socialists at the rally campaigned for Andrea Morell, the Socialist Workers candidate for U.S. Congress in the 8th Congressional District and distributed campaign statements supporting the struggle by students at nearby Roxbury Community College against attacks on education.

Young Socialists also staffed a campaign table with a sign that read: "Defend gay and lesbian rights. Support students' struggles from Roxbury to Indonesia." From the table, campaign supporters sold eight copies of the *Militant*, and two Pathfinder titles: *Abortion is a Woman's Right*, and *Women's Liberation and the African Freedom Struggle*. Eighteen participants signed up for more information on the Young Socialists.

Stephanie Pereirax, a 17-year-old high school student, wanted more information

## YS Fund Drive meeting in N.Y. on anti-imperialist fights raises \$500



Militant/Hilda Cuzco

Young Socialists in New York raised more than \$500 at a fund drive event on May 22. Above, Andy Terranova (podium), an Irish freedom struggle activist who toured the Basque Country as part of a Sinn Fein youth delegation spoke. YS leader Joshua Carroll (left) also spoke at event titled, "Ours is the Epoch of Revolution." A portion of the funds raised came from a used book sale, and a raffle where socialists sold tickets on the job to their co-workers.

about the YS. She had been to several demonstrations in February protesting U.S. war moves against Iraq, and wanted to stay more involved in politics. Pereirax added, "Going to a protest is more effective than just sitting around and being against something. You can't just be passive."

## Socialist Workers campaign in Minnesota announces candidates

BY JEFF JONES

Minneapolis — Supporters of the Minnesota Socialist Workers campaign rallied here May 1 to announce the party's candidates for governor and U.S. Congress. Heading the socialist ticket is gubernatorial candidate Tom Fiske.

Tony Lane, a worker at Northwest Airlines and member of International Association of Machinists (IAM), chaired the rally. Lane described some of the actions he and his co-workers around the country have taken to press for a contract after 19 months of fruitless negotiations.

This increased combativity, Lane pointed out, has resulted in increased discussion on the job on a broad range of political questions. That is what stood behind the success campaign supporters experienced earlier that afternoon, said Lane, selling 21 copies of the *Militant* to Northwest workers at the plant gate.

Michael Pennock, a member of Oil,

Chemical and Atomic Workers Local 6-418 and Socialist Workers candidate for U.S. Congress in the fifth district, told the audience, "Our campaign stands 100 percent with the Minneapolis Black community and its supporters in protests against police brutality in this city." Pennock pointed to the victory earlier this year when a campaign of protest meetings and a successful march on Martin Luther King Day compelled Hennepin County prosecutor and gubernatorial candidate Michael Freeman to drop charges against Lawrence Miles Jr., a victim of a police shooting.

Pennock, who has participated in actions supporting an NAACP lawsuit against the state of Minnesota calling for an end to de facto segregation in Minneapolis schools, pointed to the campaign against cop brutality as an example of the type of political action needed to defend Black rights. Pennock urged participation in a May 16 NAACP-sponsored march for school desegregation.

Tom Fiske, a member of the IAM Local 1037 and Socialist Workers candidate for governor, was the rally's featured speaker. Fiske highlighted the "sea change" occurring in the ranks of the working class internationally. The new mood of combativity so evident among Northwest unionists is part of a more general trend among workers, said Fiske. "This resistance [of the Northwest workers] is the product of workers' experiences, a new sense of solidarity created through overcoming divisions and watching other workers win.

"These fights, such as that of the Caterpillar workers, the broad working-class resistance in France, the Australian dock workers' strike, the general strike in Denmark, the Case workers' contract rejection, and the Titan rubber workers' strike, help workers begin to see the class reality and the possibilities for the labor movement tak-

### Young Socialists Fund Drive April 17 - May 31

CITY	GOAL	PAID	%
Seattle *	400	417	104%
Boston	150	128	85%
New York	800	490	61%
Birmingham	200	114	57%
Twin Cities, MN	250	115	46%
Des Moines	200	85	43%
Newark	350	143	41%
Philadelphia	200	76	38%
Chicago *	1,000	231	23%
Houston	300		0%
Los Angeles	350		0%
Miami	200		0%
Pittsburgh	550		0%
San Francisco/ Santa Cruz	150		0%
Washington, D.C.	250		0%
Other		23	
<b>U.S. total</b>	<b>5,350</b>	<b>1,822</b>	<b>34%</b>
<b>Goal/Should be</b>	<b>5,200</b>	<b>3,484</b>	<b>67%</b>
* Raised goal			

ing on broader social issues," Fiske explained.

Taking on such social questions and defending the existence of trade unions is totally intertwined, said Fiske, pointing to the example of the fight for immigrant workers' rights and the fight to organize strawberry workers in California.

The ruling-class assault on working people and their unions, said Fiske, is part of its drive toward war abroad. To go to war, the capitalist rulers will need to housebreak the unions and muzzle critics of its war drive. "The biggest prize in their drive toward war...remains the goal of grabbing and overturning the workers states in Eastern Europe and Russia," Fiske explained. "The rulers' debate on NATO expansion revolves around how best to tackle directly the progressive social relations established in these countries."

Fiske said that the Socialist Workers campaign is going wherever there's working-class resistance: a demonstration for Puerto Rican independence, strike picket lines, and meetings against the U.S. embargo of Cuba.

The final speaker of the evening was Gaetan Whiston, a member of the United Steelworkers of America and a leader of the Young Socialists. Whiston pledged the support of the revolutionary youth organization for the campaign and made an appeal for funds to get the campaign started, which netted \$770 in pledges and contributions.

Joining Fiske and Pennock as part of the Minnesota slate are John Hawkins, candidate for lieutenant governor, and Heather Wood, candidate for U.S. Congress in the fourth congressional district. Both are members of United Steelworkers of America Local 7263 at North Star Steel.

## Boston student sit-in presses better school conditions

BY ALEX PAPALI AND ANDREA MORELL

BOSTON—Students at Roxbury Community College emerged victorious May 7 after a 24-hour sit-in at administration offices demanding decent educational conditions and the right to student activities free from the heavy hand of school authorities. Student organizers explained that school administrators had previously dismissed their concerns, forcing them to take action.

At a rally last November 6, two days after the administration suspended the Student Government Association, students protested an increase in violations of their rights by school officials.

"The administration began to disrespect the students a long time ago," said sophomore student organizer Terry Marshall.

The action began at noon May 6 as a presentation of demands to school president Grace Brown, and an airing of further complaints from students and faculty. Students and teachers cited a chronic shortage of basic supplies, such as copy paper, chalk, and even toilet paper.

One student, Frantz Boneau, explained he had to take a delayed grade in one course

because no paper was available at the school to write his term paper. Akura Miyazaki said her professor had told her, "Chalk is like gold here now."

Another complaint was the continuing lack of student access to the Internet, which had been promised by the administration and for which the school had received funds for earlier this year. Students also protested the installation of a sophisticated surveillance system; a picket sign read, "We demand new books, not surveillance cameras."

When the students insisted Brown sign a statement committing the school to change, she refused, citing a lack of control over funding. She then abruptly broke off talks and left, but returned at 11:00 p.m., saying she was willing to negotiate. The students declined, saying no community or faculty witnesses were present; and that they had believed the negotiations would continue in the morning. Backed up by 27 state police cruisers, including an antiriot SWAT team and two K-9 dog squads, Brown ordered the protesters to evacuate or face arrest. The students locked arms and began humming, *We Shall Overcome*.

Fresh negotiations commenced, mediated

by the state representatives and Melvin King, a former state legislator and head of the Massachusetts Rainbow Coalition. Eventually school authorities signed onto 15 of the 18 demands.

The demonstration received constant media attention and solidarity from fellow students and others. At one point, supporters three stories below filled a basket at the end of a makeshift rope lowered by the student occupiers with sandwiches and supplies, in defiance of a police blockade.

Andrea Morell, Socialist Workers candidate for U.S. Congress, and her supporters, participated in the events. In a statement she said, "The crisis these youth are addressing is part of the larger crisis of capitalism which has resulted in the disastrous defunding of public education.... And like the young people who staged a job action against McDonald's in Ohio for better working conditions or Indonesian students who are protesting the effects of the currency crisis, they are showing that working people and youth will fight."

Alex Papali was one of the participants in the sit-in at the administration offices.



# Los Angeles: students protest attacks on affirmative action

BY GALE SHANGOLD

LOS ANGELES — Eighty-eight demonstrators protesting the implementation of Proposition 209 were arrested at the University of California here May 19 after occupying Royce Hall on the campus for most of the day.

Proposition 209, approved in a California referendum last year, is a measure banning affirmative action in state hiring and contracting and in admissions to state universities. It does not directly affect affirmative action programs in private schools or workplaces.

At the University of California in Los Angeles (UCLA), Black, Latino, and Native American students account for less than 13 percent of admissions for next fall's freshman class, compared with nearly 20 percent last year.

The arrests took place after three days of demonstrations, called Days of Defiance, that were sponsored by the UCLA Affirma-

tive Action Coalition. On May 14 students protested outside the University of California regents meeting. The next day the protests targeted the inauguration of Albert Carnesale, the new chancellor of UCLA. On May 19 students and others culminated their actions with a rally and march commemorating Malcolm X's birthday. The occupation of Royce Hall occurred after the march.

About 500 students rallied throughout the day outside the building chanting "Affirmative Action," the "Students united will never be defeated," and "We're still here." Some of the Black students wore T-shirts saying, "Black student: endangered species."

Several members of Bruin Republicans and Young Americans for Freedom showed up as a counterprotest, holding U.S. flags and signs in favor of the anti-affirmative action measure.

In a May 18 statement to the media the students explained, "The Affirmative Action Coalition has demanded that Carnesale is-



Militant/Osborne Hart

The fight against California's anti-affirmative action Proposition 209 has involved workers and youth. Above, members of the United Farm Workers take part in a demonstration on Oct. 27, 1997, campaigning for a No vote in last year's referendum.

sue a statement of noncompliance in defiance of Proposition 209, radically reform current admissions policies, establish outreach centers in educationally disadvantaged areas of Los Angeles County, and publicly state his opposition to Proposition 209."

The *Los Angeles Times* reports that

Carnesale said in a statement "that the university values diversity but that it must abide by the law, and Proposition 209 is the law."

More than 100 police in riot gear were present during the occupation. They confined the students for eight hours in a room, using handcuffs before releasing them.

## Supporters of immigrant rights in Ohio plan protests

BY TONY PRINCE

CLEVELAND — Supporters of the rights of immigrant workers held a meeting in Geneva, Ohio, on May 11 to organize plans to protest stepped-up deportations and harassment in the region by the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS).

Those present decided to hold a public forum in June in Painesville, Ohio, to expose INS persecution along the shore of Lake Erie, site of a multi-million-dollar tree and plant nursery business.

The meeting was initiated by the Alejandro Ramírez Defense Coalition, which has been organized to appeal the murder frame-up of a migrant worker.

The owners of the nurseries rely heavily on the labor of Mexican workers. Conditions are bad and the workday is often 12-14 hours, with no overtime pay and no medical benefits. Workers are on ten-month contracts that have to be renewed every year. Sometimes workers must pay the boss a \$1,000 bribe for renewal of their contract.

On April 29 the INS deported 61 people

in Columbus, Ohio, who were on their way to Painesville. They also arrested and deported the people who came down from Painesville to pick them up. Within a week, INS cops raided two factories in the adjacent town of Mentor. They were not admitted to one of the factories because they lacked a warrant. At the other factory they deported about a dozen people. The cops then targeted the homes of Spanish-surnamed workers from the factory.

According to migrant rights activist Verónica Flores, in one instance INS agents took five-year old twin girls and their three-year-old sister from Painesville to Cleveland and told their father when he called, "Turn in your wife and we'll return the children." The man refused, and eventually the girls were released. Flores reported that "since the end of September *la migrá* has been targeting a different house about once a week in the Painesville area to keep the people unnerved. They come to the house about 4:30 or 5:00 in the morning, kick in the door and demand to see identification. Often the

people in the house are U.S. citizens who happen to have Spanish names or dark skin."

Members of the Alejandro Ramírez Defense Coalition attended the meeting, along with half a dozen immigrant workers and relatives of workers who have been deported. Also present were representatives of the Council of Hope, a coalition of churches in Ashtabula; two Cleveland Latino organizations, Club Guatemala and the Club Azteca; the Socialist Workers Party; the Escuela Popular (People's School) in Cleveland; the Cuyahoga County AFL-CIO; the Labor Council for Latin American Advancement; and St. Mary's Church in Painesville.

Miriam Botello, a U.S. citizen whose husband was deported, related a history of INS harassment and stonewalling on in her husband's case. He has been in Mexico for 277 days, unable to see his wife and baby son, while the INS "considers" his case.

Valerie Pacheco's husband left the country "voluntarily" to avoid being deported. He had arranged with his employer to have his contract renewed, but because he didn't

give the employer any payoff he never heard from him. When he tried to return a couple weeks ago, the INS grabbed him and others at the airport in Columbus, Ohio.

Pat Morales described how her son-in-law moved down to Florida to avoid *la migrá*, but was arrested and, after being imprisoned with no charges for four months, deported. Morales's daughter has now followed her husband to Mexico with their baby.

### Defense of Alejandro Ramírez

The meeting also heard a report on the campaign to appeal the murder conviction of immigrant worker Ramírez. He was charged with murder in May 1997 when a man broke into the Painesville house Ramírez was living in with a number of other Mexican workers and their families. The intruder was forced out onto the front lawn and shot when he lunged at one of the residents with a knife. Ramírez was arrested although he did not carry out the shooting.

During his interrogation and his trial Ramírez had inadequate translation. He did not know he had a right to remain silent, and signed a waiver of his rights written in English, which he could not read.

At his trial last October, in which he was given a sentence of 18 years to life in prison, the police presented no evidence against Ramírez aside from his "confession", which he had already retracted. The cops had found a gun allegedly used in the shooting that did not have Ramírez's fingerprints on it, and they did not bother to try to find out whose prints they were. The defense was forced to limit its case to one day and two hours, which preventing it from presenting expert testimony that would have helped its case.

So far the Defense Coalition has raised \$12,000 toward a \$25,000 goal to fund Ramírez' appeal. Several fundraising dances have been held on Cleveland's West Side and in nearby Geneva.

*Tony Prince, a member of United Steelworkers of America Local 188 in Cleveland, is active in the Alejandro Ramírez Defense Coalition. Verónica Flores of the Alejandro Ramírez Defense Coalition contributed to this article.*

## New Zealand bosses, union officials push protectionist campaign on tariffs

BY ANNALUCIA VERMUNT

CHRISTCHURCH, New Zealand — An estimated 5,000 people participated in rallies in a number of cities throughout New Zealand to lobby for delays in cutting tariffs to zero on imported textiles, clothing, and footwear. The rallies were initiated by the Apparel and Textile Federation, an employer group, and joined by trade unions. More than 500 workers in Christchurch were bused by their bosses to the "March for Jobs" on May 1. Union banners prominently displayed at the event included Canterbury Combined Unions and the National Distribution Union (NDU), the main union in the garment and textile industry.

Speaking at the Christchurch rally on behalf of the employers federation, Glenn Keen said, "We're efficient but we're not paying 60 cents an hour like they do in China." Paul Watson, an official of the NDU, echoed these words, arguing that New Zealand companies can't compete with Fiji, Indonesia, and China "employing workers under slave labor conditions. We should be trying internationally to raise conditions for workers." Many of the placards in the rally had chauvinist New Zealand slogans like "Buy NZ."

The government is currently reviewing tariffs on non-car items, which under an agreement by members of the APEC forum are to be reduced to zero by 2010. The textile, shoe, and clothing and carpet industries have been lobbying for an exemption from tariff cuts.

A debate has opened up within the ruling class in New Zealand on how far and fast to

move ahead of their trading rivals in removing tariffs. The apparel and textile lobby has won support from members of the New Zealand First party in the coalition government. Treasurer Winston Peters, a leader of New Zealand First, said that New Zealand should not reduce trade protections faster than its trading partners.

The Apparel and Textile Federation is asking the government to stop its tariff reductions between 2000 and 2005. The industry wants tariffs to be reduced in line with New Zealand's trading partners, particularly Australia, where tariffs are due to finish in 2005, and not ahead of them.

In the May 14 budget the government showed its determination to push ahead with tariff removal by announcing the immediate lifting of tariffs on imported motor vehicles. This is much more rapidly than under an APEC agreement to abolish tariffs by 2010. The budget brought forward a schedule of tariff reductions that had been announced last December, reducing them to zero by December 2000.

In the wake of this announcement, last December most current car manufacturers had announced plans to close assembly operations within New Zealand. Over 1,000 jobs will be eliminated in vehicle assembly.

At the APEC summit in Vancouver last November Trade Minister Lockwood Smith considered he had scored a "historic agreement" when APEC leaders agreed to a nine-sector trade deal. The agreement marked a significant acceleration towards eliminating tariffs by 2010 for imperialist nations and 2020 for semicolonial countries.

Two categories of particular importance to New Zealand business were the opening of trade in forest products, valued at \$US245 billion, and fish \$US57.6 billion. The New Zealand government will hold the chair of APEC in 1999, when it hopes to make progress in "food liberalization" and increase access to markets for New Zealand employers' agricultural goods. It is in these sectors that the New Zealand capitalists think they are best able to compete in international markets. They hope that by leading in the reduction of tariff barriers it will add to their negotiating weight in the trade forums.

Ruth Gray, Communist League candidate for mayor of Christchurch responded to the rallies that were called around the country on May 1 by explaining, "My campaign starts from how we can build a working-class movement independent of the capitalists and their interests. The working class must fight to build unity across borders."

"Backing employers' tariff protections, or advancing their 'free trade' has no connection with that. Actions like these tie the interests of the workers to the well being of their employers, and they are a dead end for those looking for a way to fight for jobs for all."

On May 1, Gray visited the picket lines of dock workers in Australia and lent solidarity to the wharfies' victorious fight to win reinstatement to their jobs.

*Annalucia Vermunt is a member of the Service & Food Workers Union in Christchurch, New Zealand.*

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# Indonesia

Continued from front page

geosie that the man who had served their interests as head of state of Indonesia for 32 years had become a liability.

## Troops assault students in parliament

Suharto handed over the presidency to Habibie May 21. The next night, soldiers moved in and cleared several thousand students who had been occupying the parliament building for most of the week demanding Suharto resign. Careful not to use their guns, the troops beat many of the youth with clubs, and the building was quickly emptied. While students celebrated Suharto's departure, some pointed to Habibie, a long-time crony of the president, as no better.

As part of trying to clean up the army's image, Defense Minister Gen. Wiranto removed Lt. Gen. Prabowo Subianto, a son-in-law of Suharto, as commander of the Kostrad, an elite army unit. Prabowo, who is often described as a rival of Wiranto, is being made to take the blame for the May 13 student deaths, along with other military officers.

Habibie named a new cabinet. Nearly half of these ministers served in Suharto's government. Military figures continue to play a prominent role. One of the new appointments is Bambang Subianto as finance minister. Bambang had previously been responsible for restructuring the country's banking system in line with IMF demands.

Hours before Suharto resigned, the IMF announced it was holding up payment of the next \$1 billion installment of a \$43 billion loan package. Neiss was dispatched to Jakarta a few days later to talk to Habibie's government about what it needed to do to get the loan reinstated. On his arrival May 26, the IMF official made clear the imperialists' lack of confidence in Habibie's ability to maintain control. Neiss called for "political stability," and said the loans wouldn't be available until "the support of foreign governments is obtained and market confidence is restored."

This was echoed the same day by U.S. treasury secretary Robert Rubin, who said it would be premature for the IMF to resume disbursements as long as the political situation remained unclear, according to the *New York Times*.

"The greatest fear is that we will have months of uncertainty," commented Indonesian economist Mari Pangestu.

## No bottom to crisis in sight

There's no sign of the economic crisis turning around soon. Most capitalist economists' projections — which often have little basis besides hope — keep getting worse. The estimates currently being quoted for 1998 include a 47 percent annual inflation rate, gross domestic product shrinking between 10 and 25 percent; and the number of people officially listed as living in poverty more than doubling to 58 million, out of a population of about 200 million. Pangestu stated that unemployment will probably rise to 15 million this year, nearly 20 percent of the workforce.

Less than a year ago, Indonesia was regularly described as one of the budding "Asian tigers." Along with several other countries in the region, it was touted in the big-business press as alleged proof that capitalism



Above, students occupying Indonesian parliament cheer the announced resignation of Suharto. In the week since, actions have grown demanding democratic rights. At right, rally outside prison in Jakarta demands release of Xanana, a leader of the independence struggle in East Timor.



can usher in substantial economic growth and prosperity in the Third World. Indonesia went through a rapid industrialization in the 1980s, with millions of toilers being drawn into the cities and manufacturing. Between 1991 and mid-1997, the gross domestic product in Indonesia, Malaysia, and Thailand rose by roughly 7-10 percent a year, a much higher rate than in the United States and other imperialist countries.

Capitalists from the United States, Japan, Australia, and other imperialist countries set up factories in semicolonial countries like Indonesia in search of higher profit rates than they can get at home, seeking to pay lower wages and have export platforms in Asia, Latin America, and the Middle East. Since the start of the 1990s they have also poured billions into the stock and bond markets of what they often call "emerging markets."

This has built up a speculative bubble that can't be sustained in the context of an overall decline in the capitalist system worldwide. The collapse of the peso in Mexico at the end of 1994 gave a picture on a smaller scale of what can happen when the bubble bursts. Fearing defaults on loans to U.S. banks after the peso dropped 40 percent

against the dollar, Washington put together \$50 billion in "loan guarantees." In exchange, the government of President Ernesto Zedillo agreed to deposit all revenues from the state-owned oil monopoly Pemex in an account at the Federal Reserve Bank of New York before being transferred to Mexico, to serve as a guarantee in case of default. The Mexican government also agreed to impose a series of austerity measures and allowed U.S. and other foreign capitalists to buy up more of the national patrimony. Real wages and living standards for working people were slashed.

Last July, the air started to whoosh out of the balloons holding up the "Asian tigers." First, the government of Thailand was forced to sharply devalue the national currency, the baht. Other countries in the region had to quickly follow suit, to stay competitive. This triggered a downward spiral. With some fluctuations, most currencies in the region have been falling since, with devastating effect on industry and banking, and especially on the living standards of workers and peasants.

The "bailout" packages foisted on the rulers of Indonesia, Thailand, and elsewhere

in Asia have the same aims as the Mexican "rescue" — to ensure payment on the foreign debt, while extracting more profits from the labor of workers and farmers and forcing open the door for imperialist companies to buy up factories, banks, and land.

In Indonesia, the new government moved rapidly to assure that it would proceed with plans to sell off a dozen state-owned companies, including the long-distance phone service PT Telkom and the Indosat satellite operator, as well as review the Pertamina oil monopoly. The crisis makes it harder to find buyers, however. The May 26 *Financial Times* reported, "When PT Telkom was floated in 1995, with the sale of a 25 percent stake, it had a market capitalisation of almost \$8.5bn. That has now fallen to less than \$4bn."

Among the pressures that weigh down is the fact that governments and companies in these countries are now forced to try to repay in devalued currencies crushing debts that are denominated in dollars or yen. In the case of Indonesia, this comes to \$137 billion, with the rupiah worth just one fifth of what it was a year ago. On May 27 Moody's, the U.S. investment rating agency, described Indonesia as facing a "broadly insolvent banking system."

The crisis in Asia has a huge impact on the Japanese economy, which was already the weakest among the major imperialist world powers. Japanese banks list as assets \$23 billion in debts from private companies in Indonesia, for instance, which is not about to be paid quickly.

Back in September 1996, commenting approvingly on the outcome of the currency crisis in Mexico at that time, *New York Times* columnist Thomas Friedman wrote, "To pay for the bailout, Mexico cut the standard of living for most of its people by 20 percent. There should have been a revolution, but there was barely a demonstration."

But in Indonesia today, there have been big demonstrations. It's three years further into a world capitalist economic crisis in which working people find the catastrophe bearing down on them increasingly unacceptable.

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# Sinn Fein: 'Change is coming as a result of our struggle'

Continued from front page  
cation of Ireland. There the turnout was 55 percent.

The agreement is the end result of the recent round of talks between the British and Irish governments and nationalist and Unionist parties (those who support the continued "union" of Northern Ireland with Britain). Its main points are the setting up of a Northern Ireland assembly and cross-border links with some executive powers between that body and the Irish government on certain all-Ireland issues. The agreement also provides for the release of political prisoners within two years, a commission to examine the Royal Ulster Constabulary, and a Council of the British Isles.

At its emergency *Ard Fheis* (national conference) May 10, Sinn Fein overwhelmingly endorsed its leadership's proposal to cast a Yes vote in the referendum. Rita O'Hare, moving the leadership motion, said "All aspects of the agreement have to be viewed in the wider context. Change is coming as a result of our struggle." An exit poll conducted for the *Sunday Times* concluded that 96 percent of the Catholic vote was in favor of the agreement. The main pillar of British rule in the northeastern six counties of Ireland has been institutionalized discrimination against the Catholic population.

Commenting on the vote, Sinn Fein president Gerry Adams said that people have signed up for a future and not a past. Changes now have to be made across a whole range of issues. On TV, Sinn Fein's chief negotiator Martin McGuinness reminded a BBC interviewer, "This war is not over. British troops are still on our streets."

Television showed celebrating politicians drinking champagne as the results came in. British prime minister Anthony Blair called it, "A day of joy," and U.S. president William Clinton sent a message saying "After a 30 year winter of sectarian violence, Northern Ireland, today has the promise of a springtime of peace."

This mood was not reflected on the



streets. The *Irish Times* reported that there were no street parties, champagne or victory cavalcades, and that visitors to Belfast would not have detected any special buzz. "I'd love to think this was a new beginning," said Pauline McCann from Belfast, adding more cautiously, "the peace isn't secure. Some Unionists want to destroy the agreement."

Adams analyzed the agreement at the first session of the Sinn Fein *Ard Fheis* April 18. "On the one hand it upholds the Unionist veto over the constitutional position of the north, and, on the other hand it reduces the British territorial claim to that one hinge while it compels unionists to accept key and fundamental changes involving all-Ireland dimensions." Sinn Fein leaders also emphasized that the agreement is the end of a phase in the struggle, not the end of it.

Even before the referendum it was clear how this struggle will take shape in the immediate future. In an effort to woo unionists into voting Yes, Blair published a handwritten, signed pledge that promised that

those who used or threatened violence will be excluded from the Northern Ireland assembly and that prisoners will not be released unless violence is permanently renounced. Conservative politicians said on television that they would block the legislation needed at Westminster to release prisoners if they did not believe these pledges would be carried out. Gerry Adams however refused to accept decommissioning — that is disarmament by the Irish Republican Army (IRA) and other groups who have issued cease-fires — as a precondition for his party sitting in Northern Ireland's new cabinet. "I do not accept for one minute that those who vote for Sinn Fein will be treated any differently from anyone else," he said.

Adams also demanded that the July 5 Orange Order parade in Drumcree, Northern Ireland, and other contentious marches be called off. Every year, the Orange Order, Apprentice Boys, and other pro-British groups hold a series of triumphalist marches through mostly Catholic neighborhoods, attempting to intimidate the population. The demand to stop or reroute the parades has been a flashpoint of the nationalist struggle in recent years. David Trimble, leader of the Ulster Unionist party (UUP) insisted the marches were legitimate celebrations of the Protestant tradition and asked nationalists "don't allow the IRA to manipulate you into causing violence this summer."

Last year, the Garvaghy Road Residents Coalition appealed for other nationalists to stay away from their protest against the Orange Order march from Drumcree church through their mainly nationalist area, in a bid to defuse tension. Nonetheless, the police forced that parade down the Garvaghy Road. This year, the residents have voted 82 percent in favor of extending their protest to people from other areas. A future

minister Margaret Thatcher regime." He also explained how he had worked with Gerry Adams, now Sinn Fein's president, in the H-Blocks. "He was always encouraging us to read, to learn about political struggles throughout the world," he said.

Holland spent 18 years in prison. Released in 1991, he now works in Sinn Fein's International Department.

While on hunger strike, Sands ran for the British Parliament on the Anti-H-Block/Armagh ticket, with Sinn Fein's support. On April 9, 1981, he was elected with more than 30,000 votes. Holland described the impact on the prisoners when they secretly learned of Sands' win in the British election. "Everyone started banging — we couldn't hold our delight." A gauge of success of the decision to stand, he said, was the national and international support.

In response to a question about the Northern Ireland Agreement, Holland said, "It's not a settlement — no one believes that." A lot of republicans disagree with parts of it, but the question is, "does it give us a position to push for real change and equality?" He explained that at the May 10 *Ard Fheis* (national conference) everyone was able to put their point of view forward and then about 95 percent supported the strategy that the agreement could be used to push the fight around issues like ending discrimination in employment, release of the political prisoners, strengthening voting rights, and disbanding the Royal Ulster Constabulary.

Holland thanked everyone for attending and concluded, "The struggle for us continues. It depends on people like yourselves."

Linda Harris is a member of the Australian Manufacturing Workers' Union in Sydney, Australia.



An Phoblacht photos

Sinn Fein leaders explain that the struggle for a united Ireland will continue to advance through mass mobilizations. Above, Sinn Fein Youth spell out the message on the British Army post in the center of Crossmaglen, Northern Ireland. Left, 3,000 people came to Crossmaglen from across Ireland April 26. The protest, organized by Sinn Fein Youth, demanded the immediate release of all political prisoners.

meeting will decide on what particular plans to put into practice.

A recent march in nationalist Dunloy was rerouted away from the village center, although 100 Apprentice Boys filed to the Presbyterian church on the outskirts, past several Catholic homes. Tony Chivers of the Dunloy Residents' and Parents Association urged dialogue, saying, "The loyal orders have to talk to us...to help the common good."

Polarization among unionists is increasing. Exit polls suggested that 55 percent of Protestants voted in favor of the agreement, marking the beginnings of an acceptance that things cannot go on the old way. Ultra-rightist Ian Paisley, the leader of the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) and the main figure in the "No" campaign, was greeted with taunts of "Cheerio, Cheerio, Cheerio" from loyalists as he entered the hall for the referendum result announcement.

Nonetheless, Paisley and loyalism are far from spent forces. Ian Paisley Jr. said that in the June 25 elections for the Northern Assembly, the DUP would use its support to "frustrate any role for Dublin to have any control whatever over our affairs and to deny Sinn Fein any active role over us."

John Taylor, deputy leader of the UUP, has put into question the connection between the party and the Orange Order, which opposed the agreement. "The time is now right to break the link" he said. The UUP itself was split over the vote, with six of its MP's rejecting the document. A No voter on the Protestant Shankill Road commented angrily "This unionist party will not talk to that unionist party, and they're all going to fall out among themselves and Sinn Fein's going to take over."

Meanwhile, Seamus Mallon of the reformist Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP) and Taylor have both expressed interest in the idea of their voters offering support to the other's candidates in the elections to the Assembly.

Caroline Bellamy is a member of the Transport and General Workers Union. Pete Clifford contributed to this article.

## 300 in Sydney commemorate 1981 Irish hunger strike

BY LINDA HARRIS

SYDNEY, Australia — More than 300 people packed the Gaelic Club here on May 16 to commemorate the 17th anniversary of the deaths of Irish republican fighter Bobby Sands and nine of other hunger strikers.

The 1981 hunger strike campaign, organized by Irish republicans, was aimed at rebutting the British government's attempts to criminalize the struggle for Irish freedom by changing the status of republican inmates from political to criminal status. As part of this protest they refused to wear prison uniforms, and forced by London to wear only their blankets. By 1980 around 400 young men and women were "on the blanket."

The high point of the evening was a telephone link-up with three republican activists in Belfast who had been part of the blanket protest in Long Kesh Prison, which culminated in the 1981 hunger strike. Leonard Ferran, Brendan McFarlane, and Tom Holland responded to questions from a panel of Australian Aid for Ireland members.

Ferran served 15 years in Long Kesh until his release in 1991. He described how the blanket protest began in March 1976 when the British government withdrew the political status of republican prisoners and the atrocious conditions they faced as a result. "The bond between the blanketmen was an experience you never forget. Seventeen years since the death of Bobby Sands, [those who died] are always with us," he said. Our struggle "is going to be successful."

McFarlane was the Officer Commanding the republican prisoners during the 1981 hunger strike, taking over when Sands started the hunger strike. "It was not simply a protest about conditions alone — it was a turning point in the struggle. It was make-or-break time for the [then British prime

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# 500 people protest cop brutality in Chicago

BY JOHN STUDER

CHICAGO — Five hundred marchers took to the streets in Chicago's downtown Loop district May 19 to protest against police brutality. The march, called by the Greater Chicago Committee Against Police Brutality and endorsed by more than 120 community and political groups, and prominent individuals started at the Federal Building and marched around City Hall to a rally at the Civic Center.

"We are marching today to empower the residents of Chicago, and especially our youth, not to be silent when they are victims of police brutality," Crystal Lekgothoane, co-chair of the march, told the press as the demonstrators stepped into the streets at lunchtime. Buses brought marchers into the loop from the Cabrini Green housing project, from Black community churches, from high school field trips, and from Centro Sin Fronteras, an anti-deportation group.

The march was held on May 19 to celebrate the anniversary of the birth of Malcolm X and his example in struggle. It culminated weeks of marches and rallies following the second police beating and attempted frame-up of Jeremiah Mearday.

Mearday was brutalized by Chicago cops last fall, sparking a series of protests. After months of hearings before the police

department's Office of Professional Conduct, the two cops were fired.

One week later, Mearday was again accosted and arrested. After a search of Mearday produced nothing, cops said they searched his clothing again and claimed they found cocaine in one of his shoes. Sonny Carter, Mearday's father, joined the demonstration.

In the weeks after the march was called, two Black youths were shot and killed by police in the Chicago area. Vanessa Laurence, the aunt of Joseph Winfield, spoke at the May 19 rally about how her nephew was run down by a police car and then shot half a dozen times in the back until he was dead.

The Chicago cops assembled a force of over 1,000 around the demonstrators and along the march. All the doors at City Hall were locked when the demonstration went by, except for one staffed by cops.

Chanting "Hey, hey, ho, ho, police brutality has got to go!" the marchers drew big crowds of downtown workers on lunch. It was one of the largest demonstrations against police brutality in years.

The big-business media chose not to report on the demonstration. Except for a front-page article in the Black community paper, the *Chicago Defender*, none of the



Militant

Some 500 people rallied in Chicago May 19 in one of the largest anti-cop brutality demonstrations in years. Protest organizers announced further plans for marches.

daily press covered the march. The city's two Spanish-language television stations were the only TV media to give it coverage. As the march concluded, organizers announced that the coalition would be continuing to plan marches and rallies to de-

mand justice for Mearday and to protest police brutality. Forty-nine people signed up at coalition tables to get involved.

John Studer is a member of United Steelworkers of America Local 1011.

## Striking Florida meatpackers stick together, win gains

BY ROLLANDE GIRARD

PLANT CITY, Florida — "People stuck together and we showed that we could not be pushed around. If nothing else, they've got to respect that," said Jerry Conard, a truck lift operator at Lykes/Smithfield Meat Co. in this town near Tampa in central Florida.

The 540 members of United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) Local 1625 here voted to ratify an agreement with the company on May 22. The new contract gives an across-the-board 15 cent wage increase for the first half of the 21-month contract, and 10 cents for the rest of the term.

The strikers also won a raise for new hires from \$5.75 to \$7 an hour and an increase of 50 cents every 6 months, topping out at

\$10.28. "The company thought that having new hires in the plant was going to get us, but the new people hung in as strong as anyone else," Conard said.

The company had originally demanded an extension of the last contract for 6 months. When the workers refused, the company offered a 21-month contract with no pay increase. The union asked for 25 cents per year for three years. After the company's refusal to negotiate, the workers at Lykes/Smithfield walked off the job at midnight on April 12.

The UFCW members waged a six-week strike against Smithfield, a major hog producer, pork processor, and meat marketer that owns numerous plants around the country. The company has more than 16,000 em-

ployees and yearly sales of \$4.5 billion.

Since the company bought this plant from Lykes Bros. in 1996, it has invested millions of dollars in modernizing it, while speeding up production by double or triple according to strikers.

**Hiring of Mexicans strengthens union**

"The company hired about 100 Mexicans last year, thinking they would take over our jobs," said Tom Baretta, "but almost all of them support the strike." Baretta was speaking just before the contract vote.

Rosa, a Mexican-born worker, is one example of this. She started at Smithfield only two weeks before the strike began. Referring to the company's refusal to raise wages, Rosa said she supported the strike because

"some people worked here a long time and I believe that it is an injustice. They spent their youth here. They don't think only about themselves but about the ones who will come after them." She said she had some experience in Mexico in strikes against U.S. companies that had refused wage increases.

Although some strikers joined the union only after the strike started, they received the same weekly benefits as those who had contributed to a weekly strike fund before the walkout.

The strikers organized lively picket lines every day, which often had between 50 and 100 people at any given time — day and night. The union organized a food bank and a barbecue was cooked by the pickets on the line.

Many drivers passing by the busy Turkey Creek Road would honk in support and some would stop to show their support and join the picket line.

The strikers were proud of how they were able to stick together. Only 10-15 workers crossed the line. Other strikebreakers were hired through temporary agencies.

The many nationalities represented on the picket line was evident, with many different languages being spoken.

"Viva la huelga!" [Long live the strike] yelled Prayoon Sawaengsri, who is originally from Thailand. Some of his fellow Latin American strikers had taught him some words in Spanish as he led chants with a bullhorn.

Scott M. Burney is a member of Teamster Local 79 at United Parcel Service who was on strike there last fall. He stopped by and asked for leaflets to distribute to his co-workers.

"I am happy about the outcome of our strike — it was well worth it. And I hope that these guys get what they need," Burney said. "Everybody jacks up the price but the employers won't raise the wages," he added.

The drivers at UPS refused to deliver for Smithfield, so the company had to call another delivery company.

"It is a moral victory being that we are going back getting something," stated striker Scott Shapman, "It is better to go back and get something even if it is not all we asked for but it is more than what the company offered originally."

Vernon Smith has worked a total of 40 years for Smithfield. He quit three times and came back. In the six-week strike he picketed 10-12 hours a day, missing only one day on the picket line.

Smith explained that "this strike means a lot for me. A lot of people are supporting us. Before, people talked to me about strikes but I didn't do anything about it. But from now on, when this is over, I will support other people who go on strike any way I can."

## Black voting rights activists in Alabama fight frame-up by federal, state officials

BY SUSAN LAMONT

BIRMINGHAM, Alabama — A voting rights car caravan wound its way through communities in Greene County May 2 to win support for a defense campaign on behalf of 12 political activists in this predominantly Black, rural county in western Alabama. Organizers of the car caravan also urged participation in the June 2 primary elections as a way of standing up to efforts by federal and state officials to intimidate Black voters. The action was sponsored by the Alabama New South Coalition (ANSC), Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), NAACP, Southern Organizing Committee, Alabama Black Belt Defense Fund, and Kentucky Alliance.

The defense campaign for the 12 activists in Greene, Wilcox, and Hale counties is spearheaded by the Alabama Black Belt Defense Committee. It aims to overturn federal indictments of voting fraud against six civil rights and community activists in Greene County, the previous conviction of two others there on similar charges, and two more in Wilcox County. Two others face upcoming trials in Hale County.

Following three years of investigation by the FBI and Alabama Bureau of Investigation, 30 federal indictments were brought against the six Greene County activists in January 1998, charging them with conspiracy to commit voter fraud. These indictments follow the convictions on similar charges of Frank "Pinto" Smith, who has been removed from his elected position as Greene County Commissioner, and longtime community activist Connie Tyree, who faces 33 months in prison. They are appeal-

ing their convictions.

The six facing indictments are Greene County SCLC president Spiver Gordon, County Commissioner Garria Spencer, Althenia Spencer, Greene County Racing Commissioner Lester Brown, and county employees Booker T. Cooke, Jr., and Felephus Hardy.

"We need the support of progressive-minded people across the nation," explained SCLC president Gordon in a phone interview. "This current case is an extension of the harassment and intimidation carried out by the FBI and state authorities against Black voters in the 1980s. It's an attempt to keep Black people from exercising their constitutional rights and voting rights."

In 1985 government officials brought 212 felony charges against eight Black voting rights activists in Greene County, including Gordon. None of the charges held up and all the defendants were eventually cleared. Greene County been a center for Black rights organizing for many years, including work on behalf of Black family farmers. The latest indictments grew out of an "investigation" of the 1994 elections initiated by Jefferson Sessions, then Attorney General of Alabama. Sessions, a Republican, is now a U.S. senator. He was also involved in bringing the 1980s indictments. The eight people from Greene County are all Democrats.

The current charges revolve around the use of absentee ballots, which are often used by older people and those who are ill or may not have ready access to transportation. It is legal to assist absentee voters in applying for ballots and using them. In 1994 absen-

tee ballots accounted for one-fourth of the votes cast in Greene County.

Prior to the indictments, the FBI and ABI carried out an intense campaign of interrogation of those who voted absentee. They used the "investigation" of three Black church burnings in the area as a pretext to question people about voting. No one has been charged in the local church burnings.

"The indictments of the Greene County Eight and the others are part of a broad effort by the employers and their servants in both the Democratic and Republican parties to push back the gains of the civil rights movement," explained Kristin Meriam, Socialist Workers candidate for Alabama governor, in a recent interview. "This includes the bosses' drive to get rid of affirmative action; the growing resegregation in employment, housing, and education; and attacks on voting rights, like the one in Greene County. But these attacks are not going unanswered, as the Greene County defense effort shows," the socialist candidate noted. "All working people in Alabama and around the country, whether Black, white, Latino, or Asian, have a stake in reversing these indictments, which are aimed at smearing and intimidating Black rights fighters and closing down space for political activity by workers and farmers."

For more information on the case or to send contributions, contact the Alabama Black Belt Defense Committee, P.O. Box 82, Eutaw, AL 35462.

Susan LaMont is a member of the United Steelworkers of America in Fairfield, Alabama.



# Northwest workers step up protests to press for contract

BY MARY MARTIN

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Two hundred unionists who work at Northwest Airlines in Minneapolis held a rally May 22 in nearby Ft. Snelling, Minnesota, with a demand that was emblazoned on the red T-shirts many of them wore: "We want a decent contract — Now!"

On the same day at Detroit Metropolitan Airport, 100 Northwest pilots, flight attendants, and workers organized in the International Association of Machinists (IAM) set up informational picket lines to win public support for their contract fight.

Meanwhile, at the Los Angeles International Airport, 150 IAM members joined by pilots, flight attendants, and a few workers from other airlines conducted a day-long informational picket line. The Machinists estimate they reached 2,000 passengers and other airline workers with leaflets in Spanish and English and discussions to explain to the public the massive concession workers gave Northwest in the 1993 contract and their insistence today on a pay raise.

These three actions and at least one smaller informational picket at the Northwest terminal in Atlanta are examples of the stepped-up union activities by IAM and other union members at Northwest Airlines, who after 20 months of government-mediated negotiations find themselves no closer to a new contract with a wage raise than they have been for nearly 10 years.

The IAM's Strike Readiness Committee held a meeting in Minneapolis May 12 with representatives from the 10 largest IAM locals at Northwest to discuss strike preparations and nationally coordinated informational picketing at Northwest's terminals such as the May 22 actions.

Steve Kelton, president of IAM Local 2785, which organized the informational picketing in Los Angeles, said, "We need more of this.... The IAM is projecting informational picket lines system wide in every Northwest station possible on June 12."

Unionists at the Ft. Snelling rally chanted "Contract, Contract, Contract" and "Strike, Strike, Strike," as well as "Retro, Retro, Retro," referring to the demand for an improved pension with retroactive pay for the

period since the IAM's contract expired in October 1996. The featured speaker was AFL-CIO secretary-treasurer Richard Trumka.

At the Los Angeles picket, Armando Soto told the *Militant*, "We should have pickets once a week and stick together so management will see we are not joking." Joyce Harder, an IAM member and aircraft cleaner, said, "It's about time we pulled together and we got stronger through this picket."

In nearly 10 years, Northwest workers received only one raise of 1.5-3 percent while giving \$897 million in concessions to the airline in the 1993 contract.

## Contract negotiations grind on

The protest actions come after a month-long stall in the federal government-mediated talks between the IAM and Northwest Airlines. Talks resumed May 13-15, only to recess again until May 27.

Ricco Maniago, an Northwest ramp worker at Washington National Airport and member of IAM Local 1759, reported, "Workers at the other airlines are asking me what is going on with our contract. When we took concessions in 1993, the very next year United and other airlines followed with concessions from their workers. So what happens now is important because if we win a good contract the other unionized people in the big airlines will win too. Or the other way: if we lose out and the company gets its way, these other big companies will want whatever Northwest got from us."

None of the five other unions that represent Northwest employees, including the Airline Pilots Association (ALPA) and the Teamsters Union, which organizes flight attendants, have reached a contract agreement with the company.

Northwest bosses are asking pilots for a 10 percent pay cut, for those who fly the company's narrow-body planes, the majority of its fleet, as well as work rule changes that would eliminate hundreds of pilot jobs, ALPA reports.

## Resistance and retaliation

Northwest bosses continue to retaliate against workers who are carrying out de-



Militant/Mark Friedman

**Machinists hold informational picket line at Los Angeles airport May 22 to win public support for contract fight at Northwest Airlines. Pickets were held in several cities.**

fensive measures such as "working safe" — adhering closely to all safety rules — and refusing to volunteer for overtime for safety reasons. Refusing the overtime is also a way not to help the company solve its problems of chronic staff shortages due to the bosses' refusal to hire enough full-time workers.

The day of the informational picketing in Los Angeles, the company forced several unionists to work overtime, preventing them from participating in the action. The bosses also issued a bulletin that day prohibiting workers from wearing the union buttons that raise contract issues.

According to a report in the May 13 St. Paul *Pioneer Press*, a ninth Machinist union member was fired in Minneapolis, supposedly for "harassment" of another employee. The fired worker allegedly took issue with another worker's decision to volunteer for overtime. The report also stated that Northwest has threatened to lay off 40 mechanics at its Duluth, Minnesota, maintenance base unless their productivity increased.

## Wall Street misgivings

Northwest's May 1 "employee newspaper" boasted making \$71 million in the first quarter of 1998 and reported that the company's first-quarter earnings had more than tripled in the 1994-98 period. None-

theless, confidence in Northwest among businessmen has dipped. Northwest's stock rating was downgraded from "strong buy" to "buy" by Bankers Trust-Alex Brown, and CS First Boston lowered its stock rating for Northwest from "buy" to "hold." The analysts predict Northwest's "labor problems" will cost the company \$19 million dollars.

*Crain's Detroit Business* editorialized against Northwest Airlines on May 4 under a headline "Some people just don't get it" — a takeoff on Northwest's slogan, "Some people just know how to fly." *Crain's* complained that Northwest's near-monopoly on air travel in the Midwest means they feel no pressure to settle their contract dispute with the unions. "After nearly a month of canceled flights and stranded travelers, Northwest still hasn't been able to [resolve the labor dispute]."

Mary Martin is a member of IAM Local 1759 and works on the ramp at Northwest in Washington, D.C. Mark Friedman, a ramp worker and member of IAM Local 2785 in Los Angeles; Joe Callahan, a member of United Auto Workers (UAW) in the Twin Cities; Jeff Jones, a cleaner at Northwest in Minneapolis; and Holly Harkness and John Sarge, members of UAW in Detroit, contributed to this article.

# Detroit newspaper workers say: 'We want a contract — now!'

BY JOHN SARGE

DETROIT — Chants of "What do we want? A contract! When do we want it? Now!" echoed through the business district here May 20, as 500 newspaper workers and their supporters held a spirited rush-hour march, under the slogan of "1,000 days is long enough."

Almost three years ago, on July 13, 1995, some 2,500 members of six unions at this city's two daily newspapers, the *Detroit News* and *Free Press*, were forced to strike by the newspaper bosses.

After more than 20 months on the picket lines facing companies set on union busting and hundreds of hired thugs, the unions made an unconditional offer to return to work in February 1997. The companies — Gannett and Knight-Ridder, the two largest national newspaper chains — refused to take back most of the strikers, turning the strike into a lockout.

Last June 19, two days before tens of thousands of unionists from many cities marched here to protest the newspaper bosses' actions, a National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) administrative law judge ruled that the strike was caused by unfair labor practice by the *Detroit News*.

The paper had instituted a "merit" pay system for reporters without negotiating with the Newspaper Guild. The NLRB judge ordered the companies to return strikers to their jobs.

Eleven months later the NLRB is still reviewing the decision.

The May 20 protest was the latest step of the union campaign to keep the spotlight of

public opinion on the corporations.

Newspaper unionists actively promote a subscribers boycott of the two papers and Gannett's flagship newspaper, *USA Today*. They urge public officials and others not to talk to reporters for the papers; as a result, only two of the nine Detroit City Council members will speak to the papers. Many overpasses on the freeway system have recently had their "No News or Free Press" signs replaced.

Unionists from the Detroit newspapers can be found on numerous picket lines around North America. Over the last winter and early spring, they organized a tour of Ontario, British Columbia, Alberta, northern California, Oregon, and Washington. John Martin, a printer, reported that in Toronto they spoke at a "a couple big union meetings, with the labor council and at the International Women's Day Festival."

Religious figures in the area have been adding to the public pressure on the companies. Organized as the Religious Leaders for Justice at the Detroit Newspapers, they called a "summit" meeting of elected officials and others trying to find an end to the lockout.

A meeting of 300 took place May 18, including representatives of 24 local city councils and the three county commissions in the metropolitan area. The newspapers declined an invitation to attend.

## March draws solidarity from others

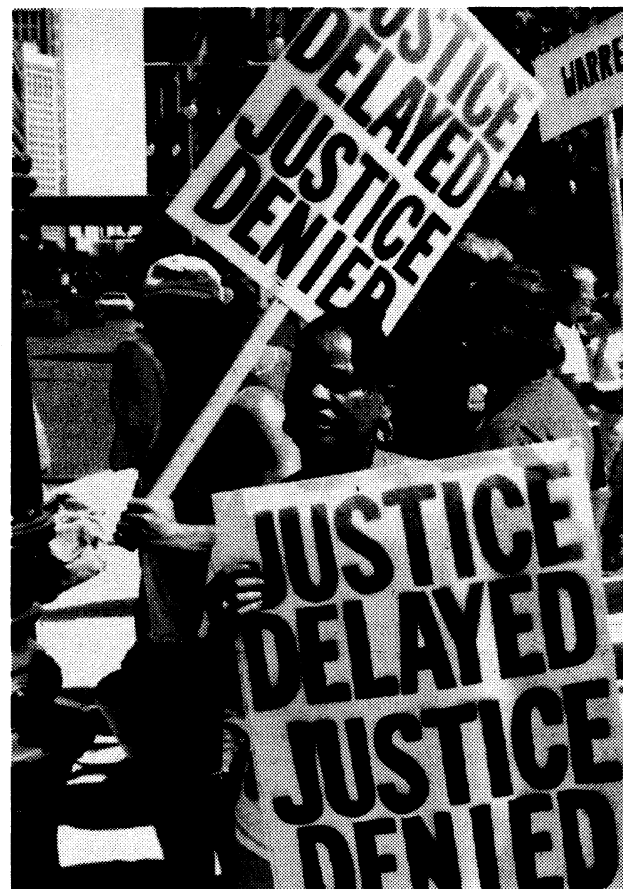
The demonstrators, who included newspaper unionists as well as members of the Steelworkers, Auto Workers, building trades

unions, marched from a downtown park to the offices of the NLRB and then rallied in front of the Detroit News Building. The marchers protested the refusal of the companies to return all strikers to their jobs and the delay of the NLRB review process, and expressed support for 500 strikers who have reclaimed their jobs since the end of the strike 15 months ago.

The newspapers indicate that about 750 unionists remain on a "preferential hiring list" that does not count the 200 workers fired for strike-related activity. Many of these have their own NLRB case against the employers.

John Peralta, a Teamster mailer with 23 years at the newspapers who has been rehired, told the demonstrators that he was only working part-time. "We have 25 full-timers with 40 years seniority who are treated like dirt," he said. But he added, "Union workers in there are not going away. We're going to fight for an honest contract, including for all the fired workers." He ended by underscoring, "That is what it's all about — solidarity."

Members of the Newspaper Guild recently got another reminder of the newspaper bosses' attitude toward them. The *News* announced a new plan of pay increases for



Militant/John Sarge

**Some 500 newspaper workers and their supporters march through downtown Detroit May 20.**

reporters, with raises varying between zero to 35 percent. In response, the union proposed an annual raise of 3.5 percent for everyone in union jobs at the paper. The employer rejected it.

John Sarge is a member of the United Auto Workers and is the Socialist Workers candidate for U.S. Congress in the 14th District in Michigan.

# New York cab drivers stand up to city gov't

Continued from front page

terrorists from carrying out their act," is how Police Commissioner Howard Safir justified the action of the cops.

"They know that we broke their strike — destroyed it really," declared Giuliani. The mayor sought to justify his actions by citing an anonymous flier, allegedly calling on them to "make Manhattan a parking lot."

After several hours of negotiations the cops did allow the drivers to march. Chanting "We want Justice" hundreds of them marched from Long Island City, across the Queensboro Bridge, through the streets of Manhattan to City Hall and finally to the offices of the Taxi and Limousine Commission — an agency that regulates the taxi industry. The march, which lasted for four and a half hours, swelled in size to about 1,000 drivers, most of them Indian and Pakistani. All along the march route a number of working people expressed support and solidarity for the drivers.

## Ongoing war in taxi industry

The taxi industry is locked in an ongoing war in which the New York City ruling class is attempting to force cab operators — a group that includes the owners of fleets of cabs, those that own one or two cabs, and individual drivers — to pay higher fines and other costs for operating cabs. The city administration hopes to accomplish this through a series of rule changes governing the industry. The changes would result in substantial increases in the cost of insurance for cab owners and drivers, fines in varying amounts of up to \$1,000 for certain offenses, and other measures. If these proposed rule changes go through those who would be most severely impacted would be the lease drivers who make up the bulk of the 44,000 yellow cabbies in New York.

Cabbie Nadir Shah explained, "I pay \$105-\$110 to lease my cab for a 12-hour shift. When a cop stops a cab, you always get a summons. For example, you get a summons for the interior or exterior of the cab being dirty. We have no medical or unemployment insurance or any other benefits and



Militant/Nancy Rosenstock

Some 200 taxi drivers rallied May 27 in New York against proposed fines, raises in insurance, and other onerous measures demanded by the city.

we are responsible for paying all the fines."

Literature distributed by the United Cab Drivers Association explained that all drivers would be forced to take a yearly drug test at their own expense. They could be fined \$150 for smoking in the cab by either the driver or by the passenger.

The United Yellow Cab Drivers Association called the May 21 protest. As a leaflet distributed explained, the protest was initially projected as a "demonstration with cars" to "fight the injustice done to us." Two days before the demonstration was to occur, however, the association canceled it after being told that Mayor Giuliani would meet with them.

Vijay Bali, one of the leaders of the United Yellow Cab Drivers Association, explained in an interview in their offices in Brooklyn the day before the demonstration that "we gave Giuliani 24 hours to meet with us. He refused, so we have no choice but to reissue the call for the demonstration."

Nick Stivdis, a yellow cab driver explained the morning of the protest, "Giuliani didn't want to talk or budge or listen. He treats all workers, if a cab driver, a street vendor or hospital worker like garbage. He wants to destroy the teachers union, cab drivers, hospital workers, all workers—he is just for the corporations."

On May 22, immediately after the dem-

onstration, the United Yellow Cab Drivers Association, represented by the New York Civil Liberties Union, filed a lawsuit in federal district court in Manhattan. The suit contends that the city administration violated the taxi drivers First Amendment rights by blocking cabs from entering Manhattan and by not allowing a rally in City Hall Park. On May 26 federal court judge Robert Patterson ruled that the Giuliani administration had indeed violated the First Amendment rights of the taxi drivers.

Rose Ana Berbeo, a member of the International Association of Machinists (IAM) at Northwest Airlines and Socialist Workers candidate for governor of New York, spoke at the May 27. She said, "At La Guardia we're fighting for a contract. We face the same struggle as you, where they try to turn 'public opinion' against us. As if 'the public' were something different than the millions of working people who make this city run." Berbeo added that her campaign "is telling the truth about the taxi drivers struggle. The new regulations are not about safety, they're about blaming taxi drivers for the problems of this city. Just like they blame hospital workers for the crisis of health care, and the students for the education crisis." The unionist called on "the organized labor movement to support the cab drivers' fight."

The drivers association is negotiating with the city administration on plans for continued protests.

Nancy Rosenstock is an airline worker at La Guardia Airport in New York and is a member of IAM. Al Duncan is a railroad worker at Conrail and is a member of United Transportation Union (UTU). Ruth Robinett, a member of the UTU in New York, contributed to this article.

## MILITANT LABOR FORUMS

### CALIFORNIA

#### Los Angeles

**How Dock Workers Smashed Employer/Government Moves to Bust Their Union.** Speaker: Gale Shangold, Socialist Workers candidate for governor of California, reports on her discussions with dock unionists and their supporters. Fri., June 5, 7:30 p.m. 2546 W. Pico Blvd. Donation: \$4. Tel: (213) 380-0460.

### FLORIDA

#### Miami

**India's Nuclear Testing: What's Behind the U.S. Sanctions.** Speaker: Glen Swanson, Socialist Workers Party and member International Association of Machinists Local 1126. Fri., June

5, 7:30 p.m. 137 N.E. 54th St. Donation: \$4. Translation into Spanish and French. Tel: (305) 756-1020.

### MASSACHUSETTS

#### Boston

**What Next for Ireland After Approval of the Good Friday Accord.** Panel discussion. Fri., June 5, 7:30 p.m. 780 Tremont St. Donation: \$4. Tel: (617) 247-6772.

### NEW YORK

#### Brooklyn

**Support the Struggle of the Palestinian People against 50 Years of Israeli Occupation.** Fri., June 5, 7:30 p.m. 59 4th Avenue (near Bergen)

in Brooklyn. (near the Atlantic and Pacific subway stops). Donation: \$4. Tel: (718) 399-7257.

### NEW JERSEY

#### Newark

**Support the Struggle for Puerto Rican Self-Determination.** Fri., June 5, 7:30 p.m. 87A Halsey St. Donation: \$4. Tel: (973) 643-3341.

### NEW ZEALAND

#### Auckland

**Firefighters Resist 'Restructuring.'** Speaker: Representative of the NZ Professional Firefighters Union. Fri., June 5, 7 p.m. 203 Karangahape Road. Donation: \$3. Tel: (09) 379-3075.

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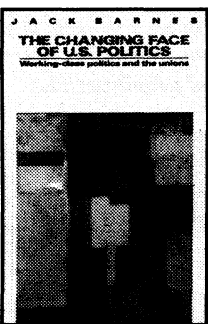
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## CALENDAR

### CALIFORNIA

#### San Francisco

**Tiocfaidh Ar La (Our Day Will Come).** Public forum on the Irish election results. Panel discussion. Sat., June 6, 8 p.m. Sponsored by the East Bay and San Francisco Irish American Unity Conference. ILWU Local 6 Union Hall, 255 9th St. (between Howard and Folsom). Donation: \$10. For more information call, (415) 282-6255.

### NEW YORK

#### Manhattan

**Stop 100 Years of Servitude (1898-1998).** A Conference marking the centennial of U.S. colonization of the Philippines. 12-14 June. Hunter College, West Building, 6th floor (southwest corner of Lexington Ave. & 68th St.). Presented by GABRIELA Network, a Philippine-U.S. women's solidarity organization, in cooperation with the Centro de Estudios Puertorriqueños. Register by email (gabnet@gabnet.org), phone (212) 592-3507, fax: (718) 740-4750, or mail to GABRIELA Network, P.O. Box 403, Times Square Station, New York, NY 10036. Contact GABRIELA for information, or visit their website (www.gabnet.org).



**C'mon kid, have a sip** — With a straight face, Budweiser denies its ad figures, Frankie and Louie the lizards or its previous animated frog, are pitched at children. Mean-



Harry Ring

while, retail stores are stocking battery-operated "talking" mugs that feature the frog and croaks "Budweiser."

**Toppings too?** — Wal-Mart, and

other companies are targets of class-action suits for working employees "off-the-clock." That is, making them clock out and then work extra without overtime pay. The Taco Bell chain settled their Washington state case out of court. Actually, they didn't make their employees work for free. They rewarded them with pizza parties.

**It figures** — A Labor Dept. official concedes that with a minuscule number of Wages and Hours investigators the chances of a company getting a visit is once every 50 years.

**Capitalism really foul things up** — The British Isles are sur-

rounded by water that keeps getting worse. Environmental researchers found that of 755 beaches monitored, 125 were clean. Why? Oil spills and "deliberate" discharges of mercury, cadmium and lead. Plus the "insidious" affect of radioactive waste.

**American Way of Death** — If you live in the New York area and your pooch checks out, call All Pets to Heaven. Casket and burial, \$1,000.

**2666?** — Wall Street banking economist Edward Yardeni warns that there's a 60 percent chance of a recession being triggered in 2000 because of computer-related prob-

lems.

**Another social disease** — "The number of Americans who suffer from asthma has risen 75 percent since 1980 to more than 15 million, due in part to pollution and other environmental factors, federal health officials said.... There were more than 1.8 million emergency room visits for asthma in 1995." — News item.

**Health-care 'reform'** — The White House has a plan for the three million people, age 55 to 64 who have no medical coverage. The plan would permit them to buy into the Medicare program. Premiums would run about \$300 to \$400 a

month.

A guesstimated 10 percent of the uninsured would be able to afford it.

**That's a comfort** — The Pope declared the earth was doomed to end "at some point," but there's no fixed date.

**Sure, the workers did it** — Britain's J. Salisbury supermarket chain ("A fresh approach to shopping") was fined £8,000 for selling food items nearly a month past their sell-by date.

Said a spokesperson: "There are clear procedures in place and these have been reemphasized to staff to ensure this does not happen again."

# Greek booklet published on farm struggle

Below we reprint excerpts of the preface to the recently published Greek-language edition of *Farmers Face the Crisis of the 1990s* by Doug Jenness. The pamphlet, based on a series of articles in the *Militant*, was published by Pathfinder in English in 1992. The Greek-language edition is published by Diethnes Vima, reprinted with permission.

Facing a decline in their average rate of profit, each imperialist class in Europe, North America, Japan, New Zealand, and Australia, is fighting to expand its domination of a bigger piece of the diminishing world market. This leads to increasing attacks by the capitalists against the living standards and working conditions of wage

## BOOK OF THE WEEK

workers and working farmers in the name of "increasing our competitiveness."

Jenness describes how the cost-price squeeze by the capitalists has devastating effects on working farmers in the United States and other countries. Farmers become debt slaves of the capitalist banks and face the continuous threat of losing their land. Working farmers in Greece face the same devastating conditions that farmers face around the world. They are victims of social conditions that emanate from the normal workings of capitalism. While the prices farmers in Greece receive for their produce from the capitalist food processors and merchants has either dropped or been frozen over the past decade, prices for seeds, fertilizers, pesticides, spare parts, and fuel have continued to rise. This year, cotton, tobacco, olive, rice, and citrus fruit producers have seen cuts of up to 50 percent in the price of their products, while large amounts have remained unsold. As a result working farmers' real income has been sharply declining.

Farmers in Greece who borrowed heavily in the 1970s and '80s to purchase land, tractors, and other modern equipment needed to produce ever more products have seen the average price of their land — and thus their collateral — drop since 1975. At the same time, high interest rates and the practice of compounding interest on overdue loans by the capitalist Agricultural Bank of Greece (ATE) have turned farmers into debt slaves. Increasing numbers are being ruined.

In the past decade hundreds of thousands

of farmers in Greece have been forced off their land and the country's agricultural labor force has declined from 27.7 percent to 20.3 percent of the population. Successive governments representing Greece's ruling capitalist families have implemented policies that have accelerated the ruin of farmers "in order for our national products to become competitive in the world market," as Stefanos Tzoumakas, Minister of Agriculture, asserts.

Farmers in Greece have continued to resist these sharp attacks. At the beginning of this year, thousands of farmers took to the streets in tractorcades, rallies, and demonstrations to press the government to provide relief. They have faced the cops, the courts, and a vicious campaign in the big-business media portraying them as greedy, privileged troublemakers in order to undermine solidarity with their struggle by workers in the cities. This effort aims to prevent struggles such as the public workers strike taking place at that time from converging with the farmers' fight....

As trade conflicts sharpen, each of the rival imperialist powers has increased its efforts to pull working people on their side using the big lie that "we" all — wage workers, working farmers and capitalist industrialists, merchants and bankers — have "common national interests." They have intensified their efforts to draw us into an alliance with them in their nationalist chauvinist trade policies and practices. For example, capitalists of Germany, France, and other countries of the European Union have used the fear of the "mad cow disease" to ban imports of beef from Britain and thus deal a blow especially to working farmers in the United Kingdom. Farmers in the UK have organized protests against imports of beef from Ireland, France, and other countries. Farmers in France have organized protests in which trucks bringing tomatoes from Spain were set on fire, and farmers in Italy have attacked trucks bringing watermelons from Greece.

Similarly, government officials and political forces within the farmers movement in Greece defending the interests of capitalist farmers have argued that the cost-price squeeze faced by working farmers in Greece is caused by U.S. imports, by farmers in Italy and Spain who are too "efficient" and have "flooded Europe" with their olive oil or farmers in Turkey who have "glutted Europe" with cheap cotton, tobacco, and hazel nuts.

The economic nationalism of the rival imperialist classes of Europe, the United States, and Japan feed ideologically incipient fascist currents such as Patrick Buchanan in the United States, Jean-Marie Le Pen in France, and Chrisi Avgi and the National Front in Greece....

Sharpening conflicts between the imperialist powers and by them against the oppressed peoples of the Third World and the workers states of central and eastern Europe, combined with the rapid rise of fascist currents have once again posed the possibility of capitalism dragging humanity into a third bloody world war. Wage workers and working farmers must oppose all imperialist military alliances, such as NATO and the Western European Union, in which Greece currently holds the presidency. As Jenness explains in these pages, we must also oppose all the ways the capitalist rulers try to organize their trade in order to impose their domination of exploitation of workers and farmers and colonial and semi colonial countries. Their aim is the same whether they prefer "free trade" pacts such as the European

Union, NAFTA, and APEC or "protectionist" measures that are often backed by political forces within the workers and farmers movements. The pretext these political forces use is the defense of "our national products" and the jobs of the native workers against "immigrants."

In the following articles Jenness provides us with unshakable evidence that workers and working farmers around the world face common problems and a common enemy: the capitalist industrialists, merchants, and bankers with whom we have no common interests.

This pamphlet contains a program for political action around which workers and working farmers can unite in a common struggle internationally against the catastrophic consequences of capitalism's depression conditions.

Working class fighters and revolutionary minded youth in the course of resisting imperialism's march toward fascism and war must build mass revolutionary workers parties around the world and emulate Cuba's revolutionary workers and farmers and their communist leadership. Revolutionary parties, as Jenness explains, are needed that can lead the working class to cement an alliance with the working farmers in a struggle to take political power out



Farmers blockade national highway in Thessaly, Greece, Feb. 4, 1997, demanding higher prices for their produce, a guaranteed income, and a debt moratorium.

of the hands of the capitalists and establish a workers and farmers government. Such a government will be used by toilers to organize the production and distribution of the goods they produce in order to meet the needs of humanity's toiling majority and not the thirst for profits of a handful of exploiters, and build a new world based on human solidarity, peace, and the development of culture — a socialist world.

Bobbis Misailides  
February 1998

## —25 AND 50 YEARS AGO—

### 25 CENTS THE MILITANT

A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY/PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF THE WORKING PEOPLE

June 8, 1973

In his May 22 statement on Watergate, [President Richard] Nixon tried to justify the need for government secrecy by citing the massive outbreak of antiwar activity following the invasion of Cambodia and the murder of student activists at Kent and Jackson State colleges. To Nixon, this antiwar activity represented a "security problem" of "critical proportions."

"Rioting and violence on colleges campuses," he claimed, "reached a new peak after the Cambodian operation and the tragedies at Kent State and Jackson state.... Some of the disruptive activities were receiving foreign support." This description is full of Nixon's self-serving falsifications. The demonstrations that swept the country were overwhelmingly peaceful. The demonstrations were not instigated by "foreign support" but grew out of opposition to the government's policies among millions of Americans. But the May 1970 upsurge did have a major impact on this country, and it did present Nixon with a political problem "of critical proportions." May 1970 saw the biggest student strike in the history of the world. The capitalist rulers of this country were shaken by the events and were publicly divided over what policy to follow. And, for the first time, important sections of the AFL-CIO unions and unions officials

publicly repudiated the prowar line of AFL-CIO President George Meany.

### THE MILITANT

PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF THE WORKING PEOPLE  
NEW YORK, N.Y. FIVE (5) CENTS

June 7, 1948

Railroad workers have been especially hard hit by the recent inflation. Over the past 12 years, they dropped from third place to 23rd place on the list of wage rates paid to skilled and semiskilled workers. At the same time, they are handling over 55 percent more in revenue traffic than eight years ago.

But the rail owners have been making hay. Their profits rose last year, after interest and all charges, to 480,000,000 dollars, or 64 percent above 1946. This year their net profit is therefore expected to go up another 50 percent. But this remains the private business of the newly appointed colonels who, in or out of uniform, act on the premise that the workers and public be damned.

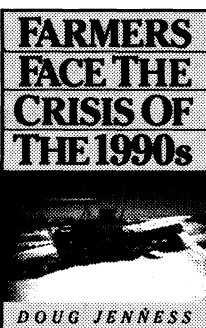
If the demand for the rail union leaders for nationalization of the railroads is to be more than a token gesture, it must be implemented with a concrete program of action. The rail unions must take the lead in insisting that the government confiscate the roads without compensation to the bondholders and stockholders who have already been compensated many times over for their original investment, not to mention the land and right-of-way they received gratis from an obliging capitalist-dominated government.

### FROM PATHFINDER

#### Farmers Face the Crisis of the 1990s

DOUG JENNESS

Examines the deepening economic and social crisis in the capitalist world and explains how farmers and workers can unite internationally against the mounting assaults from the billionaire bankers, industrialists, and merchants of grain. Now available in Greek. \$3.50



Available from bookstores, including those listed on page 12.

## Support taxi drivers' struggle

The labor movement should throw its weight behind the fight by the city's taxi drivers against the New York municipal administration's attempts to impose draconian regulations on them.

The crackdown, spearheaded by Mayor Rudolph Giuliani and backed by other Democratic and Republican politicians, is an attempt to punish cab drivers as a warning signal to any other workers in the city who stand up to the bosses' assaults. It is an important labor and social battle involving 44,000 taxi drivers in the largest city in the United States.

The city's wealthy rulers know a successful fight by cab drivers to push back the government's rules changes would boost other labor struggles — Harlem Hospital workers resisting layoffs, workers opposing the city's attempt to use the degrading workfare program to undermine union jobs, and airline workers at Northwest fighting for a decent contract.

The city bosses hope that since many cab drivers are immigrants — hailing from 85 nations, many of them from Asia, Africa, and the Caribbean — they can exploit divisions and isolate the drivers from other working people in the city. At a time of sharpening social crisis and polarization, they seek to whip up the venom and hysteria of the middle class by portraying the taxi drivers as greedy and less than human. The label of "taxi terrorists" has a

thinly veiled racist edge; many of the drivers of Middle Eastern origin in particular have heard the "terrorist" smear before.

The wealthy would like working people to view taxi drivers as being separate from the labor movement because some of them are "independent contractors." But the stance of the union movement should be to embrace these drivers as fellow workers — whether they own their taxi medallion or lease their cabs — and join them in this battle.

The capitalist media has sought to downplay the impact of the taxi drivers' actions, portraying them as failures to make sure no one else gets any ideas. New York's rulers were astonished when no cabs were seen on the streets May 13 as thousands of cab drivers stood together, dealing a blow to the efforts by capitalist politicians and media to isolate them.

The taxi drivers' militancy is part of the broader working-class resistance that has increased throughout the United States as well as other imperialist countries: from the workers in Denmark who shut down the country, to the Teamsters at Anheuser-Busch breweries who are fighting for a decent contract, to the workers at McDonald's who struck for their dignity.

An injury to one is an injury to all! Support the New York City cab drivers!

## Hands off Puerto Rican fighters

Drop the attempted victimization of Juan Marcos Vilar and Ruben Rivera! That's what working people, students and other youth, and all supporters of democratic rights need to demand by joining protests now in defense of two Puerto Rican political activists in Chicago.

Behind a federal grand jury's "investigation" of a 1992 bombing is the hatred of the U.S. imperial rulers against all those willing to fight uncompromisingly to end colonial rule of Puerto Rico. Just like Irish freedom fighters and Palestinians struggling for a homeland, Puerto Rican *independentistas* are being branded as terrorists by the employing classes.

At the heart of this sharpening conflict between those who profit from national oppression and those fighting to end it once and for all, is the resurgence of the Puerto Rican movement for self-determination. It is not an accident that Vilar is the national coordinator of the National Committee to Free Puerto Rican Prisoners of War and Political Prisoners and one of the main organizers of the July 25 march in Washington, D.C. The action will demand the release of 15 Puerto Rican political prisoners and national self-determination. Chapters of the committee Vilar leads have helped organize meetings across the country this year on the theme of "100 years of struggle against U.S. imperialism." These gatherings have brought together from Minneapolis to Miami Puerto Rican inde-

pendence fighters, like Juan Mari Bras and Rafael Cancel Miranda, with Cuban revolutionaries, activists opposing U.S. imperialist domination of the Philippines or Haiti, and other fighters.

New generations of Puerto Ricans — both in the United States and on the island — are rediscovering their history, linking up with the living heroes of the independence movement, and reopening this important front in the fight against U.S. imperialism in a new way.

The revitalization of the Puerto Rican nationalist movement coincides with stepped-up struggles by workers in the United States and around the world. These workers — from the New York taxi drivers to strikers in south Korea — are refusing to accept the reality of rapidly deteriorating working and living conditions, resegregation, the exploitation of women, social polarization and rise of incipient fascist movements, and the march toward war that capitalism offers humanity today and tomorrow.

For the same reasons Washington is ratcheting up its attempts to subvert the Puerto Rican independence struggle, class-conscious workers need to redouble their efforts to build the July 25 actions for self-determination and organize public protests now demanding that the U.S. government keep its hands off Vilar and Rivera and end the grand jury attacks on Puerto Rican activists.

## Defend right to choose!

Opponents of a woman's right to choose abortion registered another attack in Wisconsin May 14, when a broadly worded law banning late-term abortions took effect. The results were immediate. No abortions of any kind took place in the state for about a week, as doctors feared they could be prosecuted under the new regulations.

As part of their ideological war, adversaries of women's rights demagogically claim that "partial-birth abortion" is the extraction of a fetus "with the intent to kill." The Wisconsin law opens the door to eliminating the right to choose abortion altogether, claiming that a child's life begins at conception. The ruling class, their representatives, and their press try to erode support for abortion rights by attempting to make it synonymous with murder.

Both Democrats and Republicans have backed such laws, including U.S. president William Clinton. While giving lip service to supporting abortion rights, Clinton says he would sign a federal ban on D&E procedures, as long as it has a few exceptions.

Why do they target the right to choose?

The antiabortion campaign is part of a broader effort to scapegoat women — and the gains women have won over the last three decades — for the social breakdowns that increase as the crisis of the capitalist system deepens. Women, and men, are bombarded with propaganda implying that working mothers are to blame for a supposed rise in violence by youth, for instance. The message is that women are guilty for deciding to work, study, and

control when and if they have children. The aim is to undermine women's confidence and fighting capacities, and to reinforce the sexist divisions that are used to justify the lower wages and part-time work that women are often forced to accept.

The massive increase in the percentage of women in the workforce in the decades since World War II was a gain for the entire working class. It gave women the confidence and experience to fight for the unconditional right to control their own bodies, and in the course of that struggle win a majority in the United States to support the right to choose abortion. This is fundamental to being an equal in the workplace and in the unions. It weakens the bosses' attempts to get women to accept "family first, kids first, home first." It breaks down divisions sown by capitalism, putting working people in a stronger position to resist attacks by the rulers.

The increase in working-class resistance today strengthens the fight for women's rights, bringing men and women of the working class together in common struggle against the bosses and showing them the potential power of the organized labor movement.

It's possible and necessary today for supporters of the right to choose abortion to win others to the fight to demand the repeal of all late-term bans and other attempts to restrict this right, and to publicly protest each and every attack by rightist forces against clinics that perform abortions.

## Titan Tire strikers fight union busting

BY TOM MAILER  
AND RAY PARSONS

DES MOINES, Iowa — In an escalation of the contract fight between United Steelworkers of America Local 164 and Titan Tire, the employer bused 30 replacement workers across the picket line May 26. The company has had factory bosses, office employees, and sales people working in the plant trying to continue production for the past several weeks. The 650 Steelworkers began their strike May 1 when contract negotiations failed to resolve differences over mandatory overtime, retiree benefits, elimination of a two-tier wage scale, and job security.

Maurice Taylor, Jr., the owner of Titan, had threatened May 14 to use strikebreakers and to move work out of the Des Moines plant if the strikers did not return to work while negotiations continued. The unionists answered these threats with a solidarity rally of 400 workers and with daily informational leafleting by strikers at the job agency doing the hiring of strikebreakers for Titan. Members of Local 164 are discussing how to respond to the use of replacement workers.

Strikers have reached out to nonunion workers at the Quintak Distribution Center. This warehouse is attached to the Titan Tire plant and receives finished tires, mounting them on Titan wheels. When Taylor bought the tire plant in 1994 the warehouse was spun off as a separate business. All the warehouse workers were moved to production jobs and new workers were hired into Quintak without union protection.

Local 164 member Gary Stecklein explained that a team of strikers recently passed out leaflets at shift change, explaining what their strike was about and inviting the warehouse workers to come discuss joining the union. "We got a good response," he said. "Nine out of 10 took the flyers." Stecklein added that these workers had been asked by Taylor to take jobs inside the struck plant but refused.

### Strikers win support from other unionists

Financial support for the Titan strikers has started to come in from other unionists. Shelton McCrainey, a member of United Steelworkers of America (USWA) Local 7999 at Sloan Valve in Chicago, attended the May 16 solidarity rally in Des Moines. "After I gave a report on the rally at our May 20 local meeting we voted to donate \$500 to the strike, which was sent off a few days later," he said.

At the Bridgestone/Firestone tire plant in Des Moines, members of USWA Local 310 are organizing a plant-gate collection to support the Titan strikers.

A busload of strikers traveled to Detroit May 21 to attend a shareholders meeting of Titan International, the parent company of Titan Tire. A few Local 164 members own stock in the company, and others have money in a 401(k) investment scheme that includes Titan shares. Strikers wanted to get into the meeting to hold Taylor responsible for forcing their strike.

The strikers were joined by 40 Detroit area unionists for informational picketing outside the stockholders meeting. Officials from the USWA District 2 office, the United Auto Workers (UAW) and the Detroit Metro AFL-CIO were present. Many drivers on the busy highway nearby blew their horns in support.

Following the shareholders meeting, Taylor took questions from the strikers, but made it clear from the start that "at no time is anyone going to tell us how to run a business." He repeated his threats on the future of the Des Moines facility. At the same time, he took a defensive stance on the 60-hour workweeks that have been imposed on Titan workers for the last three years, claiming to favor shorter hours. The unionists have won broad support for their demand to end mandatory overtime.

Donald Umphress, with 31 years in the plant, wasn't surprised at Taylor's attitude. "He said the same thing he's always said: he's not going to give us anything. We let him know that we'll be everywhere he's at. We're not going to go away."

Dave Strock, a 20-year veteran, agreed. "We'll be on the front burner of his mind."

The *Des Moines Register*, the main big-business paper in Iowa, made no mention of the May 16 Steelworkers solidarity rally, but in a May 23 article repeated company statements that strikers have each lost nearly \$3,000 in the walkout.

Titan Tire is the third-largest manufacturer of construction and agricultural tires in the United States. Taylor has reported that the Des Moines plant generated \$7.8 million in profits last year, about 4.8 percent of sales. Its parent company, Titan International, recently reported that 1997 was its sixth consecutive year of record sales, increasing 9 percent over 1996 to \$690 million. Titan International is the world's leading manufacturer of off-highway wheels, with manufacturing locations in the United States, as well as in Britain, Italy, France, and Germany.

Negotiations resumed May 26.

Ray Parsons is a member of USWA Local 310 and is the Socialist Workers candidate for Iowa secretary of agriculture.



# 3,000 bus drivers strike in Norway over wages

This column is devoted to reporting the resistance by working people to the employers' assault on their living standards, working conditions, and unions.

We invite you to contribute short items to this column as a way for other fighting workers around the world to read about and learn from these important struggles. Jot down a few lines

down his proposed settlement."

The company's "final offer" includes a proposal to broaden the tasks for students who are hired in the summer. Students are paid \$13 (CAN\$1=US\$.69). This is \$4 below the base rate of \$17. The employer's offer of a four-year contract provided a \$1,000 signing bonus, no wage increase in the first year with 2.5 and 3 percent in-

The Ambridge Area Education Association (AAEA), representing 234 teachers, reached a tentative agreement May 19, having been on strike since May 12. Their current contract expired June 30, 1997.

During the strike 50 enthusiastic teachers picketed in front of Ambridge High School with signs calling for a contract.

Teachers explained that the main issues were wages and health care. Pat Parra, president of the AAEA, said that the school board wanted to renegotiate all items from the previous contract, including moving to a managed care system for health care. Parra said, "We went on strike now because we wanted to come to an agreement, which would include a wage increase retroactive for the 1997-98 school year."

The *Beaver County Times* had a headline saying, "Walkout isn't popular around the district," but teachers said that the community was quite supportive. Several high school students were walking the picket lines with the teachers.

Parra told the media that the agreement, which included salary increases, also provided for "satisfactory" benefits package.

## Unionists march over bridge in Philadelphia

PHILADELPHIA, Pennsylvania — More than 100 union members and supporters marched onto the Benjamin Franklin Bridge between Philadelphia and Camden, New Jersey, May 16 to protest the Delaware River Port Authority's layoff of toll takers. The protesters were arrested by dozens of Philadelphia and Camden police.

On May 2 the Port Authority cut 18 toll-collecting jobs, replacing the unionists with part-time workers. The agency claimed the move was forced by a reduction in its budget. The Port Authority has refused to negotiate with the 300 toll takers, members of the International Union

of Operating Engineers Local 716, whose union contract expired in January 1997.

Unionists marched in solidarity with the toll takers, who work on the four bridges operated by the Port Authority. Several dozen members of Laborers Union Local 57 and a dozen activists from the Kensington Welfare Rights Organization joined the rally. The New Jersey Industrial Union Council and the Pennsylvania AFL-CIO called the protest.

After a rally at Independence Mall in Philadelphia, unionists marched onto the Benjamin Franklin Bridge. The police immediately stopped all lanes of traffic from entering the bridge, shutting it down for more than an hour.

The demonstrators walked three-quarters of the way across the bridge when they were advised by Philadelphia police to turn back since the

cops could not guarantee that Camden police would allow the march to continue. The unionists turned back and within minutes were arrested by Philadelphia and Camden police.

Protesters, including the unionists' children, were hauled off in vans to a truck garage in Camden where they were held for two hours, charged with obstructing traffic.

*Carl-Erik Issacson, a member of the is a member of the metalworkers union in Södertälje, Sweden; Paul Kouri and Lukas Drake, members USWA Local 2952 in Vancouver; Edwin Fruit, a member of the International Association of Machinists in Corapolis, Pennsylvania; and John Staggs, a member of the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers in Philadelphia contributed to this column.*

## Meatpackers stay strong on pickets in Canada



Militant/Jacquie Henderson

United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) Local 118 members on picket line at Fletcher Fine Foods in Red Deer, Alberta, May 8. Six hundred members of the UFCW were locked out by Fletcher meatpacking company May 4. It was the day after the unionists rejected the company's "last-minute proposal" of cuts in wages and vacation, gutting seniority, and other concessions.

## ON THE PICKET LINE

about what is happening in your union, at your workplace, or other workplaces in your area, including interesting political discussions.

Bus traffic was brought to a standstill May 14 in Oslo, Akershus, Trondheim, and Sør-Trøndelag, Norway, as 3,000 drivers went on strike. They are demanding a wage increase of 17 Norwegian krone (1krone=US\$.13) an hour. Workers were first offered 5.50Nkr and later 9Nkr by mediators, but the unions replied that they would not accept anything below 10 Nkr. If no agreement is reached 13,000 bus drivers have threatened to strike June 6 across the country, as well as lorry drivers in 40 different transport companies.

The bus drivers are organized by the Transportarbeiderforbundet and Rutebilarbeiderforbundet unions. Some 5,400 members of the two unions have been on strike since May 18. The next day drivers at six more transport companies walked off the job. Already hundreds of thousands of people are affected in the strike areas. The lorry drivers are demanding 50 Nkr an hour around the clock and a monthly minimum wage of 18,000 Nkr, plus 300 Nkr every day for expenses when driving in other countries.

## Steelworkers fight lockout in Vancouver

VANCOUVER, British Columbia — Some 42 members of the United Steelworkers of America (USWA) local 2952, have been locked out by their employer, Davis Wire, since February 26. "The company refused to discuss the union's demands and initially rejected mediation," explained Scott McRitchie, a member of the bargaining committee. "[The boss] put up a lock-out notice before we even voted on his final offer, which further enraged the workers to vote

creases in the final three years.

"Out of this wage increase workers would have to contribute individually to the union pension plan, which is presently 100 percent employer funded," said McRitchie, who has worked 14 years in the plant as a machine operator making pulp tie and bailing wire.

"This place is making money. There's no reason for it. The owner is a union buster. All he creates is dissension and hatred," commented another picket, Maurie Gammie. "In 1995 he forced a three-week strike over his refusal to contribute 5 cents per hour per employee to the union education fund. He ended up giving us an extra 10 cents hourly increase. The owner, Dave Lloyd, has several other plants that produce materials mainly for the construction industry. They are all nonunion. Its obvious he would like to get rid of the union," concluded Gammie, who has worked eight years at Davis Wire.

The mood was one of quiet confidence among the picketers. "With Fletcher Challenge back in operation after a nine month strike, Davis Wire is under pressure to produce pulp tie for this traditional customer. Talks with a mediator present are now taking place," noted McRitchie. "Out of 41, there are 28 of us picketing regularly. We picket 24 hours a day, seven days a week."

Plant gate collections for cash, food, and other materials have brought strikers relief. Workers at two such plants, Lister Bolt and Chain and VAE Nortrak have contributed \$2,500 and \$1,000 respectively. McRitchie said visits by strikers and the local union president to several USWA-organized plants have also helped educate a broader layer of steelworkers about the issues of their strike.

## Pennsylvania teachers demand a contract

AMBRIDGE, Pennsylvania —

## LETTERS

### Accuracy is important

The news article and editorial on Indonesia in issue no. 21 were excellent. But the front-page headline, "Indonesia: workers and students oust Suharto," and the phrase in the editorial "[the Indonesian people] brought down the regime" strike me as inaccurate. These conclusions are contradicted by the facts presented in both the article and editorial, which explain that U.S. imperialism, the International Monetary Fund, previously fawning sycophants of Suharto in his regime and officer caste, as well as bourgeois forces cut off from the feeding trough, pressured Suharto to step aside. They all recognize that the mass upsurge, with young workers and students in forefront, would lead to the feeding trough itself being upset and its contents flowing back to the workers, peasants, and youth devastated by the consequences of capitalist barbarism and austerity. "Washington quickly told him to step down to try to stave off deeper protests," the editorial cor-

rectly notes.

The forced departure of Suharto is a victory. But the wrenching open of political space to organize, discuss ideas, and forge alliances with fellow fighters are the key things to keep our eyes on.

Above all, Indonesia's fresh generation of young workers, peasants, and students are at the beginning of the process of "bringing down the regime," which is still intact, despite its Bonapartist figurehead having left the presidential palace to count his billions in his private mansion. Doug Cooper Sydney, Australia

*Editor's reply: Doug Cooper is completely correct in noting the inaccuracy of the Militant's headline and what the actual situation is in Indonesia.*

### Health care and capitalism

The May 11 edition of the Montreal daily *La Presse* featured on the front page the results of a study conducted by economists at the Univer-

sity of Quebec in Montreal.

Using the statistics from Quebec and across Canada, the study showed that every 10 percent decrease in government health care spending per person results in a .5 percent increase in the infant mortality rate.

On May 12, *The Toronto Star* published the findings of a report by the National Council of Welfare. From 1989 to 1996 the number of children living in poverty in Canada increased by 500,000. According to the government's own figures and its definition of the poverty line, there were 1,481,000 children living in poverty in 1996 — one in 5 children.

Working people sacrifice their lives for children.

Capitalism sacrifices children to stay alive.

Al Cappe Toronto, Ontario

### One of the best

The *Militant* is one of the best

papers I ever read. Thanks a lot. C.M.

Glendale, California

### Appreciate prisoners' subs

Revolutionary greetings from the bowels of Amerikkka. I received the sample copy of the *Militant* you sent me, and I thank you immensely. Myself and other comrades would appreciate it if you sent us a free subscription, as soon as funding permits. We greet you comrades with the hearts and souls of New Afrikan Freedom Fighters! We salute each of you with a mailed clenched fist.

A prisoner Florence, Colorado

### For a prisoner's sub

I have received the sample copy of your paper. I must admit I'm more than satisfied with your publication. Enclosed is \$6.00 for a six-month subscription.

A prisoner Albion, New York

## PRISONER SUBSCRIPTION FUND

The *Militant* offers reduced subscription rates to workers and farmers behind bars. A six-month subscription to the *Militant* costs \$6, and one year costs \$12. We send a free sample copy on request. Contributions make these special rates possible for those who cannot afford regular rates. Please send your donation to: **Militant Prisoner Fund, 410 West St., New York, NY 10014.**

The letters column is an open forum for all viewpoints on subjects of general interest to our readers. Please keep your letters brief. Where necessary they will be abridged. Please indicate if you prefer that your initials be used rather than your full name.

## Russian miners block rails over pay

Workers' resistance remains obstacle to government's 'market reforms'

BY MAURICE WILLIAMS

Striking Russian coal miners in Siberia and the North Caucasus lifted their blockade of the Trans-Siberian railway May 24 after government officials promised to pay overdue wages. Miners in Inta, near the Polar Circle, who have been on strike since the first week of May continued blocking the railway there. The miners' battle boosted actions by hundreds of thousands of workers who are responding to the deepening economic crisis that is gripping the country.

Shipyard workers in Murmansk joined the miners' protests with a blockade of the road to the Northern Fleet's main base. Other unpaid workers joined the strike action, including teachers and steelworkers, as well as professionals such as doctors, scientists, and engineers.

The deputy head of the Federation of Russian Independent Trade Unions, Aleksei Surikov, threatened to call a nationwide strike if the \$1.45 billion owed in back wages to the miners was not paid in full by July 1.

The miners blocked key railways, cutting the country in half and paralyzing the transportation network by stopping more than 600 trains in their tracks. The strike brought an estimated \$30 million in losses for the Russian railway system and other industries, the Russian railway ministry reported.

Mikhail Shmakov, the leader of one of Russia's main trade unions, warned that "railway tracks will be dismantled the very next day" if the government tried to use troops against the miners to end the blockade. According to United Press International, Shmakov said May 21 that "an Indonesian scenario could not be excluded in Russia if Moscow decides to ignore the miners' demands or uses force to break up the blockade." A large rally of workers in western Siberia called for Russian president Boris Yeltsin to step down.

Yeltsin attacked the miners, some of whom have not been paid for as long as three years. The miners "want to resolve their problems right away... at the expense of others," he exclaimed during his May 22 national radio address. "They have brought sufferings to thousands upon thousands of absolutely innocent people."

Meanwhile, Moscow has cut government subsidies to the mines and other industries as part of pressing for brutal "market reforms." While Yeltsin raged about the miners "breaching acceptable limits," workers at the Kuznetskaya mine in Siberia are living without telephones, running water, and reliable heating. Their children have been dropping out of school because they could not afford the nine-mile trek to get there.

One bitter cold morning in January when the mining boss showed up at his office in the Kuznetskaya mine, a group of miners and their wives took him hostage.

"We had no money!" explained miner Alexandra Burmatova. "As of this coming May it will be three years that we have not been paid. So, we said: 'Pay our wages!' and we held him hostage for five days."

### Russian gov't retreats on job cuts

Facing increasing resistance by working people, the Kremlin has been forced to retreat on its austerity measures. When Deputy Finance Minister Aleksei Kudrin proclaimed plans to fire 208,000 teachers and medical workers on March 26, the next day Yeltsin denied the announcement.

According to London's *Financial Times*, Yeltsin's "formal justification" for dismissing his entire cabinet on March 23 was in response to simmering outrage among working people over back wages. "We cannot allow wage arrears to accumulate," he asserted the day after his cabinet reshuffle.



Two coal miners near Prokopyevsk, Russia, take a break May 22 while blocking rail traffic. Miners, who are on strike to demand payment of back wages, blocked the Trans-Siberian railway.

Moscow has been unable to impose other "reforms" on working people such as the deep assault on the social security system that Washington and other imperialist powers would like to see.

"Russia's retirement system has created an immense army of pensioners," complained *New York Times* reporter Michael Gordon in a March 15 dispatch from Moscow. Some 38 million people in the country receive pensions — about one for every two people in the workforce. In the United States the ratio is about one pensioner for every four workers.

The *Times* article criticized the "early re-

tirement age" in Russia and the "minuscule" 1 percent of their income working people pay toward the pension program. Male workers in Russia retire at 60 years and women workers retire at 55, years before workers retire in most capitalist countries.

Meanwhile, the Yeltsin administration received another rude shock to its "market reform" drive when it put a state-owned oil company on the auction block and no one bid. Nervous about falling oil prices and spreading financial turmoil in Asia — including the upheaval in Indonesia — none of the foreign capitalist companies — such as Royal Dutch Shell and British Petro-

leum — that had been expected to compete for the Rosneft oil company submitted an offer.

Yeltsin convened a meeting of his security council May 26 to discuss the \$10 billion in back wages owed to miners and other workers as well the political crisis in the Caucasus region plaguing his regime. "The deterioration of the situation posed a threat to political stability in the country," Yeltsin's press spokesman, Sergei Yastrzhembsky, announced that day. The most recent flare up in the Caucasus is the war being waged by Abkhazians fighting for independence from Georgia.

The social polarization has been evident in a recent wave of attacks by fascist-like and other rightist elements. A Black U.S. GI was severely beaten by a gang of Russian skinheads in broad daylight May 2 and a Jewish synagogue was bombed May 13.

More than 1,000 Azeris living in Moscow organized a demonstration in early May after an Azeri merchant was stabbed to death at a large open-air market. Russian cops have harassed immigrants and people of oppressed nationalities, particularly those from the Caucasus.

Ultranationalist Alexander Lebed, who was elected governor in the Siberian region of Krasnoyarsk May 17, has tapped into rising discontent among workers and peasants using demagoguery and scapegoating immigrants. During his campaign Lebed labeled Nigerians as drug dealers. In late March he visited the village of Tyukhtyet, which has no running water and where workers have not been paid in three years. "How much more can we let our country be robbed and deceived," he told an audience. "If you're sick and tired of being unemployed, then I suggest you work with me."

## Firefighters in New Zealand organize protests against mass sackings by gov't

BY FELICITY COGGAN

AUCKLAND, New Zealand — Firefighters throughout the country are organizing a range of protest actions in response to plans by their employer, the Fire Service Commission, to sack its entire frontline workforce of 1,575 firefighters on July 1 and force them to reapply for their jobs on new terms and conditions.

The Fire Service announced May 7 that only about 1,200 workers will be rehired — a 33 percent cut — and crews on fire engines will be reduced from four to three. Fewer firefighters will be rostered on overnight duty — the time when most serious fires causing deaths occur.

The firefighters were sending their job application forms back unopened, according to Professional Firefighters Union president Mike McEnaney. Protest rallies have been held in several cities alongside a nationwide petition campaign.

On May 12 firefighters from West Auckland set out on a three-day trip by fire engine to parliament to present the petition, stopping at rallies and to gather signatures on the way. The same day, a contingent of firefighters protested at parliament, then 150 crowded into parliament's public gallery during a snap debate on the issue.

On May 16 firefighters in Auckland marched to a rally being held by the Alliance party to protest privatization of city assets, where a union representative addressed the rally and about a dozen others circulated the petition. Several of these were "community safety team" members, fire-

fighters hired on reduced pay and conditions in the face of union opposition two years ago. A majority of them have since joined the union. "They hired us to try to drive down conditions two years ago, but that has backfired. Now this is their last desperate move," one of them said.

Union secretary Derek Best said May 9 that military firefighting teams were being readied in case of protest action. When firefighters threatened to strike in 1994, military staff were trained by the Fire Service to step in and run fire stations.

Just a day before the sackings were announced, firefighters voted 87 percent in favor of striking to protest the Fire Service's refusal to negotiate a contract. Their contract expired four years ago and wages have been frozen for eight years. They were claiming a rollover of the existing contract and a 12 percent pay rise.

The Fire Service Commission claims the planned restructuring will create a more effective "modern" fire service by supposedly shifting the resources from fighting fires to prevention and public education.

Fire Service Commission chairman Roger Estall has used a spate of recent deaths, especially of small children, in house fires to justify the changes.

He argues that working people need to become less reliant on firefighters for protection from fires and look more to their own resources, such as installing smoke alarms. "We've got this public who have an enormous confidence in what we do and perhaps they should not.... We are good, we are com-

mitted, but I'm sorry we can't save you" he said.

The Fire Service Commission is funded primarily by a levy on all insured buildings, as well as a government contribution. Its budget has already been reduced by \$24 million (US\$ 12.7 million) in the last six years, as the government demanded better financial performance. Estall has recently come under attack from opposition members of parliament who have suggested that in his previous job as an adviser and director of an insurance brokering firm, he devised schemes to help businesses to reduce the fire levies they pay, thus depriving the Commission of substantial income.

United party member of parliament Peter Dunne, noted that while suburban fire crews were being reduced, fire services to business districts have been improved. Hamilton city, whose population has grown from 89,000 in 1979 to 116,000 today, has 56 firefighters today, compared to 72 then.

Union president McEnaney explained that after 20 years in the job he earns \$42,000 a year for being in charge of a station, working two 10-hour days and two 14-hour nights per week, and six weekends out of eight. He said many firefighters worked second jobs to supplement their incomes. The starting rate is \$28,000 per year. Reducing firefighter crew numbers would endanger not only the public, but also the safety of firefighters, he said.

Felicity Coggan is a member of the Engineers Union in Auckland.