

THE MILITANT

INSIDE

Che Guevara's 1960 speech at Latin American Youth Congress

— PAGES 4-7

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Shipyard workers 'hold our heads high'

Newport News strikers inspire others in region

BY MARY MARTIN

NEWPORT NEWS, Virginia—After a four-month strike against Newport News Shipbuilding, Inc., members of United Steelworkers of America (USWA) Local 8888 approved a new contract July 30, by a vote of 2,724 to 1,696. The shipbuilders wrested improved pensions and the first pay raise since 1991 from the country's largest private shipyard and the only builder of nuclear-powered U.S. Navy aircraft carriers.

James Riggs, an outside machinist with 23 years, told the *Militant* after his first day back to work, "We've done something. We're moving in the right direction. We can hold our heads up high. The thing is we have to be ready to strike again down the road if necessary."

The 9,200 production workers covered by the agreement won pay raises averaging 23 percent and a pension increase of 78 percent. Prior to the strike, their wages and pensions were among the lowest among the top 11 shipyards in the country, with wages averaging \$13.50 per hour and maximum pensions after 30 years employment at \$500 per month. Under the new contract, most workers will see a \$2.30 to \$3.10 per hour wage increase by the end of the 58-month contract. Monthly pensions will increase to \$900 in the



USWA Local 8888 strikers on picket line. The 17-week strike encouraged other working people in area.

same period.

On voting day, many striking workers gathered outside the polling locations set up by union officials in Newport News and Ahoskie, North Carolina, with copies of the inch-thick contract text in hand, to discuss with each other what course of action to take. In Newport News, with the shipyard's giant overhead cranes lifeless in the background, some workers pointed

to the length of the contract and the return-to-work period of up to four weeks as their main objections. The company can take up to 28 days to give drug tests, physical exams, and re-qualify welders and other workers.

Lonnell Thompson, with 19 years in the shipyard, told the *Virginia Pilot* he voted against the offer. "That's not a first-class

Continued on Page 8

Saskatchewan farmers block roads demanding gov't relief from crisis

BY ANNETTE KOURI

SASKATOON, Saskatchewan — An estimated 1,200 farmers organized convoys of farm vehicles, tractors, combines, and grain trucks along Saskatchewan highways August 2, causing traffic delays of several hours on the last day of a holiday weekend. Farmers wanted to draw attention to the severe crisis hitting agriculture in this province and demand action from the federal and provincial governments.

Federal government statistics show that this year will be the worst year for farm income since statistics were first recorded in 1926. Agriculture Canada has warned that national net farm income will be cut by half this year, dropping to Can\$1.78 billion from an annual average of Can\$3.33 billion between 1994 and 1998. In Saskatchewan, farmers will accumulate a debt of Can\$48 million as opposed to the last five-year average net income of Can\$685 million. Last year, net farm income in Saskatchewan averaged just Can\$8,500 per farm (Can\$1=US\$0.67), according to Statistics Canada.

Denis Martine, who planned to protest near the Manitoba border, pointed to the escalating price of planting crops as he explained to reporters why he would be there. He said his area of southeast Saskatchewan is dotted with empty farms. According to federal statistics, 5,000 farmers have left the land in the 1990s. Martine told the Saskatoon *StarPhoenix* the mass de-

parture will only continue next year.

Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food statistics provided at the beginning of the year estimated the cost per seeded acre in the province totaled Can\$185.63. This compares with an average return per acre of Can\$131.25; a loss of Can\$54.38 per acre. "The message has to go to the chemical, fertilizer and fuel companies who make the cost of production so high. They're what's killing us," Jeff Lynchuk, a farmer near Smuts, said as he participated in the August 2 action.

Federal government cutbacks have meant that farm subsidies have been slashed on typical Saskatchewan crops. About 80 percent of the income derived from barley came from subsidies in 1986, compared to 7 percent in 1997. Wheat subsidies dropped from 55 percent to 10 percent at the same time.

The federal government phased out the Crow rail subsidy earlier this decade, so now farmers pay the whole tab on shipping and handling.

Robert Rusu from Kayville said, "I'm here today because we're losing our farms. I've

farmed for 29 years and I'm broke. We can't get money for our grain. I can't make my payments and I'm going to lose my farm."

Scott Steeves from the Gainsborough area

Continued on Page 10

Free all the Puerto Rican prisoners!

Antonio Camacho, Oscar López, Edwin Cortés, Elizam Escobar, Ricardo Jiménez, Haydée Beltrán, Adolfo Matos, Dylcia Pagán, Alberto Rodríguez, José Solís, Alicia Rodríguez, Ida Luz Rodríguez, Luis Rosa, Juan Segarra Palmer, Alejandrina Torres, Carmen Valentín, Carlos Alberto Torres.

These are the 17 Puerto Rican independence fighters who are locked up in U.S. pris-

EDITORIAL

ons today. U.S. president William Clinton should free all 17 of these political prisoners now, with no conditions attached. That de-

Continued on Page 10

Clinton offers prisoners 'pardon,' with strings

BY HARVEY McARTHUR

CHICAGO — Nearly 100 people crowded the Puerto Rican Cultural Center here August 11 for a press conference responding to the Clinton administration's offer of conditional "pardon" of 11 of the 17 Puerto Rican political prisoners now held in U.S. prisons.

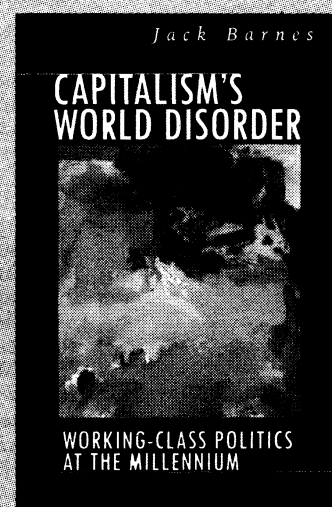
Participants included more than a dozen relatives of the incarcerated independence fighters, who have already spent up to 19 years behind bars. The meeting cheered calls for the unconditional release of all the Puerto Rican political prisoners.

Jan Susler, an attorney for the People's Law Office, said the prisoners were considering the government's offer, but none had yet made known publicly whether they accepted the terms.

President William Clinton announced

Continued on Page 10

CAPITALISM'S WORLD DISORDER: Working-Class Politics at the Millennium



JACK BARNES

"Revolutionary-minded workers must learn to read broadly, to take complicated questions seriously and work at them — and to study together with co-workers, youth, and newly won members of the communist movement. The capitalist rulers do everything they can to confuse workers, to make us believe we must rely on experts, wizards, and pollsters. They try to obfuscate — about economics, about stocks and bonds, about the monarchy in Britain, about the church in Poland, about class relations in the United States, about education and wage differentials, you name it." **Special offer \$20**

FROM PATHFINDER

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Ottawa unleashes anti-Cuba campaign at Pan-Am Games

BY JOHN STEELE

TORONTO — Taking their lead from the federal government, which recently decided to freeze high-level contacts between Canadian and Cuban government officials, media and sports commentators across Canada have launched a campaign encouraging members of the Cuban delegation to the Pan American Games in Winnipeg to defect and seek refugee status in Canada.

In the eighth inning of a baseball game between Canada and Cuba August 1, an anti-Cuba protester entered the field with a hand-lettered sign reading "Human Right First." Two Cuban players carrying a Cuban flag took on the trespasser, subduing him with their fists. He was taken away by the police in handcuffs and later released.

In response to this incident, the Cuban delegation issued a statement criticizing lax security arrangements made by Pan Am officials for the delegation, the hostility of the media to the Cubans, and efforts by professional agents — particularly from the major league baseball industry — to get Cuban players to leave Cuba and sign lucrative contracts. "Cuban athletes will not permit anyone or anything to humiliate them... if their dignity is at stake," read the statement. "From now on we will react with full energy to provocations."

Pan Am Games Society chairman Don Mackenzie confirmed that "in the village there has been some breach," as scouts have constantly been driving along the perimeter fence trying to talk to Cubans. He reported some people have been shining lights in windows at 3:00 a.m. The harassment of the Cuban delegation was condemned by the 42 heads of missions representing all the sports delegations at the games.

Speaking to thousands of workers and farmers in Cienfuegos, Cuba, on July 26, Cuban president Fidel Castro devoted a portion of his speech to the Pan American games. July 26 is the anniversary marking the 1953 attack against the Moncada army barracks by the young revolutionaries led by Castro. The attack launched the armed struggle that led to the defeat in 1959 of the armed forces of the

U.S.-backed Batista dictatorship and the taking of power by the revolutionary forces of the July 26 Movement.

Castro sharply condemned the "dishonesty," and "traps and tricks" being used against the Cuban athletes. He charged they were operating in a "hostile environment... on a field that had been turned into enemy ground."

On August 4, Cuban high jumper Javier Sotomayor, who is a world record setter, was stripped of his gold medals by the Pan Am officials, who claimed he had tested positive for cocaine.

In an interview with Sotomayor published in the August 5 issue of the Cuban daily *Granma*, the athlete rejected the charges, saying that he had been the victim of a plot, although he did not know how it happened. The leadership of the Cuban delegation issued a statement backing him. We are "convinced of his total innocence" said Dr. Mario Granda, the director of Cuba's Sports Medicine Institute.

Media reports claim that up to eight members of the Cuban delegation have defected.

Ottawa sharpens its hostility

On June 29 the Canadian government announced it was suspending high-level official contacts with Havana, in the name of punishing the Cuban government for the conviction and sentencing to jail in March of four opponents of the revolution for collaborating with counterrevolutionary organizations in the United States. During his official visit to Cuba in April 1998, Prime Minister Jean Chrétien spoke out in defense of the four, who were facing charges and a trial at the time, asking Castro to intercede on their behalf.

"After pursuing 'constructive engagement' with Cuba for years, Canada has finally recognized that our 'engaging' with the island dictatorship has been lopsided," applauded the editors of the *Globe and Mail*, Canada's main English-language big-business daily. They advised Ottawa "that it is in Canada's power to impede Cuba's desperate attempts to gain international legitimacy. As the host of the general assembly of the Organization of American States next summer in Windsor, and

150 farmers demand land at rally in Washington, D.C.



Militant Brian Williams

Chanting "Save our farms," some 150 farmers and supporters rallied in Washington, D.C., August 10, to demand the return of lost land due to discrimination by U.S. Department of Agriculture and the immediate release of land owned by Black farmers that the USDA has in its inventory.

the Summit of the Americas in Quebec City in 2001, Canada controls the precious invitations to attend these important meetings."

Cuba's new ambassador to Canada, Carlos Fernández de Cossio Domínguez told reporters that the trial and conviction of the four individuals in Cuba "was not a mistake whatsoever. We are very clear that what we did is what we had to do to protect our country, and we are sure that Canada and Canadians can learn to appreciate Cuba through its social and human achievements it's gained and not by the measures it has to take to protect those achievements from foreign hostility," he said.

Decades of hostility to workers' power

"Constructive engagement" is the description Canada's imperialist rulers give to their foreign policy in relation to the Cuban revolution. Their aim is to advance their commercial interests in Cuba and Latin America in competition with the United States and other imperialist powers, while backing the decades-long effort of world imperialism led by Washington to overthrow the Cuban workers' state and once again make Cuba a profitable place for the exploitation of its toilers.

The ruling rich package their counterrevolutionary policy in Canadian-nationalist anti-Americanism, raising criticism of Washington's more than 40-year-long economic embargo against Cuba. They also disagree with Washington's claim that its embargo legislation applies to Canada.

"We can have different approaches to a common goal, and I do think we have common goal," said U.S. President William Clinton following Chrétien's visit to Cuba last April.

Before the 1959 revolution Canadian banks and insurance companies played a major role in the exploitation of Cuban labor power and the oppression of Cuba as a nation under the imperialist boot.

Over the last four decades trade between Canada and Cuba has expanded significantly.

Today, Cuba is Canada's fourth largest trading partner in the Caribbean and Latin America, with bilateral trade topping Can\$700 million (US\$470 million). A number of Canadian corporations have significant investment in Cuba and tens of thousands of tourists from Canada visit Cuba each year. Canada is also the second biggest foreign market for Cuba, accounting for 11 percent of its exports.

Canada's capitalist rulers try to use their economic ties with Cuba not only to generate profits, but to put pressure on Havana to carry out "reforms" in the direction of the reestablishment of the capitalist market and a bourgeois parliamentary system that would register the end of workers and farmers' power in Cuba. The code words they cynically use to campaign against the revolution and its conquests are defense of "human rights."

In 1997 Canada's foreign minister Lloyd Axworthy stepped up this campaign when he visited Cuba to launch a "human rights" dialogue and to help Cuba build a "civil society."

Ottawa's deepening hostility to Cuba was announced at the same time the Chrétien government, as a NATO member, joined the U.S.-led bombing of the Yugoslav workers' state. This is the first time since the Korean war that Ottawa has taken military action on behalf of imperialism without the cover of a United Nations "peacekeeping" operation. As the world capitalist system becomes more and more unstable the class character of Ottawa's foreign policy in relation to Cuba is becoming clearer. It is the flip side of its austerity and antiunion drive against workers and farmers at home.

Last April Fidel Castro had a fitting answer to Chrétien's call for change in Cuba. "The revolution is the biggest change in history," Castro said, "and we aren't going to give it up."

John Steele is a member of the United Food and Commercial Workers Union in Toronto.

THE MILITANT

Free all the Puerto Rican political prisoners!

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in editorials.

'I got big picture' at active workers conference

BY MANUEL GONZÁLEZ
AND MAURICE WILLIAMS

OBERLIN, Ohio — "The forums I've been attending are like different pieces in a puzzle. But here I got the whole picture, with the work of the [Socialist Workers] Party and the Young Socialists stretching across the country," said Bobbi Negrón, a 19-year-old student at Rutgers University in Newark, New Jersey. She was among those who were attending their first Active Workers Conference.

About 450 people attended the conference, including members of the Socialist Workers Party, Young Socialists, and communist leagues in several countries; vanguard working people involved in struggles; supporters of the communist movement; and young people interested in socialism. Many Young Socialists and other participants converged on the conference in several car caravans—from the West Coast, Minnesota, Texas and Alabama, Georgia, and other points—that stopped along the way to pick up conference participants, join strike picket lines, and sell the *Militant* at plant gates and mine portals.

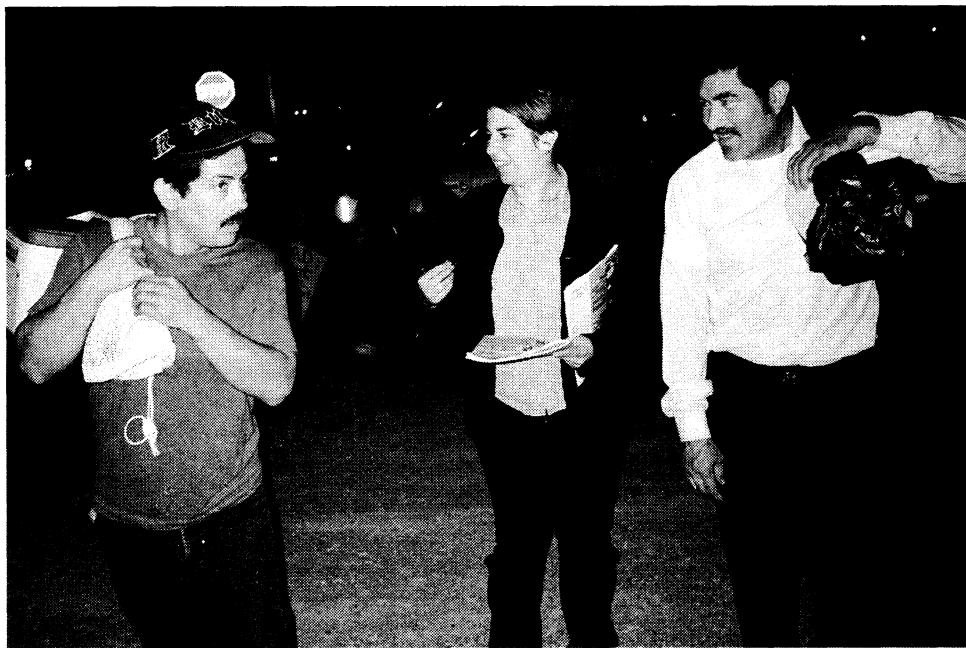
The conference included a rolling panel discussion, held each of the three days, that pulled together the threads of work of the party, YS, supporters, and fellow fighters over the last year. Talks by Mary-Alice Waters, editor of the Marxist magazine *New Internationalist*, and Jack Barnes, national secretary of the Socialist Workers Party, generalized and reinforced the lessons of the experiences described on the panels and in discussion from the floor. Themes of these discussions continued in classes based on questions that had come up during socialist summer schools over the last two months (more coverage from the conference will appear in the next *Militant*).

Visiting picket line on the way

On the way to the conference, Negrón and other socialist activists visited the picket line of United Steelworkers of America Local 3355, whose members have been waging a hard-fought strike at Demag Delaval near Trenton, New Jersey, since September 1998. "This was my first strike picket line. I was impressed by how proud the strikers were in sticking together and turning down the company's lousy contract offer."

After the conference Negrón joined the volunteer brigade of socialist workers, young socialists, and supporters to work on various projects to improve the Pathfinder building.

Romina Green from Fresno, California, joined the YS at the conference and said she is moving to another city to build the Young Socialists and to get a job in industry. She had participated in socialist summer school classes held in the weeks before the conference, which discussed political questions in *Capitalism's World Disorder: Working-Class Politics at the Millennium* and other Pathfinder titles. "The summer school answered a lot of questions," she said. "One of the classes [at the Active Workers Con-



Militant/Shem Morton

YS leader Samantha Kern talks with meatpackers in Nebraska on way to conference

ference] was based on a question I had."

Participants in the conference also included workers and students from other countries. Pierre Lavine, 37, an auto worker near Paris, joined the Communist League in France at its founding convention in March. Since meeting communist workers on the job three years ago, he has been read-

ing a number of Pathfinder books including the French translation of *The Changing Face of U.S. Politics: Working Class Politics in the Trade Unions*. After attending a class, Lavine stated, "I liked the discussion on the need for discipline in a party of revolutionary workers."

Another worker attending the meeting,

Robert Shields, 59, who works at an auto plant in Hapeville, Georgia, commented, "When I get back, I plan to talk to younger workers and help get them prepared for what's coming down the tubes. Corporate greed is turning things up another notch, trying to make people work more for less money and pushing to raise the retirement age." Shields, a *Militant* subscriber who has also purchased a copy of the Pathfinder title *Capitalism's World Disorder: Working-Class Politics at the Millennium*, had participated in several farm actions this year.

Jim Horn, a 46-year-old worker from Floyds Knobs, Indiana, got involved in supporting a strike by United Food and Commercial Workers Union members against Tyson Chicken in Corydon, Indiana, where he organized to bring firewood to the picket line and a collection by his local union. "Through the experience of the Tyson strike I see an optimism today among working people that I haven't seen in my working career over the past 23 years," he remarked.

Young fighters seek out YS

Several other youth from across the country where there is not yet a chapter of the Young Socialists attended the conference and a few expressed interest in joining the organization.

Willie Cotton, a 21-year-old student at the University of Arizona, launched a socialist

Continued on Page 10

— YOUNG SOCIALISTS AROUND THE WORLD —

'Summer schools' don't end, says YS

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, 3284 23rd St., San Francisco, California, 94110. Tel: (415) 824-1429.

E-mail: 105162.605@compuserve.com

BY CECILIA ORTEGA

OBERLIN, Ohio — Young Socialists members from Canada, Iceland, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and the United States helped to build and participate in the Active Workers Conference that took place here August 5-7. Dozens of the young revolutionaries traveled to the international gathering via car caravan, stopping off to pick up other active workers and distribute the *Militant* at the plant gates to packinghouse workers, coal miners, and steelworkers.

Classes on *Capitalism's World Disorder* were held along the way to conclude the curriculum studied during the summer schools held jointly by YS chapters and branches of the Socialist Workers Party. YS members transferred to several "summer school cen-



Militant/Stu Singer

Brigade member Maya Anderson painting wall at Pathfinder Building in New York

ters" in June to help build the communist movement in different areas, deepen their understanding of the history of the communist movement, and help advance the role that the Young Socialists are playing in increasing socialist workers' activity at industrial workplaces, primarily in garment production, meatpacking, and coal mining.

"The National Committee of the Young Socialists met last night and decided that the summer is not over," declared Samantha Kern, organizer of the Young Socialists National Executive Committee in the United States, at the closing rally of the Active Workers Conference. During a meeting of the Young Socialists held the next day, Kern explained, "What is in the best interest of the Young Socialists is to follow the momentum of the summer schools and caravans and to continue onward to the Red Week."

The Red Week is a political event that many YS members and others drove directly to following the conference, volunteering to paint and refurbish the building where Pathfinder books are published and printed.

The YS members discussed plans to organize regional socialist educational conferences during the Labor Day weekend, at least in the West Coast and Midwest regions. Some people suggested possibilities for conferences on the East Coast and in the South.

The Young Socialists in the United States will be launching a national fund drive at these weekend conferences, to better enable the YS to participate rapidly in working-class resistance and sustain the YS national office. A fund-raising raffle at the Active Workers Conference itself netted more than \$1,500 to cover YS national expenses and get two Young Socialists from the U.S. to Cuba to report on and participate in an international conference.

Other reports and discussion at the Young Socialists meeting centered on the success of the summer schools and getting out to the growing working-class resistance across the country. Young Socialists from Alabama explained that they were able to organize regular teams to campuses and mine portals. One very important regional team they were a part of was to various textile plants in the South, including one in Kannapolis, North Carolina, where a victory was recently scored for workers fighting to organize a union for a number of years at Fieldcrest Cannon (now Pillowtex). Young Socialists commented on the usefulness of collaboration between chapters from different cities in their region. The Seattle chapter and the Young Socialists in Vancouver, for example, have joined up to visit the strike picket lines of meatpackers at IBP in Wallula, Washington, and locked-out Kaiser Aluminum workers in Tacoma and Spokane.

The Young Socialists also discussed the organization's participation in the upcoming International Youth and Students Seminar about Neoliberalism in Havana, Cuba. This was the conference that two Cuban youth leaders built while they toured the U.S. to speak with student organizations and workers. Young Socialists delegations from Canada, Sweden, and the United States will attend the conference along with other youth organizations. This conference will be an opportunity for youth from around the world to discuss world politics, the development of class battles around the globe, and the perspectives for struggle.

These projections will put the Young Socialists on the best footing to maximize our opportunities to recruit, join resistance of the working class, and continue to strengthen the proletarian character of our organization.

\$125,000 Pathfinder Fund launched

BY BRIANTAYLOR

OBERLIN, Ohio — A boisterous rally held at the end of the Active Workers Conference launched the 1999 Pathfinder Fund. Several participants, as part of the panel discussions at the conference, shared their experiences of selling Pathfinder books to their co-workers, as well as to bookstores and libraries in their regions. Others explained how reading these books changed their lives.

The \$125,000 fund drive, which will run through November 15, will help finance Pathfinder's continuing reprint program and several new books. *Making History*, containing interviews with four generals of Cuba's Revolutionary Armed Forces — Enrique Carreras, José Ramón Fernández, Néstor López Cuba, and Harry Villegas — will be published in November, in time to be launched at the Guadalajara bookfair in Mexico together with the Spanish-language edition published by Editora Política in Cuba. *Che Guevara Talks to Young People*, prepared in collaboration with Editora Abril in Cuba, and the Spanish translation of *Capitalism's World Disorder: Working-Class Politics at the Millennium* by Jack Barnes are scheduled for publication by the time of the Havana bookfair in February 2000.

Following an Active Workers Conference in Pittsburgh one year ago, the Socialist Workers Party decided to strengthen its work in

industry by rebuilding fractions of worker-bolsheviks in garment, textile, and meatpacking plants; in mines; and deepening the party's ties with working farmers. The progress in carrying out this perspective was registered at the conference. Socialist workers in the Union of Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Employees, many of whom have gotten jobs in garment and textile factories over the last year, set an example by making an initial, combined fund pledge of \$1,690. United Transportation Union members have a combined pledge so far of \$10,100 and the members of the United Steelworkers of America stand at \$8,500 pledged.

To date, more than \$60,000 has been pledged for the fund. Leaving no stone unturned — giving every co-worker, every farmer and young fellow fighter a chance to make a pledge or contribution — will maximize the chances of meeting and exceeding the fund's goal. Supporters of the fund will want to plan early meetings that take advantage of the leverage Pathfinder has around the world.

To find out more information about the fund or to make a contribution, contact your nearest Pathfinder bookstore listed on page 8. Please make all checks and money orders out to Pathfinder, earmarked Pathfinder Fund, and sent them to: **Pathfinder, 410 West Street, New York, NY 10014.**

'Cuban people, their revolution demonstrate what is possible'

Che Guevara speaks at first Latin American Youth Congress in 1960

Ernesto Che Guevara delivered the following speech July 28, 1960, in Havana, Cuba, at the opening session of the first Latin American Youth Congress. Inspired by the example of the Cuban revolution, which had triumphed a year and a half earlier, some 900 delegates and observers from youth, labor, solidarity, and political organizations from every country in Latin America and nations around the world attended. The U.S. delegation included representatives from the Young Socialist Alliance. The YSA was the youth organization in political agreement with the Socialist Workers Party.

The congress had been formally inaugurated in the Sierra Maestra mountains July 26, in conjunction with the main rally celebrating the seventh anniversary of the attack led by Fidel Castro on the Moncada garrison, in eastern Cuba. That action had launched the armed struggle against the U.S.-backed dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista.

After the Sierra Maestra ceremony the congress then moved to Havana. Delegates worked in three separate commissions and debated the political, social, and economic problems facing Latin American youth, and presented a number of resolutions that were adopted by the congress.

Among the basic positions of the congress, the delegates endorsed the revolutionary government of Cuba, called for international solidarity against U.S. imperialism, an end to racial and religious discrimination, the provision of economic opportunities for youth, industrialization of the backward countries, an end to the Cold War, and the recognition of China by the United Nations. On August 7, in a speech to a mass rally at the congress, Castro read the revolutionary government's decree nationalizing the holdings of U.S.-owned corporations in Cuba. The congress closed August 8.

Guevara's speech will appear in *Che Guevara Talks to Young People*, to be published later this year by Pathfinder. The translation is copyright © 1999 Pathfinder Press, and is reproduced by permission. The subtitles are by the *Militant*.



BY ERNESTO CHE GUEVARA

Compañeros of Latin America and the entire world:

It would take a long time to extend individual greetings, on behalf of our country, to each of you, and to each of the countries represented. We nevertheless want to draw attention to some of those here who are representing countries victimized by natural catastrophes or catastrophes caused by imperialism.

We would like to extend special greetings tonight to the representative of the people of Chile, Clotario Blest, [Applause] whose youthful voice you heard a moment ago. Nevertheless, his maturity can serve as



Above: Osvaldo Salas, from Che Guevara and the Cuban Revolution; right: Cuban Council of State. Above, Ernesto Che Guevara at opening of first Latin American Youth Congress, July 28, 1960. Imperialist-owned properties in Cuba were nationalized a week later. At right, August 1960 march in Havana carrying coffins representing each of the main imperialist companies, to be dumped in sea.

an example and a guide to our fellow working people from that unfortunate land, which has been victimized by one of the most terrible earthquakes in history.¹

We would also like to extend special greetings to Jacobo Arbenz, [Applause] president of the first Latin American nation [Guatemala] to fearlessly raise its voice against colonialism, and to express the cherished desires of its peasant masses through a deep-going and courageous agrarian reform. And we would also like to express our gratitude to him and to the democracy that fell in that country for the example it gave us, and for enabling us to make a correct appreciation of all the weaknesses that government was unable to overcome.² Doing so has enabled us to get to the root of the question, and to decapitate in one blow those who held power, and the henchmen serving them.

We would also like to greet two of the

¹ Clotario Blest was a longtime leader of the Chilean labor movement, and vigorous supporter of Cuban revolution. One of the founders of the United Federation of Workers of Chile (CUT).

A series of earthquakes and tidal waves hit southern Chile May 21-29, killing an estimated 5,700 people.

² Seeking to crush political and social struggles in Guatemala accompanying a limited land reform initiated by the regime of Jacobo Arbenz, mercenary forces backed by the CIA invaded the country in 1954. Arbenz refused to arm the people and resigned, and a right-wing dictatorship took over. Among those volunteering to fight the imperialist-organized attack was Ernesto Guevara, who had been drawn to Guatemala by the upsurge in struggle there.



delegations representing the countries that have perhaps suffered the most in the Americas. First of all, Puerto Rico, [Applause] which even today, 150 years after declaring its freedom for the first time in the Americas, continues fighting to take the first step, perhaps the most difficult one, that of achieving, at least formally, a free government. And I would like the delegates of Puerto Rico to convey my greetings, and those of all Cuba, to Pedro Albizu Campos. [Applause] We would like you to convey to Pedro Albizu Campos our deep-felt respect, our recognition of the example he has shown with his valor, and our fraternal feelings as free men toward a man who is free, despite being in the dungeons of the so-called U.S. democracy.³ [Shouts of "Down with it!"]

Although it may seem paradoxical, I would also like to greet today the delegation representing the purest of the North American people. [Ovation] I would like to salute them not only because the North American people are not to blame for the barbarity and injustice of their rulers, but also because they are innocent victims of the rage of all the peoples of the world, who sometimes confuse a social system with a people.

I therefore extend my personal greetings to the distinguished individuals I've named, and to the delegations of the fraternal peoples I've named. All of Cuba, myself included, open our arms to receive you and to show you what is good here and what is bad, what has been achieved and what has yet to be achieved, the road traveled and the road ahead. Because even when all of you come to deliberate at this Latin American Youth Congress on behalf of your respective countries, I'm sure that each one of you came here full of curiosity to find out exactly what type of phenomenon known as the Cuban revolution has been born on a Caribbean island.

Many of you, from diverse political tendencies, will ask yourselves, as you did yesterday and as perhaps you will also do tomorrow: What is the Cuban revolution? What is its ideology? And immediately a question

will arise, as it always does in these cases, both by adherents and adversaries: Is the Cuban revolution communist? Some say yes, hoping the answer is yes, or that it is heading in that direction. Others, disappointed perhaps, will also think the answer is yes. There will be some disappointed people who think the answer is no, as well as those who hope the answer is no.

After going through the time-worn explanations to determine what communism is, I might be asked whether this revolution before your eyes is a communist revolution. (I leave aside the hackneyed accusations of imperialism and the colonial powers, who confuse everything.) I would answer that if this revolution is Marxist — and listen well that I say "Marxist" — then it would be because it discovered, by its own methods, the road pointed out by Marx. [Applause]

Recently one of the leading figures of the Soviet Union, vice premier Mikoyan, [Applause] a lifelong Marxist, said, toasting the success of the Cuban revolution, that it was a phenomenon Marx had not foreseen. [Applause] He then noted that life teaches more than the wisest books and the most profound thinkers. [Applause]

The Cuban revolution was moving forward, not worrying about labels, not checking what was said about it, but constantly scrutinizing what the Cuban people wanted of it. And it quickly found that not only had it achieved, or was on the way to achieving, the happiness of its people; it had also become the object of curious glances by friend and foe alike — the hopeful glances of an entire continent, and the furious glances of the king of monopolies.

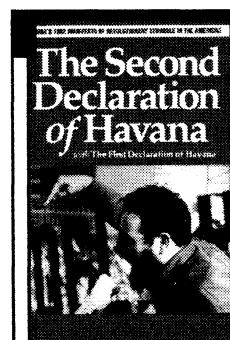
But all this did not come about overnight. Permit me to relate some of my own experience, an experience that can serve many peoples that are in similar circumstances, so that they get a living idea of how our revolutionary thinking of today arose. Because the Cuban revolution you see today is not the Cuban revolution of yesterday, even after the victory, certainly a line of continuity exists. And much less is it the Cuban insurrection prior to the victory, at the time when those eighty-two youths made the difficult crossing of the Gulf of Mexico in a boat that took in water, to reach the shores of the Sierra Maestra.⁴ Between those youths and the representatives of Cuba today there is a distance that cannot be measured in years — or at least not measured correctly in years, with twenty-four-hour days and sixty-minute hours.

All the members of the Cuban government, young in age, with a youthful character and youthful illusions, have nevertheless matured in the extraordinary world of experience; in living contact with the people, with their needs and aspirations.

The hope we all had was to arrive one day somewhere in Cuba, and after a few shouts, a few heroic actions, a few deaths, and a few radio programs, to take power and drive out the dictator Batista. History showed us that it

⁴ Fidel Castro and eighty-two other members of the July 26 Movement, including Guevara, left the Mexican port of Tuxpan November 25, 1956, aboard the yacht *Granma*. They reached Cuba's southeastern coast December 2, initiating the revolutionary war against the U.S.-backed dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista. Over the next two years, the Rebel Army conducted an ever-widening struggle that won increasing popular support in the countryside and cities, culminating in the revolution's victory on January 1, 1959. See Guevara, *Episodes of the Cuban Revolutionary War, 1956-58* (New York: Pathfinder, 1996).

³ Pedro Albizu Campos, leader of the Puerto Rican Nationalist Party, was imprisoned by the U.S. government for proindependence activities in 1937-43, 1950-53, and 1954-64. He was released shortly before his death in 1965.



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was much more difficult to overthrow a whole government backed by an army of murderers; these murderers were also partners of that government and were backed by the greatest colonial power on earth.

That was how little by little all our ideas changed. We, the children of the cities, learned to respect the peasant. We learned to respect his sense of independence, his loyalty; to recognize his age-old yearning for the land that had been snatched from him; and to recognize his experience in the thousand paths of the forest. And the peasants learned from us the value of a man when he has a rifle in his hand, and when that rifle is ready to be fired at another man, regardless of how many rifles the other man has. The peasants taught us their know-how and we taught the peasants our sense of rebellion. And from that moment until today, and forever, the peasants of Cuba and the rebel forces of Cuba — today the Cuban revolutionary government — have marched united as one.

The revolution continued progressing and we drove the troops of the dictatorship from the steep hillsides of the Sierra Maestra. We then came face to face with another reality of Cuba: the worker — whether an agricultural worker or a worker in the industrial centers. We learned from him too, while we taught him that at a certain moment, there is something much more powerful and effective than a peaceful demonstration: a well-aimed shot fired at the right person. [Applause] We learned the value of organization, while again we taught the value of rebellion. And out of this, organized rebellion arose throughout the entire territory of Cuba.

By then much time had passed. Many deaths marked the road of our victory, many of them in combat while others were innocent victims. The imperialist forces began to see that in the heights of the Sierra Maestra was something more than a group of bandits, more than a group of ambitious assailants against the ruling power. Their bombs, their bullets, their planes, and their tanks were generously offered to the dictatorship. And with these resources in front,

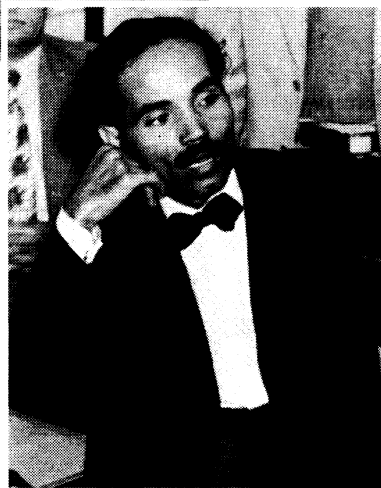


Top, a demonstration at the Panama Canal, November, 1959, protesting U.S. imperialist aggression. Right, Puerto Rican Nationalist leader Pedro Albizu Campos, "a man who is free, despite being in the dungeons of the so-called U.S. democracy."

they again attempted, for the last time, to ascend the Sierra Maestra.

Much time had already gone by. By then columns of our forces had already left to invade other regions of Cuba and had formed the "Frank País" Second Eastern Front under the orders of Commander Raúl Castro.⁵ [Applause] Our strength was growing within public opinion, and we were now headline material in the international sections of news-

papers in every corner of the world. Despite all this, the Cuban revolution at that time possessed 200 rifles — not 200 men, but 200 rifles — to stop the regime's last offensive, in which they amassed 10,000 soldiers and



every type of instrument of death.⁶ And the history of each one of those 200 rifles is a history of sacrifice and blood, because they were rifles of imperialism that the blood and determination of our martyrs had dignified and transformed into rifles of the people. This was how the last stage of the army's great offensive unfolded, under the name of "encirclement and annihilation."

What I am saying to you, studious young people from throughout the Americas, is that if today we are putting into practice what is called Marxism, it is because we discovered it here. In those days, after defeating the dictatorship's troops and inflicting 1,000 casualties on their ranks — that is, five times as many casualties as the sum total of our combat forces — and after seizing more than 600 weapons, a small pamphlet written by Mao Zedong fell into our hands. [Applause]

And that pamphlet, which dealt with the strategic problems of the revolutionary war in China, described the campaigns that Chiang Kai-shek carried out against the popular forces, which the dictator called, just like here, "campaigns of encirclement and annihilation."

Not only had the same words been used on opposite sides of the globe to designate their campaigns, but both dictators used the same type of campaign to try to destroy the popular forces. And the popular forces on both sides of the world used the same methods to combat the dictatorship's forces, without knowing the manuals that had already been written about the strategy and tactics of guerrilla warfare. Because naturally, whenever somebody passes through an experience, it can be utilized by somebody else. But it is also possible to

Continued on Page 6

Series marks key steps by Cuban revolution

BY MIKE TABER

This is the eighth piece in a series appearing in the *Militant* each month throughout 1999 celebrating the fortieth anniversary of the Cuban revolution. The series features speeches by central leaders of the revolution marking turning points and accomplishments as the workers and farmers of Cuba pressed ahead in the opening years of the revolution, defending their interests against the capitalists, landlords, and imperialist rulers in the United States.

The revolutionary struggle that toppled the U.S.-backed dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista on Jan. 1, 1959, was led by the July 26 Movement and the Rebel Army commanded by Fidel Castro. These organizations had mobilized Cuba's toilers to bring down the bloody regime, throw off the yoke of Yankee economic and political domination, and initiate radical land reform. Also opposing Batista were substantial bourgeois forces, most of whom did little to bring down the dictatorship but were energetic in seeking to block the Rebel Army's victory.

When it became clear this could not be prevented, these forces — in league with Washington — set their hopes on buying off and corrupting the revolutionary leadership. They confidently expected to engineer the sequence of events often seen elsewhere in Latin America throughout the twentieth century: that the July 26 Movement's program would remain only a piece of paper, while in practice the interests of Washington and of Cuba's landlords and capitalists would be secure. Eventually, they anticipated, the situation would "stabilize" enough so that the bearded rebels could be discarded altogether and more reliable political and military forces reinstated.

They were wrong. From the beginning, Washington and its Cuban bourgeois soul mates underestimated the political caliber, class firmness, and repeated bold initiatives of the leadership forged by the Rebel Army, and the determination of Cuba's workers and farmers to defend their interests.

The first government that came to power in January 1959 was a coalition of the revolutionary forces led by the July 26 Movement and bourgeois opposition figures, among them the new president, Manuel Urrutia. Fidel Castro remained commander-in-chief of the Rebel Army. He had no position in the new government.

The July 26 Movement and Rebel Army forces under Castro's leadership, both inside and outside the government, continued to mobilize the toilers to carry out the program they had fought for. As the revolution deepened, Castro became prime minister in mid-February. Among the measures decreed by the government in early 1959 and implemented in practice by the Rebel Army at the head of the workers and farmers vanguard were the dismantling of the military and police forces of the Batista regime; the eradication of the extremely profitable U.S.-dominated gambling and prostitution operations; the outlawing of racist discrimination in hiring and social services; and the slashing of rents and prices for other basic goods and services, such as telephone and utility rates, that consume most workers' income.

Most decisively, in May 1959, an agrarian reform law was implemented. Millions of acres of large landed estates held by U.S. and Cuban ruling-class families were confiscated, and hundreds of thousands of peasants received title to the land they worked. To implement the land reform, the new government established the National Institute of Agrarian Reform (INRA) and Castro was named INRA's president.

These measures provoked a sharpening class polarization inside Cuba, including within the coalition government. During the summer and fall of 1959, as the land reform advanced, Washington's economic and military hostility escalated. As Cuban workers and peasants responded, they deepened their determination to defend their gains and realize their dreams. Under popular pressure, the representatives of capitalist forces resigned from the government one after the other. These included Urrutia, who was replaced as president by Osvaldo Dorticós, a prominent lawyer

with ample credentials as an anti-imperialist and anti-Batista fighter and a member of the July 26 Movement.

The July 26 Movement as well as other groups that participated in the fight against Batista were profoundly affected as procapitalist forces split away. More than a few joined armed counterrevolutionary organizations.

By November 1959, the last of the bourgeois forces had left the government. Washington launched a full-scale political, economic, and military campaign to overthrow the workers and farmers government.

From August to October 1960, in direct response to the escalating U.S. attacks, Cuba's working people mobilized by the millions to support and implement government decrees nationalizing the factories, refineries, mills, and other holdings of U.S.- and Cuban-owned corporations. The domination of capital was broken and the foundations laid for beginning a transition to socialism.

In April 1961, the day after U.S.-organized bombing assaults on Cuban airfields and on the eve of the landing of U.S.-trained and -financed mercenary troops at the Bay of Pigs, the socialist character of the revolution was proclaimed. The invaders at the Bay of Pigs were defeated in seventy-two hours.

The standoff between the two irreconcilable forces represented by Havana and Washington, which continues to this day, has marked much of world politics throughout the last forty years.

Most of the speeches that will be included in this series will appear in books that Pathfinder is preparing for publication. These include two volumes of speeches by Fidel Castro from the first decade of the revolution, *Che Guevara Talks to Young People*, and a new edition of *Che Guevara and the Cuban Revolution*.

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Continued from Page 5

pass through the same experience without knowing of the earlier one.

We were unaware of the experience of the Chinese troops over twenty years of struggle in their territory. But here we knew our own territory, we knew our enemy, and we used something that every man has on his shoulders — and if he knows how to use it, it's worth a lot — we used our heads to fight the enemy. As a result, we defeated it.

Later there followed the westward invasions, the breaking of communication lines, and the crushing fall of the dictatorship when no one expected it. Then came January 1, and the revolution again, without thinking about what it had read but hearing what it needed to from the lips of the people, decided first and foremost to punish the guilty ones, and it did so.⁷

The colonial powers immediately splashed the story all over the front pages, calling this murder, and they immediately tried to do something the imperialists always try to do: sow division. "Communist murderers are killing people," they said, "but there is a naive patriot named Fidel Castro, who had nothing to do with it and can be saved." [Applause] They tried to sow divisions among men who had fought for the same cause, with pretexts and trivial arguments. They maintained this hope for a certain time.

But one day they came upon the fact that the Agrarian Reform Law approved here was much more violent and deep-going than the one their very wise, self-appointed advisers had counseled. All of them, by the way, are today in Miami or some other city of the United States. Pepín Rivero of *Diario de la*

⁷ In the first weeks after the victory of the revolution, several hundred of the most notorious murderers and torturers of the Batista regime were tried by popular tribunals and executed. This measure had the overwhelming support of the Cuban people.

⁸ José Ignacio "Pepín" Rivero was the editor of the right-wing daily *Diario de la Marina* (1947–60), which had close ties to the Catholic church hierarchy. An opponent of the Cuban revolution, Rivero took asylum in Vatican offices in Cuba May 10, 1960. Humberto Medrano was managing editor of *Prensa Libre* in Havana (1949–60). He opposed revolutionary measures and left Cuba via the Panamanian embassy in May 1960.



Cuban peasants receive title to their land following the first agrarian reform in 1959

Granma

Marina, or [Humberto] Medrano of *Prensa Libre*.⁸ [Shouts and hisses] And there were others, including a prime minister in our government, who counseled great moderation, because "one must handle such things with moderation."

"Moderation" is another one of the words colonial agents like to use. All those who are afraid or who think of betraying in one form or another are "moderates." [Applause] As for the people, in no way are they moderates.

The advice given was to divide up marabú land — marabú is a shrub that grows in our fields — and to have the peasants cut marabú with machetes, or to settle in some swamp, or to have them grab a piece of public land that somehow might have escaped the voracity of the large landowners. But to touch the holdings of the large landowners was a sin greater than anything they imagined was possible. But it was possible.

I recall in those days a conversation I had with a gentleman who told me that he had no problems at all with the revolutionary government, because he owned no more than nine hundred *caballerías*. Nine hun-

⁹ One hectare equals 2.47 acres; in Cuba, one *caballería* equals 33 acres.

dred *caballerías* comes to more than ten thousand hectares.⁹

Of course, this gentleman did have problems with the revolutionary government, and his lands were seized and divided up, and turned over to individual peasants. In addition, cooperatives were created, on lands that agricultural laborers were accustomed to working, doing so in common for a wage.¹⁰

Here lies one of the peculiar features of the Cuban revolution that must be studied. For the first time in Latin America, this revolution made an agrarian reform that attacked property relations that were not feudal. There were feudal remnants in tobacco and coffee, and in these areas the land was given to individuals who had been working small plots of land and wanted their land. But with sugarcane, rice, and cattle, given the manner in which these were worked in Cuba, the land was seized as a unit and worked as a unit by workers who were given joint ownership over all these lands. They are not owners of a parcel of land, but of the whole great joint enterprise called a cooperative. And this has enabled our deep-going agrarian reform to move rapidly. Each one of you should let it sink in, as a truth that cannot be challenged in any way, that here in Latin America no government can call itself revolutionary unless its first measure is an agrarian reform. [Applause]

Furthermore, a government that says it's going to carry out a timid agrarian reform cannot call itself revolutionary. A revolutionary government is one that makes an agrarian reform that transforms the system of property relations on the land, not just giving the peasants land that was not in use, but fundamentally giving the peasants land that was in use, land that belonged to the large landowners, the best land, with the greatest yield, land that moreover had been stolen from the peasants in past epochs. [Applause]

That is agrarian reform, and that is how

all revolutionary governments must begin. On the basis of an agrarian reform the great battle for the industrialization of a country can be waged, a battle that is not as simple, which is very complicated, and where one must fight against very big things. We could very easily fail, as in the past, if it weren't for the existence today of very great forces in the world that are friends of small nations like ours. [Applause]

One must note here for the benefit of everyone — both those who like it and those who hate it — that at the present time countries like Cuba, revolutionary countries, non-moderate countries, cannot respond half-heartedly to the question of whether the Soviet Union or People's China is our friend. They must respond with all their might that the Soviet Union, China, and all the socialist countries, and many colonial or semicolonial countries that have freed themselves, are our friends. [Applause]

And this friendship, the friendship with these governments throughout the world, is what makes it possible to carry out a revolution in Latin America. Because when they carried out aggression against us with sugar and petroleum, the Soviet Union was there to give us petroleum and buy sugar from us. Had it not been for that, then we would have needed all our strength, all our faith, and all the devotion of this people — which is enormous — to withstand the blow this would have signified.¹¹ And the forces of disunity would then have done their work, basing themselves on the effect that the measures of the "U.S. democracy" against this "threat to the free world" [Applause] would have on the standard of living of the entire Cuban people. They attacked us openly.

There are government leaders here in Latin America who still advise us to lick the hand that wants to hit us, and spit on the one who wants to help us. [Applause] And we answer the government leaders of these countries who, in the middle of the twentieth century, recommend bowing down. We say, first of all, that Cuba does not bow down before anyone. And secondly, that Cuba knows the weaknesses and defects of the governments that advise this approach; it knows this through its own experience, and the rulers of these countries know it too, they know it very well. Nevertheless, Cuba has not deigned or permitted itself, and has not thought it permissible up to the present time, to advise the rulers of these countries to shoot every traitorous official, and to nationalize all the monopoly holdings in their country. [Applause]

The people of Cuba shot their murderers and dissolved the army of the dictatorship. Yet it has not been telling any government of Latin America that they should use the firing squad on the murderers of the people or put an end to the forces propping up the dictatorships. But Cuba knows well that there are murderers inside each one of the nations. The Cubans who belong to our own Movement can attest to that fact; they were killed in a friendly country by henchmen remaining from the previous dictatorship.¹² [Applause and shouts of "Put them up against the wall!"]

We do not ask that they apply the firing squad for the murder of our militants, although we would have done so in this country. [Applause] What we ask, simply, is that if it is not possible to act with solidarity in the Americas, one should at least not be a traitor to the Americas. Let no one in the Americas parrot the idea that we are bound to a conti-



Top: George Tselos

Thousands of revolutionary minded young people from around the world made their way to Havana in the summer of 1960, and all the major currents in the workers movement were present as well, seeking to win the new generation of youth to their banner. Among those participating in the Latin American Youth Congress were many who returned to their own countries to lead revolutionary struggles throughout the Americas, including men and women like Tomás Borge, a future leader of the Sandinista National Liberation Front of Nicaragua. Among those from the United States — one of the countries whose participants Guevara singles out for a special salute — was the delegation from the Young Socialist Alliance (YSA), the forebear of today's Young Socialists, whose photo was run in the Cuban newspaper *Combate*. From left to right, Peter Buch, Suzanne Weiss, Eva Chertov, and Peter Camejo.

Among the many others who made their way from the U.S. to Cuba that summer — where they met, argued politics, tried to recruit each other, and prepared to defend Cuba together — were the young people pictured above (from right) Fred Sweet, who shared many of the positions of the Communist Party of the United States; Jack Barnes, who joined the Young Socialist Alliance a few months later and is today national secretary of the Socialist Workers Party; and Arnie Kessler, who initially held many anarcho-syndicalist views and was won to sympathize with the YSA while in Cuba. Kessler and Barnes also participated in the Latin American Youth Congress. The photo, with the American visitors' friend, Cuban militia member Juan González Díaz (at left) was taken by George Tselos, another U.S. visitor who later joined the YSA.



¹⁰ The Agrarian Reform Law of May 17, 1959, set a limit of 30 *caballerías* (approximately 1,000 acres) on individual landholdings. Implementation of the law resulted in confiscation of the vast estates in Cuba — many of them owned by U.S. companies. These lands passed into the hands of the new government. The law also granted sharecroppers, tenant farmers, and squatters a deed to the land they tilled. Another provision of the law established the National Institute of Agrarian Reform (INRA). See Fidel Castro's June 1959 speech on the implementation of the law, published in the May 31, 1999, issue of the *Militant*.

¹¹ In June 1960 three major imperialist-owned oil refineries in Cuba announced their refusal to refine oil that Cuba purchased from the Soviet Union. On June 29, the revolutionary government responded by taking control of the Texaco, Standard Oil, and Shell refineries. U.S. president Dwight Eisenhower then ordered the reduction by 700,000 tons of sugar that the United States had agreed to purchase from Cuba. The Soviet Union then announced that it would purchase all Cuban sugar the United States refused to buy. Responding to Washington's economic aggression, the revolutionary government decreed the nationalization of major U.S. companies in Cuba on August 6.

¹² Andrés Coba, coordinator of the July 26 Movement in Venezuela — which organized solidarity with the Cuban revolution — was gunned down July 27, 1960, in Caracas. The assailants were agents of Venezuela's political police. Coba died the morning of Guevara's speech.

mental alliance that includes our great enslaver, because that is the most cowardly and most denigrating lie a ruler in Latin America can utter. [Applause and shouts of: "Cuba sí, Yankees no."]

We, the members of the Cuban revolution — who are the entire people of Cuba — call our friends friends, and our enemies enemies, and we don't allow halfway terms: someone's either a friend or an enemy. [Applause] We, the people of Cuba, don't tell any nation on earth what they should do with the International Monetary Fund, for example. But we will not tolerate them coming to tell us what to do. We know what has to be done. If they want to do it, good; if they don't want to do it, that's up to them. But we will not tolerate anyone telling us what to do, because we were here on our own up to the last moment, awaiting the direct aggression of the mightiest power that exists in the capitalist world, and we did not ask help from anyone. We were prepared here, together with our people, to resist up to the final consequences of our rebel spirit.

That is why we can speak with our head held high, and with a very clear voice in all the congresses and council meetings where our brothers of the world meet. When the Cuban revolution speaks, it may make a mistake, but it will never tell a lie. From every tribune in which it speaks, the Cuban revolution expresses the truth that its sons and daughters have learned, and it always says this openly to its friends and to its enemies. It never throws stones from behind a corner, nor does it give advice that contains a dagger hidden within it, covered in velvet.

We are subject to attack. We are attacked a great deal because of what we are. But we are attacked much, much more because we demonstrate to each nation of the Americas what it's possible to be. For imperialism there's something much more important than Cuba's nickel mines or sugar mills, or Venezuela's oil, or Mexico's cotton, or Chile's copper, or Argentina's cattle, or Paraguay's grasslands, or Brazil's coffee. What is important to them is the totality of these raw materials that the monopolies feed upon.

That is why every time they can, they put an obstacle in our path. And when they themselves are not able to put the obstacles there, unfortunately in Latin America others are willing to put them there. [Shouts] Names are not important, because no one individual is to blame. We cannot say here that [Venezuelan] President Betancourt is to blame for the death of our compatriot and co-thinker. President Betancourt is not to blame; President Betancourt is simply a prisoner of a regime that calls itself democratic. [Shouts and applause] That democratic regime, a regime that could have been another example in Latin America, nevertheless committed the great blunder of not using the firing squad in a timely way. And today the democratic government of Venezuela is a prisoner of the henchmen with whom Venezuela was familiar up until a little while ago, with whom Cuba was familiar, and with whom the majority of Latin America is familiar.

We cannot blame President Betancourt for this death. We can only say here, backed by our record as revolutionaries and our conviction as revolutionaries: the day President Betancourt, elected by his people, feels himself such a prisoner that he cannot continue forward and decides to ask for the help of a fraternal people, Cuba is here, to show Venezuela some of its experiences in the revolutionary field. [Applause]

President Betancourt should know that it was not, and could not be, our diplomatic representative who started this whole conflict that led to a death. It was they; at the

far end it was the North Americans or the North American government; a little bit closer, Batista's men. A little bit closer still, all those who were the reserve force of the U.S. government in this country in anti-Batista clothing — those people wanted to defeat Batista and maintain the system: people like Miró Cardona, Quevedo, Díaz Lanz, and Hubert Matos.¹³ [Shouts] And in our direct sight, the forces of reaction that operate in Venezuela. Because it is very sad to say this, but the leader of Venezuela is at the mercy of his own troops who might assassinate him, as happened a little while ago with a car loaded with dynamite.¹⁴ The Venezuelan president, at this moment, is pris-



Photos: Bohemia
Fidel Castro reading the decree nationalizing the main U.S.-owned companies in Cuba, Aug. 6, 1960, at a mass rally at the conclusion of the first Latin American Youth Congress. Above, rally participants vote to endorse nationalizations.

oner of his repressive forces.

And this hurts. It hurts because the Cuban people received from Venezuela the greatest amount of solidarity and support when we were in the Sierra Maestra. It hurts, because much earlier than we did, Venezuela was at least able to get rid of the most hateful system of oppression represented by Pérez Jiménez.¹⁵

And it hurts because when our delegation was in Venezuela — first of all Fidel Castro, and later our president Dorticós [Applause] — they received the greatest demonstrations of support and affection.

A people that has achieved the high degree of political consciousness and the high combative faith of the Venezuelan people will not for very long be prisoners of a few bayonets or a few bullets. Because bullets and bayonets can change hands, and the murderers themselves can wind up dead.

But it is not my mission here to itemize the stabs in the back that the governments of Latin America have given us in recent days and to add fuel to the fire of rebellion. That is not my task because in the first place, Cuba is still not free of danger, and today it is still the focus of the imperialists' attention in this part of the world. Cuba needs the solidarity of all of you, the solidarity of those from the Democratic Action party in Venezuela, from those of the URD [Democratic Republican Union], or of the Communists, of COPEI [Independent Popular Electoral Committee], or any other party. It needs the solidarity of all the people of Mexico, of all the people of Colombia, of

Brazil, and of each one of the nations of Latin America.

It's true that the colonialists are scared. They too are afraid of missiles, and they too are afraid of bombs, like everyone else. [Applause] And today they see, for the first time in their history, that these bombs of destruction can fall on their wives and children, on everything they had built with so much love — anyone can love their wealth and riches. They began to make estimates; they put their electronic calculating machines to work, and they saw that this arrangement was no good.

But this does not mean in any way that they have renounced the suppression of



themselves will have to assess what is good.

There are many bad things, I know that. There is much disorganization here, I know that. All of you will already know this, perhaps, if you have been to the Sierra Maestra mountains. Guerrilla methods are still used, I know that. We lack technicians in fabulous quantities in accordance with our aspirations, I know that. Our army has still not reached the degree of maturity necessary, nor have the militia members achieved sufficient coordination to constitute themselves as an army, I know that.

But what I also know — and I would like all of you to know it — is that this revolution has always acted with the will of the entire people of Cuba. Every peasant and every worker, if they handle a rifle poorly, are working every day to handle it better, to defend their revolution. And if at this moment they cannot understand the complicated mechanism of a machine whose technician fled to the United States, then they are studying every day to learn it, so that their factory runs better. And the peasants will study their tractor, to resolve the mechanical problems it has, so that the fields of their cooperative yield more.

All Cubans, from the cities and the countryside, sharing a single feeling, are marching toward the future, thinking with absolute unity, led by a leader they have absolute confidence in, because he has shown in a thousand battles [Applause] and on a thousand different occasions his capacity for sacrifice, and the power and foresight of his thinking.

The nation before you today might disappear from the face of the earth because an atomic conflict may be unleashed on its account, and it might be its first target. Even if this entire island were to disappear along with its inhabitants, its people would consider themselves completely satisfied and fulfilled if each one of you, upon arriving in your countries, would say:

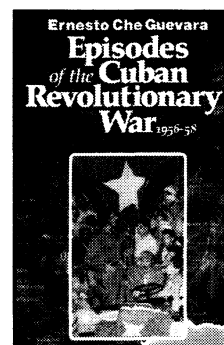
"Here we are. Our words come from the humid air of the Cuban forests. We have climbed the Sierra Maestra and seen the dawn, and our minds and our hands are full of the seed of that dawn. We are prepared to plant it in this land, and defend it so it can grow."

And from all the other brother countries of the Americas, and from our land — if it still remains as an example — from that moment on and forever, the voice of the peoples will answer: "Let it be so: Let freedom triumph in every corner of the Americas!" [Ovation]

Cuban democracy. They are again making laborious estimates on their multiplying machines, to find out which of the alternative methods is best for attacking the Cuban revolution. They have the Ydígoras method, the Nicaraguan method, the Haitian method — they no longer have the Dominican method, for the moment.¹⁶ They also have the method of the mercenaries in Florida, the method of the OAS [Organization of American States]; they have many methods. And they have power; they have power to continue improving these methods.

President Arbenz and his people know that they have many methods and a great deal of might. Unfortunately for Guatemala, President Arbenz had an army of the old style, and was not fully aware of the solidarity of the peoples and of their capacity to push back aggression of any type.

That is one of our greatest strengths: the strength that is being exerted throughout the world — regardless of the specific political faction within each country — to defend the Cuban revolution at a particular moment. And permit me to say that this is a duty of the youth of Latin America, because what we have here is something new, and it's something worth studying. I do not want to tell you what is good here; you your-



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¹³ José Miró Cardona, a leader of bourgeois opposition to Batista; prime minister of Cuba, January–February 1959; went to the United States in 1960; served as president of counterrevolutionary Revolutionary Democratic Front, and later Cuban Revolutionary Council in exile; later moved to Puerto Rico. Miguel Angel Quevedo editor of *Bohemia* until defection to the United States July 18, 1960.

José Luis Díaz Lanz, head of Cuban Air Force January–June 1959; defected to the United States June 29, 1959; conducted air raid on Havana October 21, 1959. Hubert Matos, small landowner; joined Rebel Army in March 1958; commander of Column 9 of Third Front led by Juan Almeida; as military head of Camagüey province in October 1959 he was arrested for attempted counterrevolutionary mutiny; imprisoned until 1979; currently head of right-wing Cuba Independent and Democratic in United States.

¹⁴ On June 24, 1960, an attempt was made on the life of Venezuelan president Rómulo Betancourt when a car loaded with dynamite was detonated alongside his passing vehicle. Betancourt was unhurt.

¹⁵ In January 1958, after ten years in power, Venezuelan dictator Marcos Pérez Jiménez was overthrown by a popular uprising.

¹⁶ Gen. Miguel Ydígoras was military strongman in Guatemala from 1958 until 1963. The Somoza family dictatorship in Nicaragua lasted from 1933 to 1979. François (Papa Doc) Duvalier ruled Haiti from 1957 to 1971; he was succeeded by his son Jean-Claude (Baby Doc) Duvalier, who ruled until being overthrown in 1986. Rafael Leónidas Trujillo became dictator of the Dominican Republic in 1930. At the time Guevara gave this speech, Trujillo had lost Washington's favor; he was assassinated in 1961.

Shipyard strike strengthens other workers

Continued from front page contract," he said. "It's second-class. Within five years it'll probably be third-class."

A long-prepared battle

Steelworkers here began gearing up for a fight months before the walkout. An organizing drive that involved substantial rank-and-file participation brought the union strength up to a record 83 percent by the time of the strike. Some 2,000 shipyard workers rallied in a show of unity on January 26 that halted traffic for 45 minutes, and another 4,000 marched on March 18 to let the company know they intended to fight for a substantial pay raise.

The brewing shipyard fight overlapped with an upturn in the ongoing struggle by farmers in this region to keep farming or recover farm land lost through governmental discrimination in loans and credit, as well as the workings of the capitalist market. This fight included the lawsuit against the U.S. Department of Agriculture that demanded relief from discriminatory acts and return of lost lands to farmers who are Black.

In a lawsuit settlement meeting held by government officials in early June near Richmond, Virginia, at least three of the 75 farm family members present were either currently on strike or recently retired from the shipyard. Another farmer told the *Militant* how years ago his father and uncles worked during the week in the shipyard and came home on weekends to keep the farm going.

Within the ranks of the striking shipbuilders, who are in their majority Black, were veterans of the 1979 strike that won union recognition and established USWA Local 8888. It was a hard-fought strike that included police attacks on the picket lines and union hall. As many of the veterans of that strike recount, that battle marked the beginning of forging new unity between Black and white workers in the union and in the yard. In turn, the impetus for the union drive

was the growing confidence gained by a layer of workers who were Black who had participated in the civil rights movement. A layer of these veterans of 1979 continued in a rank-and-file leadership role this strike, taking initiatives that drew in many others.

Support from other workers

For three weeks during their walkout, the Local 8888 members were joined by nearly 8,000 fellow shipyard workers who struck Ingalls Shipbuilding in Pascagoula, Mississippi. "Good news, to Newport News, Ingalls workers want money too!" read one sign at the Mississippi picket line. Striking Newport News workers on the picket lines expressed their solidarity and encouragement to the striking workers in Mississippi.

International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 733, one of the striking unions at Ingalls, sent \$500 to the Local 8888 strike. The Ingalls strike ended with the workers receiving a modest wage increase, holding down the amount of an insurance premium hike, and by their own account coming out stronger.

As one of the largest employers in the region, what happens at the shipyard has reverberations in companies throughout the region, and is watched closely by many workers. At the large Norshipco Shipyard in Norfolk, Virginia, which repairs and refurbishes commercial and military ships, workers welcomed the news of the contract settlement at Newport News. Joe McGinty, with five years left before he retires at Norshipco, said the Steelworkers at Newport News "went from \$500 a month pension to \$900 after 30 years working; right now if I retire after 30 years, I'd get \$300 per month. This means when our contract comes up in two years, I can look to the possibility of getting something better."

Many workers in the region who are trying to win union recognition also take strength from the fight of the Local 8888 Steelworkers. One of them Gayle Minor, a production worker at Newport News, Inc., a mail order processing facility, said one union organizing drive at the worksite a few years ago failed, and now the Steelworkers are trying to organize the facility. She said she looked to Local 8888 workers to start to close the pay gap between workers doing the same work at shipyards in the North and South. "If we had a union here, maybe we could deal with things like the different pay between full-time and part-time workers. I feel if you do the same work you should get the same pay, not several dollars less an hour. Another thing that needs to be addressed is the heat and dust we work in."

Workers at the giant Purdue poultry pro-

cessing plant in Lewiston, North Carolina, a couple hours from Newport News, are also engaged in a fight for a union. The UFCW has lost previous organizing drives there in recent years. One worker at Purdue who was watching the strike closely is Mary Ann Granger, who is married to a Local 8888 member. Granger was recently fired from Purdue because of repetitive motion injuries sustained on the job. She is waging a battle to get reinstated. Along with a handful of other workers, some also fired and some still working, she is seeking to bring attention to the need to defend workers victimized for on-the-job injuries. Recently she and a couple of her co-workers gave out 1,500 leaflets at the plant gate addressing this issue.

Regarding the Newport News strike, Granger said, "You know Purdue had its eye on the shipyard strike all this time too. Many of the people who work in the plant have family in the shipyard. The shipyard workers showed you can get something accomplished if you stick together."

Navy backs shipyard bosses

Throughout the strike, the shipyard bosses were cushioned from the full impact of the strike by the continued stream of contract payments from the U.S. Navy. The company conduct aimed at breaking the strike included cutting off medical insurance to the Steelworkers and their families on May 1 and an attempt to lure workers to cross the picket line with a promise of an immediate \$1-per-hour wage increase. The yard's hard stance in negotiations was framed by its agreement with the Navy to slash labor and

material costs by \$360 million in its military contracts over the next five years.

The USWA officials' arrangement on strike benefits also made things harder for striking workers. Strikers had to bring in their bills and justify to committees of other striking workers why a bill should be paid, and prove they had no other means of paying them. Many viewed this as invasion of privacy and would have preferred cash.

Nevertheless some 6,000 steelworkers stayed out on strike and organized to reach out for solidarity from other workers through expanded picket lines; a rally on the steps of the U.S. Capitol in Washington, D.C., April 21; and a rally in Richmond outside the company's stockholders meeting on June 25. The Steelworkers also set up floating picket lines, boat patrols maintained by striking workers in private boats that patrolled the James River to keep an eye on the backside of the shipyard and make sure the company did not bring scabs in to work by water.

Brian Ribblet, a welder, told the *Militant* the union presence in the yard is very visible now. "There is a sea of union hats, now when you go into work," he said. "I'm making a point to wear mine every day for now."

Neil Strum, Jr., an electrician, had this to say on what lies ahead for union members coming out of the strike. "Some say the fight is over. I say the fight is only beginning to organize the union better and stronger. Not only in the yard but in the many nonunion places all over this region."

Mary Martin is a member of International Association of Machinists Local 1759.

—MILITANT LABOR FORUMS—

CALIFORNIA

Los Angeles

Report Back on Active Workers Conference. Fri., Aug. 20, 7:30 p.m. 2546 W. Pico Blvd. Donation: \$5. Tel: (213) 380-9460.

San Francisco

U.S. Out of Vieques! Speakers: Jackie Santos, native of Vieques and a member of El Comité por un Puerto Rico Libre; representative, Socialist Workers Party. Fri., Aug. 20, 7:30 p.m. Dinner 6:30 p.m. 3284 23rd St. Donation: Forum \$5. Dinner \$5. Tel: (415) 285-5323.

ILLINOIS

Chicago

Challenges Facing Workers, Farmers, and Youth Today. Report Back from Active Workers Conference August 5-7 at Oberlin, Ohio, panel of participants. Fri., Aug. 20, 7 p.m.

Class: "The Rise and Fall of the Nicaraguan Revolution." Thurs., Aug. 19, 7 p.m.
Fight for Women's Rights in Cuba: Video "From Maids to Compañeras," with Elizabeth Stone, editor of *Women and the Cuban Revolution*. Fri., Aug. 27, 7 p.m. All events held at 1223 N. Milwaukee Ave. Donation: \$4. Tel: (773) 342-1780.

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Philadelphia

Report Back on Active Workers Conference: Organizing to Build the Revolutionary Party and Youth Organization among Fighting Workers, Farmers, and Young People. A panel discussion including Connie Allen, 1999 Socialist Workers Candidate for Mayor of Philadelphia. Fri., Aug. 20, 7:30 p.m. 1906 South St. Donation: \$5. Tel: (215) 546-8218.

AUSTRALIA

Sydney

Independence for East Timor — No to Australia/U.N. Imperialist Intervention. Speaker: Doug Cooper, Communist League, member of the Maritime Union of Australia. Fri., Aug. 20, 7 p.m. 176 Redfern St. Donation: \$4. Tel: 9690 1533.

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Upcoming Labor and Farm Actions

Sat., August 20-21

Annual meeting of the Federation of Southern Cooperatives
Epps, Alabama

Sun., August 29

March to Free Puerto Rican Political Prisoners
San Juan, Puerto Rico — starting point Plaza Barceló, Barrio Obrero, to the federal building in Hato Rey. Part of August 27-30 events at Universidad del Sagrado Corazón. For more information, contact Luis Nieves Falcón, Tel: (787) 725-1463.

Mon., September 6

Labor Day Parade
Charlotte, North Carolina — Sponsored by United Steelworkers Local 850 on strike against Continental General Tire and other area unions. For more information call Local 850, (803) 548-7272.

Sat., September 11

One Year of Struggle at Titan Tire
Natchez, Mississippi — Join the Titan Tire strike rally. For more information, contact USWA, Local 303L, Fax: (601) 445-5175.

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Boston school board deepens attack on desegregation plan

BY TED LEONARD

BOSTON — "This is a racist plan for the Boston school system," read a sign held by one of the 75 people who attended the Boston School Committee meeting on July 14. Parents, teachers, and activists jammed the meeting to speak out against the proposal of Boston School Superintendent Thomas W. Payzant to "modify the Boston Public Schools controlled choice student assignment policy by eliminating race as a factor."

The school committee voted 5-2 to approve Payzant's proposal, which would end the remnants of the busing plan to achieve school desegregation.

Superintendent Payzant told the school committee that it was necessary to adopt his proposal because of a lawsuit filed in June in federal court by a group called Boston Children First and several white parents. The legal action challenged the use of race/ethnicity in the school committee's citywide student assignment process. They claim white children are being discriminated against.

"Odds are," said Payzant, "we can not win the lawsuit." Arguing why his proposal should be adopted in a statement the superintendent wrote, "the national trend in federal court decisions has been to strike down as unconstitutional student assignment policies that use race."

The federal court decisions Payzant referred to included litigation involving court-ordered desegregation plans in public school systems throughout the country. On June 21, 1974, Federal District Judge A. Wendell Garrity ordered desegregation for the pre-

viously all-white schools in Boston, which included a busing plan. That fall racist opposition to the desegregation plan erupted into violence when white mobs attacked school buses carrying Black children into predominantly white schools.

The racist forces included James Kelly, who is currently president of the Boston city council. He had been a leader of ROAR (Restore Our Alienated Rights), which organized opposition to Judge Garrity's order in the streets.

Mass demonstrations, involving thousands of people, were organized in 1974-75 to defend Black students' right to an equal education. Since the 1974 federal court ruling, the capitalist rulers have been chipping away at affirmative action programs, including school desegregation plans in other cities such as Charlotte-Mecklenburg in North Carolina, and Louisville, Kentucky.

'Race does matter'

More than two dozen people took the floor to address the Boston School Committee meeting. The majority of them spoke against the proposal and appealed to the appointed body to postpone a decision that evening and organize public hearings on the proposal in the community.

Sandra Rogers, a Black parent, chided the school board members as setting a "bad precedent" by ending the use of affirmative action without a fight. She added the Boston Children First group should be renamed "White Boston Children First."

Steve Dockman, head of the citywide parent council, told the committee, "race does matter" and urged them to slow down on making their decision and to "give some consideration to what you have heard here tonight."

Dennis Michaud, a father of two children in the Boston school system, collected 53 signatures of parents opposed to the superintendent's proposal in a couple of days before the meeting. He told the committee, "I fear if you don't oppose the lawsuit, the progress made so far will crash against the rocks."

Another speaker appealed to the school committee to "take the high ground, the moral, ethical ground. Continuing the speaker pointed out, "until realtors change, you can't say race doesn't matter."

a counter-campaign to demand his execution.

The *Vanity Fair* article, which received extensive advance publicity, featured a claim by Philip Bloch that Abu-Jamal confessed to him in 1991. Bloch is a former Pennsylvania Prison Society worker who visited Abu-Jamal in prison.

Bloch claims he was moved to make this "confession" public out of concern for Maureen Faulkner. The alleged confession has been featured repeatedly in Philadelphia local TV and news media.

Following the April 24 demonstration this year demanding a new trial, the *Philadelphia Inquirer* ran a series of exposés on the Black United Fund (BUF), which collects and distributes funds for the International Concerned Family and Friends of Mumia Abu-Jamal. The *Inquirer* attacks the BUF's tax exempt status and implied that city workers' donations were being siphoned to the defense case. The BUF was expelled by the city administration from the city employees' annual charity fund drive until they

Justice for Pedro Oregón



Militant/Phil Duzinski

The Justice for Pedro Oregón Coalition organized a 200-strong march and rally in Houston July 11 on the one-year anniversary of the killing of Oregón, shot 12 times by six cops who entered his apartment with no warrant. The killers of the 22-year-old Mexican immigrant were fired, but not one has been convicted of a crime. One cop was charged with trespassing and acquitted. Scores of Houston cops cordoned off the five-block area in a failed effort to stifle the protest.

Other speakers asked the school committee what kind of example were they setting for young people by saying that if it costs too much money you shouldn't fight for what is right.

Shelia Decter, executive director of the American Jewish Congress' New England region, told the committee, "Boston may well be the first city convicted of racial segregation that gets convicted a second time."

Andrea Morell, Socialist Workers Party candidate for city council at-large in Boston, in addressing the committee explained she was a trade unionist. "Affirmative action is in the interest of every working person, because it increases our social solidarity and our ability to unify in order to defend our interests."

She pointed to the results of a recent study done by Harvard University that showed where race was eliminated in considering admissions, school districts were rapidly resegregated. Massachusetts and Rhode Island were named as states where this trend has gone the furthest.

City Council President Kelly addressed

the school committee. Kelly said someone had called him at his office and told him the school committee was discussing busing. He told them, "busing should be eliminated as soon as possible." Kelly said he "couldn't think of many positive things that have come about in the past 25 years. I disagreed with Garrity."

After listening to the speakers, instead of voting immediately on the proposal the committee met behind closed doors in an "executive session." After an hour the body returned and approved the superintendent's proposal.

Eighty-five percent of the students in the Boston school system are members of an oppressed nationality. The *Boston Herald*, a major daily newspaper, reported the day after the school committee decision that Boston mayor Thomas Menino expects white families to move back into the city and send their children to public school.

Ted Leonard is a member of the Union of Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Employees.

Nat'l march for immigrant rights called for October 9

BY CHRIS HOEPPNER

TOLEDO, Ohio — A coalition of unionists, immigrant rights organizations, students, and political groups met July 31 at the headquarters of the Farm Labor Organizing Committee (FLOC) here to plan par-

ticipation in an October 9 march for immigrant rights in Washington, D.C.

The march demands are:

- Amnesty for the undocumented
- Stop deportations and racist immigration raids
- Work permits for all
- Living wages for farmworkers and city workers

Among the participants were representatives from FLOC, One Stop Immigration from California, District 2 of the United Steelworkers of America (USWA), the Chicano Development Center, Michigan State University MEChA, Freedom House, Labor Notes, Socialist Workers Party, Latinos United in Labor, and students from Bowling Green, Ohio. A similar planning meeting took place in Boston at the same time for organizations on the East Coast.

After welcoming remarks by Baldemar Velásquez, president of FLOC, participants formed committees to work on the program, security, national press, and mobilization for the march. So far participants reported that FLOC has reserved a bus from the Toledo area and the USWA is reserving three from the Detroit area. The October 9 action is scheduled to start at Washington's Malcolm X Park at 10:00 a.m.

A rally and press conference to build the march will take place September 11 at the FLOC headquarters in Toledo.

For more information contact Beatriz Maya, FLOC, 1221 Broadway, Toledo, OH 43609 (419) 243-3456; e-mail: bmaya@floc.com

Chris Hoepfner is a member of the United Food and Commercial Workers in Detroit.

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Pro-cop forces in Philadelphia launch new attack on fight to free Mumia Abu-Jamal

BY JOHN STAGGS AND BOB STANTON

PHILADELPHIA — The August issue of *Vanity Fair* magazine features the latest salvo in the campaign to push for the execution of Mumia Abu-Jamal. This is the latest in a stepped up counter-campaign against the Abu-Jamal defense effort since the successful April 24 demonstrations in Philadelphia and San Francisco that drew some 10,000 people in each city.

Abu-Jamal, a well known radio journalist who is Black, was framed for the 1981 shooting death of Philadelphia cop Daniel Faulkner. His case has become a major focus in the fight against the death penalty. Abu-Jamal was convicted and sentenced to death in a trial that was a classic police frame-up with witness coercion, evidence tampering, and a "hanging judge" who made no secret of his aim to see the defendant convicted.

Abu-Jamal's fight for justice has won national and international support. The Fraternal Order of Police and Maureen Faulkner, the cop's widow, have spearheaded

break relations with the Concerned Family and Friends. The BUF held a news conference June 3 with supporters, including state legislators and union heads, and filed an appeal of the city's action.

There have been other attacks on the defense campaign. On May 23 a motorcycle caravan of several thousand bikers rode into Philadelphia "to honor Daniel Faulkner," according to the *Philadelphia Inquirer*. The demonstration included cops from 50 police departments from the region.

An advance for the campaign to free Abu-Jamal was the successful invitation for the framed-up journalist to speak via tape to the Evergreen State College graduation in Olympia, Washington, June 11, despite a national controversy over the invitation.

On July 4, several hundred protesters staged a peaceful protest at the Liberty Bell chanting "Brick by brick, wall by wall, we're going to free Mumia Abu-Jamal." About 200 people demonstrated the day before, in commemoration of the 17th anniversary of his death sentence.

Free all 17 Puerto Rican prisoners

Continued from front page

mand should be raised more loudly today in light of statements by the White House that some of the prisoners may be granted a presidential “pardon” — if they publicly renounce “violence” and submit to other onerous parole conditions such as not meeting with other independence activists.

The 17 have been imprisoned for the “crime” of acting and speaking on behalf of the independence of Puerto Rico. The freedom of these political prisoners deserves the support of working people and all those who champion justice, regardless of their views on Puerto Rico’s independence.

The *independentistas*, smeared by Washington as “terrorists,” are serving prison sentences ranging up to 105 years; most have already served between 14 and 19 years. They are among the longest held political prisoners in the world.

The fact the Clinton administration is now talking about releasing the Puerto Rican political prisoners is a sign of its weakness, not strength. The fight to get the U.S. Navy out of the island of Vieques, which has exploded on the political scene over the past few months, has put Washington and the colonial authorities somewhat on the defensive. That fight is the most recent expression of the renewed struggle for national rights unfolding in Puerto Rico today. This national-

ist upsurge — which is giving the independence movement the biggest hearing in many years — is intertwined with growing working-class resistance, seen most visibly in last year’s general strike of half a million workers. As a result of these political changes, the campaign to free the Puerto Rican political prisoners has picked up strength.

The Clinton administration’s offer of “amnesty” is designed to undercut the momentum both of the defense campaign for the political prisoners and of the fight around Vieques. The jailed independentistas have nothing to ask forgiveness about — much less of Washington, which has kept Puerto Rico under its colonial boot for 101 years.

Taking advantage of the U.S. government’s signs of weakness, now is the time to intensify the struggle for the release of all 17 political prisoners, including the most recent one, José Solís, who only last month was sentenced to 51 months on fabricated charges. With the growing working-class struggles in the United States, conditions have never been more favorable to involve fighting workers and farmers, as well as young people, in the defense campaign. Supporters of the release of the Puerto Rican prisoners are urging a big turnout at an August 29 march in San Juan, Puerto Rico. Protest actions are also needed in the United States to demand: free them all now!

Farmers block roads in Canada

Continued from front page

said, “I have no money and AIDA isn’t working. My off-farm job doesn’t seem to support the farm anymore. I won’t go down without making a lot of noise.” Steeves was referring to the Agriculture Income Disaster Assistance (AIDA), an aid program announced by the federal government last year. But most farmers can’t use it because its based on the income made in the previous years, which has been very low for some time.

Saskatchewan New Democratic Party (NDP) premier Roy Romanow was initially very critical of the highway blockade and was quoted on local radio claiming to be worried about the possibility of violence. The premier changed his tune after 250 farmers burst into an NDP fund-raising picnic August 3, demanding he state his plans for action. Romanow was forced to take the floor and explained that he would insist that the federal government and other provincial premiers prioritize action on agriculture at the upcoming premiers conference in Quebec City August 10.

Farmers demonstrated again in the streets of Regina, the provincial capital, August 6, to drive home their griev-

ances before the premiers meeting. “We’ve got to raise this issue, we’ve got to stay on top of it,” said protest organizer Harvey Linen, announcing the Regina action

Lyold Pletz, a farmer in the Balcarres area who helped organize the August 2 protest, spoke to the *Militant* about the farmers’ aims. “We’re fighting back,” he said. “You have to holler and scream. Both levels of government [federal and provincial] have declared war on us. Our only option is to declare war back on them.” Pletz explained that farmers need immediate cash relief, but in the long-term they need to meet their production costs. “Nine years out of ten we lose money,” he added.

Farmers are demanding Prime Minister Jean Chretien, Finance Minister Paul Martin, and Agriculture Minister Lyle Vancilief come to a large rally in Regina August 16 to address their concerns. If there is no action on the governments’ part by then another province-wide farm protest is scheduled for August 17, targeting the cities. Pletz told the press, “We just want to let people in the city know that if agriculture goes down, basically this province is going down. The cities are going down, too.”

Clinton offers ‘pardon’ — with strings

Continued from front page

earlier that day that he was offering to release 11 prisoners immediately, but only if they agree to a series of onerous conditions. These are Edwin Cortés, Elizam Escobar, Ricardo Jiménez, Adolfo Matos, Dylcia Pagán, Alicia Rodríguez, Ida Luz Rodríguez, Alberto Rodríguez, Luis Rosa, Alejandrina Torres, and Carmen Valentín.

Each of these prisoners would be required to sign statements personally requesting “clemency from the President” and renouncing “the use, threatened use, or advocacy of the use of violence for any purpose, including the achieving of any goal concerning the status of Puerto Rico.”

In addition they would have to submit to terms of parole and other conditions, including not meeting or communicating with each other or with other Puerto Rican independence activists, not traveling without U.S. government permission, reporting to U.S. parole authorities, not possessing firearms or “destructive devices,” and submitting to drug tests on demand.

“Each patriot will have to make their decision about signing the conditions,” José López, director of the Cultural Center, told the meeting. If any of them are freed, he said, “we will welcome them as heroes.”

López called on those present to join in “a huge march and rally” set for San Juan, Puerto Rico, on August 29 to demand freedom for all Puerto Rican political prisoners. A number of activists in Chicago are already making plans to be there.

Six of the 17 prisoners are not included immediately in Clinton’s commutation offer. Juan Segarra and Oscar López would have to serve additional time before being considered for a pardon. Carlos Alberto Torres, Antonio Camacho, José Solís, and Haydée Beltrán are not included at all in the amnesty offer. Torres is serving a 70-year sentence. Camacho was released last year but rearrested after he refused to submit to the outrageous terms of his parole. Solís was sentenced in July on frame-up charges to 51 months in prison. Beltrán has been pursuing a separate effort to win parole.

In Puerto Rico, several independence fighters and relatives of the prisoners condemned the degrading terms demanded by Clinton. Luis Nieves Falcón, head of the Puerto Rico Committee on Human Rights, which has been spearheading the campaign on the island for the release of the prisoners, stated, “We cannot support these conditions” insofar as they require that the prisoners publicly call themselves criminals and renounce their views.

The terms are “subhuman,” declared Ramón Segarra, son of prisoner Juan Segarra Palmer. Even in prison they can

express their views, he said.

In a phone interview from his home in Cabo Rojo, Puerto Rico, pro-independence leader Rafael Cancel Miranda said, “We will greet any freed prisoner with open arms, but we demand all 17 prisoners be released immediately with no conditions. They are all patriots and none is a criminal. Justice cannot be done halfway.”

“The fact that the United States government made this announcement shows they were forced to respond to pressure from the people. It shows they are not invulnerable,” Cancel Miranda said. He noted that when he and four other Nationalists, who spent a quarter century in U.S. prisons, were released in 1978 and 1979 after an international defense campaign, “we never accepted any of their conditions. The U.S. imperialist government is the criminal, not us.”

Cancel Miranda added, “We must step up the campaign to free all the prisoners.” He urged defenders of the political prisoners to join the August 29 rally in San Juan.

Harvey McArthur is a member of the United Food and Commercial Workers. Martin Koppel contributed to this article.

Conference

Continued from Page 3

study group with other students when ultrarightist Patrick Buchanan announced his campaign for U.S. president. “We organized classes on the pamphlet *Fascism: What It Is and How to Fight It*, by Leon Trotsky. We also did a class on *State and Revolution* by V.I. Lenin to discuss the role of the police and the state,” he said.

Maya Anderson, 20, from Santa Cruz, California, pointed to her participation in one of the caravans of socialist workers, members of the Young Socialists, and other youth that traveled across the country as excellent preparation for the conference. “Even though I had done sales before, I had never sold at plant gates,” she said.

Alfonso García, a high school student in Atlanta and member of the YS there, noted the importance of both reading and participating in the class struggle. “It really makes you think because it’s about discussing and understanding and doing things, not just reading, he asserted. “It gives you the confidence that we can make a revolution.”

Olympia Newton contributed to this article.

Ventura gains prominence in Reform Party

BY DOUG JENNESS

ST. PAUL, Minnesota — Supporters of Minnesota governor Jesse Ventura succeeded in electing their nominee to head the Reform Party at its recent national convention in Dearborn, Michigan. In a setback to Ross Perot, the party’s founder and standard-bearer for president of the United States in 1992 and 1996, the 400 delegates elected John Gargan by a 61 percent vote over Perot’s choice, Patricia Benjamin, party vice-chairperson.

The convention registered the increased prominence of Ventura as a national political figure who feeds on middle-class insecurities and suggests he will bring stability with an iron hand. The Reform Party was originally put together around Perot, who during the 1992 election campaign offered similar demagogic rhetoric and won an unprecedented 19 percent of the vote. It is not easy for two such authoritarian figures to coexist in a party of that sort.

Gargan, a retired financial consultant and businessman from Florida, told the convention he believes the current economic upturn “is a temporary bubble.” When the bubble breaks, he predicts economic depression accompanied by anarchy. “I can foresee people storming the Capitol and hanging their congressmen from the nearest lampposts,” he said. The new Reform Party chairman explains that he lives in Florida’s Cedar Key because it could be more easily be barricaded from the mainland during the anticipated social upheaval.

The three-day gathering didn’t choose a presidential candidate for 2000. Ventura has publicly announced that he isn’t available to head the party’s national ticket until he completes his four-year term as governor.

Lobbying efforts began at the gathering for a number of nationally known figures who were promoted as potential presidential candidates. Among them were former general Colin Powell, consumer advocate Ralph Nader, real estate and financial tycoon Donald Trump, and fascist-minded Patrick Buchanan.

Buchanan, who is running for president in the Republican primaries, has hinted that he might be open to running on the Reform Party ticket. This seems aimed primarily at courting the most ultraright forces in and around the Reform Party rather than a serious bid for the party’s nomination. Ventura recently stated, “I’m not sure that Pat would make a good fit for the Reform Party.” He said Buchanan focuses more on social questions — that is, his loudly proclaimed “culture war” — than on issues such as taxation and finance reform, which have been more at the center of Perot’s and his own campaigns.

Bonapartist demagogues

Like Perot and Ventura, the names that are being promoted to be the Reform Party’s presidential contender — while politically very different — represent the possibilities that exist for “straight-talking,” demagogic figures who are not “establishment” politicians and who can win support from middle-class layers and even some workers who are disappointed, frustrated, and resentful about the effects of the growing crisis of the capitalist system.

Ventura and Perot are both what has been known historically as Bonapartist politicians. At a time of growing social crisis, these figures offer themselves as strong and authoritative individuals who can “cut through the gridlock” of traditional parties and government institutions and “get something done,” even if it’s at the expense of some democratic rights. They portray themselves as rough-talking tough guys ready to use violent means if necessary to protect “the people.” Their main selling point is themselves, not a particular party, program, or policies.

Ventura’s campaign and first seven months as governor have been a classic example of this kind of strongman approach. Ventura stresses his military credentials, repeatedly referring to his experience as a SEAL, the Navy’s elite unit. Early on, the Minnesota governor established his right to pack weapons in state office buildings and made a show of beefing up the security around his home.

He also promotes scapegoating and conspiracy theories. His talks and interviews, as well as his recently re-established weekly radio talk show, are often filled with dark accusations against the press as a suspect institution.

Ventura seized on the recent session of the Minnesota state legislature, which has no representative from the Reform Party, to portray himself as standing up for “all Minnesotans” against bipartisan politicking.

The governor declared he would not lengthen the legislative deliberations by convening the customary special session to finish up business. Under this pressure, the Democratic-Farmer Labor and Republican parties compromised on the most disputed budgetary measures and finished the session on schedule.

Then, when the budget reached Ventura’s desk for signing, he promptly used the line-item veto 40 times to slash more than \$160 million from the budget. For each section of a bill he objected to, Ventura crossed it out, initialed it, and inked it with a rubber pig stamp, which he said symbolized “cutting out the pork.”

Housing for homeless women and children, reading programs, and other social assistance measures were among the items cut. All in all, he has vetoed all or parts of more bills than any Minnesota governor in the past 60 years.

Appliance workers in New Zealand strike, demand raise

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

ing last year's losses.

On July 7 they voted to reject a recommendation from union officials to negotiate the wages below this level. The company upped its

through the union hiring hall so bosses at these buildings can hire who they want. Workers argue this will not only lead to discrimination, but allow the bosses to hire the workers without regards to seniority. The workers already face a three-tier set-up, a concession won by BOMA in previous contracts.

One worker with 15 years in the union said the hiring hall is important so "the company can't do whatever they want and send us wherever they want."

Mohammed Ismael is a worker from Yemen who has been a member of SEIU for 11 years. He said, "We deserve what we're asking for." He explained the joint march and rally with HERE Local 2 was important for strengthening both fights.

The main issues in the janitors' contract talks are protecting job seniority, benefits, and a pay hike.

The janitors' march joined up with the hotel workers at Union Square. More than 1,000 workers continued the march through downtown San Francisco to the Marriott Hotel. Hundreds of workers, including from other hotels, regularly participate in picket lines and rallies in front of this hotel.

Workers at the Marriott have been fighting for a contract since they voted for HERE Local 2 to represent them three years ago. The majority of workers here are Latino, Chinese, and Filipino.

HERE's contract with 22 hotels expires August 14, and other hotel and motel contracts expire throughout the summer and fall.

Ten Steelworkers on lockout by Kaiser Aluminum joined the march and rally, as did members of the Carpenters' Union, the American Federation of Teachers, and the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees.

News workers mark four years of fight in Detroit

DETROIT — Chanting "Justice delayed is justice denied," more than 400 locked-out newspaper workers and their supporters gathered outside the joint editorial offices of this city's two daily newspapers, the *Detroit News* and the *Free Press*, July 15. The protest, billed as an "Hawaiian Beach Luau" and "Corporate Pig Roast," was part of a week of actions



Hotel workers and janitors rally in San Francisco July 22

Militant

held to mark the opening of the fifth year in their fight against the union busting carried out by the newspaper bosses.

Some 2,500 workers, members of six union locals, went on strike at the two papers July 13, 1995, after the bosses unilaterally imposed new wages and work rules. But the striking workers never stopped the newspapers from printing, and in the face of cop assaults on the picket lines and court injunctions the union leaderships ended the mass picketing.

After a National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) trial on charges by the unions of unfair labor practices by the companies, the six locals offered to return to work in February 1997. The companies refused to return most strikers and the struggle became a fight against a lockout. The NLRB ruled in favor of the unions but the companies continue to appeal in the federal courts.

Some strikers have taken other jobs, while many others have returned to work with the newspapers over the last two years and taken up the difficult task of rebuilding their unions inside. But nearly 900 members of the six unions still have not been reinstated. The newspaper bosses claim only 400 remain to be recalled, refusing to count the hundreds who were fired for "picket line misconduct" and other workers who refused to return to jobs different than their pre-strike positions.

Newspaper workers are fighting to get all strikers their jobs back and are demanding union contracts. They have kept up the pressure on the companies for four years. They continue to organize a readers' boycott, publish the *Detroit Sunday Journal*, organize protests at public events associated with the newspapers, and join other fighting workers' picket lines.

The unionists organized two other actions to mark the anniversary. On July 11 they decorated 50 cars and trucks and caravaned around the region, stopping to hold noisy picket lines at the homes of some of the

best-known bosses and scab columnists. Two days later, more than 100 people picketed at the north printing plant during rush hour.

After the pig roast, more than 25 newspaper unionists joined United Steelworkers of America (USWA) members in picketing a Ford auto dealership as part of the USWA corporate campaign against Continental General Tire. Ford puts tires on some new vehicle produced by scabs at General's Charlotte, North Carolina, plant where 1,400 USWA members are on strike.

This fight continues to put pressure on the newspaper bosses. Independent auditors have pegged the two dailies' readership at 33 percent below pre-strike levels. The unions estimate that advertising revenue is 40 percent below 1995 levels and that strike-related costs and lost profits are more than \$400 million.

The companies have signed partial agreements with three locals that allow early retirements and company buy-outs of workers with long-term job guarantees.

Barb Ingalls, a printer who has been active in the fight against the newspaper giants, recently returned to work part-time there. She attended the rally before going into the "evil empire," as she called it.

On her first day inside, the boss promised three, eight-hour shifts a week with benefits. On her second day, she and others who returned at the same time were told that a mistake was made, they would only be working two shifts a week without benefits. She declared that it was actions like this that fueled the determination of newspaper workers to make sure "this is not over until every striker has returned to work and all six unions have signed contracts."

Terry Coggan, a member of the Engineers Union at Fisher & Paykel in Auckland; Deborah Liatos, a member of United Food and Commercial Workers Local 101 in San Francisco; and John Sarge, a member of United Auto Workers Local 900 in Detroit contributed to this article.

ON THE PICKET LINE

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

AUCKLAND, New Zealand — "This is an awesome turnout. People are starting to wake up," declared Lindsay Flavell as 500 workers picketed the appliance manufacturer at its Fisher & Paykel Auckland plant August 2. The picket was part of a 24-hour nationwide strike by 1,500 union members to press demands for a wage rise in their contract, which expired July 31.

Fisher & Paykel has long been touted as a flagship of New Zealand capitalism by the big-business media. The company boasts of its "good industrial relations," promoted by the slogan "Share the dream." Signs at the August 2 action included, "Share the dream — not!" and "Share the cream."

Other signs celebrated "union power" and declared their carriers were "proud to be union." The picket was held on a busy highway, and attracted considerable support from passing workers. Both national television news networks carried reports of the action on their evening bulletins.

The August 3 *New Zealand Herald* noted that the picket "was one of the largest industrial protests seen in New Zealand since the advent of the Employment Contracts Act," antiunion legislation adopted in 1991. In a speech on the day of the strike, Prime Minister Jennifer Shipley tried to play down its significance, calling it a "rarity."

The strike action came against a background of cutbacks implemented by the bosses over several years, as they look to maintain profit margins in the face of competition from imported appliances.

Last year, workers voted narrowly to accept a concession contract that included cuts in overtime pay, incremental service pay, and other allowances. Many workers see this year's claim for a 5.5 percent wage raise as a way of retak-

first offer of 1.5 percent to 2.8 percent, but an 87 percent majority of the workers rejected this in favor of industrial action. A further offer from the company of 3.25 percent for each of two years was turned down by the union negotiators, citing the fact that workers in Fisher and Paykel's Australia plants recently got a 3.5 percent increase. "One company — one wage," read a placard on the picket line.

Following the strike, the company again offered an increase of 3.25 percent, but for a one-year contract only. Union officials recommended workers accept this offer. Opinions expressed by workers at Fisher & Paykel's Auckland plants at union meetings August 5 and on the job were evenly divided. The result of the vote announced August 11, was 57 percent in favor of accepting the contract.

For the majority of workers, the August 2 action was the first time they had been on strike. Janet Mai, a production worker in the washing machine plant, echoed the sentiments of many when she commented, "It's good to feel like a union again."

Bay Area hotel workers, janitors hold joint rally

SAN FRANCISCO — Hotel workers organized in the Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees Union (HERE) Local 2 and janitors who are members of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) Local 87 joined forces July 22 in a rally together in their fight for fair contracts.

About 500 SEIU members and their supporters marched from Justin Herman Plaza through downtown, past a number of the buildings in which they work. They held signs in Arabic, Chinese, English, and Spanish, reading "Justice for Janitors." Many of the signs pointed to the main demand in their contract talks—"Hands off the hiring hall." The contract between SEIU Local 87, which represents janitors who clean more than 90 percent of the city's commercial office buildings, and the Building Owners and Managers Association (BOMA) expires July 31. BOMA is pushing to change the present control the union has of dispatching workers

of the role the spouses can play in strengthening the struggle (or weakening it if just left to the bosses' pressure) is something we will have to think about as we also fight to get more women hired.

But I did not think the picture that went with the article was useful. "Up yours, Hurwitz!" is an expression not worthy of the coverage. I believe another choice of picture would have helped illustrate the coverage better — or no picture at all if that was the choice.

Jacquie Henderson
Houston, Texas

Why 'national socialist'?

In Chris Remple's article on the support given by the union leaders

at Weirton Steel for Buchanan's campaign, the following sentence appeared: "The globalists in Washington who believe that all Americans are riding a wave of Wall Street prosperity don't like to talk about the Weirtons of America," said Buchanan, in comments typical of his increasingly anticapitalist and national socialist rhetoric."

I think it would be more accurate to refer to Buchanan's rhetoric as nationalist and populist, and avoid use of the term "national socialist," when referring to Buchanan's present rhetoric or demagoguery.

The expression "national socialist" recalls the name of the movement adopted by the Hitlerites in Germany in the 1920s. "National

socialism" was just the right label for Hitler and his cronies at the time.

But Buchanan has not adopted this label, nor is he likely to do so in the foreseeable future. There are other fascist forces in the U.S. who call themselves "national socialist," the various self-proclaimed Nazis and skinhead types. They are less politically farsighted than Buchanan, and don't mind being identified fully with Hitlerism.

Buchanan has a different strategy. He uses populist rhetoric but avoids specifically "socialist" rhetoric. He avoids openly identifying himself with Hitler. He's careful about what he says so that he can pose as a conservative Republican.

Meanwhile, he uses his cam-

paign as a tool to try to bring together some fascist-minded forces.

I don't think it would be wrong to say that Buchanan seeks to build a "national socialist" kind of movement. That is indeed what he's trying to do. But it would be misleading to say that he is using "national socialist" rhetoric now.

Jim Miller
Seattle, Washington

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.

LETTERS

On 'Spouses of Steel'

I found the article and box on the Kaiser workers in Washington State very interesting. Gave me a glimpse of the beginnings of organization on another level after all these months of the strike and lockout. The formation of the "Spouses of Steel" is quite a step forward! I remember talking to strikers at the Tacoma, Washington plant last fall who said they had no women in the plant anymore — and yet the most popular button at their rally that day was "Women of Steel."

Someone had brought some down from Spokane and everyone was proudly wearing them. I work in a mill that only has five women (out of about 150). So the question

'We all stood together to win,' say striking paperworkers in Australia

BY RON POULSEN

SYDNEY, Australia — At a mass meeting July 20, some 400 paperworkers, most of them members of the printing division of the Australian Manufacturing Workers' Union, voted to return to work after winning an important victory through a two-week strike.

The dispute over attacks on union rights and working conditions began July 7 at two Visy Industries cardboard plants in western Sydney. The strike began to win wider union support after media reports of cops physically battling picketers. The pickets were trying to stop strikebreaking trucks and buses of scabs under police escort from entering the struck sites. A picket line meeting of strikers from both sites July 19 voted unanimously to defy an Industrial Relations Commission return-to-work order until the company lifted the suspension of eight workers and dismissal notices against three others. More than half of the workers targeted over alleged "misconduct" on the picket lines were union delegates.

The termination notices, complete with final payments, were sent out less than a week after Visy Board New South Wales manager Andrew Gleason claimed in the press that "nobody has been sacked" and everybody was welcome back to work.

In the face of the workers' determination and unity, the company was forced to back down, lifting all final warnings and dropping the eight original suspensions. The three sacked workers were also reinstated, albeit at different plants, after two weeks' paid leave, with the right to return to their original positions after six months.

Brian Henderson, secretary of the printing division of the AMWU, told the meeting that while "the dispute" was resolved, it was back to negotiations over the enterprise agreement or contract.

The strike erupted when enterprise agreement negotiations broke down. Workers replied to company intransigence by first imposing work restrictions. The workers then voted to strike when the company stood down (suspended) two forklift drivers for refusing to handle flat board boxes and two other employees for wanting union representation over the issue.

They set up round-the-clock picket lines



Striking paperworkers defend picket line against cops and out-going trucks July 12

at the main entrances to the plants at Smithfield and Warwick Farm, complete with picket shacks.

'The unity is fantastic'

"This is the biggest strike in the history of Visy Board," Mick Milutinovic, who has worked at Visy altogether for over 10 years, told this reporter in a picket line interview. "There have been disputes before, but nothing like this. The unity is fantastic." Strikers often mentioned that this was the first time workers from the two sites, 20 minutes drive apart, had walked out together.

The striking workers also included forklift drivers covered by the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union and some electricians in the Electrical Trades Union. Ho Chew, a 13-year veteran who works in the mill, said he thought "the company is trying to break the backbone of the union."

One issue in the enterprise agreement negotiations was the introduction of a third shift with the subsequent loss of overtime payments. "We don't object to another shift," Milutinovic said, "but we should be compensated" for the reduction in pay. The unions are calling for a pay raise of up to 16

percent over two years to make up for lost income.

Milutinovic was one of the 48 workers listed on a Supreme Court order, secured by the company a week after the strike began, to refrain "from hindering or preventing access" to the plants or "assaulting or threatening to assault" anyone.

"This is worse than where I came from" in Yugoslavia, declared Milutinovic. "I went to anti-NATO demonstrations here without harassment [earlier this year], but here on the picket line, I get a court injunction against me."

Strikers face guards, cops, courts

Visy Industries' billionaire owner, Richard Pratt, dubbed "Australia's cardboard king" by the big-business press, threw considerable resources against the strike, even using helicopters to bring in the strikebreakers. Private security guards, the New South Wales police, and both the Industrial Relations Commission and Supreme Court were all enlisted to back Visy's strikebreaking attempts.

More than one picket, however, asserted the picket lines were effective. While normally 140 to 150 trucks a day went in and

out fully laden, they said, this was reduced during the dispute to 10 or so full truckloads, with other truck movements largely for "psychological effect." At the Warwick Farm picket line, the unionists were joined by a number of owner-drivers under contract to Visy, who had walked out in support of the strikers. As a result, the company tried to impound their trucks. The picket lines also turned away numerous delivery trucks after negotiations with the drivers.

Several strikers explained how many workers had been intimidated by the company for years into working shifts of up to 14 hours with only one 15-minute meal break. They were "basically forced to eat while working on the machine," said Milutinovic. "They didn't realize they were entitled to paid meal breaks" until the new union organizer told them.

Wayne Peacock backed this up, explaining that "workers here don't matter to them any more than the way they treat the Third World countries." The fight at Visy "is bigger than the people here on strike," he said, it's for "the whole union movement."

Bob Vucicevic, senior delegate and one of the three workers who received termination notices, said that because of speedups and understaffing, there had been as many serious accidents in the past six months as in the previous 10 years. Greg Murray added that the machines were "understaffed by design" and that "health and safety is a fundamental issue" in the EBA negotiations. He and other workers spoke of the most recent serious accident where more than 600 pounds of hot paper was dropped onto a worker on the floor below, badly injuring him. Injuries involving limbs caught in presses are common, they said.

The strike received support from other unionists and students. When a forklift driver, who is the afternoon shift union delegate at the Hoover plant in Sydney, refused to unload a truck with scab cardboard packaging from Visy, the company threatened to sack him. When faced with support for his action by other workers on the shift however, the company backed down and ordered packaging from a rival supplier to Visy.

On July 13 two busloads of students and supporters chanting "workers and students will never be defeated" swelled the morning picket line to more than 200 people to forestall the cops' picket-line breaching. When the student buses left, however, the cops blocked pickets' cars and sent the scab convoy in through another gate.

This reporter was on the picket line of the Mountain Maid cannery workers at Batlow, July 9, when someone read from a newspaper quoting Visy NSW manager Gleason, who had denounced picketing as "un-Australian." Immediately, an older, Australian-born worker responded, "We should fax them a letter of support from fellow foreigners down here!" to a round of applause. The next week, a copy of the message of support from the Batlow strikers was on a picket shack notice board at the Visy Smithfield plant. "From fellow un-Australian picketers," it read, followed by a dozen signatures.

"We've won it!" was the enthusiastic response of Ricky Caruana, a worker for 10 years at Visy Board, after the final vote to return to work. Inspired by the unity shown by workers of many different national backgrounds — from eastern and southern Europe, the Middle East, Latin America, and many parts of Asia and the Pacific — he explained, "We all stood together for this." Earlier a line of pickets had jubilantly emulated a Maori worker who did a *haka*, a traditional war dance.

The result of the strike was best expressed by one picket's comment, echoed by others, "Before, the bosses used to terrorize most workers, now they are afraid of us."

Skychefs strikers in Britain mobilize to defend union and win back jobs

BY JONATHAN SILBERMAN

LONDON — "We're going to keep the pressure on now 'till we win, we are not going to stop campaigning," reported Skychefs union leader Adesh Farmahan, after strikers here relaunched their efforts to win back their jobs and union rights. Some 270 airline catering workers were fired by Lufthansa LSG Skychefs after a one-day strike on Nov. 20, 1998.

Javed Upaday, another strike leader, reported talks that had taken place with Lufthansa during June and July had collapsed. "They offered just six jobs to strikers," he said. "They were going through the motions and had no intention of settling." Lufthansa, Upaday said, was "under pressure to appear to do something" as a result of the strikers' mobilization, including a 300-strong rally May 3 outside the plant gates in support of their fight.

The Skychefs workers also defeated an attempt by the cops to prosecute Parmjit Bajwa on two charges of threatening behavior and common assault arising out of a picket line incident with a scab. About 30 strikers and a couple of supporters packed out the courthouse when Bajwa's case came up May 13. Bajwa was found not guilty.

After the talks collapsed, more than 200 strikers met July 18 to relaunch their efforts. "The first thing we decided was to strengthen the picket," said Farmahan. The strikers have sustained a 24-hour picket, seven days a week, outside the catering plant at Heathrow airport since the start of their fight, but numbers attending had declined. There are now 130 people on the picket roster, 80 women and 50 men. They are joined by other strikers who have gotten jobs. Nearly half of the strikers are working in other jobs, mainly at the airport. The workers decided to channel the bulk of their strike pay to full-time strikers, while seeking to organize others into regular picket duty. When *Militant* reporters visited the picket line following the meeting, it was clear morale was up.

Sixty strikers launched a boycott campaign against Lufthansa in a press conference July 21 outside the offices of the Trades Union Congress. TUC leader John Monks and Transport and General Workers Union general secretary Bill Morris took part in the event. Since then, Farmahan said, "Every day up to 20 strikers have been picketing Lufthansa's offices in central London as well as at Heathrow."

Lufthansa reacted by claiming they did not own the London-based firm. "Four months ago, they even repainted the catering delivery trucks removing Lufthansa from them so they just read LSG Skychefs," Farmahan said. Within days of the launch of the boycott campaign, Lufthansa agreed again to talks, which he said "just shows they are lying" about their connection to the London operation. This time, though, there will be no easing up of the strikers' campaign, he says.

The unionists' efforts were also boosted by a meeting of more than 100 union representatives from different airlines at Heathrow July 21. Workers at Aer Lingus are facing attempts to impose new conditions on them arising out of Aer Lingus selling its London-based operation to Swissair. Since the meeting strikers on the Skychefs picket line report that union delegations from British Airways and Aer Lingus have been down to express their support. A delegation of TGWU members from GlaxoWellcome in Dartford also visited the picket line to bring money raised in a factory collection held to mark the eight-month anniversary of the strike.

Jonathan Silberman is member of the TGWU in London.

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