

THE MILITANT

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Overnite truckers win support
in strike for union recognition
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'Not one more bomb!' say Vieques protesters

Puerto Rico anticolonial fighters tell U.S. Navy: leave now

BY HARVEY McARTHUR

CHICAGO—Puerto Rican opponents of the U.S. military presence on the island of Vieques reacted swiftly to the Clinton administration's decision that the U.S. Navy will not carry out military exercises there at the

Independence for Puerto Rico!

—See editorial, page 14

moment, but will do so by late March 2000. U.S. president William Clinton announced December 3 that the naval battle group headed by the aircraft carrier *USS Eisenhower* would carry out live bombing, amphibious assault practice, and other training in Florida, North Carolina, and Scotland, not at Vieques as previously announced by the Pentagon.

This was "a small battle victory in a struggle that continues," declared Ismael Guadalupe in a phone interview with the *Militant*. Guadalupe, a retired schoolteacher, is a leader of the Committee for the Rescue and Development of Vieques, which has helped spearhead the civil disobedience camps that have occupied the U.S. Navy firing range on Vieques since last April.

"We rejected Clinton's announcement. We remain united in saying: 'not one more shot.' The Navy must leave now and give us back our land," Guadalupe said. Referring to the



Protest outside U.S. Navy's Camp García on Puerto Rican island of Vieques, where opponents of U.S. military presence set up a new resistance camp following Clinton's announcement that the *USS Eisenhower* would not train on Vieques but that exercises would resume in March 2000.

proposal to use "inert" ordnance, he added, "There's no difference—they're still bombs and we say no."

The U.S. Navy took over two-thirds of Vieques in the early 1940s, using it as its major target range for the Atlantic Fleet. For de-

cedes, residents of Vieques and others in Puerto Rico have demanded the Navy leave and return the land to the Puerto Rican people.

This fight became a central question in Puerto Rican politics and a bigger factor in

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WTO talks fail, Clinton postures as friend of labor

BY PATRICK O'NEILL

SEATTLE — "Summit ends in failure." "Shipwreck in Seattle." The *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* and *New York Times* delivered blunt verdicts in their headlines in reporting the December 1-3 ministerial conference of the World Trade Organization (WTO). The "negotiations to rewrite the rules of world trade for a new millennium collapsed in bitterness and discord this week," wrote *Times* reporter David Sanger.

U.S. president William Clinton, however, salvaged something from the failure. He used his appearance at the event to increase support for the U.S. government and especially the Democratic Party among the tens of thousands who protested outside the meeting.

The talks foundered on divisions among participating governments, particularly those of the most powerful imperialist countries of North America, Europe, and Japan. Washington and its rivals find it more and more difficult to conduct such talks without exposing increasingly deep disagreements. Behind their quarrels lies the continuing crisis of capitalism worldwide. Capitalist families and the national governments that represent their interests are fighting over their share of the exploitation of the semicolonial world, and for access to each other's markets.

After three days of talks, the 5,000 trade ministers and officials from 135 member governments and 30 observer countries who attended the conference were unable to produce any joint statement. "We could have stayed

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Moscow prepares siege of Chechen capital

BY MAURICE WILLIAMS

After more than two months of Russian jets and helicopters relentlessly pounding Chechnya, Moscow is preparing to demolish the capital city, Grozny, and consolidate its occupation of the breakaway republic. Russian president Boris Yeltsin issued a statement December 3 that decreed the "formation of combined [Russian] armed forces on a permanent basis" in Chechnya.

Three days after Yeltsin's remarks, Russian military forces dropped thousands of leaflets over Grozny warning residents to get out of town by December 11. "Everyone who fails to leave the city will be destroyed," the leaflet stated.

The next day the Russian government retreated slightly from the ultimatum. "We have not set any time period," said Russian interior minister Vladimir Rushailo. But, he added, "People who are capable of leaving the war zone should do it as soon as possible."

Washington is exploiting the Russian government's assault on the 1.5 million Chechens to further its campaign against the workers state in Russia. Moscow "will pay a heavy price for those actions, with each passing day, sinking more deeply into a morass that will intensify extremism and diminish its own standing in the world," said Clinton in a White House speech December 6.

Accusing the Kremlin of committing "war crimes," the editors of the *Washington Post*

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Canadian gov't opens new attack on rights of Quebecois

BY JOHN STEELE

TORONTO—The federal Liberal government headed by Prime Minister Jean Chretien intends to introduce legislation in Parliament December 10 imposing its preconditions for negotiations if the "Yes" side wins the next Quebec referendum on sovereignty. The bourgeois nationalist Parti Quebecois government in Quebec City is committed to holding another Quebec sovereignty referendum before the end of its mandate in 2003.

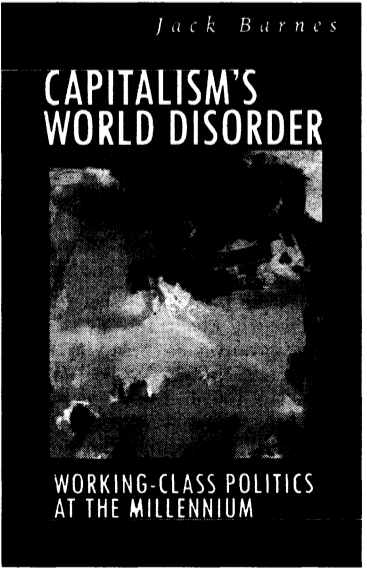
In October 1995, the "Yes" vote for Quebec sovereignty almost won, getting 49.4 percent of the ballot. More than 60 percent of the Quebecois, who are an oppressed French-speaking nationality in Canada, voted "Yes" in the referendum. There are about 6 million Quebecois in Quebec, out of a population of 7 million.

Following a November 23 cabinet meeting Chretien launched a frenzied patriotic flag-waving campaign against Quebec. He de-

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California farmers discuss struggle to hold onto their land

BY ELLEN HAYWOOD AND JIMALTENBERG

BERKELEY, California—About 120 working farmers were among the 500 participants at the "California Farm Conference: Cultivating the Farm-City Connection" held here November 7-9. Conference organizers said they wanted "to address issues vital to the long-term success of California's small-scale and family farms." Others in attendance included academics, farmers market directors, and a number of young people interested in or involved with farming.

Most of the farmers at the conference raise organic or specialty products for farmers markets and customers who pay in advance for weekly baskets of food, known here as Community Supported Agriculture. About a dozen Hmong vegetable farmers from the area around Fresno, California, attended. There were also a few farmers from other states, the Philippines, and Japan who had read about the conference on the Internet.

Thomas and Denesse Willey farm organic produce on 75 acres in Madera, California. They described the difficulties farmers like themselves now face in staying in business. "It used to be that organic farming was a separate subset in farming," Thomas told the *Militant*. "But as organic vegetables have become more popular, they are getting incorporated into the whole corporate food system that requires larger producers, and now the prices we get are falling."

"Unless you have enough to supply all the supermarkets," Denesse added, "the wholesalers no longer want to do business with you."

Ka Neng Vang and Bentley Vang, Hmong farmers from Fresno, grow strawberries and a variety of Asian vegetables. Bentley said they face many problems as small farmers. "Lack of equipment," he said immediately. "We all have to line up for one tractor."

"Crops do not wait and then if the equipment breaks down in one farmer's field the others are in trouble," added Ka Neng. They

also said it was hard to get loans because the banks and farm lending agencies require tremendous amounts of paperwork and records to prove their farm history and "creditworthiness."

Searching for solutions to farm crisis

A farmer from Tennessee said in a workshop discussion, "I am \$300,000 in debt so I can't even get out. I got on the Internet searching for solutions and saw this conference and that's why I'm here." Three years ago he farmed 3,000 acres of cotton. Last year he had to sell nearly half his land to avoid foreclosure. This year he had to sell more to keep afloat.

Howard Jeter, a long time farm activist from Vacaville, California, was a plaintiff in the suit brought by Black farmers against discrimination by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). He said he opposed the recent settlement of the suit "as totally insufficient." A similar lawsuit was filed November 23 by Native American farmers against the USDA over the same kinds of discrimination in granting government loans.

Most of the workshops covered technical questions dealing with crops, equipment, marketing, and loans. A series of workshops on Agriculture and Food Policy discussed the problems resulting from the concentration and control of the food industry from seed to supermarket by a few corporations. Many farmers commented that the biggest problem they face is the falling price of farm products. Net farm income nationally has fallen 38 percent since 1997.

David Hoyle and Alisha Taylor, two young people who traveled to the conference from their cooperative farm in Oregon, argued that the only answer is to "remove small farmers and food production from the commodity-based, profit-driven economy."

Genetically engineered food

One panel took up the question of genetically engineered foods, in which a plant's genetic make-up is changed to make it toxic

Workers occupy brewery in Ontario



Thirty Molson Brewery workers occupied the plant in Barrie, Ontario, November 21 to protest the company's plans to close the brewery, wiping out 350 unionized jobs. The members of Canadian Auto Workers Local 500 are protesting the company's refusal to move the jobs to its Etobicoke plant near Toronto and are demanding an adequate severance package. The union has launched a nationwide boycott of Molson beer. The occupation has stopped production at Barrie, and workers have blocked all entrances with pickets and company trucks.

to pests or resistant to a particular brand of chemical herbicide or pesticide.

Such technological advances could provide great benefits for farmers and consumers. However, biotechnology is in the hands of giant corporations driving for profit. One of the best known examples is the "Roundup Ready" seeds genetically engineered by Monsanto to be used only with the company's "Roundup" herbicide. Corporations such as Monsanto, DuPont, and Novartis want to patent and control the seeds, herbicides, and pesticides that farmers in this country and around the world use.

One of the panelists, Britt Bailey, co-author of *Against the Grain, Biotechnology and the Corporate Takeover of Your Food*, said that in the corporations' rush to dominate the market and increase profits, little attention has been paid to the long-term impact of genetically engineered agricultural products on health and the environment. The USDA relies on these companies to supply their own studies documenting the safety of these seeds when approving them for use.

In the discussion, a farmer pointed out that contracts signed by farmers who buy genetically engineered seed bar them from saving seed from their fields for the following year's crop. Thus farmers are required to purchase new seed every year. Bailey stated that more than 400 farmers in the United States are facing possible prosecution for allegedly violating the agreement not to save seeds.

Bailey and another panelist hailed the opponents of genetic engineering in Europe as being "more advanced" than their counterparts in the United States. In fact, agribusiness and capitalist governments in Europe have utilized the public concern over food safety to whip up nationalist sentiments against imports and in support of protection-

ist trade barriers.

Although they presented no evidence to back their arguments, workshop speakers pointed to the World Trade Organization (WTO) as the chief obstacle confronting farmers and others concerned with potential environmental disasters. They urged opponents of genetically modified food to join protests in Seattle at the WTO meeting in December.

In the last few weeks, debate over the use of genetically altered agricultural products has spread to the United States. A front-page article in the November 12 *New York Times* explained that agribusiness giants are forming alliances and spending tens of millions of dollars to fight bad publicity on biotech foods in the United States and Europe. The article reports that there is "pressure from farmers seeking more information" as these crops become more controversial. In late November, more than 30 farm organizations including the National Family Farm Coalition and the American Corn Growers Association publicly warned their members of problems with the marketability of genetically altered foods.

Seventy million acres of farmland in the United States were planted with genetically engineered seed in 1999. Farmers, battered by the already low prices they get for their commodities, now face the worry that their crops will produce even less income.

A number of conference presenters and participants urged support to the workers who are fighting to organize a union at the Radisson Hotel, where the conference took place. A table with literature on their fight was set up and a number of conference participants sported buttons supporting the unionization drive. Remarks made from the floor urging support for the Teamsters strike at Basic Vegetable in King City were also warmly received.

THE MILITANT

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Canadian gov't tries to dictate terms of new referendum on Quebec sovereignty

Continued from front page

clared that the federal government would never negotiate the secession of Quebec unless the next referendum question was "clear" and unless the Yes side won more than a simple majority. Fifty percent plus one was the accepted margin for victory in the two previous Quebec referendums of 1995 and 1980.

Chretien based Ottawa's position on a Supreme Court ruling handed down last year that said the federal government would be obligated to negotiate with Quebec if the sovereigntists won, as long as there was a "clear majority on a clear question." The court did not define in precise terms what it meant by clear.

Chretien said his proposed conditions were a response to statements by Quebec premier Lucien Bouchard outlining Quebec's grievances against the Canadian federal system at an international conference on federalism. At that conference U.S. president William Clinton spoke strongly in defense of Canadian federalism and a united stable Canada.

The proposed legislation will not state the exact percentage required for a referendum victory or the exact wording of a referendum question that would be acceptable to the federal government in order for negotiations to take place over the secession of Quebec. Instead, the core of the legislation will be based on last year's Supreme Court ruling.

However, federal Intergovernmental Affairs Minister Stephane Dion said that the legislation would list the areas that would have to be negotiated.

Trying to play the Native people of Quebec, who also face national oppression, against the Quebecois—something the federal government successfully employed during the 1995 referendum, Dion stated, "We have a requirement from the Supreme Court to take into account different issues, including the borders. It would be unfair to the aboriginal peoples in the north of Quebec to say, 'We will switch you from one country to another country, we will not even consult you.'"

Bouchard rejects demand

"There is absolutely no way that we will allow Mr. Chretien to play any role in the definition of anything relating to the itinerary of the people of Quebec toward the future," said Quebec premier Bouchard.

This comment was in response to Chretien's demagogic call for a referendum truce on November 25, in which he offered

to drop all talk about referendums and conditions for secession if Bouchard promised not to hold a referendum during his mandate.

Bouchard stated that surrendering the possibility of holding another referendum would mean "accepting the constitutional order imposed [by Ottawa] in 1982, and all the federal intrusions, past and future, in Quebec's jurisdictions."

In 1982 Liberal prime minister Pierre Trudeau "repatriated" the Canadian constitution, which until then had remained formally in the hands of the United Kingdom's Parliament and monarchy. The resulting constitution and Charter of Rights and freedoms weakened historic powers of the Quebec National Assembly. All provincial governments endorsed and signed the constitution except Quebec.

"Ask anyone in any country near or far, and it's evident they'll tell you that 50 percent plus one vote as a majority is the universally recognized international rule, recognized by the United Nations and the entire world," said Quebec international relations minister Louise Beaudoin.

Full-page ads were published by the Quebec government in most Quebec dailies stating: "For the United Nations, democracy is 50 percent plus one of the votes cast."

Officials of the pro-sovereignty Quebec Federation of Labour, one of three main union federations in Quebec, issued a statement backing the PQ government against Ottawa and stating that only the Quebec National Assembly had the right to define the terms of the next referendum.

In the federal Parliament in Ottawa, the pro-sovereignty Bloc Quebecois with 44 elected members of parliament accused Ottawa of creating two classes of voters for any future Quebec referendum.

Bloc leader Gilles Duceppe said that Ottawa's position would give more power to No voters than Yes voters. "Should we understand that the only way the Prime Minister can save Canada is by changing the value of a vote, to say that a federalist vote means more than a sovereigntist vote?" he asked. The Bloc said it would slow down the work of the House of Commons to try and block any resolution of bill setting new rules for a referendum on sovereignty.



Oct. 26, 1995, rally in Montreal urges vote for Quebec independence in referendum that year.

Militant/Monica Jones

Federalist politicians divided

Throughout the week after Chretien's November 23 announcement, Quebec Liberal Party leader Jean Charest, a federalist politician currently leading the Parti Quebecois in the polls, expressed considerable unease over the initiative being taken by the federal government.

"The issue isn't going to be 60 percent or 50 percent plus one," he complained. "The issue is going to become 'Do we have the right to decide our own future, or is the rest of the country going to lock us in.'" The perception may become that English Canada is telling French Canada, "You can't have a divorce honey," he stated.

Charest also attacked Bouchard's statement that there could be a unilateral declaration of independence. "That would be clearly illegal," Charest said. "For him [Bouchard] to stand here yesterday and invoke a unilateral declaration of independence is extremely, extremely grave."

Conservative Party leader Joseph Clark accused Chretien of wanting to retire with a legacy as the "guy who stands up to Quebec."

Speaking on behalf of the New Democratic Party premiers of British Columbia, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba, federal NDP leader Alexa McDonough attacked the sovereignty forces in Quebec and at the same time criticized the Chretien government, accusing it of inflammatory actions that are "risking fanning the embers of separatism."

The NDP is a social democratic party linked to the unions outside of Quebec.

"The Supreme Court decision stated that clarity is an absolute prerequisite for any succession negotiations," she said. "If sovereigntists insist upon proceeding with a referendum the onus of responsibility to ensure clarity falls on the National Assembly of Quebec."

Using the opening provided by Ottawa's talk of negotiating Quebec's borders, Preston Manning, leader of the populist right-wing Reform Party, unveiled a proposed "New Canada Act" that talks openly of partitioning Quebec as part of the process of secession. The Reform Party is the official opposition in Ottawa.

The Reform Party's proposed legislation sets out provisions for Ottawa to hold its own double-question referendum if it deems the question set forth by the Quebec National Assembly is unclear.

One question would state that an independent Quebec would have "no special legal ties to Canada." The other would ask communities in Quebec defined by municipal boundaries if they want to stay in Canada if Quebec separates.

"It isn't just that secession will divide Canada, but it has a very good prospect of dividing Quebec," Manning insisted.

John Steele is a member of United Food and Commercial Workers Local 175.

Farm crisis in Saskatchewan

Continued from Page 16

below the land," said Thomas. The team brought copies of the Pathfinder book *Capitalism's World Disorder* by Jack Barnes. This book explains that the crisis facing family farmers is not the result of a plot, but the lawful development of the crisis-ridden capitalist market system that puts profits before human needs. No one bought the book but it generated interest and helped provoke discussion about the need for farmers to build an alliance with workers in Canada and to look for allies among farmers on an international level.

The socialist activists pointed to the experience of the Cuban revolution to explain how an alliance of workers and peasants forged in that country led to a socialist revolution and the formation of a workers and farmers government. The farmers were surprised to learn that land, which is owned by the government in Cuba today, cannot be used as collateral. The government provides cheap credit. Farmers work the land in co-operatives or individually, and cannot lose their land as long as they are working it.

We also suggested that workers in the urban centers could be won to supporting the demand of the farmers for immediate government aid, as well as other demands that could help forge unity such as an immediate moratorium on bank foreclosures of family farmers and the cancellation of the debt of Third World countries to the bankers and governments in Canada and the United States. Lifting this debt burden off

the backs of millions of farmers and workers in these countries would have a dramatic impact on their ability to survive.

During the discussion Harvey Linnen pointed to the unity of 8,400 nurses in Saskatchewan who defied the NDP government's strike-breaking legislation last spring when they fought against funding cutbacks to the health-care system as an example for the farmers.

Linnen also pointed to the need for international solidarity among farmers. "I like watching those French farmers on TV. They know how to fight," he said.

He also asked us about what was happening in Quebec. We explained how the Quebecois are oppressed and why they are fighting for independence. "Farmers here and the people in Quebec have a lot in common, we're both fighting for our dignity," Linnen responded.

A comment by farmer Lloyd Pletz captured the fighting spirit evident by the broad resistance on the land in Saskatchewan. "We're not going down without a fight. We have nothing to lose and everything to gain," he said.

During the course of the three-day trip farmers bought three Pathfinder books and one farmer purchased a subscription to the *Militant*.

Joanne Pritchard is a member of the Union of Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Employees. Michel Prairie contributed to this article.

Black Farmers and Agriculturists call December 13 protest in D.C.

BY MARY MARTIN

WASHINGTON, D.C.—A December 13 "Call for Justice" demonstration here has been called by the Black Farmers and Agriculturists Association (BFAA) to protest violations of the March 1999 consent decree settlement that is supposed to award damages to farmers who have suffered racist discrimination by the government.

The decree was a result of a class-action suit brought by thousands of farmers against systematic discrimination in loans and other policies at the hands of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA).

A leaflet calling the demonstration points out that few farmers have received the cash settlements they were awarded, and new incidents of discrimination have occurred even after the consent decree was signed.

"The reason for the rally is that Black farmers are still being denied justice because of the ineffective implementation

of the consent decree," said Gary Grant, president of the BFAA. "Over 40 percent of applications processed have been turned down."

The demonstration will take place at either Lafayette Park across from the White House or at the steps of the U.S. Capitol at 10:00 a.m. It will be followed by a meeting of supporters of the farmers' fight inside the capital in the House Agriculture Committee room. For information on the protest site, housing, and other details call the BFAA at 252-826-2800.

Meanwhile, the fight of farmers in this country who are being pushed off the land—not only through racist discrimination but also through the normal workings of capitalism—recently received new impetus. Native American farmers and tobacco farmers recently announced plans to launch their own class-action suits to protest attacks on their means of livelihood and land ownership by the USDA.

Vieques protesters: 'Not one more bomb'

Continued from front page

U.S. politics after April 19, when a U.S. plane killed a civilian security guard after dropping bombs off-target during a training flight. Protesters, led by Vieques fishermen and including workers, students, and political figures, set up civil disobedience camps in the target zone and prevented the Navy from carrying out any exercises.

Tens of thousands have joined marches and other protests, demanding the U.S. Navy get out. Under this pressure, virtually all prominent political figures in Puerto Rico, including pro-statehood governor Pedro Rosselló, have spoken out against further bombing and called for the Navy to leave Vieques.

In an attempt to regain use of the Vieques firing range, Washington combined political and economic pressure with preparations for police action against the protesters. In the last week before Clinton's announcement, the administration debated the use of special FBI teams to clear out the civil disobedience camps, but concluded the political cost would be too high.

Clinton's action drew criticism from some big-business, military, and government leaders in the United States.

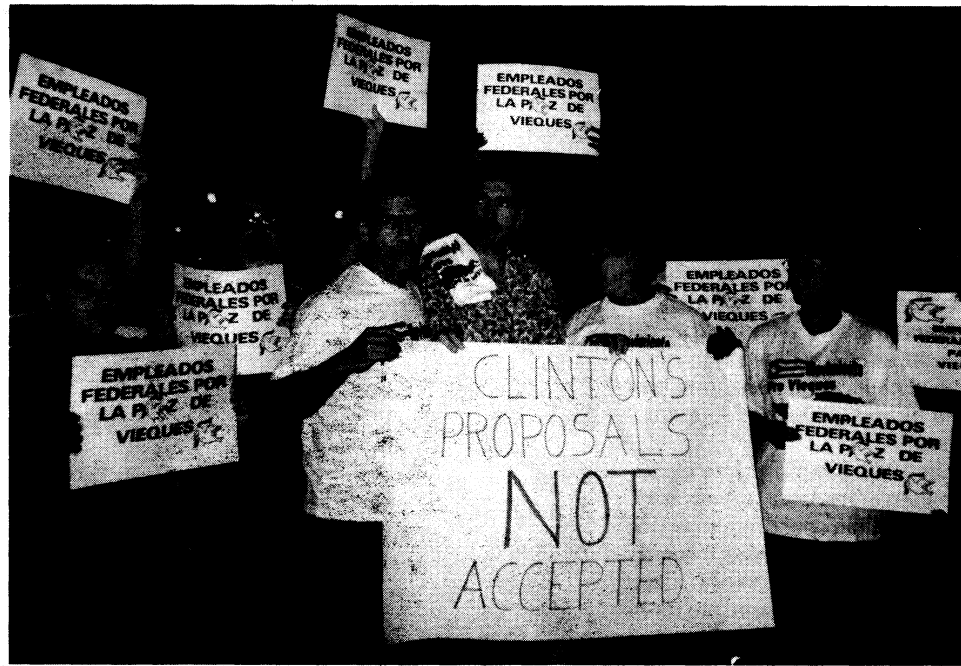
Pentagon officials had insisted they needed to use Vieques to adequately train Washington's military forces. For weeks they had said publicly that they must use Vieques in early December to train the Eisenhower battle group, which is scheduled to deploy to the Arab-Persian Gulf in February 2000. House Republican leader Rep. Tillie Fowler denounced the decision, saying it would increase the risks to U.S. Navy personnel.

She also pointed to the example Vieques could set for other peoples who have had U.S. military bases imposed on them. "You can bet the Okinawans and others will soon be pursuing the same tactics as were employed on Vieques," she said, referring to the Japanese island largely taken over by the U.S. military since the end of the second world war.

Washington aims to retain bases

U.S. military bases in Puerto Rico also include the huge naval station at Roosevelt Roads, the Fort Buchanan army base, and a special forces camp at Ceiba. They have long been key bastions in Washington's military operations throughout Latin America and the Caribbean. On December 10, Roosevelt Roads will come under the direction of the Pentagon's Southern Command, instead of the Norfolk, Virginia-based Atlantic Fleet command, underscoring its importance in Washington's war preparations.

Clinton's December 3 announcement revealed Washington's intention to retain control over Vieques. The president offered a few concessions in hopes of undercutting



Militant/Ron Richards

Federal employees rally in San Juan December 3 in solidarity with Vieques fight

protests and winning more support for the Navy.

Firing exercises will resume at the end of March, Clinton said, but only using non-explosive bombs and projectiles. The number of days of actual bombing could be reduced to 90 days per year. He also offered a promise of a \$40 million development program—to begin only after Navy exercises resume. He projected this plan as the start of a five-year "transition period" during which the Navy would find an alternative site for future training.

Clinton, however, hedged every one of the restrictions, including the five-year withdrawal deadline, with the phrase "unless the people of Vieques decide otherwise," blatantly signaling Washington's intentions to pressure Puerto Rico to accept a continued U.S. Navy presence.

Pentagon spokesman Kenneth Bacon described the plan as a "cooling off" period.

Independence fighter and former political prisoner Rafael Cancel Miranda told the *Militant* that Clinton's announcement "was an insult to the Puerto Rican people."

Remarking that he wasn't surprised by Washington's move, Cancel Miranda added, "They acted in their own interests. I'm talking about the ones who decided: the big monopolies and corporations, the U.S. ruling class. Clinton just signed the order on their behalf."

Protests grow

The Coordinating Committee for Peace and Justice in Vieques responded immediately to Clinton's announcement with expanded civil disobedience actions. They set up a new camp the night of December 3, blocking the entrance to the Navy base called Camp García with a roadblock made up of cars and tents. At least two other pro-

test sites were set up inside the restricted zone in early December, bringing the number of camps to at least 10.

"If I have to stay here one year, I'll be here one year," declared Emma Rosa, 53 years old, who has spent 10 years working as a fisherwoman. "The children of Vieques deserve to walk on a free Vieques."

On December 6 U.S. federal marshals tried to force the protesters to stop blocking the entrance to the base, but they refused to move. News of the government attempt spread rapidly, and hundreds of Vieques residents quickly joined the protest, forcing the marshals to back down. Before dawn the following morning some young troops were sent to cut the locks protesters had placed on the doors to Camp García. They quickly retreated, however, without accomplishing their task, to the incessant booping of the protesters.

Student leaders at the University of Puerto Rico at Rio Piedras announced they would step up participation in the civil disobedience camps on Vieques and called for a protest march to the U.S. Navy recruiting center in Vieques December 8.

The Association of Vieques Women issued a call for more people to join the civil disobedience camps.

The evening before Clinton's announcement, a group of U.S. government employees, including postal workers and workers at the Department of Agriculture held a vigil in San Juan to oppose Washington's policies towards Vieques.

Capitalist politicians try to blunt fight

Meanwhile, big-business politicians in Puerto Rico scrambled to bolster their own positions and divert the struggle for Vieques toward support for some form of continued colonial status.

Rosselló, of the New Progressive Party (PNP), had been privately talking with Clinton for several weeks prior to the December 3 announcement, while making appeals for Puerto Ricans to "remain calm." The governor said he was "disappointed" by the plan and claimed it did not reflect what he had discussed with Clinton earlier.

Rosselló, however, said he was open to "seeking a fair settlement... the balance of [U.S.] defense [needs] should have some ingredient of justice and peace for Vieques." Rosselló, whose party advocates making Puerto Rico a state of the United States, is also the head of Al Gore's presidential campaign committee in Puerto Rico.

Carlos Pesquera, gubernatorial candidate of the PNP, called Clinton's proposal "a positive step" that only needed a more definite deadline for the eventual departure of the Navy. "It's unrealistic to expect the Navy to leave immediately," he said.

Sila María Calderón, gubernatorial candidate of the Popular Democratic Party (PPD), which supports maintaining the current "commonwealth" status of Puerto Rico, moved to seek a more prominent role in the dispute. She led a delegation of 115 PPD candidates to Vieques December 4, and has shifted her stance to more active support for the civil disobedience protests. Calderón met with protest leaders from Vieques and with Puerto Rican Independence Party leader Reuben Berrios, who has camped out on the firing range since May 8.

The next day, however, Calderón urged greater reliance on negotiations between Puerto Rican politicians and the U.S. government, saying that the protesters should not get all the credit for Washington's change in plans for the Eisenhower.

Meanwhile, prominent anticolonial fighters stressed the importance of the mass protests.

"The Puerto Rican government strategy of lobbying the U.S. government collapsed" with Clinton's announcement, Ismael Guadalupe told the *Militant*. "The strategy of the people's struggle has prevailed." He called for strengthening the groups occupying the naval firing range.

"These events have helped open the eyes of many people who have had illusions in the U.S. government," said independentista leader Rafael Cancel Miranda. "The U.S. government rejects the will of the majority of our people. The people are saying 'leave Vieques' but they [Washington] are the ones who have control over our country."

Cancel Miranda noted that the massive character of the fight around Vieques "has strengthened the independence movement," and pointed to the importance of the growing pro-Vieques protests in the United States.

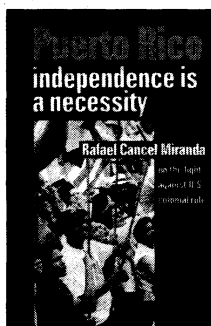
Harvey McArthur is a member of United Food and Commercial Workers Local 100A in Chicago. Militant staff writer Martin Koppel contributed to this article.

From Pathfinder

Puerto Rico: Independence is a Necessity

RAFAEL CANCEL MIRANDA

In two interviews, Cancel Miranda—one of five Puerto Rican Nationalists imprisoned by Washington for more than 25 years until 1979—speaks out on the



brutal reality of U.S. colonial domination, the campaign needed to free Puerto Rican political prisoners, the example of Cuba's socialist revolution, and the resurgence of the independence movement today. English and Spanish. \$3.00

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

Protests in U.S. demand Navy leave Vieques

BY ROSA GARMENDÍA

ORLANDO, Florida—"Peace for Vieques, Stop U.S. Navy Bombing!" was the theme of a vigil and rally held outside City Hall here December 3-4. The action started at 5:00 p.m. and lasted for 22 hours. More than 50 people participated, including several representatives of churches from the Central Florida area, and the representative of the office of the governor of Puerto Rico in Orlando.

The same day of the protest, U.S. president William Clinton announced that the military training will not resume on Vieques until next spring. Eric Jiménez, one of the organizers, responded to this statement. "The position of the people of Puerto Rico is that there's nothing to negotiate. 'Not one more bomb!' " he said. "Everybody is staying on the camps and we continue organizing."

At the vigil, several participants spoke about their experiences growing up in Vieques amid the bombings and shootings. Jorge, who now lives in Orlando said, "We've never been alone [in our struggle] but now, there are more people who realize that this is not only the problem of Vieques, of Puerto Rico, but of all Latin America." Irving Forestier, a leader of the National

Committee to Free the Puerto Rican Prisoners of War and Political Prisoners in Orlando, has been in Vieques several times in the last months and is going back again. He described how the U.S. Navy is harassing the people who are occupying the shooting ranges by flying low over the camps with their helicopters.

Participants came from as far as Miami and Plantation, Florida, and included a few retirees from the U.S. military. Several local TV channels and newspapers covered the event.

BY NANCY BOYASKO

NEW YORK—Picketing the Federal Building here December 7, protesters demanded "U.S. out of Vieques." The demonstration, which numbered about 150, was sponsored by Vieques Support Campaign, All of East Harlem with Vieques, and All of New York with Vieques.

Half a dozen members of the Latin Women Group of Brooklyn College were among the demonstrators. "This is not a Puerto Rican thing. What the U.S. is doing to Puerto Rico is what they are doing to the rest of Latin America," stated Carla Moscoso, one of the students.

David Cline of the Veterans Support Vieques was among the speakers. "As military veterans, many of us have had first hand experience with the Pentagon's callous disregard for the earth and people, including U.S. troops," he said, pointing to the Pentagon's use of toxins such as Agent Orange and depleted uranium in Vietnam, Iraq, and Yugoslavia.

Myra Esdepa of the Puerto Rican Legal Defense and Education Fund stated, "After 50 years of abuse, it is time for the U.S. to get out."

The picket line was called on the anniversary of Tokyo's bombing of the U.S. naval base at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, during World War II. The leaflet building the protest, headlined "No More Bombs, U.S. Navy out of Vieques," included the demand "Tell the Navy: Remember Pearl Harbor." Danny Figueroa the co-chair of All New York for Vieques chaired the rally and called for a moment of silence to remember the lives lost in Pearl Harbor and in Vieques.

This pro-U.S. military slogan was not the dominant theme of the action, however. The overwhelming majority of signs and chants focused on the demand, "U.S. Navy out of Vieques!" Numerous passersby stopped and were interested in the action.

'Campaign for communism' is a success in Seattle

BY SCOTT BREEN
AND PATRICK O'NEILL

SEATTLE—In its November 29 issue the *Militant* printed an editorial titled, "Campaign for communism." In the midst of the "swirl of political protests and forums whose program and character smacks of economic nationalism," it stated, "socialists in the Northwest are being joined by [Young Socialists and Socialist Workers Party] members and contacts from across the United States for an aggressive propaganda campaign in the Seattle region.... The socialists will centralize their work by campaigning to sell dozens of copies of *Capitalism's World Disorder: Working-Class Politics at the Millennium*," read the editorial.

That is just what happened, with the important assistance of Young Socialists and Communist League members and friends from Canada, over the course of nine days at the end of November and December in Seattle.

Fifty volunteers joined the effort, many for several days or more. They intervened vigorously in the city-wide discussion generated by the week's events—from the fractious WTO negotiations, to the protests which drew many workers and young people looking for a way to fight injustice, to the violence unleashed by the Seattle police. The volunteers successfully promoted and sold *Capitalism's World Disorder* to workers, farmers, and youth. They also made important initial steps in placing this and other Pathfinder books in area bookstores.

Eighty-nine copies of *Capitalism's World Disorder* were placed in stores or sold as the sales teams put forward an internationalist, working-class position. They argued against the protectionist, America-First politics around which the anti-WTO protests were organized. Where an open microphone was available, socialists also presented their views to a bigger audience. Often people responded with interest.

Volunteers also sold or placed 59 copies of *Making History*, Pathfinder's newest title. The book prints interviews with four generals in Cuba's Revolutionary Armed Forces. It was especially well received at a public meeting addressed by the Cuban delegation to the WTO and at the weekend "Cuba 2000" conference Seattle.

Sales teams found *Making History* very useful in their discussions with young protesters who admired the disruptive actions of the anarchists. Their methods provided a ready-made pretext for the police crackdown. The socialists pointed to the very different leadership example brought to life in the book. The four generals speak as veteran leaders of actions by workers and peasants on a scale which allowed them to "make history."

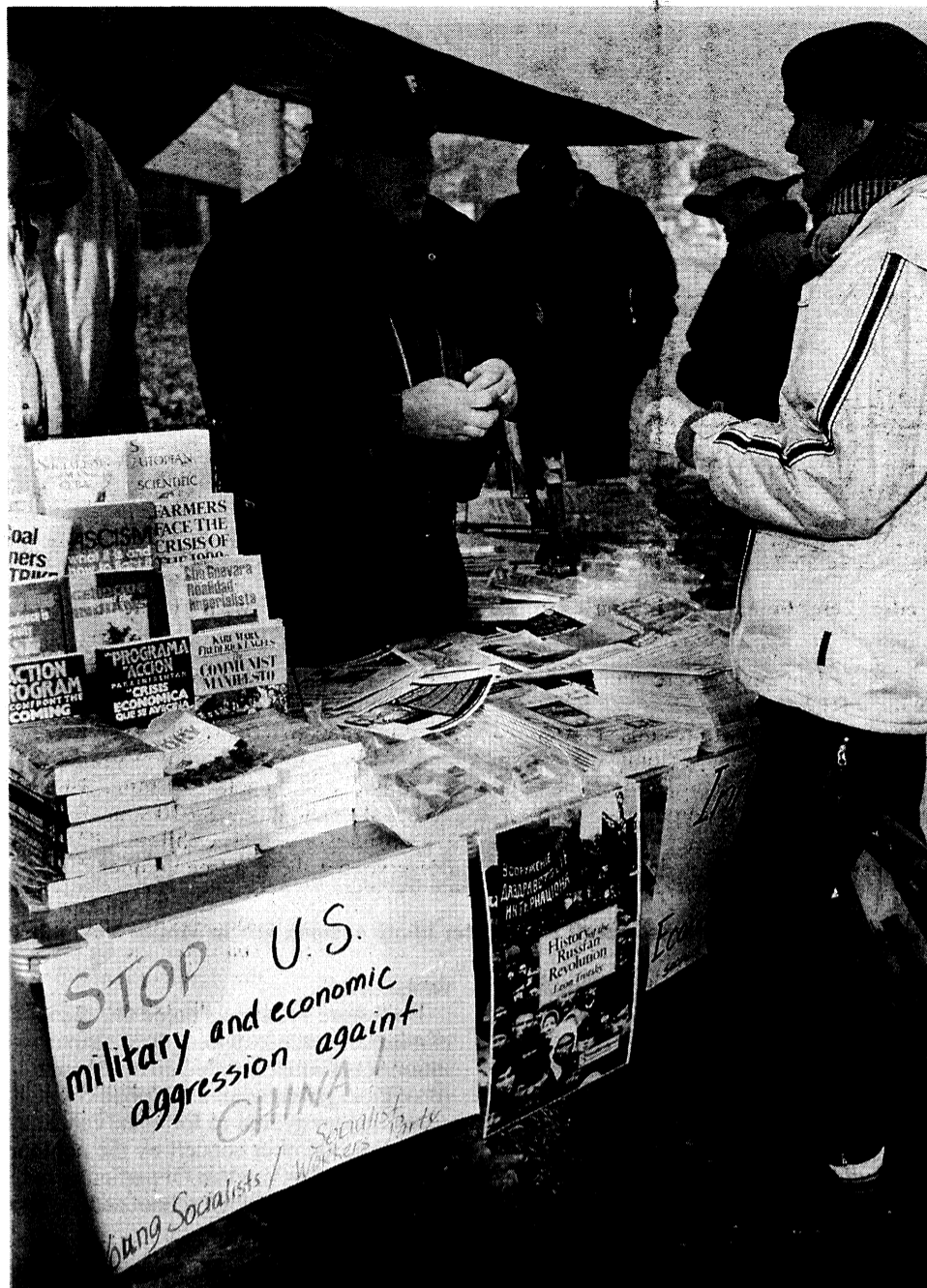
Intervening in political discussions

Meeting early every morning, the volunteers discussed what they had done the previous day, and the political questions that had come up. They then organized themselves to intervene in political discussions, protests, and meetings occurring throughout the city.

Six sales teams were dispatched from the campaign office early on the morning of the large-scale November 30 protest. The total of 30-plus copies of *Capitalism's World Disorder* sold during that all-day effort gave everybody a huge boost. That night the volunteers heard the results of a sales team in France that had taken the same literature to an anti-WTO protest in Paris. The action's demands resembled those of the Seattle actions, except that the nationalism they expressed was that of the French capitalist rulers.

"About 5,000 people participated in the demo," wrote Jean-Louis Salfati in a note sent to the *Militant*. "A lot of nationalist placards supporting José Bové." This farmer made his name leading protests that vandalized McDonald's outlets in France. Bové participated in the Seattle protests.

Marchers' placards also opposed "the invisible government ruling the world (the WTO) against the will of democratically elected governments," continued Salfati. "We had a statement entitled, 'Our enemies are in Paris' and a table with one big placard at the front saying the same thing. This had a real impact, negative or positive. A



Militant/Lisa Ahlberg

Table set up by socialist workers and youth to campaign with *Capitalism's World Disorder* during union-sponsored rally of 40,000 November 30.

lot of people came to the table to discuss politics. We sold one copy of *Capitalism's World Disorder* in English and took three orders for the French edition, scheduled to be published early next year. We also sold five other Pathfinder books, three copies of [the Marxist magazine] *New International*, and four *Militants*," concluded Salfati.

After Seattle mayor Paul Schell, declared a "state of civil emergency" November 30 in an effort to curb democratic rights and to intimidate youth, workers, and others involved in protesting against the WTO and police violence, the socialist volunteers still found ways to get these important political tools out broadly. Tables were set up at area college campuses, at protests and meetings held outside the cops' 50-block "no-protest" zone, and at workplaces.

Debates outside jail

On December 1, a team set up a sales table on the pavement outside the King County jail. A crowd of around 200 had gathered there in one of a series of protests demanding the release of hundreds who had been arrested on that day and the day before. In the course of the six-hour stint, participants at the action bought two copies of *Capitalism's World Disorder*, along with three copies of *Making History* and a number of other books, and more than 10 copies of the *Militant*.

At one point, a young man dressed in a trench coat worked his way through the crowd, declaring himself a supporter of ultrarightist politician Patrick Buchanan. He handed out a leaflet headed

"Global Economy or Global Plantation?" It demanded "Defend American sovereignty and stop their New World Order from sending your job to Mexico or China!" Near the sales table a woman responded to his appeal for support saying, "Over my dead body!" Some others in the crowd reacted

differently, however, stating that if Buchanan's followers agreed with the demands of the protests, then the more the merrier.

The team sold a lot of literature. Many workers and young people wanted to read the books and newspapers, even though few agreed totally with our views at first hearing. In total, volunteers sold more than 800 *Militant* newspapers, 12 introductory subscriptions to the socialist newsweekly, and 15 copies of *Perspectiva Mundial*. A total of more than \$3,000 in Pathfinder literature was sold—some 230 books and pamphlets. While *Capitalism's World Disorder* and *Making History* at 76 and 55 sold respectively were the top-selling titles, 12 people bought the *Communist Manifesto*, 10 bought *Farmers Face the Crisis of the 1990's*, and seven picked up copies of *An Action Program to Confront the Coming Economic Crisis*, to round out the top five titles. All told, 45 different Pathfinder titles were bought from sales teams and the Pathfinder Bookstore, which was kept open throughout each day.

Volunteers organized 15 visits to area bookstores during the week. Six stores took a total of 15 copies of *Capitalism's World Disorder*; 4 copies of *New International* no. 11, which features the article "U.S. Imperialism Has Lost the Cold War"; and 4 copies of *Making History*.

One shop took eight copies of *Capitalism's World Disorder*, and a newsstand near the University of Washington took four copies each of the same title and *New International* no. 11. Another bookstore buyer in downtown Seattle exclaimed, "I wish you had visited me a couple of weeks earlier!" She planned to send in a special, rush order the next day. Several other bookstores said they would place an order for Pathfinder books through their own distributors.

The week-long experience of selling these revolutionary books in Seattle has given socialist workers, Young Socialists, and supporters of Pathfinder confidence that *Capitalism's World Disorder*, *Making History*, and other Pathfinder titles can get an even wider hearing among youth, farmers, and workers as the crisis of world capitalism continues to deepen, the fissures between the imperialist countries widen, and working people reach out for an effective way to struggle and solidarize with each other.

Transit workers rally in New York



Militant/Marc Lichtman

Thousands of trade unionists rallied December 8 to support the contract fight of the transit Workers who run New York's buses and subways. Their contract expires December 15. The city administration has threatened legal action against them if they strike. In addition to thousands of transportation workers, many other city workers, Teamsters, and Communication Workers came to show solidarity.

Books on Cuba are top sellers at Miami fair

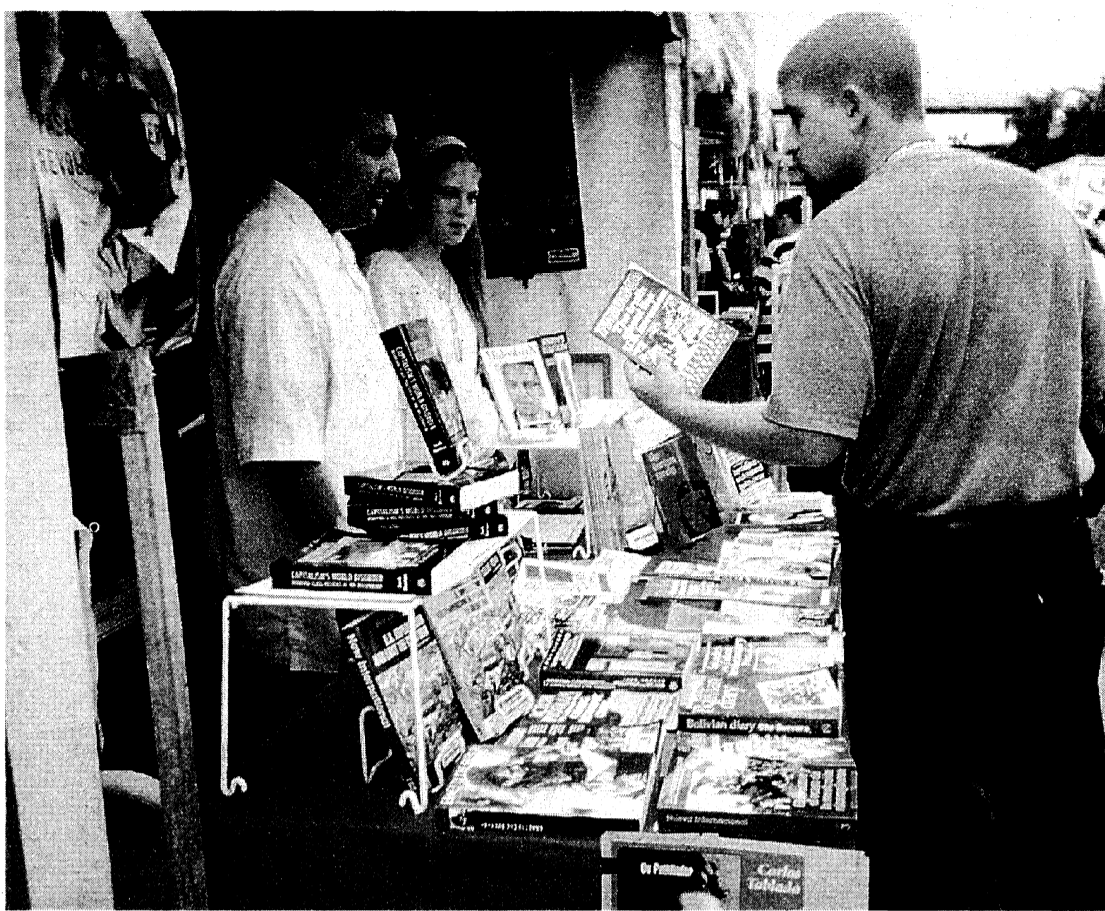
This column is written and edited by the Young Socialists (YS), an international organization of young workers, students, and other youth fighting for socialism. For more information about the YS write to: Young Socialists, 3284 23rd St., San Francisco, CA 94110. Tel: (415) 824-1429. E-mail: 105162.605@compuserve.com

BY MIKE MARTÍNEZ

MAIMI—"I want to find out more about Che Guevara," was a comment heard frequently at the Pathfinder Bookstore booth at the Miami Book Fair International held here November 19-21. Hundreds of people visiting the fair stopped at the Pathfinder stall and browsed through the colorful book displays. Many were originally from the Caribbean, and Central and South America. Eighty copies of the 1999 Pathfinder catalog were sold, and hundreds of bookstore business cards and leaflets were distributed.

During the three days of the book fair the volunteers staffing the Pathfinder booth sold more than \$1,100 in books and periodicals, despite intermittent rain. Pathfinder volunteers took a goal of selling 10 copies of *Capitalism's World Disorder* at the fair and came close, selling eight copies of this important book. People at the fair bought 18 books and pamphlets on the Cuban revolution, as well as 14 titles by Malcolm X and 11 pamphlets on Puerto Rico.

As has been the case in previous years, the best-selling title was *The Communist Manifesto* by Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, with 13 people buying the pamphlet in either English or Spanish. Visitors to the Pathfinder booth snapped up 33 copies of



Mike Martínez and Sonja Swanson staff Pathfinder booth at book fair in Miami November 21

the *Militant*, 10 copies of *Perspectiva Mundial*, and a *Perspectiva Mundial* subscription during the fair.

Like last year, there were no serious attempts to try to disrupt or close down the ongoing political discussions around the booth. Many opponents of the Cuban revolution, upon seeing the titles at the booth, simply muttered under their breath and

walked away.

Bookstore volunteers noted this the kind of political space to discuss the Cuban revolution was similarly reflected by the inability of local government and Cuban counter-revolutionary groups to force the cancellation of the October concert by the popular Cuban band Los Van Van. Of particular note were the number of high school and college

students who bought books and pamphlets. Five "4-packs" were sold to young people. These were four pamphlets—*The Communist Manifesto*, *Socialism and Man in Cuba*, *Malcolm X Talks to Young People*, and *Is Biology Women's Destiny*—were priced at \$10 for young people interested in learning more about socialism. In addition to the Pathfinder books about Cuba that were sold, five copies of the weekly *Granma International*, two of *Tricontinental*, one of *Cuba Socialista*, and one *La Gaceta de Cuba* were sold. The display of these periodicals from Cuba attracted quite a bit of attention.

Many young people also took a leaflet put out by the Miami Young Socialists, and were pleasantly surprised that a socialist youth organization had a presence in Miami. One Miami high school student from Colombia asked how to join the group.

Fifty-one people signed a mailing list to get more information about Pathfinder books and the Young Socialists. Already, one student has returned a coupon requesting more information on the Young Socialists.

Michael Martínez is a member of the Young Socialists. Bill Kalman, a member of the United Transportation Union, contributed to this article.

Militant/Angel Lariscy



FROM PATHFINDER

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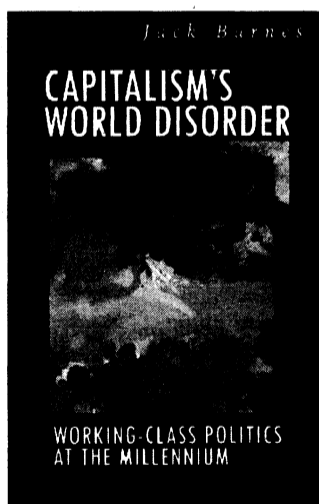
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Interviews with four generals of Cuba's Revolutionary Armed Forces



Teamster Rebellion

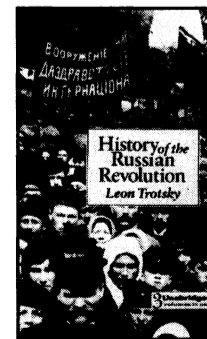
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Labour Party victory marks shift to left in New Zealand vote

BY MICHAEL TUCKER

AUCKLAND, New Zealand—Elections in New Zealand November 27 saw a shift to the left with the ouster of the ruling National Party after nine years in office and the election of a Labour Party-led coalition government. Labour leader Helen Clark replaces National leader Jennifer Shipley as prime minister. James Anderton, the leader of the Alliance party, which is in coalition with Labour, is deputy prime minister.

For the first time since 1984, Labour politicians mounted a campaign that distanced the party from the "free market" policies followed by successive Labour and National party governments over the past 15 years. This bipartisan course saw sweeping privatizations of state enterprises, the lifting of import tariffs and export subsidies, the removal of many protective labor laws and guaranteed prices to farmers, the erosion of education and health care, and the reduction of benefits and pensions.

"The post-1984 era of hands-off economic policy came to an end yesterday," began the lead article in the November 29 *New Zealand Herald* following the election.

Labour promised to repeal the antiunion Employment Contracts Act, increase access to health care and education, reverse cuts in retirement pensions, halt the privatization of workplace accident insurance, reduce state housing rents, and review the minimum wage. It also pledged to increase income tax by 6 cents, to 39 cents on the dollar, for the 5 percent of incomes above NZ\$60,000 annually, while holding other tax rates at present levels (NZ\$1 = US\$0.51).

The Alliance campaigned for raising the minimum wage from NZ\$7 to NZ\$7.50 an hour, extending annual holidays from three to four weeks, introducing 12 weeks' paid maternity leave, and for a steeper progressive tax on higher incomes. It also called for the reintroduction of tariffs on imports to "protect New Zealand jobs," a halt to privatizations, and the establishment of a New Zealand bank.

Labour and Alliance both called for financial incentives to business as their answer to unemployment, claiming this would generate jobs. Trade union leaders urged workers to vote for a Labour-led government. Labour is a social-democratic party, historically based on the unions.

Fifteen years of 'free market reforms'

Prime Minister-elect Helen Clark was a member of the 1984-90 Labour Party government that initiated a series of "free market reforms" aimed at pushing back the wages, conditions, and union rights of working people and reversing the social conquests in health care, education, and retirement pensions and other gains won by the labor movement over previous decades. This course continued and deepened under the National Party, the traditional party of the ruling class, after 1990.

Once hailed by capitalist commentators in many countries as a model, these "free market reforms" have become increasingly discredited in ruling circles today, reflecting the failure of the bosses to make the inroads they need, and their inability to break the confidence among working people to resist these attacks.

In this election campaign Clark spoke as an opponent of these policies, criticizing their effect on working people while producing "more riches for the few."

"My vision is of a nation that doesn't leave people one or two pay packets away from catastrophe," she said.

The Alliance is a coalition of three parties dominated by the New Labour Party of James Anderton. A former Labour Party president and member of parliament, Anderton led a major split from Labour in 1990 of forces opposed to the "free market" policies. Many unions also disaffiliated from Labour. The Alliance advocates economic protectionism and similar nationalist policies traditionally identified with Labour prior to 1984. The Green Party was part of the Alliance until recently. Many groups and individuals who identify themselves as socialists are part of or support the Alliance.

"Let's not go back" was the theme of the National Party campaign. National called for lower taxes for higher income earners and business, and for maintaining the Employment Contracts Act.

The right-wing pro-business party Act New Zealand advocated reducing company and personal income tax to a top rate of 20 percent, and restricting the provision of social welfare benefits. It called for longer prison sentences, and for halting further claims by Maori, the indigenous people of New Zealand, for government compensation for the loss of land and resources. National and Act offered themselves as an alternative coalition to Labour and the Alliance.

There was little discussion on foreign policy during the campaign, reflecting the common stand of all the parliamentary parties in support of New Zealand military intervention in East Timor and elsewhere.

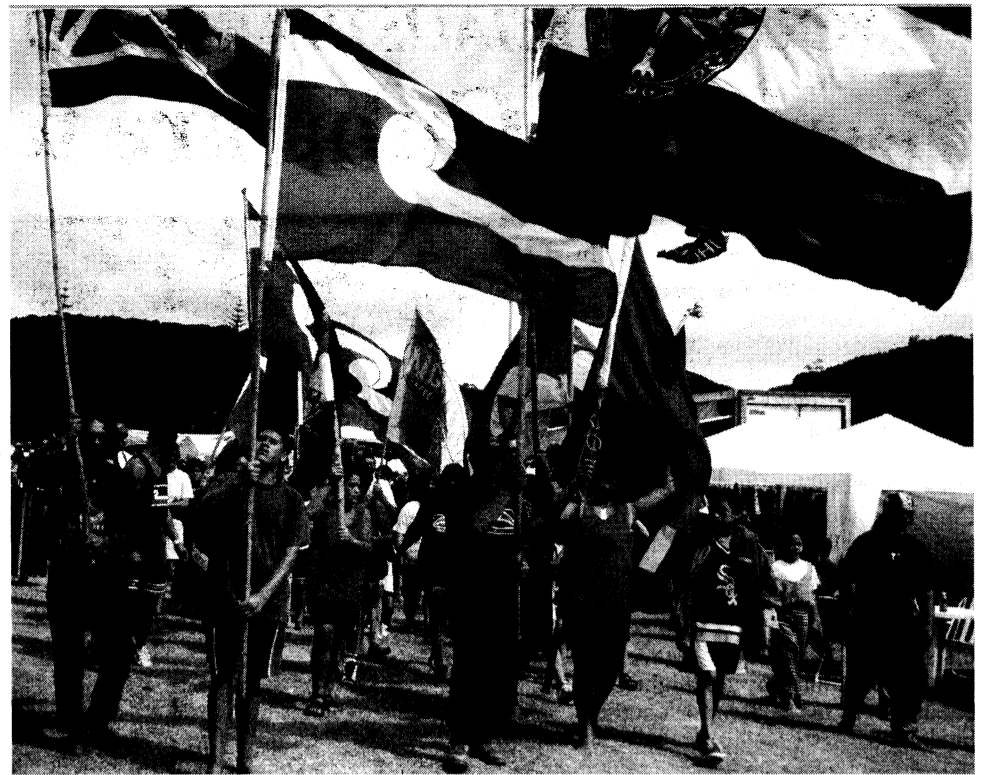
"Let's not go back" was also the slogan of a major publicity campaign mounted by the Employers Federation through media advertisements and workplace posters. It championed the Employment Contracts Act and the privatization of workplace accident insurance. Both employer spokespeople and National Party politicians scaremongered that repeal of the labor legislation would lead to a sharp jump in unemployment and a resurgence of strikes.

Increase in working-class resistance

The Labour-Alliance victory, part of a pattern of social-democratic electoral shifts in a number of imperialist countries over the past two years, registered the refusal of working people to accept the capitalist austerity drive in the hope of better things to come. This sentiment within the working class has been expressed over recent months in actions by nurses, airline workers, bus drivers, hotel workers, watersiders, and other factory workers, as well as in protests by students against fee increases, health workers against the decline in the public health system, and state housing tenants against rent hikes. Actions by Maori in defense of land and language rights have also been ongoing. A provocative event staged by the right wing Act party to launch its Maori policy for the election on Auckland's One Tree Hill, where a monument symbolizes the dispossession of Maori in this region, was answered by a brief occupation of the site by 20 Maori protesters.

In the last elections, in 1996, the majority of votes went against the government, but were split among Labour, the Alliance, and the New Zealand First Party of rightist politician Winston Peters. This time the mood for change was expressed more clearly in the election outcome.

Spokespeople for ruling-class opinion generally favored National, but once it became clear the party was trailing in the polls they urged voters to back either of the two main parties and reject the minor parties, in order to enable a stable government to be formed. "National and Labour are the only parties with the credentials to govern this



Militant/Janet Roth

March for Maori rights at Waitangi, Feb. 6, 1999. Actions by Maori in defense of land and language rights and upturn in labor struggles are signs of shift in working class.

country and whichever of them is preferred this time, it is better that they are not forced to bargain every step of a coherent programme with a party or parties running extreme or perverse agendas," the *New Zealand Herald* editorialized November 19.

Following the 1996 election National cobbled together a coalition with the New Zealand First Party. When the coalition fell apart 18 months later, it remained in office with the support of Act and defectors from New Zealand First and other parties.

For "the first time in three years there is certainty," editorialized the *Sunday Star Times* the morning after election day, adding, "There will be nervousness about this centre-left government but finally we are out of limbo."

The November 29 *Herald* urged Helen Clark to "exercise caution in all things," adding, "The new government has no need to start at breakneck speed." Speaking to the media later that day, Clark said she would lead "a responsible, mainstream social democratic government," not a "government of revolutionary change."

Lowest vote ever for National Party

The National Party recorded its lowest share of the vote in its 63-year history, with 30.6 percent. Labour gained 38.9 percent, the Alliance 7.8 percent, and Act 7 percent.

Labour swept the vote in all six Maori seats, in contrast to the 1996 election when its vote plummeted by 80 percent. (Voters who are Maori can enroll to vote in either a general electorate or a Maori electorate. Around half are enrolled in the Maori seats.)

Under the system of proportional representation introduced in 1996, parties must win at least 5 percent of the votes cast for a party, or win a constituency seat, in order to gain representation in parliament.

Rightist politician Winston Peters won his Tauranga seat on election night by a slim margin of 323 votes in a three-way race with National and Labour. His New Zealand First Party gained 4.3 percent of the vote, and will have a total of six members in parliament.

Peters, who is Maori, campaigned on rightist themes, speaking to large meetings throughout the country. He denounced the sale of assets to "foreign" banks and corpo-

Auckland: hunger strikers win release

BY TERRY COGGAN

AUCKLAND, New Zealand—Sixteen immigrants seeking asylum here ended a 32-day hunger strike in Mt. Eden Prison November 29 after a High Court judge told the New Zealand Immigration Service to reconsider their applications for temporary visitors' permits while their claims for refugee status are determined.

The 16 men, from Pakistan, Iran, and the Sikh region of India, were released two days later. An additional asylum seeker, a woman from Ghana who was not on hunger strike, remains in prison.

The men told the December 2 *New Zealand Herald* that while in prison, "we were held like animals." Prison authorities simply watched as their health steadily deteriorated.

William Smith, executive secretary of the

Auckland Refugee Council, told Radio New Zealand News December 2, "It was the public fight that got them released." Regular pickets of 20 people, and some as large as 70, were held outside the prison and the Immigration Service's Auckland offices. On November 26, some 40 people marched through central Auckland to demand the hunger strikers' release.

The growing support for the asylum seekers was registered when 13 members of the Auckland City Council, including Mayor Christine Fletcher, signed an open letter to Acting Immigration Minister Wyatt Creech asking for their release. Fletcher and her deputy, Bruce Hucker, visited the hunger strikers in prison November 29 prior to the High Court decision.

That same morning, Labour Party leader and newly elected prime minister Helen

rations and attacked the "failed, blind monetarist experiment" under Labour and National in the interests of the "venal few."

Peters called for breaking "the tired, old, party stranglehold" of the two main parties, with "their identical corporate backers" who "can buy Labour and National policy any day of the week." He called for a "rural revolution" and "a political revolution" by "decent New Zealanders" to get rid of "highly paid parasites" and "fat-cat officials" running government departments and boards, and their "party cronies." New Zealand First also called for compulsory military service for all men at age 18, and for work camps for "petty criminals."

The Green Party failed to win the Coromandel electorate from National by a mere 114 votes. It gained 4.9 percent of the party vote, just short of the 5 percent threshold.

The party centered its campaign on opposition to genetic modification of animals and plant crops, and for the introduction of protectionist tariffs and "eco-taxes."

The final composition of parliament could alter once the large number of special votes are counted on December 7, but this will not affect the change in government.

The Communist League stood candidates for parliament in two seats, Auckland Central and Christchurch Central. Central to the communist campaign was opposition to the New Zealand rulers' imperialist intervention in East Timor. The candidates also championed the fight by 16 asylum seekers who staged a hunger strike to protest their detention in an Auckland prison, and participated in actions against cuts in the public health system. They outlined a communist perspective at meetings on a number of university campuses, and in their electorates, including rejecting the nationalist and anti-working-class character of protectionist policies advocated by the Alliance and the Greens.

The communist candidates called for a class vote for Labour in other electorates as the party historically based on the trade unions, while explaining this did not mean placing confidence in that party to speak and act in the interests of working people.

Michael Tucker is a member of the Service & Food Workers Union in Auckland.

Clark told reporters that she urgently wanted to know why the men were being detained.

Creech, the acting minister of immigration in the outgoing National Party-led government, immediately attacked the High Court ruling and announced that the Immigration Service would appeal against it. The Immigration Service is continuing to deny the immigrants temporary visitor permits until this appeal is ruled on. This means they remain in the country without status and with no right to welfare benefits.

Their application for refugee status will go before the Refugee Status Appeals Authority. Eighty percent of such applications lodged each year in New Zealand are turned down.

Terry Coggan is a member of the Engineering, Printing and Manufacturing Union.

WTO talks fail, Clinton poses as friend of

Hundreds of protesters in Seattle are released from jail after police

Continued from front page

all night, maybe for five more days, it wouldn't have mattered," said U.S. trade representative Charlene Barshefsky.

The large-scale protests that occurred in Seattle throughout the week, the violent police reaction, and the restrictions on movement in the downtown area added to the image of disarray. When WTO president Michael Moore said, "If only the world could be like Seattle," the delegates laughed derisively. Seattle mayor Paul Schell insisted that the delegates leave the convention center by midnight December 3 to make way for another booking.

Washington, EU in conflict

Just before the Seattle talks Clinton declared his hope that "we'll get a new trade round launched that will slash tariffs and other trade barriers in agriculture and other areas." The U.S. rulers hoped to take advantage of the long-lasting boom in their economy, contrasted with the low rates of growth and high unemployment in Europe and Japan, to win concessions in the negotiations.

Washington, along with governments from 18 other food-exporting countries in the "Cairns Group," particularly targeted European Union (EU) and Japanese subsidies on agriculture. The EU includes major agricultural exporters such as France, second only to the United States in the export of agricultural goods. The European powers and Tokyo refused to budge on this question, however.

Other disputes helped to shipwreck the summit. The Japanese representatives joined their south Korean and Brazilian counterparts in opposing Washington's so-called anti-dumping laws. The U.S. government has used this legislation to impose tariffs on steel from these countries and on imports from China and other nations, claiming that the goods are being sold below cost. This remains another unresolved conflict.

Delegates from a number of Third World countries took advantage of the divisions among the "great powers" to stage their own protests. A number, including representatives from Caribbean nations, threatened to walk out of the conference in protest at being shut out of small-group negotiations imposed by U.S. representatives. "They think they can meet in small gatherings and



Cops charge through crowd with protester they've arrested during police crackdown December 1. Speaking at Militant Labor Forum on the week's events, Young Socialists leader Elena Tate addressed how actions by anarchists gave police the opportunity to victimize demonstrators.

then announce that the two or three most important countries have already come to a consensus," said El Salvador trade representative Victor Manuel. "It is very hard for small countries to have any influence on the process."

These incidents partially and momentarily exposed the way in which the imperialist powers lord over the peoples of most of Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Washington and the rulers of the European, Japanese, and other imperialist countries use their economic and military muscle to wrest superprofits from the working people and resources of these countries. They use the WTO and other international bodies to codify and reinforce that exploitation. These unequal relations are generated not by such bodies, however, but by the normal workings of the capitalist system.

The WTO also serves as a forum where

the trade conflicts between Washington and its imperialist competitors are argued out.

The disputes between the U.S. rulers and their European allies, who are also rivals, are paralleled by growing divisions over diplomatic and military policy in Europe. London and Paris are spearheading a proposal to create a European military force of up to 60,000 troops independent of the U.S.-dominated NATO alliance. U.S. defense secretary William Cohen, speaking in Germany on December 1, argued that the European powers must contribute more to NATO, which "looks to German leadership to contribute" financially and militarily.

The French government has stated its concern about U.S. plans to construct a new missile system that would give the Pentagon a first-strike capacity. Washington is pressing the Russian regime to modify the 1972 antiballistic missile treaty to allow this, but has met refusal so far. "We must avoid any questioning of the ABM treaty that could lead to disruption of strategic equilibria and a new nuclear arms race," said French president Jacques Chirac.

Clinton poses as friend of labor

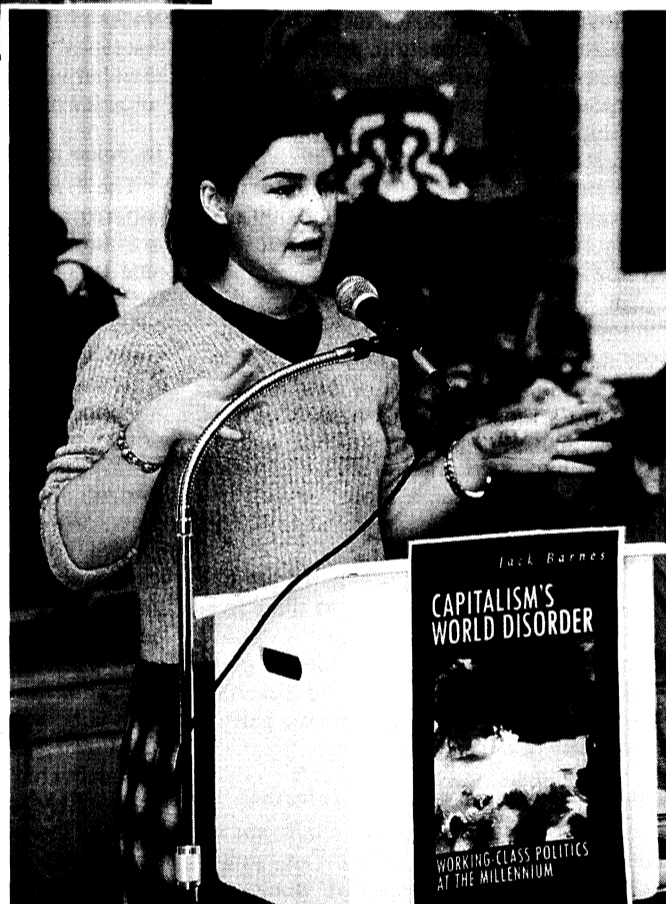
Clinton did not return from the talks empty-handed. In the 30 hours he spent in Seattle, he presented himself as a friend of labor and the environment. "Clinton Echoes the Protesters' Cries" ran a headline in the *International Herald Tribune*. "The sooner the WTO opens up the process and lets people representing those who are outside in, the sooner we will see fewer demonstrations," Clinton said in his December 1 speech to the trade ministers.

"The WTO must make sure that open trade ... respects core labor

standards that are essential not only to worker rights, but to human rights," he continued in the same demagogic vein. This lifetime servant of capital signed an International Labor Organization treaty "banning the worst forms of child labor," in the words of a statement by the AFL-CIO union federation.

In an interview conducted during his visit Clinton said, "We ought to... adopt the United States' position on having a working group on labor within the WTO, and then that working group should develop these core labor standards, and then they ought to be a part of every trade agreement, and ultimately I would favor a system in which sanctions would come for violating any provision of a trade agreement."

Clinton's performance opened the way for top union officials to campaign more vigorously for the Democratic Party in the 2000 presidential race, claiming that the Seattle protests and their other protectionist aims are getting a hearing in the White House. The AFL-CIO leadership has endorsed Democratic Party candidate



Militant/Chris Remple

Albert Gore in the race for the presidency.

Top environmental figures who helped organize the protests also expressed support for the Democratic Party campaign. Daniel Seligman, "trade expert" for the Sierra Club, one of the "traditional political allies" of the Democratic Party according to the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, said, "They're really good at intoning the principles of the high road on various standards. We haven't see much rubber on the road, [however]," he added, and then denounced two prominent Republican opponents of Gore, George Bush and John McCain, as "free traders." The *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* article succinctly summarized Clinton's success in winning backing for the party with the headline, "Out of the WTO ashes, the winner is... Gore."

After meeting with Clinton in Seattle, AFL-CIO president John Sweeney said he had "reiterated... how important it was to get [labor rights] in our trade agreements. The president says he's all for it. But he said he's having a tough time with the developing countries."

Representatives of "developing countries" in Seattle, including officials from Brazil, India, and Egypt, recognized that Clinton's professed concern for labor standards provides cover for Washington to impose tariffs and other restrictions on goods produced by competitors in the semicolonial world. Egyptian trade minister Youssef Boutros-

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labor crackdown

Ghali asked, "Why do industrial countries start feeling concerned about our workers? It is suspicious."

The pro-Washington and pro-company stance of the U.S. union officials opens the way for such capitalist politicians to pose as friends of workers in their own countries. "I think they should ask how the steelworkers in Brazil feel," said Celso Amorim, Brazil's ambassador to the WTO, after United Steelworkers of America (USWA) led union members and others in dumping symbolic beams representing steel produced outside the United States in the Seattle harbor. The protest called for the defense of "American jobs." Steel produced in Brazil is penalized under U.S. "anti-dumping" laws.

Reactionary campaign against China

Chinese trade minister Shi Gyuangsheng said that labor standards should not be part of the WTO negotiations. Washington has used Beijing's "abuses of human rights"—real and alleged—as a pressure point in trade negotiations. Two weeks before the WTO summit convened, representatives of the two governments signed a trade agreement that opened China's markets to U.S. capital in several areas. In exchange, Washington agreed to support China's application for WTO membership. On November 26 the Canadian government reached a deal with Beijing on terms for its application, clearing another major obstacle to the workers state's admission. The Chinese representatives attended the WTO meeting as observers.

Top union officials in the United States are aligning themselves with right-wing capitalist politicians by campaigning against this agreement. An AFL-CIO statement reports that President John Sweeney has "reiterated his opposition to admitting China, the world's most populous human rights abuser, into the WTO.... [and] has promised an all-out effort ... to block congressional approval of permanent normal trade relations status with China."

"WTO: People First Not China First" read a placard carried by a union marshal at the large march led by union officials in Seattle on November 30, the day the summit was originally due to start.

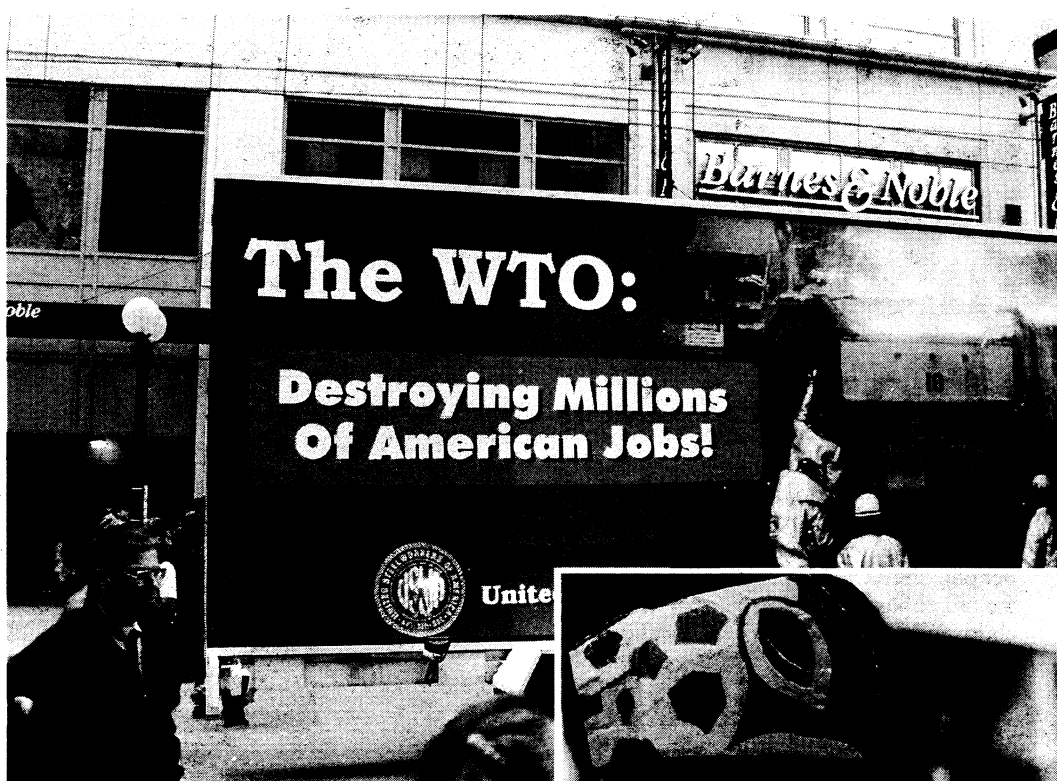
That day up to 40,000 people demonstrated in this city against the WTO. The event was part of a week-long series of protests against the trade body. Other anti-China signs were evident here and there in the crowd, demanding "WTO say no to China" and "China out of Tibet." "For the basic human rights in Vietnam. Kill the red evil" read a banner carried by a group of right-wingers.

Patrick Buchanan was among the rightist political figures who came to Seattle. A former Republican, Buchanan is running a high-profile campaign for the presidential candidacy of the Reform Party. Buchanan made several media appearances in the city. The WTO is "an embryonic institution of world government, which asserts the right to veto laws democratically passed by the United States," he told Diane Sawyer on her talk show. "If we Americans want to defend sea turtles and porpoises, that is our business," he said, referring to WTO rulings that have allegedly undermined U.S. environmental legislation. Buchanan also attacked the trade deal with China.

These right-wingers were drawn to the essentially nationalist character of the protests. Buchanan, who is deeply hostile to the international interests of working people, very deliberately pitches his "America First" message to unionists, and courts labor officials such as James Hoffa of the Teamsters Union. Placards demanding the preservation of "American" jobs predominated among the ranks organized in Seattle by the union officialdom.

One placard carried by a Longshoremen's Union member listed the evils that many accused the WTO of perpetrating: "WTO—Child labor, forced labor, environmental destruction." These and similar themes were very common in the protests.

Protests divert fire from Washington



Militant photos. Top: Patrick O'Neill; right: Lisa Ahlberg
Seattle protests promoted economic nationalism, demanding U.S. imperialism impose sanctions on semicolonial countries. Truck by Steelworkers officials above was a sharp example. Clinton embraced protesters' demands, posing as friend of labor. Socialist Workers and Young Socialists campaigned against these arguments, and got a hearing from many youth and workers (see article on page 5).

In the different marches many carried signs calling for the abolition of the trade body, like "No to WTO" and "WTO Go To Hell." Others protested against "multinational companies" that allegedly violate national sovereignty through the medium of the WTO. Radical as these demands sometimes sounded, they diverted the fire from the number one enemy of working people in this country—the U.S. government, headed at this time by the liberal Democratic Party president Clinton. "In Seattle, few protesters bothered to denounce President Clinton," wrote Michael Kazin on December 5. "Nike, Starbucks and the producers of genetically engineered crops were seen as far more potent enemies."

Militant reporters can attest that the protests vilified WTO head Moore far more than Clinton. Moore, formerly a Labour Party politician from the minor imperialist power of New Zealand, is serving as chief bureaucrat in the trade body. He was evidently stung by the protesters' accusations against the WTO and by Clinton's grandstanding calls for "accountability."

"The WTO is member driven," he said in his major speech to the delegates, "thus driven by governments, congresses, and parliaments." Speaking as the head of the organization that allegedly has the power to "[render] our national sovereignty meaningless" in the words of a USWA leaflet, Moore asked, "Is the nation state surrendering its legitimate rights and prerogatives to global institutions?... Our member states direct our progress.... The World Wildlife Fund has a budget three times ours.... I am, I guess, a navigator, a facilitator, and a public servant."

The domination of the WTO's proceedings by Washington and the other imperialist powers was highlighted by the protests mounted by representatives of Third World governments during the summit.

The large-scale peaceful protest led by union officials, environmentalists and others formed the prelude to the events that dominated politics in Seattle during the WTO meeting. While up to 40,000 joined the main procession through the city, a smaller group gathered around the WTO meeting venue.

Starting mid-morning, police used tear gas, pepper spray, and rubber bullets in their attempts to clear the



streets for the conference opening. They stepped up their violence throughout the day, but the protesters held their ground long enough to force an effective one-day postponement of the opening of the summit. The evening of November 30 Mayor Schell declared a civil emergency, a curfew from 7:00 p.m. to 7:30 a.m. in most of the downtown area, and closed down the 50 blocks of downtown Seattle to protests. The National Guard was called in.

Much of the worst police violence, and

by far the most arrests, occurred on December 1. That evening, the cops rampaged through the city's most populous suburb of Capitol Hill, advancing up streets behind a cloud of tear gas, firing concussion grenades, and arbitrarily brutalizing and arresting pedestrians and drivers.

Solomon, a student in his 20s, told the *Militant* that in dodging cops on horseback, he and other protesters had ended up in a park. One of the cops pursuing on foot approached him and asked if he wanted to leave. "Yes," he replied. "It's too late," said the cop, and arrested him. In the cells Solomon heard of cops spraying pepper gas into the faces of some prisoners bound to chairs.

Two women students reported that they were sitting in a parked car videotaping the police attack on the protests. When the driver complied with a police request to roll down the window, she received a face full of pepper gas. Many other stories are now being publicized.

Cops crackdown

Many people got a taste of the kind of police brutality that young workers in face routinely in Seattle and throughout the nation—especially those who are Black, Latino, or from other oppressed nationalities. On the night of December 1 Richard McIver, a city councilor who is Black, was roughed up by cops and almost arrested. "All they were

interested in was that I was a Black man who wasn't doing what they wanted," he said.

Throughout the week, the police employed standard "crowd control" methods. Around 600 people were arrested November 30 and December 1. Opponents of the police action gathered outside Seattle's King County prison for several demonstrations over the following days, chanting and listening to speeches and songs. On December 4 the remaining 300 prisoners began

Continued on Page 14

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Thousands rally in Cuba to demand Washington stop its provocations

BY ERIC SIMPSON

MIAMI—The refusal of the U.S. government to repatriate six-year-old Elián González to Cuba has drawn protests from hundreds of thousands of Cubans. Some 200,000 people rallied in front of the U.S. Interests Section in Havana December 8. It was the fourth such action in as many days, and the largest so far.

Cuban President Fidel Castro has called on the Cuban people to wage a "battle for world public opinion" and win support for the child's return.

González was rescued by fishermen after a shipwreck left him clinging to an inner tube in the Florida Straits for two days. He was one of 13 Cubans who left Cuba outside legal channels aboard an overloaded 20-foot boat. Ten drowned, including the boy's mother.

González was turned over to the Coast Guard, brought to shore, and the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) released him to relatives. His father, Juan Miguel González, who Elián lived with, and all four of his grandparents have made it clear that they want him back home in Cárdenas, Cuba.

The U.S. government, backed by the big-business press and right-wing organizations such as the Cuban American National Foundation (CANF), project the framework of a custody battle fought out in the Florida Family Court. They have demanded that Juan Miguel González travel to the United States to argue for his son's return against the boy's Miami relatives.

"This is not a topic for negotiation or legal wrangling in the hands of banal and corrupt judges such as those in Florida," said Alejandro González Galliano of Cuba's ministry of foreign relations.

Ricardo Alarcón, president of the Cuban parliament, told Cárdenas residents at a rally December 5, "We are demanding that they send him back immediately, because we have what is most important, moral force."

U.S. officials lead anti-Cuba campaign

Taking the lead in slandering the Cuban revolution, U.S. State Department spokesperson James Rubin asserted December 6, "When [people] are prepared to take the extraordinary risks and go around the safe, orderly, and legal process, it is a function of the terrible deprivations they live under in Cuba. The blame clearly lies squarely on Cuba's shoulders for creating the conditions and refusing to reform the country, and denying the human rights and economic conditions to these people."

A Miami rightist political funeral procession for seven of the drowned immigrants, called by the counterrevolutionary Radio Mambí, had a similar political point. "We want to show the world what some people go through to escape a brutal dictatorship," one rightist told the *Miami Herald*. The bodies were interred in the "Cuban Mausoleum" of Radio Mambí.

It's the U.S. government's policies, however, that encourage dangerous attempts to cross the Florida Straits by boat. Cubans who reach the United States by extralegal means are granted residency under the terms of the 1966 Cuban Adjustment Act. At the same time, Washington tightly restricts visas for those who wish to move to the United States. In 1994 and 1995 immigration accords with Havana, the U.S. government agreed to issue 20,000 visas a year, but has failed to live up to this pledge according to Cuban government officials.

A minority layer of Cubans have sought to get out from under the pressures of the economic crisis that is affecting not only Cuba but all of Latin America. Some decide to try to migrate to the United States without a visa in hopes of finding better economic conditions. A handful of these are opponents of the Cuban revolution.

The discussion in the working class, both in Cuba and in the US, including in Miami,

is not adequately reflected in public opinion polls on González's situation. At one garment plant in Opa Locka, this is the number one discussion. Many people agree that the father has the right to care for his young child, and some call for his repatriation, but others say that socialist Cuba offers the child "no future."

U.S. State Department officials said December 8 they would send representatives to meet with Juan Miguel González in Cuba, instead of insisting he travel to Miami, to discuss "an appropriate resolution."

But they still say he must prove his parentage, file U.S. immigration paperwork, and then wait for the INS to decide on his child's status.

That same day U.S. officials announced they are sending back to Cuba six individuals who allegedly hijacked a Cuban tourist boat to Florida at knifepoint December 6. Two crew members who were taken hostage were repatriated and the boat is also returned. Often in such cases the hijackers are granted U.S. residency, and hostages pressured to stay in the United States.

Eric Simpson is a member of the United Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Employees, Local 415.



December 7 rally in Havana demands return of Elián González to Cuba

Opponents of immigrant rights try to revive Proposition 187 in California

BY JIMALTENBERG

SAN FRANCISCO—Three months after California governor Gray Davis ended the state government's appeal of a court ruling striking down most of the provisions of California Proposition 187, sponsors of the anti-immigrant ballot measure announced that they are returning with a new edition of the law for placement on the ballot next year.

Under Proposition 187, which was approved in a 1994 referendum, so-called illegal immigrants were to be denied access to public education, health care, and other social services. The law required teachers, health-care workers, and others to turn in immigrants "suspected" of lacking papers documenting their right to live and work in the United States to the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) for deportation.

Ron Prince, one of the authors of 187, told reporters October 21 that he aims to ban the state from providing any benefits to immigrants without papers, emphasizing in particular prenatal care and public education. He also wants to require that the state government defend ballot measures in court, regardless of their legality.

Other anti-immigrant organizations, including the California Coalition for Immigration Reform and the Los Angeles-area Voice of Citizens Together, are seeking to enlist right-wing forces in a drive to recall the governor. They have attacked Davis not only for allowing 187 to die in court, but for establishing relations with Mexican president Ernesto Zedillo.

Anti-immigrant demagoguery

The 1994 election featured a demagogic political campaign by promoters of 187 that scapegoated immigrants for the declining conditions of life facing workers and the middle classes in California. This campaign was backed by sections of big business.

The campaign for 187 sought to convince working people and middle class residents to think of themselves first as "Americans," who have common interests that are threatened by immigrants, particularly those lacking legal U.S. residency papers. Pro-187 propaganda depicted undocumented immi-

grants as the cause of the increasing insecurity, unemployment, and shrinking public services that mark life in the capitalist United States at the end of the century. They pushed the lie that "illegal" immigrants "steal American jobs," and that their use of available government-funded schools, clinics, and other public services were the reason for high taxes.

The employers' nationalist appeal for protecting "our" jobs, "our" schools, "our country" from immigrants was echoed by union officials and other middle class political figures, including in Black, Asian, and even Latino communities, where a substantial minority voted in favor of 187. Polls taken on election day indicated that the percentage of workers who voted for 187 was similar to that of the other classes. Support for 187 could even be found among some immigrants themselves. The measure passed by a 59 percent margin.

Even capitalist politicians opposed to the measure argued for curbing the rights of immigrant workers. Many in the middle class, including organizations in the Black community and the trade union officialdom, proved themselves unable or unwilling to defend immigrant workers and answer the bosses' propaganda around Proposition 187, despite adopting a stance opposing it in resolutions and campaign material.

After the election, liberal opponents of the measure would claim that "voters" were "alienated" by the thousands of flags of Mexico and other countries carried in anti-187 demonstrations across California.

Nevertheless, large protests, involving tens of thousands of workers and young people, as well as subsequent actions after the election indicated that enforcing Proposition 187 would be far more difficult than winning votes for it at the polls. Garment workers and truck drivers in Los Angeles stopped work. High school students defied Los Angeles school administrators, cops, and city officials and walked out of class in protest of the measure.

These protests had a positive impact, even among workers who had backed the measure. Substantial debate over the issue continued among workers long after the elec-

tions. Moreover, thousands of immigrant workers and youth had entered into politics in the United States for the first time.

Since 1994, the bosses and their two political parties in California have deepened their attacks on hard-won social advances. Proposition 209, the so-called "California Civil Rights Initiative" that sought to prohibit all state affirmative action programs, was placed on the November 1996 ballot and adopted.

Two years later, supporters of another reactionary ballot measure, Proposition 227, which targeted bilingual education prominently featured Latino spokespeople. They urged an end to bilingual education—a gain particularly of the fight for Chicano rights—on grounds that children in bilingual classrooms were not being taught the English necessary for simply getting a job and succeeding in the United States.

Attempt to revive Proposition 187

After Proposition 187 was passed, opponents of the measure quickly challenged it in federal court. Last year, U.S. District Judge Mariana Pfaelzer ruled that 187 was unconstitutional because federal law overrides state authority in immigration matters. Pete Wilson, who was still governor of California at that time, tried to get this ruling overturned by a higher court, but in July of this year, the state's effort to keep 187 alive was ended.

Davis's 1998 campaign for governor pitched him as an opponent of 187. But after only three months in office Davis announced that he would not drop the state's effort to defend Proposition 187 in court, but instead would seek to mediate the issue with supporters of the measure.

This drew protests from his allies in the Democratic Party, particularly Latino politicians, who had stumped for Davis in communities where opposition to 187 was widespread.

Although mediation ultimately failed, Davis said that his agreement not to defend the law in court "essentially embraces the spirit of Proposition 187."

So far the attempt to revive the measure has not gained much momentum.

Overnite strikers win solidarity in battle for union recognition

Up to 2,000 truck drivers and loading dock workers have been on strike against Overnite Transportation since October 24. Their battle to win union recognition has won support from other members of the Teamsters union and other unions. Below are some of the latest reports from the picket line by *Militant* correspondents from terminals across the country.

BY DOUG JENNESS

BLAINE, Minnesota—Spirits were high among the 125 unionists and supporters who rallied here December 2 to demonstrate solidarity with striking Teamsters. The rally was held outside the gates of the Overnite truck terminal where strikers have been picketing round the clock every day.

The largest contingent was from Teamsters Local 120, which includes many truckers and warehouse workers in the Twin Cities area. Strikers were dispatched during the days before the action to take fliers to Teamsters-organized work sites. There were also small groups from the Service Employees International Union Local 284 and the Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees Local 17, which have been involved in union-organizing efforts in the metropolitan area.

A small group of Northwest Airlines workers, members of International Association of Machinists (IAM) Local 1833, also participated. About a dozen members of this local had come to the picket lines the morning before in a day of solidarity with the strikers.

Airline workers collected \$500 to contribute to the strikers and another \$100 was donated by the IAM local.

In addition to several strikers and Teamsters officials, Bernard Brommer, president of the Minnesota AFL-CIO, and U.S. congressmen Bruce Vento and William Luther spoke.

Following the short rally scores of unionists hung around to talk and to confront the scab trucks that were returning to the terminal. A recent injunction has limited pickets to four in the driveway, but for a while on the day of the rally a lot more workers gathered in and around the driveway.

One of the goals of the action was to try to crack the total blackout of news coverage by the local media. One TV station and the *Minneapolis Star Tribune* did give brief coverage to the event.

Overnite tries to violence-bait strikers

BY SUSAN LAMONT

BIRMINGHAM, Alabama—On December 1 a scab driver for Overnite Transportation was shot and wounded outside Mem-

phis, an important center in the union recognition fight. The scab driver, William Wonder, was from Evansville, Indiana. According to his report to the police, three shots were fired at his truck. One hit him in the stomach; the wound was not life-threatening.

"The company is trying to blame the union for what happened," reported Dennis Harris, a Memphis striker, in a December 5 telephone interview. "They are losing a lot of customers, so they're trying to make the union look bad. They thought the strikers would only last a few weeks. They didn't count on us being so determined. If they want to settle the strike, they're going to have to sign a contract."

"There is no evidence that this act is connected to the unfair labor practices strike at Overnite, as the company alleges," said Teamsters president James P. Hoffa in a December 1 news statement.

There have been numerous incidents of company-inspired violence against the strikers, the Teamsters reported in the same news release, including: Overnite employees carrying guns; knives pulled on union supporters; Overnite security running ambulatory pickets off the road; Overnite drivers driving out of gates at dangerous speeds; and scabs attacking strikers and inciting fistfights.

In late November someone fired a shot through the front door of the Teamsters Local 667 union hall in Memphis. The shotgun blast went through two doors and could have killed someone if they were behind the door, Harris said.

The FBI is investigating the shooting of the trucker, according to the December 3 *Memphis Commercial Appeal*. The company has also offered a \$1 million reward for information about the shooting.

Other Teamsters picket in Virginia to back union drive

BY JANICE LYNN AND MARY MARTIN

RICHMOND, Virginia—Daily picket lines have been set up outside the Overnite Trans-



Militant/Doug Jenness

Teamsters and other unionists at December 2 solidarity rally for Overnite strikers in Blaine, Minnesota.

portation terminal here by Teamsters members who are drivers for other freight carriers. They are showing solidarity with the nationwide strike at Overnite and sending a message to Overnite that the fight for union recognition is alive and well in Richmond.

Workers inside the Overnite terminal have not yet been able to vote on union recognition and face victimization by the bosses if they take up picket signs against the nonunion carrier. Overnite is the sixth-largest freight company in the country and the largest nonunion carrier.

Two *Militant* supporters who are also members of the Machinists union in Washington, D.C., made a second visit to the Richmond picket lines on December 1, the coldest day of the year on record.

We found a warm welcome for the solidarity, coffee, and copies of the *Militant* we brought with us.

Jim Smith, an 11-year driver and the picket line spokesperson for Teamsters Local 592, said, "The company is trying all kinds of tactics as a result of losing 40 percent of their business. See those empty Overnite trailers lined up? Normally they would not be sitting in this lot. Now see those other trailers with different company names on

them? Overnite has rented them so that they can go down the road with freight under a different name."

Smith also said that several area companies had suspended their use of Overnite trucks.

"Management is trying to single out people inside," he continued, "and make it look like there is no support for the union, but we're finding support is growing."

The Teamsters pickets were glad to hear that *Militant* supporters were on their way to distribute the paper with news on the Overnite fight to United Steelworkers of America (USWA) members at a nearby chemical plant to which Overnite delivers. At that plant gate, 13 USWA members bought the paper and several expressed interest in bringing up the Overnite strike at their next union meeting and discussing what kind of solidarity they could offer as they had done previously during the strike against the Newport News shipyard bosses.

Doug Jenness is a member of the USWA in Roseville, Minnesota. Susan LaMont is a member of the USWA in Birmingham, Alabama. Janice Lynn and Mary Martin are members of the IAM in Washington, D.C.

Indiana foundry workers end strike

BY HARVEY McARTHUR

AUBURN, Indiana—Striking workers at the Auburn Foundry here voted November 21 to accept the company's harsh terms and end their six-month walkout. The vote was 198 to 79 to accept the deal proposed

by international officials of their union, the Glass, Molders, Pottery, Plastics and Allied Workers International Union (GMP).

Auburn Foundry is a major producer of gray-iron castings for the auto and appliance industries. The 675 members of GMP Local 322 walked out May 3.

The bosses agreed to call back 150 of the strikers within six months, and to take back all those remaining by the end of the four-year contract, May 2, 2003. The company will keep the 490 strikebreakers hired during the strike, as well as 190 former GMP members who broke ranks and returned to work. Auburn Foundry's two plants here will remain union shops, although none of the scabs now working there will be required to join the union.

The company and union also agreed to drop all legal charges against each other, including unfair labor practice charges the GMP had filed with the National Labor Relations Board, and charges the company had filed against some strikers for alleged violations of court orders restricting picketing.

"Some people wanted to stay out because they thought we could get more if we did," said striker Larry Chapman in explaining the November 21 vote. "But the International officials told us this was our last chance; that we'd all be out of a job if we didn't accept this deal."

One week after the agreement was reached, only five strikers had actually been called back to work.

"We face a long hard time, working to rebuild the union from inside the plant again," said striker George Paul.

The strikers faced a company determined to break their resistance. The bosses started hiring strikebreakers within days of the start

of the walkout. Strikers responded with sizeable, determined picket lines. On May 29, however, the company got a court to limit the union to two persons at each picket site.

Strikers also reported incidents of harassment and physical attacks by the security cops hired by Auburn Foundry and by some scabs. On September 20 a picket shanty was firebombed; no one was on the picket line at the time. A few weeks later, the same shanty was burned to the ground.

The GMP organized several marches and rallies during the strike, drawing support from hundreds of workers in the region. In August members of the United Steelworkers of America (USWA) Local 634 at the nearby Cooper Engineering plant launched weekly picket-line rallies in support of the strike. USWA members also backed the pickets by honking their horns when driving by.

The Steelworkers called for a bigger rally later in August, seeking support from unions in northern Indiana, Ohio, and Michigan. Auburn police, however, soon cracked down on the strike supporters, issuing tickets to those honking their horns and bringing charges against union officials, allegedly for violating the court restraining order. Under this pressure, union officials called off the projected march.

After several negotiating sessions in mid-August, GMP officials said they had reached agreement on most issues in the contract. But the bosses still insisted on keeping all the strikebreakers it had hired. On August 28, strikers voted 344 to 4 to reject a company proposal that would have allowed 100 strikers to return to work within 30 days.

Harvey McArthur is a member of the United Food and Commercial Workers in Chicago.

from Pathfinder

The Changing Face of U.S. Politics
Working-Class Politics and the Trade Unions
Jack Barnes

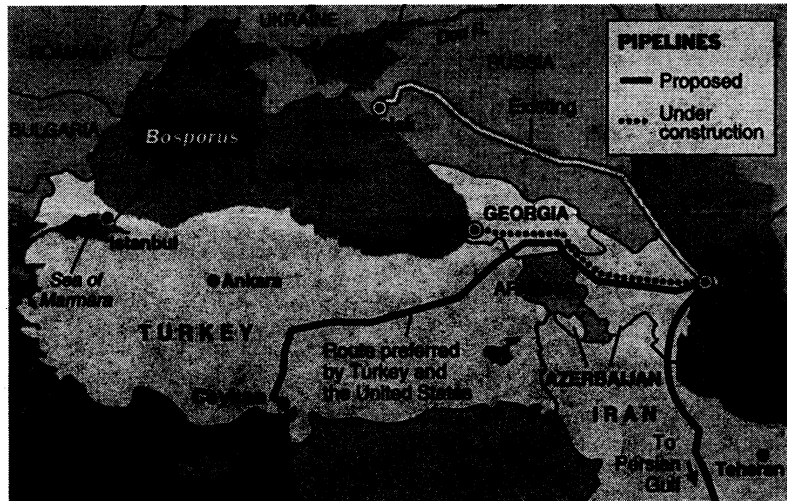
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The story of the 686-day strike in which a rank-and-file resistance by Machinists prevented Eastern's union-busting onslaught from becoming the road to a profitable nonunion airline. \$9.95

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Moscow prepares siege of Chechen capital



As part of their longer-term goal of overthrowing the Russian workers state, the U.S. rulers are driving to weaken Moscow's influence in the Caucasus. Among other things, the imperialists want to get their hands on the region's oil wealth. Map shows existing oil pipeline running through Russia and Chechnya. Washington has signed a deal with Georgia, Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, and Turkey to construct a pipeline further south, which would bypass Russia and end at the port of Ceyhan in Turkey.

Continued from front page

urged an investigation of "Russia's tactics in Chechnya... to let Russia's leaders and generals know that no one should be immune from prosecution for such atrocities."

The U.S. rulers' policy toward Moscow is driven by their aim to overturn the Russian workers state and reimpose capitalist property relations there.

As part of this, Washington is seeking to expand its influence in the Caucasus, including with a recently signed oil pipeline deal. Those interests shape the Clinton administration's positions in relation to Chechnya.

The Russian officer corps is adamant about retaking Grozny, the city from which they were expelled during the 1994-96 Chechen war for independence. "Grozny is a symbol of the Russian military's humiliation during the earlier war, and Russia's generals show every sign of wanting it back," the *New York Times* reported November 29.

Some 100,000 Russian soldiers have been sent to Chechnya and more than 60 towns and villages are now occupied by the Russian military. Tens of thousands of troops surround about 80 percent of Grozny. Fighting has intensified as Chechen rebel forces in Grozny, Argun, and Urus-Martan put up stiff resistance to the Russian military.

Grozny, which was devastated in the first war from continuous bombing and shelling, has been pummeled by Russian warplanes, helicopters, and artillery batteries. Russian deputy prime minister Nikolai Koshman, appointed as the Kremlin's chief administrator in the Russian-occupied territory, said Chechnya's capital would probably be transferred to Gudermes, the second largest city, where a shoot-on-sight nighttime curfew is in effect.

Koshman said the Russian government would be in no hurry to rebuild Grozny after destroying it. "We can think about reconstructing Grozny in the future, if the situation warrants it," he declared.

More than 4,000 people have died so far in Moscow's bloody assault, and at least 220,000 people have been driven from their homes in Chechnya into the neighboring republic of Ingushetia and elsewhere. About 50,000 people remain in Grozny, where 250,000 used to live.

Washington presses for 'reforms'

Washington and its imperialist allies are using Moscow's brutal onslaught to press the Yeltsin regime to adopt laws that would remove restrictions on capitalist investors. Michel Camdessus, the director of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), declared in late November, "The violent military campaign in Chechnya is creating very negative reactions against Russia in the world." Camdessus announced December 7 that the imperialist financial institution would continue to delay a \$640 million loan to Russia until the Kremlin adopts bankruptcy laws that would protect capitalist investments and enforce payments for electricity, natural gas, and rail-freight services.

Meanwhile, the Clinton administration may order the Export-Import Bank, a U.S. government trade agency, to hold up a \$500 million loan to Russia's Tyumen Oil Company, which is involved in a "nasty dispute" with BP-Amoco over control of another Russian oil enterprise, London's *Financial Times* reported December 7.

Washington has taken other recent steps to squeeze the Kremlin and weaken its influence in the Caucasus region. During the November 17-18 summit of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Istanbul, Turkey, Clinton lectured Yeltsin to seek "a political dialogue and a political settlement" on Chechnya. While in Istanbul the

U.S. president oversaw the signing of an agreement between the governments of Turkey, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, and Georgia to build a \$2.4 billion pipeline that would send oil from the Caspian Sea to Turkey and bypass the existing pipeline, which goes through Chechnya. Another deal was concluded to pipe gas from fields in Turkmenistan to Turkey.

"These pipelines will be an insurance policy for the entire world by helping to ensure our energy resources pass through multiple routes instead of a single chokepoint," crowed Clinton.

The pipeline negotiations are just one aspect of Washington's efforts to establish political domination in the region. In 1997 the Pentagon conducted military exercises in Kazakhstan that included U.S. troops and soldiers from Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Kyrgyzstan—former Soviet republics on Russia's southern flank.

Moscow gains in Chechen war

Moscow has been more successful in its current attempt to crush the Chechen struggle for independence than in the 1994-96 war. The Russian military has been advancing behind a line of heavy bombardment. During the previous war Moscow's losses were huge and widely reported in Russian press at a time when the army was underfed and sometimes not paid. The military campaign became deeply unpopular among broad layers of work-

ing people and others in Russia. Chechen residents mobilized to appeal—often successfully—to the Russian soldiers not to shoot.

Over the last several months, the Kremlin has waged a propaganda campaign that has gained some sympathy among Russian citizens. The regime claims that Chechen independence fighters are "bandits," "international terrorists," and "Islamic fundamentalists" who are to blame for a series of bombings in apartments that killed more than 300 people in several Russian cities last September. The government has produced no evidence that Chechens were involved, and no one has claimed responsibility for the explosions.

There is also less political support among Chechen workers and peasants for the Chechen guerrillas who are fighting today, as well as for the president of Chechnya. The Russian media has linked the Chechen insurgents to kidnappings and demands for ransom.

Moscow's war in the Caucasus is rooted in the Stalinist counterrevolution in the Soviet Union more than 70 years ago. The bureau-

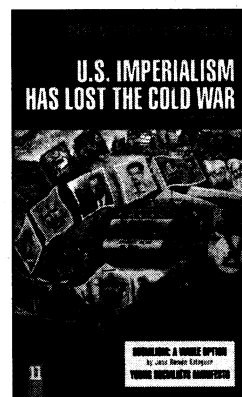
cratic caste that emerged in the 1920s usurped power and trampled on the rights of peoples who had been oppressed under the tsarist empire. The Bolshevik policy of voluntary federation and the championing of self-determination of oppressed nations led by V.I. Lenin was reversed.

The Yeltsin regime is trying to stanch the inevitable uprisings for self-determination and independence among the peoples in the Caucasus. But the resistance to Russian chauvinism won't go away.

"Even if you can suppress this problem by force for one year, for two years, it will arise again at a future date," said Ruslan Aushev, president of Ingushetia and a former officer in the Soviet army.

"Every Chechen thinks about their own nationality, their own language, and their own culture," he asserted. "The probability that they will ever live as subjects of the Russian federation is very small."

This will be true as long as the Russian federation is not voluntary.



In *New International* no. 11

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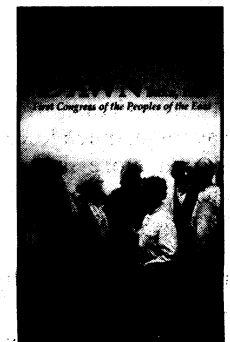
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Clinton administration targets social wage

The selection below is from "Capitalism's Deadly World Disorder," a talk presented by Socialist Workers Party national secretary Jack Barnes to a regional socialist educational conference in Greensboro, North Carolina, in April 1993. The talk and discussion that followed appear as the third chapter in *Capitalism's World Disorder: Working-Class Politics at the Millennium*. The book is copyright © 1999 by Pathfinder Press, reprinted by permission. Subheadings are by the *Militant*.

BY JACK BARNES

The rulers try to convince people... that the conditions faced by the elderly are not the problem of the middle-aged or the young. The capitalist does not care about the first thirteen years of workers' lives; then he cares about our ability to work hard for the next fifty years; then he hopes we die quickly. That coarse attitude is what the rulers try to get layers of the working population to accept as well.

The most revealing explanations of what the bipartisan assault on Social Security is

from the pages of

Capitalism's World Disorder

all about are those made by some of the more boldly forthright statisticians and economists. They say: when we passed Social Security legislation in the mid-1930s, when we conceded to the rising industrial union movement there was a need for it, we never expected to have to pay out most of it, because average life expectancy in the United States was lower than the retirement age of sixty-five. (Yes, lower, by about five years on average, much lower than that for workers, and more than ten years lower for Blacks.) But now workers live some ten years longer than retirement age, on average. So our lifespan has become a big problem for the rulers. Why won't you people face this? the "experts" ask.

Read their economic articles; read their debates and arguments about the Social Security fund. This is the capitalists' complaint. To them, Social Security was a concession. It might ameliorate some problems that could otherwise become destabilizing, but they never intended for workers to live off it for very long. The insurance specialists, the actuaries had it all figured out: Look at the averages, they said; few will get much of anything for more than a year or two. We can handle that; don't worry.

Workers had a different view. For us, Social Security was the beginning of the attempt to moderate the dog-eat-dog competition imposed on the working class under capitalism. Social Security was an initial step by our class—by those who produce wealth—toward conquering the social organization of conditions necessary for life, such as education and health care, for a lifetime. Workers think of each other in terms of a lifetime. We cannot think of each other the way capitalists think of us. We cannot make ourselves think of other human beings as though they do not exist up to the age of thirteen or after the age of sixty-five. That is not how workers function. We have a different class view, a different moral view of society. Elementary human solidarity is in our interests, not in conflict with them.

Battle for Social Security

For the working class, there is no real Social Security that does not cover the entire lifetime of a worker. For the working class, there is no real education that is not

lifetime education.

That is what the battle for Social Security was and remains. It was never just about pensions. What we won in 1935, with all its inadequacies, nonetheless encompassed the first federal-guaranteed universal unemployment benefits and the first guaranteed disability compensation. It established the Aid to Families with Dependent Children program that politicians in both parties are talking today about dumping.¹ Out of the Black rights battles of the 1950s and early 1960s, the working class won the extension of Social Security to include health benefits like Medicare for the elderly and Medicaid for workers with very low incomes.

To the political vanguard of the working class, Social Security has always been about the battle to bring all welfare payments, all medical claims, all supplemental payments for education and child care into a comprehensive, nationwide, government-guaranteed entitlement. That is why the term "the social wage" is a useful one. We are talking about something that goes beyond the wage any individual worker receives from an employer. We are talking about something that the working class and labor movement fight to establish as social rights for all.

But for the capitalists, Social Security was about making the smallest concessions necessary. It was about looking at actuarial tables to make sure that payments would never take much out of their potential profits or reduce their power over a divided and insecure working class. That is how the exploiters still look at it.

Workers should never present today's crisis of the propertied classes and their social system as primarily an economic crisis. No, it is the great political and moral crisis of our time. It is proof that only the working class has a chance to resolve this crisis and begin transforming society in a truly human way. Because only the working class, the propertyless class, has no interest in turning like dogs on any of the victims of the crisis-ridden capitalist system.

That is why the battle for jobs, the battle for solidarity, the battle against racism and the oppression of women, the battle against immigrant-bashing, the battle for social protection—why all these are a battle for the life and death of the labor movement. They are the battle for the time and space to prepare a socialist revolution! That is what is at stake in pulling the working class together.

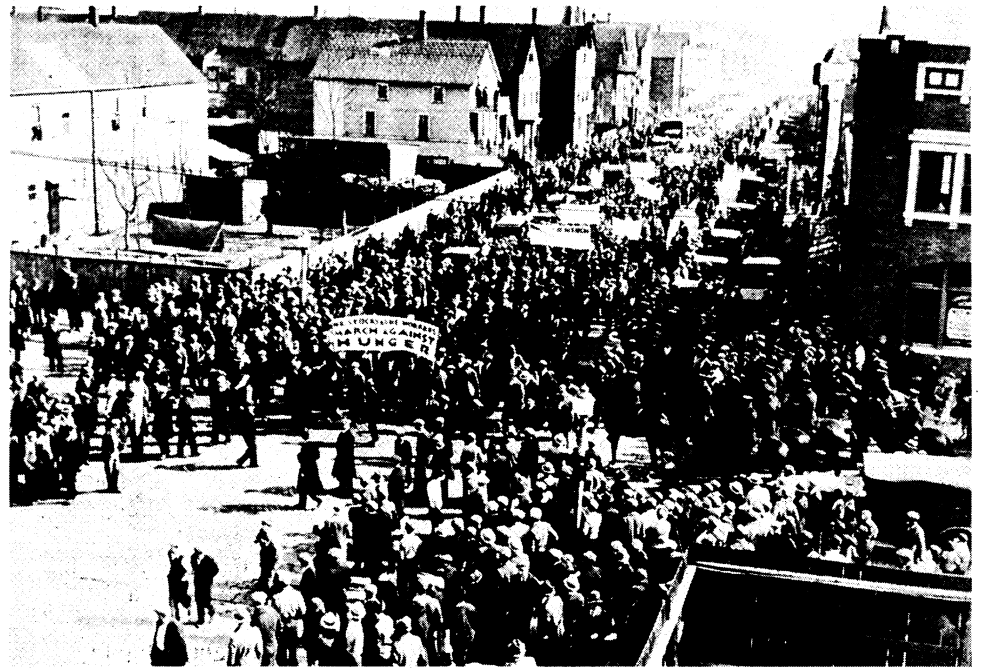
Consider the political implications of the capitalists' assault on entitlements here in the United States over the past decade or so. Thinking workers must explain this to other working people: "Look at what they're doing to our class. Look at what they're doing to the social wage, to the entitlements we have fought for and won. Our class is under assault. They're pitting us against each other and tearing us apart."

The stakes for free labor

The working class is being torn apart in the plants, too—literally. There are industries where thousands of immigrant workers and other workers who have become desperate for a job offer their limbs in exchange for a weekly wage. That is the bargain in more and more meatpacking plants in this country. The frequency of carpal tunnel and other repetitive motion injuries is staggering. Normal use of hands, shoulders, necks, vertebrae, and tendons is lost—sometimes forever. Not to mention injuries from knives and machinery. It is not just selling your labor power; it is selling life and limb.

The working class fought bloody battles over the last two centuries, as industrial capitalism expanded, to make sure we would not face these kinds of conditions as a norm. We built unions and fought to end all forms of physical bondage. We fought for laws that took away the "right" for anyone to sell themselves—or any little piece of themselves. It was working people who fought for this: for human beings not to be treated like commodities....

The exploiters under crisis conditions always attempt to push back the clock of history. It was only a little more than a century ago that chattel slavery was swept away in the Civil War, the second American revolu-



"Hunger March" by packinghouse workers in Chicago, 1930s. Battle for social security was and remains a fight for lifetime entitlements to protect working class.

tion. The door was opened to a vast expansion of free labor, on the land and in the factories. Under the momentum of the political reaction following the defeat of Radical Reconstruction, however, the capitalists pushed back rural labor in the U.S. South toward forms of peonage. That was part of the social counterrevolution that imposed Jim Crow segregation on the oppressed Black nationality and left the toilers of this country weakened and divided. It took the rise of the industrial union movement and then the mass Black rights battles in this century to begin reversing the consequences of that historic setback.

This is what the broader historic struggle for Social Security is all about. It is about whether workers have a lifetime right to medical care; to workers' compensation if we are injured; to unemployment insurance for as long as needed. It is part and parcel of the fight for affirmative action to combat racist and antiwoman discrimination, so we can unite our class and strengthen the labor movement. It is about the fight to ensure jobs for all; to raise the wages and shorten the hours of the working class; and to defend health and safety on and off the job.

It is a fight to keep the capitalists from tearing the working class apart.

¹ Acting on his 1992 campaign pledge "to end welfare as we know it" and "move people from welfare to work," Clinton in the fall of 1996 signed into law the bipartisan "Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act," eliminating federally guaranteed Aid for Families with Dependent Children. AFDC payments were replaced by federal "block grants" to each individual state—a shift that both reduced the overall funds for such payments, and transferred to state governments the power to disburse. The so-called welfare reform act also cut off food stamps and Medicaid to many working people.

In early 1999 Clinton boasted that welfare rolls in the United States were down 44 percent from 1994, failing to mention that up to 50 percent of those denied payments had no jobs at all and the majority of the rest were employed at makework jobs paying minimum wage with no benefits. A federal study released in early 1999 also revealed that one-quarter of the \$12 billion allotted to state governments for welfare payments in 1998 had actually been used for other purposes.

In his remarks during the 1996 Senate debate on the legislation, Democratic senator Daniel Moynihan of New York said that the Clinton proposal "is not 'welfare reform,' it is 'welfare repeal.' It is the first step in dismantling the social contract that has been in place in the United States since at least the 1930's. Do not doubt that Social Security itself, which is to say insured retirement benefits, will be next." In fact, politicians in both big-business parties—from the Clinton administration, to the Republican leadership in Congress—are increasingly preparing the ground to erode the universal and federally financed character of pensions. To rationalize this course, the employing class is promoting the notion that the Social Security system will be bankrupted early in the next century unless working people and worse-off layers of the middle class recognize that they cannot depend on federal pensions to make it through retirement—and must "supplement" these payments through private savings and investment accounts that they finance themselves, and for which they must individually bear the "market risk."

—25 AND 50 YEARS AGO—



December 13, 1974

Having failed to break the strike of 3,000 waterworks personnel by jailing their leaders, the Puerto Rican government called out the National Guard Nov. 28, using acts of sabotage against the government-run water system as a pretext.

The strike against the Autoridad de Acueductos y Alcantarillados (AAA—Aqueducts and Sewers Authority) began Oct. 30 in defiance of a court injunction. On Nov. 4 a jail sentence of 30 days was handed down against 11 strike leaders for violating the court order.

However, the workers refused to participate in any negotiations while their leaders were in jail, and a general strike was threatened by the Puerto Rican labor movement.

On Nov. 8 the sentencing judge backed down and released the 11 union leaders, giving them five days to negotiate an end to the strike or face imprisonment once more. When the deadline ran out without a settlement, Governor Rafael Hernández Colón chose to pardon the 11 rather than face the prospect of a general strike.

The new attack on the AAA strikers parallels the action of Hernández Colón in July 1973, when the guard was called out against

striking firemen and electrical workers.



December 12, 1949

For once the Associated Press hit the nail on the head when its dispatch on the presidential elections in Colombia said that the "Conservatives named Laureano Gómez President."

The "election" of Gómez was truly a one-party affair run from beginning to end by the ruling Conservative Party. After the Liberal Party once again got a majority in both Congress and Senate in last June's congressional election, the Conservatives realized they had no chance to win the presidency in a free election.

They therefore prepared for last month's election by launching a campaign of terror, murder, burning and destruction of whole villages and small communities where the Liberals had a strong following. Then, without consulting Congress, the Conservatives, through the President, declared martial law a few weeks before election day under the pretext that there was a state of "undeclared civil war." This move abolished all constitutional guarantees, imposed a drastic censorship on the opposition press and prohibited political gatherings.

December 20, 1999 The Militant 13

from Pathfinder

TEAMSTER POLITICS

How rank-and-file Teamsters led the fight against antiunion frame-ups and assaults by fascist goons; the battle for jobs for all; the fight for cash relief for the unemployed; and efforts to advance independent labor political action. \$17.95

Available from bookstores, including those listed on page 12.

Independence for Puerto Rico!

The expanding struggle to get the U.S. Navy out of the island of Vieques has given a powerful boost to the fight to end Puerto Rico's colonial subjugation to Washington—the root of the problem.

The U.S. government blinked in the face sustained protests demanding the Pentagon stop using Vieques for bombing practice. After insisting for weeks that the *USS Eisenhower* battle group must rapidly hold training exercises there, the Clinton administration backed down; the troops will train elsewhere. At the same time, the U.S. president stressed Washington's intent to continue using the Puerto Rican island for target practice for at least five more years. In response, protesters in the resistance camps on Vieques and throughout Puerto Rico and many U.S. cities are redoubling their efforts.

The massive desire among workers, farmers, fishermen, and young people for the U.S. Navy to leave Vieques—now, not down the road—is a part of the growing radicalization and anticolonial sentiment, especially among a new generation of Puerto Ricans. The battle over Vieques follows the general strike last year against the sell-off of the state-owned phone company, as well as the campaign that earlier this year won the release of 11 of the 17 *independentista* political prisoners held in U.S. jails.

Under the pressure of this growing movement, increasing numbers of bourgeois politicians, in both Puerto Rico and the United States, are jumping on the Vieques bandwagon. They want working people to believe we all share a "consensus" over goals and interests. But as with all political questions, this one is divided along class lines. The pro-capitalist forces are intervening to try to divert the struggle from an anticolonial and anti-imperialist direction. They seek to draw people into the fold of accepting Washington's rule, whether in the current form (euphemistically called a "commonwealth") or through U.S. statehood. They urge backroom lobbying and reliance on capitalist politicians when mass action is what's necessary.

In New York, one demonstration was called on anniversary of the World War II bombing of Pearl Harbor with a leaflet stating, "Tell the U.S. Navy to remember Pearl Harbor." This is a pro-war, pro-U.S. military slogan designed to appeal to Demo-

cratic Party politicians. Its proponents argue that it will "broaden" participation, but it is a slogan that stands in total contradiction to the main demand of the action: "U.S. Navy out of Vieques."

The struggle for Puerto Rico's sovereignty strengthens resistance to U.S. imperialism around the world. U.S. Congresswoman Tillie Fowler, no friend of the independence struggle, captured this point when she complained that Clinton's weakness on Vieques would encourage residents in Okinawa, Japan, to step up their long struggle against U.S. bases on their land.

The common enemy of the Puerto Rican people, and of workers and farmers in the United States, is Washington. Teamsters striking against Overnite Transportation, farmers defending their right to land and against government foreclosures, fellow bat-tlers for the unification of Ireland and the independence of Quebec, and others can be won to championing this struggle. Every blow by Puerto Rican fighters to the boss class responsible for bombing Vieques is also a blow to the same ruling class whose never-ending drive for profits results in worsening conditions on the job. Those fighting to get the Navy out of Vieques should oppose U.S. military and other imperialist interventions around the world, from Yugoslavia to Colombia, and demand U.S. troops get out of Okinawa, Puerto Rico, and everywhere else.

The struggle to get the U.S. Navy out of Vieques "has strengthened the independence movement," noted *independentista* leader Rafael Cancel Miranda. The latest round in the battle "helped open the eyes of many people who have had illusions in the U.S. government. The people are saying 'Leave Vieques,' but they [Washington] are the ones who have control over our country." This makes it a bit easier to argue the case that independence from U.S. rule is not only a nice ideal, but a necessity for the Puerto Rican people to determine their own destiny.

The independence movement has taken the moral high ground, playing a leading role in this struggle, and gaining in attractiveness. The wavering of the Clinton administration shows that yes, indeed, ordinary working people can stand up to the mightiest imperialist power on earth and push it back.

Not one more bomb! U.S. Navy out of Vieques! Independence for Puerto Rico!

Quebecois will decide own future

The Canadian government's proposed legislation to impose terms for the next referendum on Quebec's sovereignty is a clear assault on the right of the Quebecois to self-determination.

Workers on picket lines, farmers demanding government aid, Native people across Canada fighting for their national rights, and all defenders of democratic rights should stand as one in condemning Ottawa's attempt to impose conditions on the nationally oppressed Quebecois. These include the outrageously undemocratic demand that only a pro-sovereignty vote significantly above a majority would be considered legitimate.

Ottawa's initiative reflects the fear of Canada's ruling capitalist families—not fear of the bourgeois nationalist Parti Quebecois government in Quebec City, but of the fighting example set by the toilers in Quebec for the working class as a whole. As the Pathfinder book *Capitalism's World Disorder: Working-Class Politics at the Millennium* explains, the ruling class has been incapable "despite all their efforts over decades, to put a lid on resistance to national oppression and demands for independence by the French-speaking majority in Quebec."

Well over two decades ago, the demand for an independent Quebec became the rallying cry of the most determined fighters against national oppression—threatening the stable rule of the Canadian bourgeoisie. The sight of thousands of Quebecois youth in the streets representing a new generation of fighters chanting, "We want a country," during the 1995 sovereignty referendum again struck terror in the hearts of the ruling rich.

Ottawa's initiative has divided federalist politicians. New

Democratic Party leader Alexa McDonough issued a declaration on behalf of the NDP premiers of British Columbia, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba criticizing the tactics of the Chrétien government for "fanning the flames of separatism." The NDP hypocritically claims to support the right of Quebec to determine its own affairs, but has a decades-long history of coming down foursquare on the side of Ottawa against the "separatists" in defense of "Canadian unity."

Using the opening provided by Ottawa and the social democracy, right-wing Reform Party leader Preston Manning raised the stakes by proposing Ottawa hold its own referendum to legitimize the partitioning of Quebec by Ottawa in the event of a sovereigntist victory.

Class-conscious workers, exploited farmers, and rebellious youth across the country should stand shoulder to shoulder with those circulating petitions and buttons insisting that "50 percent plus one is enough." We need to detail how the fight for Quebec's independence is a fight for elementary justice and equality. We need to patiently explain to fighting workers and youth across the country that we have no stake in saving "Canada," which from its beginnings has been a prison house of nationalities and a source of profits for the superrich.

Winning the most determined fighters in our unions, working farmers, and students to the fight for Quebec's independence is a precondition for forging the unity we need for the fight to replace capitalist political power in Ottawa with a workers and farmers government that will defend the rights of all those who today face oppression at the hands of Ottawa.

Labor must fight for job safety

The November 24 fire and explosion at the Titan Tire plant in Des Moines, Iowa, where 670 members of United Steelworkers of America Local 164 are waging a hard-fought strike, was the result of the downsizing, cost-cutting, and speed-up that capitalist employers everywhere are seeking to impose on working people. (See coverage in the December 13 issue.)

Local 164 striker Denny Wicker commented that Titan's "safety record wasn't good when we were in there, and now [as strikebreakers staff the plant] it's gone all to hell."

The Titan fire, in which one worker was killed, is far from an isolated incident. Recently workers around the United States have been killed in railroad collisions, mining accidents, and other on-the-job incidents. And when there's a disaster in the air, such as the recent EgyptAir crash that killed 217 passengers and airline workers, government officials and the media float groundless claims of terrorism, sabotage, or even suicide—anything but admit that the bosses' neglect of safety is most likely to blame.

Under the pressures of sagging profit margins and intensified competition, the capitalist exploiters worldwide are driven to try to push back the clock of history, reimposing conditions workers fought against for two centuries. More and more, work-

ers risk life and limb as job conditions deteriorate.

Worsening job safety is a pressing moral challenge to the labor movement. The class collaborationism of the union officialdom—its complicity with the employers' attempts to foster divisions among workers—breeds among some a cynical attitude of "I don't give a damn" about dangers on the job.

The union tops also cripple the fight for safety with their economic nationalism. They attack the importation of "unsafe" foodstuffs and decry increased truck traffic from Mexico, claiming these drivers bring danger to "American" roadways. In fact, we need look no further than the U.S. packinghouses and the U.S. trucking and rail industries for gross violations of health and safety regulations.

Working people cannot rely on government "safety" agencies. Only workers and a fighting union movement can wage a successful struggle to advance safety on the job.

In September rallies organized by the United Mine Workers of America drew thousands of retired and working coal miners and their families in a deepening fight to defend lifetime health care as the coal bosses seek to evade their responsibilities. These actions mark the beginning of a new social movement in the coalfields; they are a good example of what labor must do.

WTO talks

Continued from Page 9

walking out of the jail that evening, released on their own recognizance under an agreement with city lawyers.

Initially the mayor and police won some support for their violent methods. A small group of demonstrators identifying themselves as anarchists handed them a political justification on a plate. Starting in the morning November 30, they broke from other demonstrators and went on a spree of vandalism, targeting shop windows and setting fires in trash cans. Looting took place. Many other protesters tried to stop the incidents, and often faced retaliation from the police, who targeted any protesters as the black-clad perpetrators kept on the move. Businesses are claiming that \$1.5 million worth of damage was done.

One anarchist who supported those who carried out the vandalism told the media, "We came here to protest the WTO, and to protest homelessness and the neglect of people." Some claimed to target companies such as Starbucks for their exploitation of labor. No one, however, claimed that they talked to the workers inside these stores.

Scott Breen, a member of the Machinists union who works at Boeing, reported that on December 1 during discussions in the morning with his co-workers, a number of them tended to support the police actions. The anarchists' actions had provided the police with an opening to crack down, argued Breen, but the cops were looking for such a pretext to step up their repression.

After the police riot on later that night, the mood shifted significantly. As details of the cop actions accumulated, workers started to discuss their own experiences of police brutality. The violence had backfired on its authors, and the cops used more restraint in the days that followed.

Fallout for the rulers in the city continues. On December 7 police chief Norman Stamper announced his resignation. Mayor Schell, asked by reporters whether he would follow suit, said, "I am not going to step down."

Socialists: Drop the charges!

Speakers at a December 4 Militant Labor Forum condemned the police violence. "All those who have been imprisoned should be released, and the charges dropped," said Chris Rayson, who campaigned earlier this year as the Socialist Workers' candidate for the office of Port Commissioner in Seattle. Elena Tate from the Young Socialists joined Rayson on the speakers' platform. In her remarks she described incidents of police violence.

The meeting drew around 50 people. Many of them participated in sales of Pathfinder books and the socialist periodicals *Militant* and *Perspectiva Mundial*. Around 40 volunteers joined sales teams at one time or other during the week.

Working out of the offices of the Socialist Workers Party in Seattle, they carried out a highly successful propaganda offensive. Discussing and selling Pathfinder's newest titles, *Capitalism's World Disorder* and *Making History*, they explained why working people and young fighters need to reject the economic nationalism that characterized the protests. The socialist campaigners promoted a working-class, internationalist course. They explained that capitalism, in its normal workings, gives birth to the crimes of unemployment, homelessness, and environmental degradation.

Working people should call for the abolition of bodies like the WTO, the socialists explained, as part of targeting the imperialist powers, their governments, and their military forces that defend the borders on which they are based.

Tate and Rayson took up these themes during the lively discussion at the forum. One young participant expressed sympathy for the energy of those who had battled it out with the cops. Tate responded by referring to sections of *Capitalism's World Disorder: Working-Class Politics at the Millennium* in explaining why class-conscious workers never take irresponsible individual action that endangers their co-fighters.

Rayson recommended the Pathfinder pamphlet *An Action Program to Confront the Coming Economic Crisis*, which puts forward concrete demands to combat unemployment and to cancel the Third World debt. Such demands, he said, "can be fought for equally no matter what country you happen to be in. And they help to direct the fire of working people at the capitalist class and its government."

Tomato workers strike for a union in Arizona

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

We invite you to contribute short items to this column as a way for other fighting workers around the world to read about and learn from these important struggles. Jot down a few lines about what is happening in your union, at your workplace, or other workplaces in your area, including interesting political discussions.

WILLCOX, Arizona—Fed up with their working conditions, 250 tomato workers walked out of the hothouses and packing plants of Bonita Nurseries, Inc., a Eurofresh subsidiary, here November 12.

About 80 of the workers at Bonita Nurseries are prisoners from nearby Fort Grant State Prison, who receive \$2 an hour.

Strikers said Eurofresh began hiring replacement workers right after the strike started.

During the strike dozens of Graham County police cars were parked beside the company's main gate. On Thursday, November 18, a regular payday, about 150 strikers accompanied by four UFCW representatives went inside the plant gate to demand their pay checks.

Sheriff's deputies tried to lock the strikers inside and called for backup. They arrested the four UFCW representatives and an *Arizona Daily Star* reporter on charges of trespassing and inciting to riot.

Company officials finally brought the checks and a letter rescinding the change in work plan

threatened, "We will strike!" If the mediation board were to respond in a timely and neutral manner, the 30-day period would expire at the end of December, when air travel is at its peak. But few observers predict that will happen.

Major issues for the flight attendants, who have been working under an expired contract nearly three years, are pay, pensions, and numerous other work and benefit items. They oppose the pay parity scheme, which would base rates on a formula of pay and benefits at other competing airlines. Three other major unionized work groups have now accepted this setup and company tops are pushing for the AFA to "get on the bandwagon."

Picketing the Los Angeles airport November 24, flight attendant Karin Morris told the *Militant*, "I've never seen our group so militant. People are ready to strike if necessary." Strike ballots have been sent out and will be counted by December 20, according to the AFA.

At the Philadelphia airport more than 50 flight attendants were joined by representatives of United Food and Commercial Workers Union Local 1776, as well as by several members of Teamsters Local 107, which includes strikers at the Overnite Transportation terminal in Bensalem, Pennsylvania.

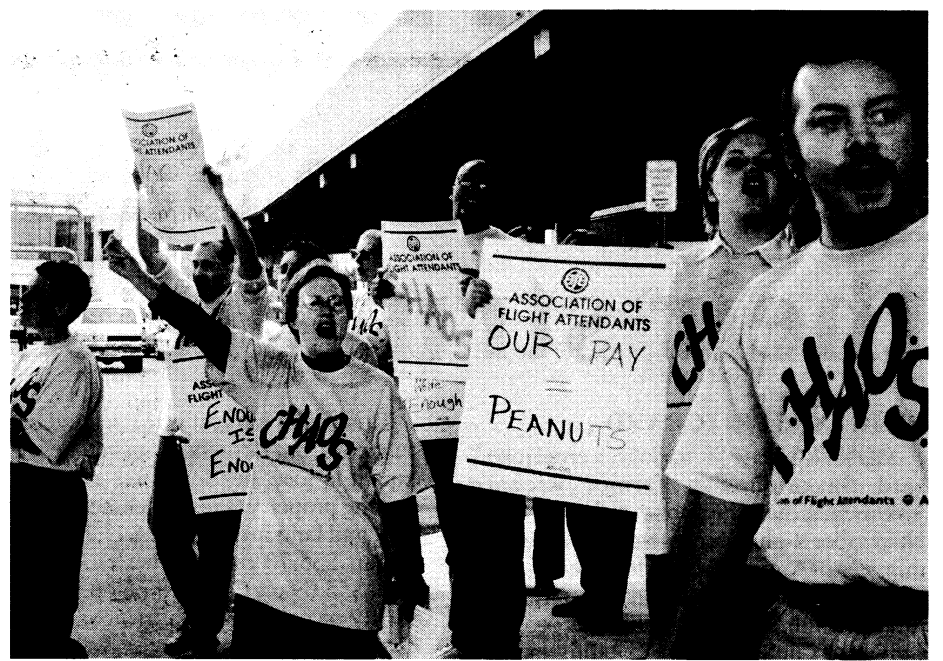
Police and airport officials kept the pickets isolated at either end of the airport entrances.

"It's just like they do with us at the strike picket line," noted Teamster Jim Milligan. "What's happened to our rights?" Strikers in Bensalem have been continually harassed by the sheriff's department, including an order that they remove a lean-to they had put up to protect pickets from the cold.

Montreal: paperworkers demand plant reopen

MONTREAL—Nearly 400 demonstrators, more than 250 of them from Chandler, Quebec, rallied here November 26, to demand the reopening of Abitibi Consolidated's Gaspésia paper mill in their town.

Chandler is a small community on the south shore of the Gaspé Peninsula, about 600 miles east of



Militant/Nancy Cole

US Airways flight attendants picket at Philadelphia airport November 24

ON THE PICKET LINE

They were soon joined by another 100 workers. The strikers, most of whom are Mexican, asked the United Food and Commercial Workers Union (UFCW) to help and vowed to fight until the company recognized them as union.

The walkout was ignited by a new pay structure announced November 12 that would increase the workload for less pay. Two workers, Jesús García and Rito Gutiérrez, told *Militant* correspondents they spent all day explaining to company officials that the new work requirements were impossible to meet. When the company stated that those workers who could not keep up with the new pace should leave, García and Gutiérrez rallied the other workers to walk out.

Strikers said they are not allowed to go to the bathroom freely. They have to share drinking water bottles, which spreads illnesses. Temperatures inside range from 100 to 115 degrees. The work is year round and they have no holidays.

They also described abuse by the supervisors. Gutiérrez, 45, said when he fell from a cherry-picker and broke his leg, he was first refused a trip to the hospital. Then the company doctor told him he would have to continue picking tomatoes on crutches. "After all, you still have one good leg," he said.

One woman reported that after she fell off a ladder and hurt herself, the supervisor worried only about the plants she fell on, reproaching her that "a tomato plant is worth more than a Mexican worker."

that triggered the strike. The CEO said he would like to meet with the strikers Monday morning inside the plant to hear their concerns.

About 200 strikers rallied outside Eurofresh property that day with UFCW representatives, refusing to go inside to meet with the CEO without union representation. Eurofresh claimed 70 to 80 strikers returned to work. The workers later decided to return together, and were all back at work by Wednesday, November 24.

Union officials and tomato workers say 250 of 350 tomato workers signed union cards requesting an election for union representation.

Flight attendants: 'We will strike' US Airways

PHILADELPHIA—Flight attendants at US Airways took to the streets in front of airports across the country November 24, on one of the busiest travel days of the year, to warn, "CHAOS could be coming," if they don't get a decent contract.

CHAOS—Create Havoc Around Our System—is what the Association of Flight Attendants has dubbed actions their 9,000 members at US Airways will take if released from negotiations by the National Mediation Board. On November 22 the AFA asked the board to declare an impasse and begin a "30-day cooling-off period," which is required under the Railway Labor Act.

"Pay us or chaos," they chanted outside the airport here November 24. Some signs and one chant

LETTERS

Coal bosses in Colombia

I appreciated Andy Buchanan and Martin Koppel's excellent article in the November 1 issue, "U.S. military escalation in Colombia targets working people, guerrillas." It provides a powerful example of how even countries which have not been direct colonies for many decades continue to be dominated by imperialism, and did a good job of explaining why Washington is really stepping up its military intervention in that country.

Militant readers will be interested to know that one reason for the increased militarization in Colombia has to do with its vast coal reserves, which, as the authors point out, are one of its main exports. Drummond Coal Co., Alabama's largest coal producer, has closed many mines in this state, laying off several thousand miners in the last few years, all members of the United Mine Workers union. Meanwhile, they have invested \$425 million in coal mines in Colombia.

"Things change and you have to adjust," explained company president Garry Neil Drummond in the September 9 *Birmingham News*. Drummond Coal found "Colombia to be an excellent match for us," he said. Their Pribbenow Mine in LaLoma, Colombia, employs 1,100 people and last year produced 7 million tons; Drummond expects production to double by 2005. They also hold claims on two other large reserves in that country. What does Colombia get in this exchange? A 15 percent royalty and railway and port built to service the mine.

To ensure that Drummond's vast investment is protected and that its executives and engineers are not bothered by the conditions of social breakdown and military terror the working people of Colombia are living through, the coal company runs what amounts to its own airline in and out of the country. "The company also built a barracks and training center, for the Colombian military, near its operations; that

keeps between 400 and 600 armed troops nearby at all times," the *News* reports.

"There is some threat of violence," Drummond noted. "But people in government and business are really good: educated, intelligent and heroic in the work they are doing for their country."

Meanwhile, Drummond just received approval to dig a long wall mining shaft 1,100 feet below the Black Warrior River in Alabama, despite concern expressed by working people in the area that surface collapses could damage homes, hurt or kill miners, threaten animal and plant life, and devastate the river.

Susan LaMont
Birmingham, Alabama

Hates capitalism

I just wanted to say that my friend at work is a subscriber to your newspaper and that we have elaborate discussions on the work-

ing class. As a 17 year-old, I have quickly learned many things in the field of capitalism and its disgusting character.

The worker is a cost; we are no different than the cans of soup we stock on the shelves.

Why do we work to make profit for a small, not elite, but selfish and corrupt group of the world?

These are most likely very common points, but I have grown an interest in your newspaper and its points of view (being the truth as I see it).

Brian Quarles
St. Paul, Minnesota

'No Domino Sugar here'

Strikers at Domino Sugar in Brooklyn and their supporters may be interested to know that in Eastern Pennsylvania most Domino Sugar products are not available in grocery stores. I recently moved to this area from Brooklyn. In Brooklyn the grocery stores are well

stocked with Domino sugar, perhaps giving the impression that the strike is not affecting production or sales.

Nurses rally in N.Y. to demand more hiring

NEW YORK—Registered nurses at Saint Vincent's Hospital organize a two-hour rally here the night of November 22 to protest increased understaffing and the failure of the hospital administration to negotiate a contract that favorably addresses this issue. The nurses are members of the New York State Nurses Association (NYSNA). The last contract between the hospital and NYSNA members expired February 15. The nurses say that they will soon vote whether to join NYSNA members at North Shore Hospital, in Plainview, Long Island, on strike.

The nurses there are also protesting understaffing and the resulting overwork and danger to patients' safety. "When I first came to the rehabilitation unit, there were five RN's; now it's been cut to three," said Ansell Horn, a nurse at Saint Vincent's for 13 years.

Nurses said that on some floors of the hospital there is only one registered nurse for 15 to 20 patients. Throughout the rally passersby stopped to take information being given out and to join the picket.

Betsy McDonald and Willie Cotton in Tucson, Arizona; Nancy Cole, a member of the International Association of Machinists (IAM) in Philadelphia; Bob Cantrick, a member of the Union of Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Employees, and Grant Hargrave, a member of the IAM, in Montreal; and Jason Corley in New York contributed to this column.

Here, not only are Domino's products absent from the shelves, but one major chain, Wegmans, even has a sign on the shelf that says, "Out of Stock. Domino Sugar. Due to the ongoing labor strike at Domino's Brooklyn refinery, the following items will be unavailable until settlement: All sugar packets, 3 oz. Sugar and Cinnamon, 14 oz. Brownulated, 1 lb. Superfine, and 1 lb. Dots and Tablets."

H.B.
Allentown, Pennsylvania

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.

Farmers in Saskatchewan discuss their struggle to stay on the land

BY JOANNE PRITCHARD

MONTREAL—"It's a joke, a cruel joke," said Saskatchewan farmer Richard Yakimchuk over the phone, referring to the November 4 announcement by the federal minister of Agriculture, Lyle Vanclief, of an additional Can\$170 million to the Agricultural Income Disaster Assistance program (AIDA). (Can\$1=US\$0.68. All figures are in Canadian dollars)

This brings the available funds up to just over \$1 billion. But this is far short of the modest request by provincial government-sponsored delegations from Manitoba and Saskatchewan for \$1.3 billion in additional aid for farmers facing the worst economic crisis in that region since the Great Depression of the 1930s.

Yakimchuk was among the dozen farmers with whom a team of socialist workers from Montreal, Toronto, and Vancouver met in mid-October. The goal of this trip was to learn more about the conditions the farmers are facing and how they are fighting back. These meetings became an exchange between workers and farmers on how to work together to defend ourselves.

Over the past year Saskatchewan farmers organized a series of protests to demand aid, including one of 1,000 farmers in Rosedale in November 1998, and at least two of 1,000 farmers and supporters in Regina, the capital city, last March and June. At the beginning of August they organized roadblocks in different parts of the province. And on August 17 a tractorcade of more than 1,000 farmers tied up the streets of Regina.

The actions were organized and led not by the traditional farmers' organizations, but by an organization of activist farmers called the Bengough Rally group. The organization has now changed its name to the Pro-West Rally group.

The worst crisis since the 1930s

Saskatchewan, a province in western Canada, has a population of 1 million and supplies 28 percent of Canada's grain production. Crops include canola, rye, oats, barley, and flaxseed, as well as wheat. Canada accounts for 10 percent of the grain exports in the world, third after the United States, which exports 40 percent of the total, and France, which exports 12 percent.

An average farm in Saskatchewan is 1,000 acres. According to Statistics Canada, 65,700 people in the province make a living directly from agriculture. Last year 4,900 people left the land there, about 7.5 percent of the farm population.

This year's harvest is the second biggest on record, but farmers in Saskatchewan can expect to lose, per acre after expenses, including property taxes, machinery depreciation, and land investment: \$47.78 on spring wheat, \$55.70 on feed barley, \$81.59 on oats, \$55.09 on flax, \$28.16 on lentils, and \$36.17 on canola. Net farm income dropped 41 percent in Saskatchewan last year.

The facts are not all in for this year's harvest but the federal government in Ottawa predicts this will be the worst year for farm income since statistics were first recorded in 1926. Yakimchuk, who farms 1,000 acres near Wakaw, an hour's drive east of Saskatoon, summed up the situation facing them when he said, "The guy producing the food is in the food bank line."

Bob Thomas, a farmer near Milestone south of Regina, explained that in order to keep the farm going he has two jobs and sold off cattle in order to pay the bills. "When we started organizing the tractor rallies, it was a great boost for a lot of farmers because we found out how many of us were going bankrupt and that it wasn't our fault that we were losing money," he said. A theme commonly promoted by the big capitalist farmers, bourgeois politicians, and the big-business media is that small farmers' problems are the result of bad management.

Yakimchuk related the case of a friend of the family who was forced by the bank to auction off his land and his machinery in order to pay off loans. "This is starting to happen big time now," he said.

Doubly squeezed

The farmers are being squeezed between the high prices that huge corporations such as Cargill, Monsanto, and Imperial Oil require them to pay for inputs such as seed, fertilizer, pesticides, and fuel and the low prices they are receiving for their produce from the big companies that process and market it. Farmers have also been badly hit by the trend for the prices of commodities to fall on the world market—an aspect of the deflationary slide in the world capitalist economy.

Harvey Linnen, near Raymore, described how farmers are forced to pay "deferred input" bills in order to get seeds, fertilizer, and fuel if they don't have the money. "If you can't pay it off on time, Imperial Oil charges 24 percent interest and Cargill charges 18 percent retroactive from the time you signed the bill," he said. All the farmers emphasized the enormous gap between the money they receive for their grain and the

Brazil peasant leader faces retrial in frame-up



Sem Terra

The retrial of José Rainha, a leader of the Movement of Landless Rural Workers (MST) in Brazil, is scheduled to open December 13. Rainha was convicted in 1997 on frame-up charges in the death of a landowner and cop during a 1989 land takeover by peasants in Pedro Canário, in the state of Espírito Santo, and sentenced to 26 and a half years in prison. He has been out of jail while awaiting the second trial. Rainha's defense campaign has won support in Brazil and around the world. Above, recent MST march in city of Marabá. Banner reads, "Occupy, resist, and produce," the slogan of the organization.

price consumers pay for the product in the supermarket.

Farmers in Saskatchewan are also being hit by major cuts in federal subsidies for transportation of their product by rail to ports on the West Coast or the Great Lakes. "I can pay from 30 to 50 percent of the check I get on transportation costs, depending on the product," said Linnen.

Discussion on what way forward

The Pro-West Rally group calls for an immediate cash injection of \$80 per acre, worth about \$3 billion in Saskatchewan. Thomas explained that the biggest beneficiaries in Saskatchewan under the AIDA program are the industrial hog producers. "The government jimmied the figures so that the family farmer wouldn't collect," he said.

In making its case to the federal government for aid, representatives of the New Democratic Party (NDP) government in Saskatchewan argue that wheat farmers in Europe receive 56 cents of every dollar they earn as a subsidy from their government, farmers in the United States receive 38 cents and that farmers in Canada only receive 9 cents. The NDP is a social democratic party based on the trade unions outside of Quebec. Saskatchewan NDP agriculture and food minister Dwain Lingenfelter called on Ottawa to negotiate a substantial reduction in European and U.S. grain subsidies at the World Trade Organization talks in Seattle, which is the approach the federal government takes.

The new Saskatchewan government is a coalition of the NDP and the Liberal Party, one of Canada's traditional capitalist parties. The coalition government was formed after the NDP lost ground to the right-wing Saskatchewan Party in last September's provincial election. This party, making its electoral debut, got considerable support in rural areas promising tax cuts and immediate aid to farmers as well as a long-term safety net program to protect farmers against the "international agricultural trade war."

The farmers discussed with the socialist workers their ideas on the source of the problem and what the solution is. These discussions reflected openness to listening and considering radical solutions from different and opposing class forces.

One idea that is popular among farmers is "western separation," since the problem is seen as being the "East." Linked to this is the idea that Saskatchewan farmers are paying exorbitant taxes to Ottawa from which they don't benefit and that an effective way to resist would be to organize a tax revolt.

In the discussions, the socialist activists pointed out that it is not the workers and other farmers in the eastern industrial centers of Canada who benefit from the exploitation of the labor of the farmers in the West. Christian Cornejo, a member of the United Food and Commercial Workers in a meatpacking plant in Toronto, argued that workers and farmers should work together against the corporations that exploit their labor. "The company pays low prices to the hog producers, and has cut our wages in the plant by 40 percent after a hard-fought strike. Yet the price of pork at the supermarket remains the same," he said.

In one of the meetings there was an exchange on the role of the Canadian Wheat Board, which is a marketing board set up in 1935 after several decades of struggle by farmers against the big grain companies. The goal was to regulate the market and achieve stable prices for their products, especially for smaller, less competitive farmers.

Today there is a campaign by better-off farmers and the big grain corporations to abolish the Wheat Board. The platform of the Saskatchewan Party called for weakening the Canada Wheat Board "to give farmers a choice in how and where they market crops."

Warren Potter, who farms 10,000 acres in the Wakaw region, complained that because of the Board, "I'm not free to sell my grain where I want to."

But Dennis Roy, a "retiree" who farms his daughter's 1,000 acres while she works in town to pay the bills, said, "You know, Warren, more than once I was very pleased with the price the Wheat Board gave me for my grain."

Lloyd Pletz and Bob Thomas speculated that there was a deliberate plot to drive the family farmer off the land in Saskatchewan. "Lloyd thinks it's in order to settle Native land claims, but I think it's in order to sell water to the U.S. or to get at the crude oil

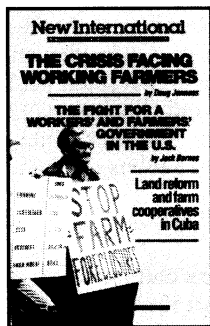
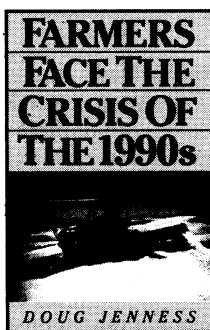
Continued on Page 3

FROM PATHFINDER

Farmers Face the Crisis of the 1990s

DOUG JENNESS

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