

THE MILITANT

INSIDE

Louisville cop campaign polarizes city

— PAGE 6

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Farmers bring demands for relief to Washington



Militant/Dave Wulp

Thousands of farmers and supporters participated in the Rally for Rural America on March 21.

BY JAMES HARRIS

WASHINGTON—Thousands of working farmers and their supporters rallied here March 20 and 21. About 3,000 participated in the "Rally for Rural America," called by the National Farmers Union (NFU).

The actions were endorsed by a broad coalition of about 40 labor, religious, and farm organizations, including the AFL-CIO, American Agriculture Movement, Federa-

tion of Southern Cooperatives, National Farmers Organization (NFO), and the Protestant Church USA.

The rally demanded relief from record-low prices that farmers are now receiving from the agricultural monopolies for their crops and livestock. Farmers have been hit with a 17 percent plunge in farm income since 1996, forcing thousands off the land. Farmers at the action demanded that the

government put in place measures to stop this devastating decline.

As one placard carried by a farmer stated, "If you understand the 'minimum wage' you can understand a safety net for us." Other signs read, "Food is too important to trust to the volatility of the market," "We can't eat on \$2.58 wheat," and, "Dump the Farm Bill."

Melodie Sutter, who with her husband John farms in Central Illinois, said in an interview, "We could live and cover our expenses before the last two years. Although prices have dropped, it has been primarily

Continued on Page 8

U.S., allies build up forces in Kosova

BY BRIAN TAYLOR

March 24 marked one year since Washington and allies in Europe—operating under a NATO banner and claiming to defend the rights of Albanians in Kosova—opened a 78-day bombing campaign against Yugoslavia, leveling factories, public buildings, and other military and civilian structures in Serbia and Kosova.

Today, U.S.-led NATO forces are pushing to expand their military presence by increasing to as many as 40,000 the number of occupation troops there, installing a NATO-run police force, and driving ahead toward a de facto partition of Kosova from the rest of Yugoslavia. Conflicts among the imperialist powers—an aspect of the war

Continued on Page 10

Supporters kick off subscription campaign

BY MAURICE WILLIAMS

"We have people coming in from six cities to help us launch the *Militant* subscription drive at the March 25 action in Mansfield, Ohio," said Mike Fitzsimmons, referring to the rally being organized by Steelworkers locked out at AK Steel rolling mill.

"We will have two campaign tables with signs saying "Support the Steelworkers," "Defend Affirmative Action," "Join the Young Socialists," and "For a Workers and Farmers Government."

"It will be a place where fighters can come

Continued on Page 5

Flight attendants mobilize in contract fight at US Airways

BY REBECCA ARENSEN AND NANCY COLE

PHILADELPHIA—"Pay us or CHAOS," shouted flight attendants here who are fighting for a contract at US Airways. Hundreds of unionists marched behind 200 flight attendants at a March 14 rally called by the Pennsylvania AFL-CIO during its state convention.

Members of the Association of Flight Attendants (AFA), who wore bright green "CHAOS" T-shirts, chanted their demands for a decent contract. CHAOS stands for Create Havoc Around Our System, a union campaign that can include intermittent or rolling strikes.

"I was in front, and I looked behind me and saw three blocks filling the streets," said Tom Sauers. "Our rally shut down two and a half city blocks. We came away from that excited and rejuvenated, ready for the home stretch."

March 25 marks the end of a 30-day cooling off period mandated by the National Mediation Board. After three years of negotiations, if the AFA and US Airways have not reached an agreement by that date, the flight attendants will begin CHAOS. The

company has vowed to shut down the airline rather than allow the flight attendants to disrupt its operations. The bosses contend the major issue is that the AFA must accept the concept of "parity plus 1 percent" with the wages and benefits of its four main competitors, as have all other unions at the company. The union counters that the company's parity formula is unacceptable and would result in pay cuts.

Because of the complicated nature of computing flight attendants' pay, it can easily be distorted. In response to a slew of letters to the editor of the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* after an article appeared on "A Day in the Life of One Attendant," Pamela Hook wrote, "(F)or every 3.5 hours that I'm on duty, I get paid \$41.02. If you do the math you can see that I'm really only paid \$11.72 per hour. That's after putting over 23 years of my life into this company. That's top pay after completing 14 years of flying. It never goes higher."

In Pennsylvania, where nearly half of the airline's 40,000 employees work, Gov. Thomas Ridge has called on the president to intervene in the last-minute mediation to

Continued on Page 5

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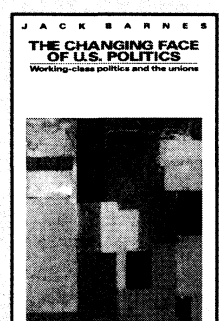
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AFL-CIO women's conference draws 4,000 — page 7

In Austria, Haider pushes nationalist stance

BY BIRGITTA ISACSSON

Since resigning as head of the Freedom Party at the end of February, Jörg Haider has continued to gain an international platform for his Austrian nationalist, right-wing perspectives. At the same time, the coalition government of the conservative People's Party and the fascist Freedom Party is aiming to impose widespread austerity measures on working people.

The new government has been met with protests by youth, working people, and others opposed to the anti-immigrant, racist, and pro-Nazi stands of the Freedom Party. Haider himself lives on a 3,800-acre estate seized by the Nazis from a Jewish family forced to flee during World War II.

European imperialist powers have also criticized the Austrian government for its

inclusion of the Freedom Party in the coalition, imposing some diplomatic sanctions on the country.

Haider resigned after leaders of the People's Party criticized his statement that the single European currency, the euro, was a "miscarriage."

At a rally in Ried March 8, Haider made a further move to embarrass People's Party leader and Austrian chancellor Wolfgang Schüssel. Haider took aim at the French government, which has been in the forefront of protests by European powers against the coalition. "Austria does not need a 21st-century pocket-sized Napoleon" like the president of France, Jacques Chirac, he said. "He should realize that his pointed finger has the moral quality of Pinocchio." Haider also attacked Austrian president Thomas Klestil

for criticizing the new government, describing him as a "doubting Thomas."

Chancellor Gerhard Schröder of Germany said February 18 that the isolation of the government in Vienna is about a principle. Reflecting the European Union's position, Portuguese prime minister António Guterres said, "For the moment our position remains the same. The key question is not the personality of Haider. It is the nature of his party."

An editorial in the March 1 *Financial Times* cautioned that "EU member states have got themselves into a political corner with their precipitate action. They are in a danger of making Mr. Haider more popular in Austria, by demonizing him. But they have embarked on a strategy without an escape route, short of the collapse of the Austrian government. There seems little prospect of that happening in the near future." The paper noted Haider "remains very much in control of his party," and is positioning "himself to run for chancellor in the future."

Jeanne Kirkpatrick, former U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, wrote in an opinion column that the stance of the EU members meant "Europe affirmed under undemocratic duress a denial of a country's right to choose its own government."

The attacks by the European imperialist powers have so far given Haider the opportunity to gain a hearing as the defender of the "Austrian nation" and "democracy."

Haider's resignation means that he can take a distance from austerity measures being discussed in the government. These range from budget cuts to the abolition of

the popular anonymous savings passbooks, which can be used to avoid taxes. Karl-Heinz Grasser, the national finance minister and a protégé of Haider, has vowed to eliminate about 9,000 state jobs, sell off state industries to capitalist concerns, raise the retirement age, and reduce pensions for early retirees in order to bring down the budget deficit.

The new leader of the Freedom Party is Susanne Riess-Passer, the vice chancellor of Austria and Haider's former press spokesperson. "We will continue to work as a team and operate as a political partnership," she said of Haider. "It would not be very clever of me to do without someone with his political experience."

The Freedom Party is demanding compensation for property lost by ethnic Germans following World War II in what is now Slovenia and the Czech Republic. This has upset plans for eastward expansion of the EU, and has worried the governments in the Czech Republic and Slovenia that this issue could complicate or slow their negotiations over EU membership.

After World War II, nearly 3 million Germans in Czechoslovakia, who were viewed as collaborators with the Nazis, were expelled and their property confiscated. They were also deliberately excluded from Czech compensation schemes. In Slovenia, the property of the capitalists, many of whom were Germans, was confiscated after 1945 through a socialist revolution.

Birgitta Isacsson is a member of the Metal Workers Union in Sweden.

Immigrants protest antiwoman violence



Militant/Felicity Coggan

Eighty women and men rallied in central Auckland, New Zealand, March 18, demanding an end to domestic violence and abuse of women. The protest, organized by the Shakti Asian Women's Support Group, included immigrants from China, Thailand, Korea, India, Bangladesh, and the Pacific Islands. Placards and chants in several languages said, "Stop the violence! Stop the abuse!"

The protest was sparked by the fatal stabbing of a Chinese woman, Juan Hiang, in Auckland in February by her estranged husband. She had gone to the police station to seek help when her husband had shown up to dispute custody of their child. When police told her to return home to collect some papers, she was killed.

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Miner explains Shoal Creek strike

BY CINDY JAQUITH

BIRMINGHAM, Alabama—A history of verbal and physical abuse by foremen led to the recent walkout here by members of the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) at the Shoal Creek mine.

The coal miners struck February 23 after one union member was fired for insubordination. The mine's owner, Drummond Co., retaliated by closing the mine for five days. But the miner won his job back.

The firing of this miner was the latest in a spate of employer abuses, said Randell Erwin, financial secretary of UMWA Local 1948. Over the last year there have been numerous incidents:

- A boss "got smart with a man," said Erwin. The miner answered him back. Then the miner turned away and was hit from behind with a sharp object.
- A mine manager grabbed one worker.
- Another worker was joking with a supervisor. The boss then verbally abused the man.
- A miner was pushed and spit upon by a boss while working.

"Grievances were filed in all of these instances," said Erwin. "But no supervisor was ever disciplined."

The final straw was the firing of the miner in February. The worker and a foreman had a verbal exchange. While others observed them talking from afar, there were no wit-

nesses as to what was said. "They fired the man for talking back," explained Erwin.

Miners walked out in protest. Drummond announced before eight hours were up that the mine was closed.

The workers' action has been closely followed by miners and other workers in this area. Opinions vary on the strike, including among members of Local 1948. Some take pride in the UMWA tradition of direct job action to defend their members. Others worry that strikes like this could give Drummond an excuse to close the Shoal Creek mine altogether.

In November of 1999, Drummond laid off 215 miners from Shoal Creek. "The company lied to us," said Erwin. Earlier, Drummond had urged miners to approve a new shift schedule and in return, the company promised, there would be no more layoffs, just a drop in the work force by attrition. The new shift schedule was voted in by just 21 votes.

The layoff at Shoal Creek comes on top of other closures, and attacks on the union and working conditions by the company.

Many miners suspect that Drummond has financial interests in the several nonunion mines that have opened where UMWA Drummond mines once were.

Cindy Jaquith is a member of the United Steelworkers of America in Birmingham.

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London whips up campaign against immigrant workers

BY JONATHAN SILBERMAN

LONDON—In a significant assault on democratic rights, Labour government Home Secretary Jack Straw announced a crackdown against immigrants who are caught begging. People seeking asylum who are arrested and convicted will be automatically put on a fast track to be thrown out of the country. A government spokesperson said that an increasing number of asylum seekers "appear" to be engaged in begging.

Begging on the streets is a criminal offense here. Earlier this month a stipendiary magistrate, Roger Davies, made the headlines when he told a Romanian asylum seeker, Elena Barbu, to tell her friends that they face jail sentences if they are caught begging with their children. Barbu was arrested for begging with her three-year-old daughter. "We don't like people begging with children in this country," Davies said. "Next time you come to court you will go to prison. Tell your friends, if they come before me they will go to prison."

Davies's remarks have been echoed by shadow Home Secretary Ann Widdecombe. "It is a criminal offense to demand money [in public]. People like that should be in prison," she said. New Metropolitan police commissioner John Stevens has announced a "big bang" strategy to purge the streets of "aggressive beggars."

Truckers in Houston rally for union representation

BY BOB BRUCE

HOUSTON—More than 500 drivers who haul for trucking firms at the Port of Houston rallied at the Teamsters Local 988 hall as part of their fight for a union. The truckers are independent owner-operators who contract with the companies to deliver containers from the port to the rail yards in Houston.

With the high cost of fuel on top of other expenses, the drivers are finding it difficult to make a decent living. This has led the truckers to be involved in several protest actions and to demand that the companies recognize the Teamsters union as their representative. But the companies counter that National Labor Relations law does not allow "independent businessmen" like the truckers to be eligible for union representation.

The truckers have also rallied at the mayor's office and police department, demanding they stop giving the drivers hefty fines for faulty equipment owned by the shipping lines. The truckers say the shipping companies should be the ones receiving the penalties.

At the rally drivers took petitions to circulate among fellow truckers. They aim to put the companies on notice that the contracts to haul will be terminated. If the trucking company wants goods to be hauled they should take them on as employees and contact Teamsters Local 988 as to the terms of their employment. One owner of a small trucking company signed a contract at the rally itself.

A major campaign by the capitalist media and politicians has been launched against so-called aggressive begging, targeting Romanians in particular. The London daily, the *Evening Standard*, has complained that London boroughs "spent £265 million in the year 1999-2000 supporting around 60,000 asylum seekers." A March 9 *Standard* article announced, "Beggar walks free as arrests double," citing the case of a "Romanian gypsy," Viorita Dumitry, who was caught begging with her two-year-old boy by plainclothes police. The paper sent a reporter, Keith Dovkants, to Bucharest to write a major spread entitled, "Town that lives off London's beggars."

Dovkants's report was filled with anti-working-class and antiforeign assertions. One was that a "gypsy township in Romania is sending beggars to London on organized expeditions that support a community of 4,000 people." At a meeting for London mayoral candidates March 14, Liberal Democrat candidate Susan Kramer said, "I know Romania. Begging is a way of life for these people."

About 60 asylum seekers—most of them from Romania—sent from London to Glasgow under the government's immigrant "dispersal scheme" were returned to London one week after 12 of them had been arrested for begging.

The government states that it hopes the get-tough measures will stem the number of asylum seekers. Home Office minister Barbara Roche plans to announce three further huge "reception centres" when she opens the Oakington barracks in Cambridgeshire March 20. The converted military and hospital sites, where newly arrived people will be detained in Kent, Yorkshire, and the West Midlands, will be policed by private security firms.

"Hundreds of men and women whose only crime is to have sought asylum" are "incarcerated on the mere say-so of low-ranking immigration officials, acting without reference or effective accountability to any court or independent review body," said Amnesty International in a new report entitled, "Cell culture: the detention and imprisonment of asylum-seekers in the United Kingdom."

The report explains that "over the past decade, the British government has implemented a seemingly endless stream of new and ever more oppressive measures against asylum-seekers...[including] the arbitrary and prolonged detention of many asylum-

Pathfinder print shop workers step up pace of book production



Militant/Hilda Cuzco

New Pathfinder print shop worker Susan Anmuth (left) and Peter Thierjung binding copies of *Le désordre mondial du capitalisme*, the French-language version of *Capitalism's World Disorder*. In addition to printing new titles by Pathfinder, print shop workers have set a goal of producing three reprints of Pathfinder titles each week, prepared digitally by supporters of the communist movement.

Rolling off the presses this week were *Teamster Politics*, *Malcolm X Talks to Young People*, and *Struggle for a Proletarian Party*. In addition, 200 copies of a new edition of *Che Guevara Speaks* are rapidly being produced to meet a recent classroom adoption order. Last week, print shop workers completed reprints of *Politics of Chicano Liberation*, *The Organizational Character of the Party*, and *The Fight against Fascism in the U.S.A.*

Keeping a three-reprint-a-week schedule, in addition to printing new titles and rush orders like *Che Guevara Speaks*, sets a pace that will by September 1 get back into circulation the 23 newly digitized titles in the shop's hands ready to be printed, as well as keep up with Pathfinder's digitizers, who are now producing six to eight additional copies per month. Beginning next week, the *Militant* will feature regular coverage on this effort to keep well over 350 Pathfinder titles—which carry the history and lessons of the modern working class spanning the last 150 years—in print.

seekers, in purpose-built detention centres and criminal prisons, while their claims are examined."

Other accommodations include buildings like the London Park Hotel in Southwark, where nearly 1,000 immigrants are currently staying. Dozens of immigrants, the majority from Kosovo, mill around the hotel with no money and nothing to do. "We receive board and lodging, and that's it," said Eddie, who didn't want his surname mentioned. "For the first six months after our arrival we are not allowed to work so there's nothing to do. You can only play football for so many hours a day," he said, referring to the kick-about on the green nearby.

"We want to do something constructive," said Tim, from Sierra Leone, who was visiting friends staying at the hotel. He said that even after an immigrant has the right to

work, the problems don't end. "I applied for my National Insurance number but I was told I'll get it when I can find a job. But when you apply for a job, they ask for your National Insurance number!"

Depression conditions in Romania are fueling an increase in emigration. A report by the American Business Community states that there was a net population decrease in Romania in 1998, the last year for which figures are available. The economy suffered a decline in gross domestic product of about 12 percent in the last three years. Between 1997 and 1998 industrial production dropped by 17 percent and agricultural production fell by 7.6 percent. Last year inflation ran at an estimated 45 percent.

Jonathan Silberman is a member of the Transport and General Workers' Union.

Vermont legislature backs rights for gay couples

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

In a victory for democratic rights, the Vermont House of Representatives approved a bill recognizing "civil unions" among gay and lesbian couples that provides virtually all the benefits received by those who marry.

According to the *New York Times*, this law would be "the most sweeping set of rights for same-sex couples in the country." The bill is expected to easily pass in the Senate

next month, and Gov. Howard Dean has promised to sign it.

Couples will be able to apply for a license from a town clerk and receive a certificate of union that guarantees the same rights as spouses on questions of child custody, workers' compensation, family leave benefits, among others.

"The state," the bill said, "has a strong interest in promoting stable and lasting families, including families based upon a same-sex couple."

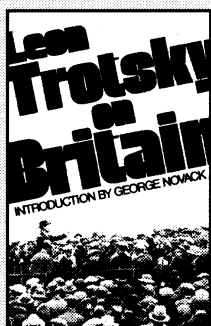
The bill comes in the wake of a Vermont Supreme Court ruling that same-sex couples deserve all the same rights as heterosexual spouses. The lawmakers, however, sought to limit the extent of the proposed legislation. The bill draws a distinction between same-sex unions and marriage. In fact, it specifically states that marriage could only be between a man and a woman.

Supporters of the bill said that they do not expect other states to recognize the legal status of Vermont's civil unions.

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Puerto Ricans call April 19 march on Washington

BY PETE SEIDMAN

PHILADELPHIA—Plans are underway to send at least five buses from here to a national march on Washington April 19 demanding "U.S. Navy Out of Vieques Now." City Councilman Angel Ortiz opened a planning meeting for the event with a report on his participation in the massive February 21 demonstration of more than 80,000 people in San Juan, Puerto Rico.

This action opposed the recently announced agreement between the Clinton administration and Puerto Rican governor Pedro Rosselló that allows U.S. naval training exercises to resume on Vieques and calls for a referendum on continued U.S. bombing on the island.

About 20 activists attended the planning meeting, which was hosted by Taller Puertorriqueño, a cultural center in north Philadelphia's Puerto Rican community. Luis Sanabria, from the National Committee to Free Puerto Rican Political Prisoners and Prisoners of War, reported that buses were being organized from New Jersey, Illinois, and Ohio for the event.

Ortiz reports that he is seeking support from the Catholic Archdiocese here to see if it will back the action, as it did February 21 in Puerto Rico. He is also contacting other churches and community organizations to speak at an upcoming City Hall news conference announcing local plans to support the national demonstration.

YS joins march to defend affirmative action in Florida

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 Young Socialists, call (415) 824-1429, or send an e-mail to: young_socialists@hotmail.com

BY MICHAEL MARTINEZ

TALLAHASSEE, Florida—On March 7 thousands of people marched to the Florida state capitol here in defense of affirmative action. Last November Gov. John Ellis Bush, by executive order, ended affirmative action in university admissions and state contracts under something he called the "One Florida" plan. This plan promises only the top 20 percent of students in each high school admission to a state university in Florida.

Most of the participants from Miami arrived in buses provided by unions and other labor organizations, churches, the NAACP, and schools. At the parking lot in Tallahassee where the rally goes met for a breakfast and lunch, young people showed their presence with picket signs, banners, T-shirts, and more.

The majority of the demonstrators were young students and workers. Luis Silva, an 18-year-old high school student attending the rally, said, "Malcolm fought, King fought, we have all fought too hard for hundreds of years to let Bush come in and in one day take it all away from us."

During the march Young Socialists, Socialist Workers Party members, and supporters carried a banner that read: "Defend affirmative action with quotas. Stop racism and police brutality. For a workers and farmers government. Socialist Workers Party and Young Socialists."

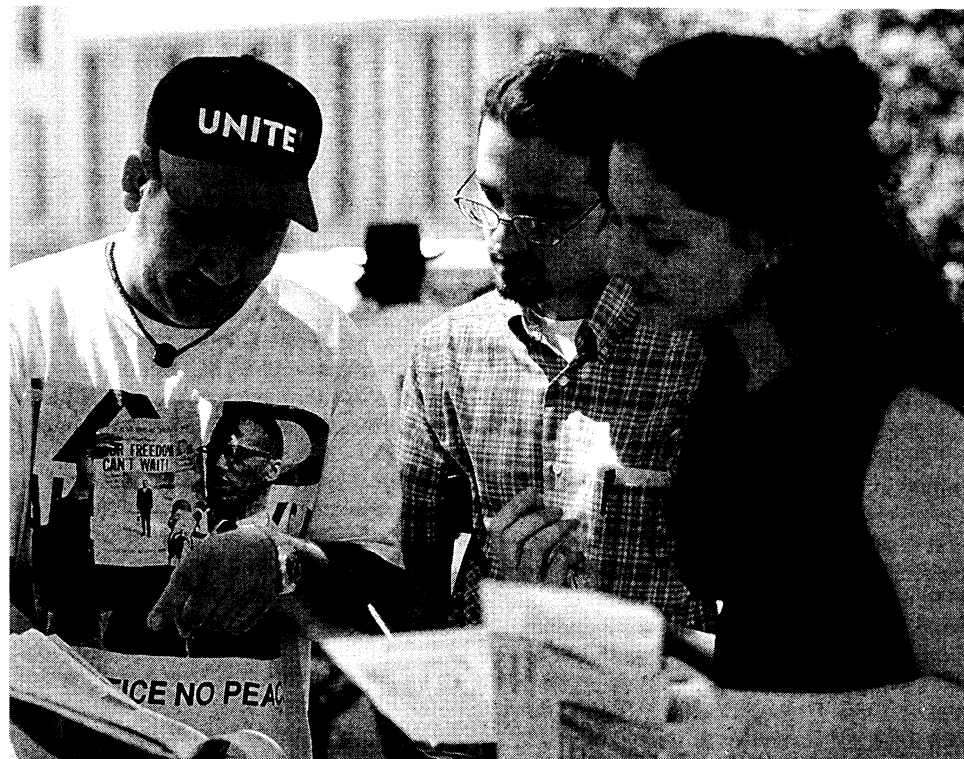
At a table full of Pathfinder books and literature, many youths attracted to revolutionary politics gathered around. There they had a chance to talk to members of the Young Socialists and Rollande Girard, the SWP candidate for mayor of Miami-Dade county.

Shem Morton, a leader of the Young Socialists from Los Angeles, participated in a serious discussion with two young women from Tallahassee. He explained why Marx's ideas are still relevant today and why com-

munist is still a viable option. He said it is important to join the Young Socialists to fight to overthrow capitalism in order to create a society based on human needs and solidarity, instead of one marked by sexism, racism, and exploitation.

Other Young Socialist members from Atlanta and Valdosta, Georgia, as well as from Birmingham, Alabama, participated in the demonstration and helped sell revolutionary literature and copies of the *Militant*. They talked to young people about the importance of Pathfinder books and why the Young Socialists organize to educate ourselves and other fighters about the history of the working-class movement and to apply these lessons to struggles that break out today in preparation for major battles ahead.

Among the people spreading the word about the Young Socialists was Sonja Swanson, a high school student from Miami. She sold the *Militant*, discussed politics at the Pathfinder table, and expressed



Militant/Linda Joyce

Michael Martinez, left, uses *Militant*, *Perspectiva Mundial*, and Pathfinder books to discuss politics with participants at affirmative action march in Tallahassee.

interest in joining the Young Socialists.

In a combined effort with the SWP, seven *Join the fight for socialism: Join the Young Socialists* pamphlets were sold, as well as

three *Che Guevara Talks to Young People*, and numerous books from the Pathfinder arsenal. YS and SWP members there also sold about 300 copies of the *Militant*.

IMF head given nod, but divisions remain

BY CARL-ERIK ISACSSON

STOCKHOLM, Sweden—Discord over who should head the International Monetary Fund brought to the surface fissures within the wealthy ruling class in the United States and conflicts between the imperialist powers over how best to advance their competing interests.

After Washington in early March blocked German candidate Caio Koch-Weser for the job, European Union finance ministers unanimously endorsed Horst Köhler, Germany's new candidate to head the International Monetary Fund (IMF). At a meeting in Brussels March 13 they pledged to stand by their candidate whether or not he met Washington's approval.

Köhler heads the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, an institution that mainly provides loans to the workers states in the former Soviet Union and eastern and central Europe.

An article in the *New York Times* noted that American officials remain unenthusiastic about the new nomination, and described the European Bank for Reconstruc-

tion and Development as a small version of the World Bank, devoted largely to lending money to countries for public projects. One of the "objections to Mr. Koch-Weser was his background with the World Bank and a suspicion that he would support development projects rather than straightforward economic assistance," the *Times* said.

The Portuguese finance minister who presided over the meeting in Brussels told the press that the EU governments agreed not only to support Köhler, but to also campaign to get the necessary support from developing countries and the United States.

"When the French government takes a decision, France does not need to consult the Americans," the French minister of finance Christian Sauter said after the meeting, noting Köhler's experience and expertise in negotiating with Russia and eastern Europe.

This is in contrast to the lukewarm support Caio Koch-Weser earlier got, especially from Paris.

The German government has campaigned vigorously for their candidates, marking a shift from what the *Times* called its "chronic postwar shyness" in diplomacy. But the conflict shows what is at stake for Germany's rulers if the Clinton administration's proposed policy shifts for the IMF are implemented. The proposals will make it much harder for Berlin to collect debt, especially in the former Soviet Union and eastern and central Europe.

Tensions have grown to the extent that the March 14 *International Herald Tribune* quoted an unnamed official in Brussels saying that another effort by Washington to block the European candidate would cause a major international crisis.

Hours later, Clinton endorsed Köhler in a phone conversation with German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder. The next day, Tokyo, whose candidates have never been given consideration for the post, withdrew its nominee Eisuke Sakakibara.

Growing rifts in U.S. ruling class

The Republican-led Congress in Washington set up an 11-member panel more than a year ago to develop proposals on how to change the practices of the IMF and World Bank. This was agreed to in exchange for Clinton's move to add \$18 billion to the IMF during the financial crises that began in Asia.

This move by the U.S. Congress was a reflection of the growing disorder of capitalism, in which IMF demands for austerity in countries like Indonesia and south Korea have deepened economic turmoil and led to increased resistance by workers and peasants there.

It also reflects the inability of the imperialists to make much headway in overturning the workers states in Russia and throughout eastern Europe.

The commission, headed by Prof. Allan

Meltzer, split along partisan lines. Among the proposals that the majority endorsed was that the IMF stop lending to the poorest countries. Instead, the agency would specialize in emergency lending to countries that lose access to private financial markets, with a stipulation that the governments in these countries meet requirements to prequalify for such loans. This proposal would drastically reduce what the IMF is doing today and limit its engagement to a few countries.

The majority also recommended that the IMF and World Bank write off all loans to the poorest, most heavily indebted countries if they carry out imperialist dictates on economic policy, a proposal that goes well beyond the debt relief plan endorsed last year by Clinton and his imperialist allies.

The dissenters described some of the commission's proposals as "reckless" and "cavalier," arguing that withdrawing most of the IMF's funding from governments that have some access to private money would leave them vulnerable to the kind of "investor nervousness that caused so much havoc during the Asian crisis," commented an article in the *Wall Street Journal*.

The Clinton administration's plans to change the IMF and World Bank are more limited than those proposed by the Congressional commission. In his report late last year Treasury Secretary Lawrence Summers proposed that the IMF focus on emergency loans, eliminating most of its long-term lending, but continue to offer such loans to the poorest countries, including in Africa.

London's *Financial Times* carried an editorial March 10 entitled, "Vexed politics of U.S. aid." It noted "just how poisonously partisan U.S. policy-making has become." It worried over "the collapse of bipartisanism in crucial areas of foreign policy...The response in Washington to the report from the international financial institutions advisory commission is a perfect—and disturbing—case in point."

The editorial says that the ideas in the Congressional report go "too far, but they are not crazy. Given willingness to compromise, they could be the basis for discussion between the two sides. The alternative is certainly worse. Continued bitter partisan disagreement, with one side committed to defence of the status quo and the other to radical transformation, must make the environment for these institutions extraordinarily difficult."

But the laws of motion of the capitalist system goes in the other direction: more disagreement within the imperialist ruling classes and more rivalry among the imperialist powers as they respond to the crisis their system is heading into.

Carl-Erik Isacsson is a member of the Metalworkers Union in Södertälje, Sweden.

400 protest cop violence in Canada

BY ANNETTE KOURI

VANCOUVER, Canada—Four hundred people marched in Saskatchewan February 17 to demand justice in a series of deaths of First Nations men after encounters with the police.

Rodney Naistus and Lawrence Wegner were found within days of each other, both outside of Saskatoon near the Queen Elizabeth Power Plant. Wegner, found on February 3, was last seen being forced into a police cruiser. The next day Darrell Night, also an Aboriginal, filed a complaint against two Saskatoon policemen, saying they drove him to the power plant, took his coat, and told him to walk home. Winter temperatures in Saskatchewan are normally well below freezing.

The Saskatoon police force suspended with pay the two officers identified by Night. They soon called on the Royal Canadian Mounted Police to continue the investigation.

The Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations (FSIN) demands a public inquiry. FSIN Chief Perry Bellegarde said that an investigation into the Saskatoon Police Service has led to more than a hundred complaints by First Nations people who experienced similar abuse by police.

"This is not an isolated case. We have to get to the bottom of this," Lawrence Joseph, vice chief of the FSIN, stated in an interview.

The February 17 march included many students and Aboriginals. They began with

a vigil at the Saskatchewan Federated College (SIFC), where Wegner had been a student and then marched to the police station. "People are questioning how this could happen. It hits so close to home. One day he's in class and the next his death is all over the news," said Joy Joachim, vice president of the SIFC student association.

More police-related Aboriginal deaths in the Saskatoon area have come to light, including of Lloyd Dustyhorn, found January 19 frozen outside his apartment building hours after his release from police custody, and Darcy Ironchild, found dead in his bed February 19 after being released by police.

Neil Stonechild, 17 years old, was found frozen to death in a field on the edge of Saskatoon in November 1990. A 16-year-old friend of Stonechild's was the last to see him alive, five days before his body was found in the back of a police cruiser screaming: "They're going to kill me! They're going to kill me!" The family has been demanding justice for Stonechild since.

On February 22 Clem Chartier, president of the Metis Nation of Saskatchewan, and Gerald Morin, president of the Metis National Council, called for an independent judicial inquiry into the provincial justice system.

Phil Fontaine, chief of the Assembly of First Nations, told the *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix* that the case is likely the "tip of the iceberg" and could lead to revelations of widespread police racism across Canada.

Supporters kick off subscription campaign

Continued from front page

to have a political discussion," said Fitzsimmons, a member of the Union of Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Employees in Cleveland. Supporters of the *Militant* and *Perspectiva Mundial* will be coming to the action in buses and carloads with other unionists, he added.

"Some students from Kent High School are planning to come, including a member of the Young Socialists there. Three of my co-workers are also planning to participate. They got turned on by two AK Steelworkers who spoke at my local union meeting. That stirred things up," said the socialist activist. "They don't have subs to the *Militant* yet, but I'm working on them."

Supporters of the socialist press are sending in goals as they gear up for the international campaign to win new readers to the *Militant* and *Perspectiva Mundial* and to sell copies of the Marxist magazine *New Internationalist*. A chart with goals for the eight-week drive will be printed in the next issue of the *Militant*.

Nearly 80 introductory *Militant* subscriptions were sent in during the first three weeks of March, which included a farmer in the Midwest and coal miner in the Appalachian region. Another 49 subs received by the *Militant* in March were renewals for six months, one and two years. One farmer in the South renewed his sub for one year. These sales results bode well for launching the circulation drive.

Farmers and others at the Rally for Rural America action in Washington, D.C., bought 100 papers, seven subscriptions to the *Militant*, five copies of the *Farmers Face the Crisis of the 1990s*, and one copy of *Capitalism's World Disorder*.

"There were many young people, including three high school students from Colorado who bought a copy of the *Militant*," said Mary Martin, a member of the Machinists union. "One of them lived and worked on a hog farm and the other two worked on cattle farms. They were considering their future as farmers but were doubtful because of the crisis facing working farmers."

"At the AFL-CIO Working Women 2000 conference March 11-12 we found many participants interested in reading the *Militant* and *Capitalism's World Disorder*," wrote Maggie Trowe. "We sold 65 copies of the *Militant*, 13 introductory subscriptions, 2 copies of *Perspectiva Mundial*, and 9 copies of *Capitalism's World Disorder*."

Mark Friedman from Los Angeles said,

Judge backs INS in Elián González ruling; appeal under consideration

BY ERIC SIMPSON

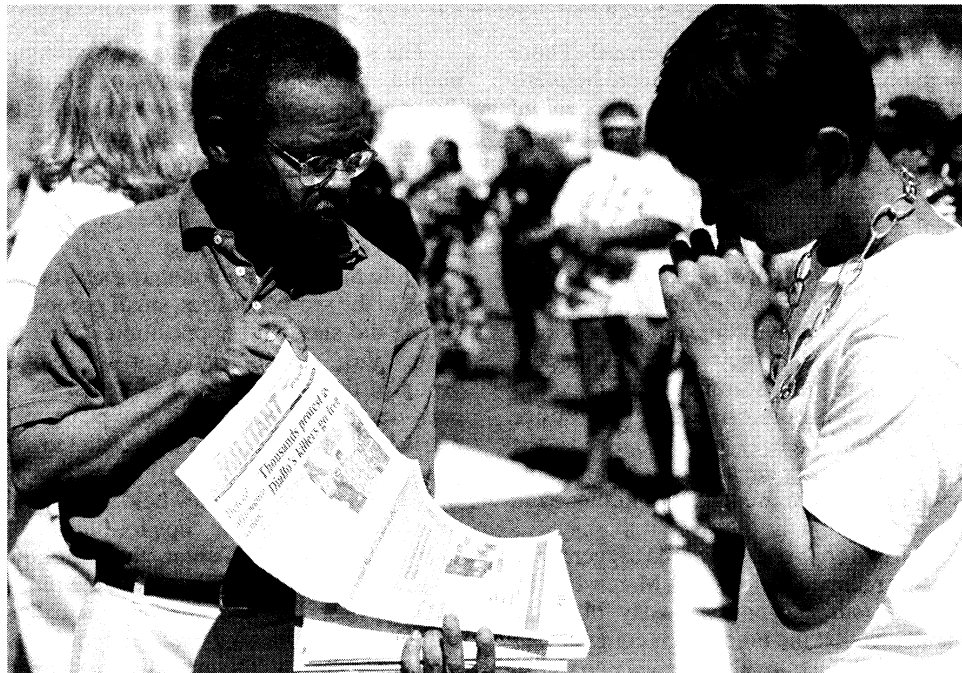
MIAMI—In a ruling here March 21, a federal judge upheld the U.S. attorney general's authority in the case of Cuban child Elián González. The judge dismissed a lawsuit aimed at ordering the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) to hold a political asylum hearing for Cuban boy Elián González.

Relatives in Miami had filed the lawsuit against the INS, stating they were acting on behalf of the six-year-old child, who is currently in their custody. His father, Juan González, who lives in Cuba, has insisted he be sent home. Lawyers for the Miami relatives quickly notified the court they intended to appeal the decision.

In a news conference, U.S. attorney general Janet Reno applauded the ruling in her favor. She gave, however, no indication that the INS, which is under her purview, was about to take any immediate action.

"The determination to grant asylum is a matter within the discretion of the Attorney General," U.S. district judge Michael Moore wrote in his decision. "She has decided the issue of who may speak for Plaintiff, and her decision. . . is controlling as a matter of law."

Elián González was picked up at sea November 25 off the coast of Florida, one of the few survivors of a smuggler-organized boat trip from Cuba where his mother and 10 other passengers drowned. The U.S. attorney general's office immediately granted Elián temporary parole and turned him over to his granduncle Lázaro González, who, with the support of right-wing Cuban-American forces, has sought to keep the



Militant/Linda Joyce

James Harris introduces *Militant* to a participant in march for affirmative action

"We set up a literature table at the Boeing plant in Long Beach. The table sported a sign 'Support SPEEA Strikers,' referring to the Seattle Boeing engineers who have been on strike for a month. During the shift change at one gate, workers at the facility purchased 24 copies of the *Militant* and a Pathfinder book."

Socialist workers organized in the industrial unions will have an abundance of opportunities to win new subscribers among fellow union members.

Big sales to auto workers at good-bye party

US Airways flight attendants mobilize

Continued from front page

insure there is no strike or shutdown.

Inside the crew room at the Philadelphia airport, flight attendants have set up a CHAOS "command center," with printed information, green business cards with local AFA numbers to call, "GUTS" tags for crew bags (Gearing Up To Strike), and bags of buttons with the words, "I Support the US Airways Flight Attendants." Some US Airways workers at the airport here are now wearing these buttons on their uniforms.

child in the United States.

The INS ruled January 5 that Juan González had sole legal authority to speak on behalf of Elián regarding his immigration status. The Clinton administration has argued from the beginning that the U.S. attorney and the INS have broad powers in determining the boy's status, at the same time that they have let the case go through several rounds in the courts over the past four months.

Moore's decision, that he has limited jurisdiction to intervene in this case, reaffirmed Reno's sweeping authority. The *Miami Herald* reported that it "relies heavily on previous decisions by the 11th Circuit Court of Appeals in Atlanta, which would handle the relatives' appeal. That court has consistently upheld the near-absolute legal discretion granted to the INS by Congress to decide certain immigration matters without judicial second-guessing."

While the judge's ruling appeared to leave little margin for a successful appeal, Lázaro González's attorneys are evidently hoping the INS will be willing to let their legal challenge run its course before acting to send the child back to Cuba. That process could take months.

At least one Miami public school closed early the day of the ruling, supposedly in anticipation of traffic tie-ups that might be caused by massive right-wing protests of the ruling. However, only small protests materialized.

Eric Simpson is a member of the Union of Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Employees.

BY SUSAN ANMUTH

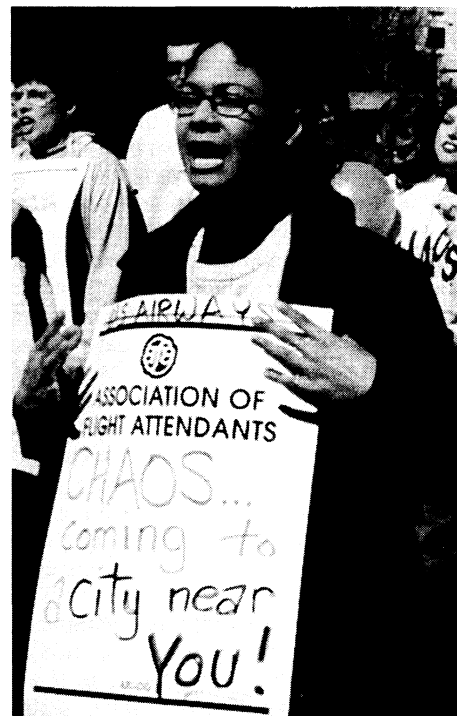
EDISON, New Jersey—Before beginning a full-time stint at the Pathfinder print shop, I made a point of letting co-workers know why I was leaving after 8 and one half years of building trucks at that United Auto Workers-organized Ford plant. The initial reaction of many co-workers was concern. "You're giving up this good paying job? You're giving up this job?" But many said, "Great!" One guy told me, "I wish there was anything I cared about that much."

Intense and virtually nonstop discussion occupied all my breaks. Subjects included Pathfinder's irreplaceable role and how volunteering to help print revolutionary books,

Staffing the AFA command post, Tom Sauers waves a list of activities planned across the US Airways system. "Our resolve has never been stronger," he says. Informational picketing is planned in many cities and on March 24, a candlelight vigil is planned leading up to the midnight deadline for every hub city and in many others as well.

Flight attendants are discussing copies of letters to the editor of the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*. One letter takes the flight attendants to task for demanding what other workers don't have or lost at some point. "Just because other groups didn't fight for what's theirs doesn't mean I shouldn't," responded Kim Rainey, a flight attendant for 11 years. "I'm not going to take all these concessions lying down. I'm at least going to fight them."

The company's drive to divide other union workers at US Airways from the AFA members has definitely had an impact, but many realize what their fight is all about. "I support the flight attendants because I think they would have supported us if we had struck," says mechanic Patrick Doerfler, who marched in the March 14 action in support of the AFA. "This is their opportunity



Militant/Nancy Cole

March and rally in support of US Airways flight attendants, Philadelphia, March 14.

as well as the commercial work to sustain them, is in essence the opposite of producing profits for the bosses.

I said, "I'll be helping to print these books and the *Militant*. So the next time you buy Pathfinder, you can say, 'Hey, I know someone who collated this book.' " It brought to mind the Pathfinder booklet *Pathfinder Press Was Born with the October Revolution* in which the author and president of Pathfinder, Mary Alice Waters, discusses the tremendous prejudice against manual labor the bourgeoisie fosters and stokes. The denigration of labor is part of hiding the power of our class from ourselves, the gravediggers of capitalism.

Co-workers organized a great good-bye party. One brought a cake and balloons and a wonderful card she'd gotten several people to sign. Six of the 10 co-workers at the party toured the Pathfinder building a few years ago. It made a lasting impression on each of them.

In my last 11 days at Ford co-workers bought \$230 worth of Pathfinder literature and five *Militant* subscriptions. Another co-worker renewed his subscription to *Perspectiva Mundial* at the Militant Labor Forum on Ecuador he attended after the party.

The books I sold included three copies of *El desorden mundial del capitalismo* and two of *Capitalism's World Disorder* (which makes 20 in the Edison plant since its publication); four copies of *Che Speaks to Young People*, including two in Spanish; four copies of *Pathfinder Was Born with the October Revolution* to see what this move I was making was all about; one *Changing Face of U.S. Politics*; one *On the Jewish Question* by Leon Trotsky; and one *Puerto Rico: Independence is a Necessity* by Rafael Cancel-Miranda.

and they shouldn't waste it like we did ours." Mechanics, utility workers, and stock clerks approved a contract with a parity formula last October.

At National Airport in Washington, D.C., flight attendants and their supporters held an informational picket line March 20.

"The company never made the threat to shut down the airline while they were negotiating with the Machinists or pilot's union. They thought they would buckle under," said picket captain Alin Boswell. "They used this tactic to divide us, but the opposite has happened. Other unionists—pilots, machinists, Teamsters—at US Airways and other airlines are wearing our buttons to support us and have come to march on our informational picket lines."

Boswell noted that after three and a half years without a contract, 99 percent of the flight attendants voted to strike. "Key issues in the contacts talks, which started again March 18," he said, "are company demands to reduce our sick time and vacation benefits, and to set wages in line with other airlines but weighted towards nonunion Delta which pays less."

Chanting, "We say talk it out. They say lock 'em out," "No Contract, No Peace," and "Unfair: USAir," some 200 flight attendants and their supporters marched through downtown Pittsburgh March 22. The flight attendants gathered on the steps of the Allegheny County courthouse, and marched to a rally in nearby Market Square.

Throughout the march the workers passed out informational leaflets explaining the issues in their contract fight. As the demonstrators wound through downtown, honks of support came from passing cars, buses, and trucks.

At the rally, pledges of solidarity came from the presidents of the Allegheny County Labor Council, the Pennsylvania AFL-CIO, and the Communications Workers of America, who recently won the right to represent ticket agents at the company.

The workers also marched to a US Airways ticket office in downtown Pittsburgh, where they briefly rallied and leafleted passersby.

Rebecca Arenson and Nancy Cole are members of the International Association of Machinists and work at US Airways in Philadelphia. Salm Kolis in Pittsburgh and Mark Friedman in Los Angeles contributed to this article.

Louisville cop campaign polarizes city

BY JOHN SARGE

LOUISVILLE, Kentucky—Working people, especially those who are Black, have faced a reactionary two-week campaign by the local police and their organization.

The cops in this city of 269,000 on the Ohio River have been denouncing anti-police brutality activists and demanding the resignation of Mayor David Armstrong, who had fired police chief Eugene Sherrard. The rightist actions have called for Sherrard's reinstatement.

The first big mobilization was on March 3 when some 600 cops and some supporters, led by the dismissed chief and nine police commanders, converged on City Hall. Scores of cops deserted their assigned beats to join the demonstration and parked their cruisers, with lights flashing, outside the local government center. During the protest the nine commanders threw their badges to the ground and later submitted their resignations.

In what the Louisville *Courier-Journal* described as the city's "largest demonstration since a massive anti-busing protest in 1975," the cops marched again March 17, this time with a permit issued by the city. The action was organized by national and local Fraternal Order of Police (FOP) leaders and a couple of local politicians. At least 2,000 cops and their supporters marched from the FOP office to City Hall to denounce the mayor.

Sherrard was dismissed for not telling the mayor until a day before a police awards ceremony that he planned to decorate two cops who killed 18-year-old Desmond Rudolph in a hail of 22 shots on May 13, 1999. The cops received medal of valor awards. Armstrong, who had selected Sherrard 14 months ago for the post, called the move "a breach of trust." Sherrard is eligible to return to the rank of captain on the force.

Growing anger over police brutality

The chiefs' action fueled growing anger here over the role of the cops and police brutality. The two cops had been cleared by a grand jury, but a coroner's jury split 4 to 2 in ruling the cops used justifiable force. The two Black members of the panel said the shooting could have been avoided.

The Rudolph shooting came on the heels of the jailhouse death of Adrian Raymond, another Black arrested by the Louisville police. One jail guard is awaiting trial in that case.

The *Courier-Journal* reported that their recent poll found that 89 percent of Black adults surveyed said that excessive police force is a problem and more than half of all adults in the city agreed.

While Louisville FOP president Rick McCubbin was claiming that "the support of the community is with law enforcement in Louisville," the march and the reaction to it did not reflect that. While the city is about 30 percent Black, and the 730-member police force itself is 16 percent African American, less than three dozen Blacks marched.

The FOP tried to distance the police from the image projected two weeks earlier by not having cops protest in uniform, even though many wore their badges around their necks with a black band around them. The cop organization distributed balloons, white and blue T-shirts declaring Armstrong wrong, and printed signs calling for "unity in the community."

Many participants wore green bumper stickers reading, "Impeach Armstrong," but some of the marchers' real attitudes came through. One demonstrator wore a sign that read, "Tis better to bury 1 thief than 2 cops," while another carried a sign declaring, "Judged by 12 or carried by 6—What would you Pick?"

Despite the attempt to come across as the offended party, the cops don't have a lot of wind in their sails and are somewhat on the defensive. While Sherrard led the early March action, he sent a letter to the second. It was reported from the stage that his wife was in attendance.

While some cops carried signs attacking Rev. Louis Coleman, a leader of the fight against cop brutality, a Louisville FOP leader said from the stage that no one in the organization "condones bully cops. We do not support racial profiling."

Only one of the cops who spoke called

for the reinstatement of Sherrard. There were only two speakers who were not cops at the rally, a Black minister who praised the police for "cleaning up" crime in the area that his church is located, and a state senator who described his role in trying to get the Ten Commandments posted inside the state capitol.

This is a reflection of the divisions among the city's rulers over the issue. Many businesspeople have come out in support of the mayor. The local newspaper has attacked FOP actions. On March 11 the *Courier-Journal* ran an editorial entitled, "Police Coup." On March 17 it editorialized, "the FOP is forfeiting the support of the people whom the police are sworn to protect and to serve."

The two cops whose awards triggered the conflict returned their medals March 16. The *Courier-Journal* reported the day following the march that the nine police commanders who so demonstratively resigned two weeks earlier "will meet among themselves" and with the FOP "to decide whether to serve in their current posts past April 1."

What's behind capitalists' productivity gains?

BY MAURICE WILLIAMS

"Productivity soars in U.S. and labor costs ease," announced the *International Herald Tribune*, citing a report on the booming economy by the U.S. Labor Department. "US productivity strongest for seven years," echoed London's *Financial Times*. What is behind these productivity gains? And what class is benefiting from them?

Some capitalist economic pundits and the big-business media are hailing what they describe as "the new economy." For instance, *Business Week* featured on its cover at the end of January a wrench made out of a circuit board under the main headline: "The New Economy—It Works in America. Will It Go Global?"

"It seems almost too good to be true," the article started out. Citing a nearly 4 percent growth rate, low inflation, and declining unemployment, the magazine says the "spectacular boom was not built on smoke and mirrors. Rather, it reflects a willingness to undertake massive risky investments in innovative information technology, combined with a decade of retooling U.S. financial markets, governments, and corporations to cut costs and increase flexibility and efficiency."

The article calls this the "U.S. model of free-market capitalism." Many articles along these lines claim the increased rate of productivity has been stoked by faster computers, the Internet, and new high-speed communications.

Despite the "spectacular numbers" of the "new Internet economy" hailed in the *Tribune* and other capitalist dailies, however, a layer of big-business figures have voiced concerns over exaggerated expectations of the "productivity miracle."

An article in the *New York Times*, for example, quotes several bourgeois economists who downplay the impact of computers. One, Robert Gordon from Northwestern University, explained, "When the economy is growing above normal, the output of a worker also jumps. That is because companies, faced with a growing demand for their products and services, find ways to squeeze more output from their employees."

That the long expansion and corporate profits are actually based on this "squeeze" on workers is something that Gordon does not admit, but the grinding effects of the intensification of labor is something millions of industrial workers face on a daily basis. While the bosses pocket the profits realized by increased productivity and lower per-unit costs, workers are paying for it in damage to their bodies and with their lives. One indication of how far the bosses have pushed along these lines is the increased number of strikes by workers demanding dignity on the job and relief from brutal working conditions.

According to Labor Department figures, workforce productivity rose 3 percent in 1999. In the fourth quarter it shot up at a 5 percent annual rate. This is the biggest rise for both figures since 1992. Productivity is measured in the amount of output for each

The sentiments and actions of working people, especially those who are African-American, are something those who run this city clearly took into account. Two days after the March 3 cop action, 800 people turned out for a commemoration of the Selma civil rights march. The event became an anti-cop-brutality protest.

While there was no counterprotest organized to the pro-cop rallies, small groups of people did show their opposition. "We are against this," said Taneisha Curtis, one of a group of three high school students. "Nobody deserves to be buried." Two protesters carried a sign on the sidewalk parallel to the head of the march declaring, "The mayor is right in his decision." They held a shouting match with some of the cops for blocks.

Justice Resource Center, the Rainbow Coalition, Citizens Against Police Brutality, and other civil rights organizations staged a reenactment of the Rudolph shooting later in the day. The event was organized for the media, focusing on the cops' actions the night of the murder. The national big-business press covered the demonstration,

and local TV and radio carried the march and rally live, disrupting local programming for two hours.

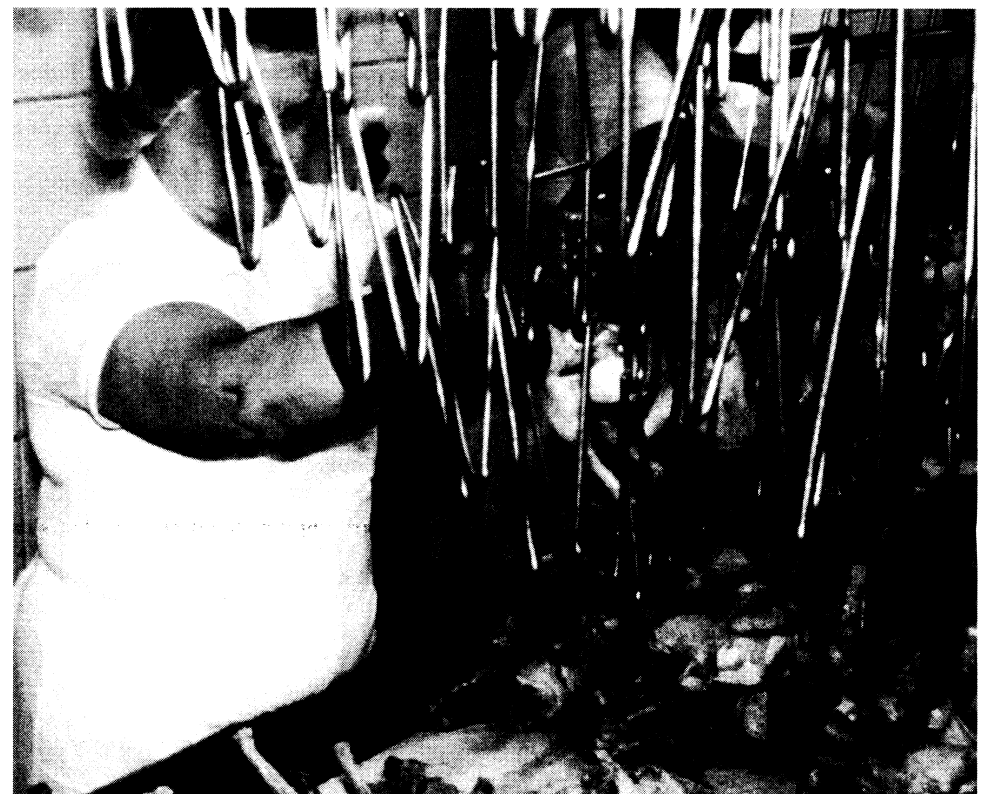
Three past or present officials of the National Black Police Association dominated the reenactment, explaining in great detail how the two killer cops violated "proper police procedure."

Their portrayal of the killer cops as rotten apples was undermined by local residents and relatives of Rudolph.

Joyce Whitten, a local West End resident and witness to the cop murder, described the cops ordering Rudolph to "get out," and then starting to shoot. "The shots just rang out as if the vehicle was exploding," she said.

Rudolph's grandmother and cousin attended the reenactment. Quinesha Rudolph, a cousin, said the "police were wrong for killing him." She declared that the cops "need some kind of punishment."

John Sarge is a member of the United Auto Workers in Wayne, Michigan. Jim Horn, a member of the United Food and Commercial Workers, contributed to this article.



Workers in poultry plant. Intensification of labor is key factor in productivity gains.

hour worked. Reflecting a double boon for big business, the department also stated that unit labor costs dropped 2.5 percent in the fourth quarter of 1999. The last time productivity rose by more than 2 percent for four consecutive years was 1961–66.

An increase in productivity in the manufacturing sector of the economy is a significant part of the overall total, where it rose at an annual rate of 6.4 percent in 1999, and 10.7 percent in the fourth quarter. Half of this came in the manufacture of computers and other electronic gear.

These numbers are "a veritable textbook version of how an economy should perform," crowed David Orr, chief economist at First Union Corp. Bruce Steinberg, chief economist at Merrill Lynch, ascribed the rise in productivity to "the new technologies." "We are seeing things in this [business] cycle that are unprecedented," he declared.

"The 1990's entered the books as the decade that produced the greatest improvement in productivity since the golden 1960's," wrote Louis Uchitelle in a February 9 *New York Times* article. He asserted that "almost all of the improvement came in the last four years, when computers became much faster and the Internet expanded rapidly."

'Productivity overstated'

Less than a week after the Labor Department presented its glowing report, Stephen Roach, chief economist and director of global economics for Morgan Stanley Dean Witter, wrote in an opinion column that the figures in the report were "ludicrous" and that productivity was "overstated." Federal Reserve chairman Alan Greenspan said that increased productivity could fuel inflation-

ary pressures or "squeeze profit margins." Either outcome is "capable of bringing our growing prosperity to an end," he warned.

Roach's article focused on office workers and professionals. While "many experts attribute the rise in productivity to the breakthroughs of new information technologies and the explosion in doing business online," said Roach, "the dirty little secret of the information age is that an increasingly large slice of work goes on outside the official work hours the government recognizes."

Roach noted that e-commerce was a "puny" factor in the \$9 trillion U.S. economy, accounting for an estimated \$150 billion in 1999, or about 1.6 percent. Industries such as mining, manufacturing, and construction, however, accounted for some 23 percent of the U.S. gross domestic product in 1997. There, the bosses bolstered productivity by lengthening the workweek, cranking up the speed of production lines, setting aside safety measures, doing away with work rules won through labor struggles, combining jobs, and other measures that make people work harder.

"There can be little doubt about the option that corporate America has chosen in the 1990s: downsizing has triumphed over rebuilding," Roach wrote in 1996. "Downsizing means making do with less—realizing efficiencies by pruning both labor and capital."

As productivity increases have hit record levels and unemployment has sunk to lows not seen in decades, workers pay has also lagged. Fewer than 10 percent of all workers found their incomes rising faster in 1999 than in 1998. Only those earning above \$65,000 found their incomes growing faster last year after adjusting for inflation. The

Continued on page 7

AFL-CIO women's conference draws 4,000

Workers involved in range of struggles build solidarity, share experiences

BY LISA POTASH
AND MAGGIE TROWE

CHICAGO—The AFL-CIO women's conference here drew 4,000 women March 10-12. A small number of men attended as well. The conference was stamped by women who are in the middle of union battles today.

Delta Airlines flight attendants, Cagle-Keystone poultry workers from Kentucky, home health-care workers from Illinois, strikers at Boeing, locked-out workers from AK Steel in Ohio, and others fighting in response to the employers' offensive brought their experiences to plenary sessions and workshops.

The large turnout at this conference registers the deepening resistance of working people to the employers' continuing grinding offensive on working conditions, wages, and safety on the job. One conference participant, 36-year-old electrical workers union member Kris Butler, works at Rockwell Collins in Coralville, Iowa. Through the course of a strike in 1998, she said, "we came out stronger in the contract, but the biggest thing we got out of the strike was solidarity. They can take a lot away, but they can never take away what happened on that strike line."

Some of the conference participants had recently attended the March 7 demonstration in Tallahassee, Florida, in defense of affirmative action, which is under attack by Gov. John Ellis Bush. Around a third of the conference participants were Black, reflecting the impact of the hard-won advances made through struggles beginning with the civil rights movement in the 1960s on the composition of the unions.

Many conference participants are part of women's committees and women's caucuses in their unions, particularly in the United Auto Workers and Amalgamated Transit Union. Statistics released by the conference organizers show two-thirds of all new union members in the United States are women.

A large number of the women participating were officials of their unions, from shop stewards to officers and business agents. A central theme was how women can work their way up in the union officialdom.

Many union officials spoke, including AFL-CIO president John Sweeney, Executive Vice President Linda Chavez-Thompson, Secretary-Treasurer Richard Trumka, and Gloria Johnson, vice president of the International Union of Electrical Workers. Most speeches railed against trade with China, called for support to Democratic Party candidates, and promoted nationalist and protectionist themes. Democratic presidential candidate Albert Gore was the featured speaker at the major conference rally on March 11.

Current labor struggles were a prominent part of the conference. Karen Hikel and Judy Campbell, members of the Society of Pro-

fessional Engineering Employees in Aerospace (SPEEA) then on strike at Boeing, greeted conference participants with their picket signs as they walked to and from the plenary sessions. A collection was taken for their strike during the weekend. The two SPEEA members, celebrating one month on strike against the aerospace giant, received a standing ovation from conference participants. Campbell, who is also chair of the union's Women's Advisory Committee, noted women are playing a leadership role in the walkout. In 1995 SPEEA won on-site child care.

A number of speakers at the main plenary

Employees and Restaurant Employees International Union, spoke in Spanish to a conference plenary sessions about the fight to win a unionization drive by restaurant workers at New York's Metropolitan Opera House. Immigrant workers have been the backbone of that struggle, she said. Fulgencia is a cashier there.

Rhonda Aron, 23 years old and a member of the United Food and Commercial Workers union, asked for support to a unionization drive by poultry workers at Cagle-Keystone in Kentucky. Aron was fired when she developed carpal tunnel, a disabling repetitive-motion injury.

and defend their rights.

Conference participants gave a warm reception to several invited international guests and immigrant workers who spoke at the main plenary sessions. Dita Sari, of the National Front for Indonesian Workers, who spent three years in prison and was released seven months ago, spoke on the deepening struggles of workers and peasants in that country and the importance of solidarity with them. Myung Ja Koo, of the Asian Immigrant Women Advocates (AIWA), based in California, spoke in Korean about the struggles of unorganized garment and electronic assembly workers there to win

200,000 protest cutbacks in France



Militant/Claude Bleton

Some 200,000 teachers, students, and parents held demonstrations in France March 16 to protest cutbacks in education. Schools were closed throughout the country, some of them being occupied by angry parents. The media reported 800,000 teachers and public school employees went on strike the same day. Another national strike is planned for March 24.

mary sessions spoke on some of the battles taking place today. Andrea Taylor, head of the Association of Flight Attendants, gave conference participants a flavor of Delta's campaign to keep out the union. The company has held mass employee meetings and promised personal computers to all workers, she said.

Lula Bronson, of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), spoke on the fight for a wage increase by home health-care workers and called on conference participants to join her in Springfield, Illinois, for a rally later this month.

Noemi Fulgencia of HERE, the Hotel

Locked-out workers at AK Steel, members of the United Steelworkers of America (USWA), organized a raffle and publicized a March 25 rally in Mansfield, Ohio, that the union is organizing. Victoria Womack, a longtime member of the United Auto Workers women's committee at the Ford Assembly plant in Chicago, said she was inspired by the activities of the Women of Steel from Mansfield. "We use steel where we work. We're all connected," she said.

Dolores Huerta of the United Farm Workers union spoke at the Saturday evening awards ceremony and reception on the continuing fight of farm workers to organize

better safety conditions on the job. Koo was also part of the AIWA workers' panel that led two workplace safety and health workshops, which were well attended.

Speakers from Brazil, Canada, Indonesia, and South Africa spoke at the Working Women: An International Perspective workshop. Other workshops were organized on the effects of changes in U.S. immigration laws. The AFL-CIO recently changed its policy on immigration to one advocating amnesty for immigrants now living in the United States.

Other workshops included organizing drives, sexual harassment, welfare reform, and gays in the workplace. There was quite a bit of discussion and debate in these sessions. In the Workplace Health and Safety workshop a woman asked panelists from AIWA why they didn't learn to speak English. Several unionists responded in defense of their Asian sisters.

Many conference participants were concerned about health and safety on the job. A 42-year-old woman, who asked that her name not be used, is a General Motors assembly worker in St. Louis. She reported, "I have a torn tendon in my shoulder from using a heavy solder gun with a faulty tip. If you go to your own doctor the company says it's not a compensation case. You have to go to the company doctor. I put in a gender harassment complaint against the boss for harassing me and not the guys," she said. "The male coworkers support me and were upset about what has happened to me. They gave statements to support me. The injury happened in February and I'm still fighting to get it accepted as a compensation claim."

Lisa Potash is a member of the Union of Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Employees, in Chicago. Maggie Trowe is a member of the UFCW. Also contributing to this article are Pattie Thompson, member of the International Association of Machinists, and Lisa-Marie Rottach, member of UNITE, both in Chicago.

What's behind the jump in productivity in U.S.?

Continued from page 6

only spike in wage increases for working people came in 1996 and 1997 when the federal minimum wage was increased.

"Caught off guard, economists are reaching for explanations," wrote Louis Uchitelle in a *Times* column. While these economists

would be less off guard if they had visited any mine, mill, or factory over the last decade where the bosses have been carrying out their antilabor drive, Uchitelle does note that workers face "job insecurity."

He states, "Despite rising public confidence in the economy, many workers still

remember the layoffs and downsizings of the early 1990s."

Meanwhile, as the nation's economy chugged along, the decade of the 1990s ended with a rash of eight bank failures.

This has provoked nervousness among some big-business economists such as Federal Reserve governor Laurence Meyer, who told a hearing of the House Banking Committee, "When the economy weakens—as it ultimately will—we can expect bank losses."

A "troubling trend" exists among bankers who operate as if "current robust conditions will continue indefinitely," Greenspan remarked to a gathering of bankers in San Antonio, Texas. "Competitive pressures have intensified" between lending institutions, he added.

Many banking institutions have in fact tightened their lending standards. More business loans are being paid late, the *Wall Street Journal* reported in early February. A quarterly Federal Reserve survey of senior loan officials at banks across the country found that nearly 60 percent of domestic banks and 90 percent of foreign banks reported an increase in their delinquency rates.

Unionists hold solidarity ox roast

BY JOHN SARGE

DETROIT—Unionists here organized a "Solidarity Ox Roast" fund-raising dinner to support steelworkers locked out by AK Steel in Ohio. More than half a dozen members and supporters of United Steelworkers of America (USWA) Local 169 made the three-hour drive from Mansfield, Ohio, to participate in the event, which was sponsored by USWA Local 1299 at Great Lakes Steel.

Some 125 people turned out for an evening of food and discussion on how to win support for ongoing labor battles. Among those attending were members of the United Auto Workers and a siz-

able group of Detroit newspaper workers, some of whom are still locked out by the city's two daily newspapers in a five-and-a-half-year contract fight.

One focus of discussion was the March 25 demonstration called by USWA Local 169 in Mansfield to protest company union busting. The USWA is sending at least two buses from Michigan. Local 169 members told dinner participants that this rally will draw many more unionists and others than a similar mobilization last November.

John Sarge is a member of the United Auto Workers in Wayne, Michigan.

Rally in Washington

Continued from front page

that expenses went up so much," she said.

"Monopolies are setting higher and higher prices for inputs like fertilizer and seed. The price of seed corn has gone up to \$100 a bag, about a 50 percent increase in the last eight years. And fuel prices have gone up about 50 percent from last year," she said. "My husband works three part-time, off-farm jobs, and I have worked a seasonal job at the IRS for 13 years."

The NFU events included participants from nearly every state in the country. The largest groups came from Minnesota, with between 400 and 500 people. Seven buses came from North Dakota. Farmers from Georgia, Mississippi, Alabama, and Tennessee came on three buses organized by the Federation of Southern Cooperatives.

Also demonstrating here were 40 farmers organized by the Black Farmers and Agriculturalists Association (BFAA), who have been organizing a series of actions at the offices of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). The farmers are protesting the government's failure to even carry out the terms it agreed to in a Consent Decree in a lawsuit proving gross discrimination in the practices of the USDA.

They are also protesting the fact that the government is now using the FBI to investigate "fraudulent claims" filed by farmers, who are required to provide various levels of documentation of discrimination by USDA agents.

BFAA president Gary Grant denounced the FBI and Justice Department investigations. "Everyone is entitled to compensation, even if they were never able to farm. We were promised land after slavery. Paying the meager amounts of the Consent Decree still does not compensate nor address the 14 million acres of land stolen, or the life these farmers were cheated out of, or the harm done to the farmer's family."

Participants in the BFAA action also took part in the actions called by the NFU.

Also participating were youth that belonged to the Future Farmers of America, part of a strong youth component at the actions. Three high-school-age youth from farm families in Connecticut attended the rally to bring attention to the concerns of young farmers. All three said they did not believe they were going to be able to make a living at farming after high school.

Justin Hergnreder, a cattle and crop farmer, said, "The way things are going shows it's not getting better but worse. The prices we need to stay in farming are not here." His friend, a hog farmer, echoed the same sentiment. "We came today because the rally also needs to be focusing not just on what farmers need today, but on the youth who are the heart and soul of future agriculture. We want to be able to do what we love to do."

Unionists from around the country also attended, wearing union jackets and carrying banners. Some of the most prominent were: the Bakery, Confectionery and Tobacco Workers; the American Federation of Grain Millers; United Steelworkers of America members from the Iron Range in Minnesota; and the Service Employees International Union.

On March 20 the NFU events included a press conference, a luncheon that was addressed by Agriculture Secretary Dan Glickman, and a Town Hall meeting on the rural crisis. The following day the farmers participated in an interfaith service in the morning, then spent several hours lobbying Congress before the noon rally.

One feature that marked all of the events was the relatively few number of farmers who got a chance to speak. The vast majority of those addressing the crowd were not farmers, but included a heavy presence of senators, congressional representatives, and officials from the USDA, all of whom worked to turn the event into more of a Democratic Party rally for the upcoming presidential elections.

The politicians and USDA officials also attempted to turn the anger of the farmers towards competition from Europe and China. They claimed the problems facing farmers result from the failure of U.S. government representatives to be tough enough trade negotiators, pointing away from the agricultural monopolies owned by capitalists in the United States and the U.S. government itself.

Senators like Tom Harkin from Iowa, the ranking member of the Senate Committee

Sydney: 'British troops out of Ireland!'



A dozen members and supporters of Australian Aid for Ireland protested outside the official welcoming ceremony for Queen Elizabeth at the Opera House in Sydney, Australia, March 20. New South Wales cops moved quickly to threaten the activists with arrest if they didn't surrender their signs and banners. Among the slogans put forward by the demonstrators were: British troops out of Ireland, Release all political prisoners, and Disband the Royal Ulster Constabulary. The peaceful, legal protest had been built the day before at the annual St. Patrick's Day parade.

on Agriculture, was typical when he said that the real "foreign competitors" were receiving larger subsidies from their governments, which put farmers in the United States at a disadvantage.

Although these appeals to nationalism were accepted by many, others weren't about to be pointed away from protesting against those they considered the real enemies of farmers. This became evident when, after one senator said that U.S. farmers have to be on a war footing when it comes to trade, a few farmers shouted from the audience that the only one they wanted to be on a war footing against was Cargill, the giant grain monopoly.

Kelly Shockman, the NFO director in North Dakota and a farmer, said, "Farmers

all over the world face difficulties and current trade policies try to pit farmers against each other. Farmers in Japan, Europe, and Canada face the same problems as us."

Vicki Trytten, president of the Alaska Farmers Union, and a dairy farmer, said, "All farms in Alaska are family farms, and when times are all right we do okay. But when we bleed we bleed bad. I've seen too many neighbors forced out of farming."

"No more auctions," she chanted from the stage, "No more auctions."

James Harris is a member of the Union of Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Employees in Atlanta. Doug Jenness from St. Paul, Minnesota, and Janice Lynn from Washington contributed to this article.

MILITANT LABOR FORUMS

ILLINOIS

Chicago

Fighting Racist Oppression in the U.S. Speaker: Tom Leonard, former merchant seaman and machinist, Socialist Workers Party, participant in the civil rights movement of the 1960s and 1970s. Program will include video on the rise of La Raza Unida Party in the 1960s and 70s. Fri., March 31, 7:00 p.m. 1223 N. Milwaukee Ave. Donation: \$4. Tel: (773) 342-1780.

MASSACHUSETTS

Boston

The Fuel Crisis: Why are Prices Inflated and What Working People Can do About It. Speakers: Ted Leonard, Socialist Workers Party, and member of Union of Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Employees. Fri., March 31, 8 p.m. Codman Square 683 Washington St. Dorchester. Donation: \$4. Tel: (617) 282-2254.

MISSOURI

St. Louis

The Beginning of a Social Movement in the Coalfields. Speaker: Elyse Hathaway. Sun., April 2, 2 p.m. Salad Bowl Cafeteria, 4929 Lindell. Donation: \$5. Tel: (314) 924-2500.

AUSTRALIA

Sydney

British Troops Out of Ireland! Speakers: Joanne Kuniansky, Communist League; and others. Fri., March 31, 7 p.m. 176 Redfern St. Redfern. Donation: \$4. Tel: 9 690 1533.

NEW ZEALAND

Christchurch

F16s or "Peacekeepers," Oppose All Imperialist Military Campaigns! Sat., April 1, 7 p.m. Gloucester Arcade, 129 Gloucester St. Donation: \$3. Tel: 365 6055.

CALENDAR

CANADA

Vancouver

Update on Cuba. Speaker: Manuel Montero, International Department, Central Trade Union of Cuba (CTC). Fri., April 7, 7 p.m. Steel Workers Hall, 25 Cecil St.

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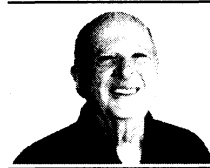
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Work hard, do the overtime— Last year, John Welch, top dog at General Electric, took home \$93.1 million in salary, bonuses and stock shares.



Harry Ring

Wanna bet?—The contenders in the Republican and Democratic presidential primaries spent a reported combined total of \$250 million. We readily concede that the presidential bid of the Socialist Workers Party is not likely to further swell that kind of spend-

ing. But we'll give odds that the socialist candidates will be the only ones to spotlight the ever-mounting social evils spawned by capitalism and offer a program for basic change.

A case in point—"Pollutants that waft from major industries are stifling precipitation in many regions of the world, in some cases eliminating almost all rain and snow produced by clouds, according to a new multinational study..."—News item.

Essence of Wall Street—Eleven New Yorkers, including stock brokers and strong-arm mobsters, are facing trial on charges of swindling a mass of investors. The brokers bought big

blocks of stocks in four companies and inflated their value by flooding the market with false, misleading info about their value. At crash time, they would ignore the pleas of investors to sell. The stock peddlers apparently felt they couldn't ask the cops for protection from enraged investors and called in the hoods instead.

A "Labor" government?—Gordon Brown, England's labor minister, was slated to tell the jobless that he wants to replace the culture of government "hand-outs" with "a new work ethic." His program for the unemployed includes new tax breaks for companies and encouraging older jobless folks to start their own businesses

Enjoy your trip—"Safety Board finds 82 percent of cribs at hotels, motels to be unsafe"—News headline.

There are dogs and there are dogs—There's a significant disparity in the price of prescription drugs in a pharmacy and in a pet food store, a federal study found. For instance, at a drug counter, a month's supply of Lodine, an arthritis medicine, will set you back \$108.90. At pet stores it's available for dogs at \$37.80.

Or crackpots?—The Utah legislature is pondering a sex "education" bill. It would be limited to teaching that sexual activity outside marriage is a criminal no-no. One member of the House,

who felt the measure was too liberal, grouched, "We don't teach people how to be thieves."

How apologetic can you get?—Aetna, a ranking insurance company, apologized because in the early 1850s, it "may have" sold life insurance policies to slaveholders to cover the deaths of slaves.

The company assured that the number of such policies it "may have" sold amounted to no more than a dozen. It said Aetna was prompted to make the "apology" after being contacted by Deadria Farmer-Paellmann, who it said was a New York lawyer. The company said Farmer-Paellmann posed the issue of an apology—and reparations.

Imperialists, Stalinists try to rip apart Yugoslavia

The excerpt below is from "Youth and the Communist Movement," a report given at a special congress of the communist movement in the United Kingdom held over the June 27-28 weekend in 1992. The entire talk appears in *Capitalism's World Disorder: Working-Class Politics at the Millennium*, copyright © 1999 Pathfinder Press, reprinted by permission.

BY JACK BARNES

If we look at the unfolding slaughter in Yugoslavia, we will see many elements of the world we are describing. The most difficult things to come to grips with in discussing Yugoslavia are not the theoretical questions; we have adopted reports on those questions and written about them well. The most difficult thing is to acknowledge the reality of a murderous war, the scope and horror of which has not been seen in continental Europe for decades. Even more dif-

from the pages of Capitalism's World Disorder

ficult to accept is the fact this war is not an aberration, but instead a foreshadowing of the direction of world politics today.

Most bourgeois commentators would have us believe that the slaughter in Yugoslavia signifies a new rise of nationalism—or as they often prefer saying, a new rise of "tribalism." Outside a few white enclaves in "the West," they imply, world civilization is threatening to break down along lines of "age-old ethnic hatreds." The truth is the opposite. The slaughter in Yugoslavia is the product of the breakdown of the capitalist world order; it is the product of intensifying conflicts among rival capitalist classes in the imperialist countries and would-be capitalists in the deformed workers states. These conflicts, in which exploiting layers demagogically don national garb to defend their narrow class interests, will increasingly mark world politics.

What is happening in Yugoslavia also bloodily demonstrates the fact that Stalinist leaderships cannot unite toilers from different national origins on a lasting basis to open up a broadening federation of soviet republics working together to build socialism. Several years after the October 1917 revolution in Russia, the Bolsheviks under the leadership of Lenin formed the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics as a voluntary federation of workers and peasants republics. The Bolsheviks in Lenin's time were a revolutionary workers vanguard that fought uncompromisingly for the right of oppressed nations to self-determination, for the complete equality of nations and nationalities, and against every vestige of national privilege, arrogance, and chauvinism. They took the lead in placing that internationalist perspective at the heart of the program and practice of the Communist International. As part of the political counterrevolution carried out by the petty-bourgeois social caste whose spokesman was Joseph Stalin, however, this proletarian internationalist course gave way to the return of Great Russian chauvinism, now dressed up as the "new



"The slaughter in Yugoslavia is the product of the breakdown of the capitalist world order; it is the product of intensifying conflicts among rival capitalist classes in the imperialist countries and would-be capitalists in the deformed workers states." Above, U.S. troops under NATO command patrol Mitrovica, Kosova, February 23. NATO general Wesley Clark is calling for more troops for U.S.-led occupation.

Soviet nation" and "Soviet man."²

The federated Yugoslav workers state that the imperialists and rival Stalinist gangs are now trying to tear apart was a gigantic accomplishment of the Yugoslav revolution of 1942-46. Workers and peasants who were Serbian, Croatian, Bosnian, and from other nationalities forged unity to oust the Nazi occupation forces and their local collaborators, carry out a radical land reform, and expropriate the capitalist exploiters. It was truly one of the great revolutions of this century, a proletarian socialist revolution.

The Stalinist leadership of the Yugoslav Communist Party, headed by Josip Broz (known by his *nom de guerre* Tito), however, blocked the toilers of different nationalities from building on their conquests and solidly cementing the federation together. The socialist revolution in Yugoslavia was deformed from birth. Nonetheless, substantial layers of toilers in Yugoslavia—whether Bosnian, Serb, or Croat, whether Christian or Muslim in their current beliefs or family origins—have continued even today to demonstrate their will to resist the horrors thrust on them by the rival bureaucratic gangs that emerged from the crumbling Stalinist apparatus.

The consequences of the bloodbath in Yugoslavia also provide further confirmation that refugees are increasingly becoming actors in world politics today. Every time we hear the word "refugee," in any language, we should always translate it in our minds as "fellow worker." It is not enough for class-conscious workers to reject the chauvinist portrayal of refugees as pariahs. Above all, we must resist turning refugees simply into victims, rather than potential soldiers in the battalions of the international working class. We take communist politics to these fellow workers, and we fight alongside them for their rights, their dignity, and the common interests of working people the world over.

The slaughter in Yugoslavia shows every sign of deepening and drawing in other countries. There is already a United Nations intervention force there—so-called "peace-keeping" troops—for the first time ever in

Europe. We cannot predict whether the war will expand, or foresee the forms an escalation might take. Nor do we know how long the current imperialist "peacekeeping" will

—25 AND 50 YEARS AGO—

25 CENTS THE MILITANT A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY/PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF THE WORKING PEOPLE

April 4, 1975

With its troops reeling back in disarray, its positions collapsing in one province after another, and Saigon itself facing the possibility of attack, the Thieu dictatorship—and its backers in Washington—have been dealt a staggering defeat.

Not since the Vietnamese liberation fighters drove the French colonialists out of Indochina twenty-one years ago has there been a victory of greater magnitude for the people of Vietnam. And its impact is heightened by the spectacle of Lon Nol, Washington's man in Cambodia, packing his bags while the United States Embassy there burns documents in preparation for its evacuation.

Yet despite the overwhelming opposition of the American people to spending still more billions to back the Thieu dictatorship, the Ford administration is stubbornly insisting that the United States must continue to bankroll the Saigon generals.

Why is it that with three times as many troops, seven times as much fire power, and sole control of the air, Saigon has not been able to hold its own against the liberation fighters?

There is only one answer. The capitalist landlord regime in Saigon, held together by the glue of corruption and privilege, offers nothing to the great mass of Vietnamese except brutal repression and continued exploitation. The aspirations of the Vietnamese workers and peasants are for the reunification of Vietnam.

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

April 3, 1950

AKRON, March 24—Fears for the future safety of Negro citizens of Akron rose this week when the Summit County Grand Jury failed to indict Policemen Wilcox and Pohl for the murder of Ernest Fenner, 26-year-old Negro veteran who was shot to death by two bullets fired through the windshield of the police cruiser manned by Wilcox and Pohl on Feb. 9.

The report of the Grand Jury rejected evidence presented by 15 eyewitnesses to the slaying of Fenner, confirming that the shooting was unjustifiable homicide. Instead, the Grand Jury accepted the story of Wilcox that he was "in fear of harm to himself" when he fired two bullets into Fenner's back and stomach. Although police claim that Fenner beat on the windshield of their cruiser with some kind of weapon, they were unable to produce the alleged weapon after an intensive search of the scene of the crime.

Witnesses stated that Fenner was eight to ten feet from the cruiser when he was shot and was clutching a length of stick one inch in diameter. A stick answering this description had been found at the scene and turned over to the NAACP. The Grand Jury refused to allow this piece of evidence, however, because it was embarrassing to the police. Wilcox and Pohl had earlier claimed that Fenner attacked the cruiser with an ax.

The young Negro veteran was suffering from a mental illness at the time of his death and had been receiving medical treatment from the VA.

U.S. and allies out of Yugoslavia!

On the one-year anniversary of a brutal and horrendous bombing campaign against Yugoslavia, Washington and its imperialist allies are stepping up their military occupation and control over pieces of the country it has gained a hold in.

The war was hypocritically carried out the banner of defending self-determination for the Albanians in Kosova and of bringing peace to the region, but both were set back by the imperialist onslaught. Rather than these lofty goals—similar to proclamations that have accompanied every military assault by Washington aimed at extending its empire and imposing its domination—the real aim of Washington is the return of capitalism as the social system in Yugoslavia.

The imperialists have learned since the fall of the Stalinist regimes in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union that goal cannot be achieved short of a bloody military imposition of what is an outmoded and reactionary social system—something that can only be done by breaking the spirit, fighting capacity, and unity of working people in Yugoslavia.

The federated Yugoslav workers state the imperialists are trying to tear apart was a gigantic accomplishment of the Yugoslav revolution of 1942-46. Workers and peasants who were Serbian, Croatian, Bosnian, and from other nationalities forged unity to oust the Nazi occupation forces and their local collaborators, carry out a radical land reform, and expropriate the capitalist exploiters. It was one of the truly great revolutions of this century, a proletarian socialist revolution.

The arrogance and imperialist mentality of bourgeois mouthpieces, government officials, and the military brass who speak on Yugoslavia, give an indication of Washington's real goals. It shows the disdain with which they hold working people in the region, and the casual disregard with which they view the national sovereignty of any country other than their own.

Protestations by some Democrats, Republicans, and Reform party leaders about a long-term military occupation in Kosova notwithstanding, the U.S. rulers must more and more use their military as a main vehicle to defend their interests in the world. The war and military occupation of Bosnia and Kosova are not an aberration: this is what the imperialists have to offer working people the world over.

Washington hopes fighting workers, farmers, and youth in the United States will become inured to its military forays and susceptible to the rationalizations and lies with which it justifies them. But as struggles and battles continue against the employers' offensive at home, seeing refugees, immigrants, and any working person under attack anywhere in the world as first and foremost a fellow worker becomes a necessary stance to effectively advance struggles here.

Demanding Washington and its allies get every soldier, war plane, tank, and weapon out of Yugoslavia is the most important contribution workers around the world can make to the prospects for reinitiating the revolutionary goals workers and peasants in the Balkans so heroically advanced coming out of World War II.

London's assault on immigrants

The following statement was released by Jonathan Silberman, Communist League candidate for the London Assembly in the Lambeth and Southwark constituency. Silberman is a member of the Transport and General Workers' Union. We are reprinting the statement here for *Militant* readers.

All working people should reject the government's assault on asylum seekers, the latest in a series of moves aimed at scapegoating foreign-born workers for unemployment, low pay, and poor housing. The criminalization of immigrants on the pretext of alleged "aggressive begging" gives cover to a sharp assault on the democratic rights of all. This includes internment without trial, to which hundreds of foreign nationals are subjected upon arrival in this country, and ending the right to trial by jury for people accused of so-called "secondary" offenses.

The capitalist rulers seek to reinforce the second-class status of foreign-born workers to justify the low wages and poor working conditions they receive. The maintenance of such divisions among working people gives the bosses an opening to go after the living standards of all workers.

The real cause of declining living standards and social decay is the profit-driven capitalist system. The decision by BMW to sell off Rover, and that of Ford to impose massive redundancies, will throw tens of thousands of workers out of a job. This is caused by the capitalist auto industries where overcapacity is driving the bosses to at-

tack the workforce to boost profits.

Neither Romanian immigrants nor any other workers are responsible for these attacks. Jobs and living standards can only be protected by defending the interests of the working class as a whole, irrespective of nationality.

In Romania itself living standards of the average worker have declined by 25 percent over the past 10 years. Depression conditions are driving workers and farmers to uproot themselves in the search for jobs and livelihoods. "Market reforms," demanded by the imperialists and implemented by governments since the popular overthrow of the Stalinist Ceaucescu regime, have deepened the already severe economic crisis in that country. Imperialism's criminal military assaults and economic sanctions against Iraq and Yugoslavia, Romania's major trading partners, have compounded the social devastation.

The crisis of the market system is universal. What is needed is a revolutionary struggle for a government of workers and farmers to overthrow capitalism and join in the worldwide fight for socialism. In mounting a militant fightback against attacks on jobs and living standards, the trade unions need to project a social program to unite all workers: Jobs for all! Equal rights for immigrants! Open the borders—end all immigration controls! Close the detention centers! A 30-hour working week with no loss of pay! A crash program of public works to build houses, schools, hospitals, and employ the jobless! Increase the national minimum wage!

Socialist alternative in 2000

Socialist workers are launching election campaigns in a number of states where there are contests underway between the Democrats and the Republicans. Socialists who are members of industrial unions, along with members of the Young Socialists, will be running for U.S. Senate, Congress, and a range of other state offices. Communist workers in Britain have also announced a working-class candidate and union fighter for the London Assembly.

The activity of these campaigns, both of the candidates and their supporters, will on its own show an alternative to the two-party system and the course of the Democrats, Republicans, Reform, and other parties that operate within the framework of capitalism.

The socialist candidates are part of the resistance of working people across the country. They are building demonstrations to defend affirmative action, while the employers and their parties in state and federal government try to dismantle it; walking picket lines on strike or in solidarity with workers fighting increasingly harsh conditions on the job and attacks on our unions; joining actions of farmers as part of building a fighting alliance of workers and farmers today; and standing shoulder to shoulder with others in actions against police brutality. They encourage and participate in protests against imperial outrages committed by Washington around the globe: from military assaults to the embargo against Cuba.

The socialists bring something else to tens of thousands through their campaigns: the perspective that working people can and must, in their tens of millions, organize a revolutionary movement that can topple the imperialist government in Washington and put in place a government of workers and farmers. Only this victory can open up the wider education and mobilization of the population to overturn capitalism and begin the transition to socialism,

joining with working people in other countries as part of a worldwide struggle.

This is the only answer and road forward for working people in face of the economic crisis, and the perspective of fascism and war that forms the deadly logic of the capitalist system. The heat lightening of this can be seen across the imperialist world, from Jörg Haider in Austria to Patrick Buchanan in the United States. Right-wing and fascist currents are organizing with the knowledge that the capitalists will turn to them down the road to attempt to crush the growing revolutionary mobilizations and organized power of workers and farmers.

Socialist campaigners are discussing this perspective and encouraging those interested to read and study books with them, such as *Capitalism's World Disorder* and *The Changing Face of U.S. Politics*. This exchange among vanguard militants is the best way not only to draw together current experiences in fights and struggles, but to draw on the written legacy of similar working-class battles and revolutionary struggles for 150 years.

The imperialists have in their hands military, economic, and political power. But they are a minority without any ideas, only pragmatic and brutal actions to defend an outmoded and decaying system from which they profit.

Working people have on their side organization and the program its leaders have forged through struggle since the inception of the modern working class—mighty weapons that can bring victory. All those involved in the ongoing resistance—from truckers, to farmers, to mine workers, to youth—are welcome to become a part of the socialist campaign, and join the organizations that exist today in the United States that are advancing this perspective: the Socialist Workers Party and Young Socialists.

U.S. in Kosova

Continued from front page

from the beginning—persist. Washington has been unable to get full agreement among its ally-competitors in Europe on how to proceed in the region.

In order to justify the increase in military forces and the use of them to carry out imperialist designs in the country, the big-business media has focused on a number of protests in Kosova and Serbia, highlighting divisions and fighting between Albanians and Serbs, especially around the city of Mitrovica in NATO-occupied Kosova. The overwhelming majority of the facts and quotes cited in the ruling-class media narrowly and one-sidedly cover developments there.

On March 15, hundreds of U.S. Army troops—by helicopter, armored vehicle, and on foot—struck five sites in southeastern Kosova, seizing weapons, uniforms, and documents, as well as detaining nine people. Some U.S. officials have declared the raids a first step to "rein in" former members of the disbanded Kosova Liberation Army (KLA). The area, under U.S. control, has seen raids by a small group of Kosova Albanians across the border into Serbia.

The Pentagon played a central role in building up the KLA leading up to the bombing a year ago. The group originally was an organization that fighters for self-determination and against imperialist intervention participated in. But it quickly evolved into a pro-imperialist outfit, co-opted by Washington as the war drive accelerated.

The same day as the March 15 raids, French troops used tear gas and stun grenades on a group of Serbs in Mitrovica who were holding a protest on a bridge that divides two parts of the city. Fifteen people were injured.

'NATO forces digging in for long haul'

U.S. general Wesley Clark, serving as NATO's top commander in Europe, has been calling for more U.S. and allied troops to be deployed in Yugoslavia. There are currently more than 37,000 NATO troops in Kosova—up from 33,000 a week before. Clark is requesting a force of 50,000. His approach has consistently been to boost troop strength up to what would be necessary to put a freeze on resistance and conflict in the region.

The U.S. government initially refused to add any troops above the 5,300 already in Kosova until other allied governments field more. The Clinton administration later added another 700 troops. Only three pro-NATO governments—Britain, France, and Denmark—give NATO direct authority over their troops. A joint military exercise with air and ground capabilities, involving U.S., Argentinian, Polish, and Romanian forces, as well as from the Netherlands, was organized to take place at the end of March as a show of force.

NATO "peacekeepers" have set up "confidence zones" in Mitrovica—areas tightly policed by NATO troops where Serbs and Kosova Albanians can "freely" move around the city. The zones have "forbidden" demonstrations, the use of weapons, and unauthorized parking. Mitrovica contains 50,000 Albanians and 17,000 Serbs.

Over the past decade Washington's goal has been to get its forces on the ground in the workers state of Yugoslavia as part of its long-range goal of restoring capitalist property relations there. The U.S. government has sought to bolster its dominance over European imperialist powers. While maintaining its military power in the region, Washington has fanned the flames of war in the Balkans in order to wear down working-class resistance.

U.S. government spokespeople, the big-business media, and bourgeois commentators now openly talk about Yugoslavia as if it is a place where they make the decisions about the future.

Thomas Friedman in a March 16 *New York Times* column titled, "Get Real on Kosovo," posed very sharply Washington's choices. Accusing U.S. officials of wanting to pull back or withdraw from Kosova, he writes, "It might be momentarily satisfying to just walk away, telling both sides: 'You people deserve each other. Why don't you just slug it out and call us when you're exhausted.'" But that could open a door to even greater instability, he argues.

Friedman puts forward two options: "Use overwhelming force to disarm the whole population and then stand guard on every corner" to enforce stability, or "disarm the politics by tacitly partitioning the country." He proposes adding to Serbia the southern piece of Kosova below it; in return the Milosevic government would turn over to Kosova a couple of counties on the border.

"KFOR troops have begun to dig in for the long haul," writes Texas senator Kay Bailey Hutchison in an article picked up in London's *Financial Times*, titled, "Back to the Balkan drawing board." Yugoslavia and the surrounding region are "likely to remain under NATO occupation for years," she writes. Hutchison points out that Washington's military apparatus in Yugoslavia comprises the largest overseas military construction project—some 200 buildings—since the Vietnam War.

Hutchison notes that the Texas National Guard 49th Armored Division will soon be deployed to Bosnia for eight months, the first time National Guard units will be sent there as active duty forces.

"Long term western occupation is a poor foundation on which to build a lasting peace in the Balkans," she states, while advocating Washington "redrawing the border lines" and set up "Albanian, Serbian, Croatian, and secular Muslim states." While presenting it as a plan that "reflects the apparent desires of the people who live there," Hutchison's proposal is that sought by every great power for the Balkans: divide, conquer, and enslave for the benefit of the occupiers.

Train drivers in Sweden win better contract

BY CATHARINA TIRSÉN

STOCKHOLM, Sweden—Improvements in the contract covering commuter train workers has led to many signing up to work at Citypendeln, a privately owned company that took over from the state-owned railway.

The workers organized sickouts and refused to start work under the concessions demanded by the bosses, which led to severe curtailment of train service and cancellation in towns the farthest away from here. Protests by residents demanding resumption of service took place in several towns during February.

"I am one of the drivers who went to work

for Citypendeln after the new contract was signed," said Johnny Olsson March 2 as he waited on the platform at the central station in Stockholm to start his shift on the commuter train. "The earlier contract was terrible but this one is better."

Citypendeln took over operating the commuter trains in the Stockholm area January 6. Many of the 630 train drivers (engineers), conductors, and other workers showed their opposition to the conditions Citypendeln wanted to impose by calling in sick on October 27 and 28. Despite this, the union leaders signed a contract December 22 with several concessions the workers had opposed.

Some 140 workers refused to sign on with

the new company, on top of the 50 workers who had already gotten other jobs. Because of lack of workers, trains have been running at half capacity, and have been replaced by buses to the stations at the end of the lines.

"We wanted to work," Olsson explained. "But we refused to sign on because we had to choose between working under conditions that would either render us a heart attack within 10 years or not work at all. That 150 workers did not sign on should not have come as a surprise to the company. They knew what we wanted."

Olsson explained that the new contract, signed February 20, contains improved work schedules, especially shorter early morning shifts, something the workers had demanded for safety reasons.

Another train driver, who did not give his name, agreed that the schedules now are better. After the former CEO of Citypendeln was forced to resign on January 13, he said, negotiations and conditions improved. Workers have gotten back rooms that enable them to stay overnight, and parking

places for those who start early or finish late.

On February 7 several hundred people living in Nynäshamn, at the end of one of the lines, attended a protest meeting. By February 10 some 6,000 people in that town had signed petitions to protest cancellation of the trains. On February 9, 300 people in Gnesta, at the end of another line, held a protest meeting. On February 21 about 100 people met at the railway station in Järna, another town where the trains had not been running. Local politicians threatened to organize a demonstration on the rails, thereby blocking train traffic on the main southbound railroad out of Stockholm, but then backed away from that action.

The meeting adopted a statement demanding the resignation of members of the board of local traffic in the Stockholm area and an end to privatizations. Several people at the meeting expressed solidarity with the train drivers and conductors.

Claudio Burgos, Lars Erlandsson, and Carl-Erik Isacson contributed to this article.

Union election in France deals blow to bosses

BY DEREK JEFFERS

POISSY, France—Elections for delegates to represent workers at the Peugeot auto factory outside Paris March 15 dealt a blow to antiunion repression and recent company-backed agreements calling for "flexible" work rules, inadequate pre-retirement pay, and limitations on vacations.

Workers on the evening shift March 15 in car assembly, upon learning of the results, banged on their lockers at the end of the work day, whooping it up and shouting "we won."

Five unions presented competing slates in the election. All of them, except the CGT (General Confederation of Labor) had docilely signed the three agreements. The CGT nearly doubled its vote, from 1,242 to 2,189, becoming the first union among production workers and low-level employees with 43 percent of the vote. On the main assembly lines, the CGT won more than 50 percent

of the vote.

Workers are particularly fed up with the higher than ever levels of overtime, which have been programmed every week for the last two months. The recent "flexibility" agreement facilitates working extra hours with payment only at the end of the year under certain conditions.

For decades the bosses have pressured workers not to join the CGT, which is the main union among industrial workers in France. Instead, they have promoted house unions, such as the CSL (Confederation of Free Trade Unions). A few months ago, the CSL in Poissy joined the local unit of FO (Workers Force), a nationally recognized union, in a bid for more respectability. But in the March 15 elections, the new FO lost nearly half the votes received by both FO and the CSL in the 1998 elections, dropping from 67 percent to 34 percent.

Titan Tire strikers prepare for Des Moines rally

BY RAY PARSONS

DES MOINES, Iowa—Steelworkers on strike against Titan Tire Corp. are gearing up for a solidarity action to mark the two-year anniversary of their walkout. The unionists, members of United Steelworkers of America (USWA) Local 164, are building a noontime rally April 29 at the Iowa State Fairgrounds here.

Some 670 workers hit the bricks on May 1, 1998, in a fight against forced overtime and two-tier wages, and for pension and health-care benefits for retirees. Titan bosses are now running the plant with scab labor.

Most strikers have gotten jobs at other plants in the area while continuing to picket the struck plant. Many work at Bridgestone/Firestone across town, where the union contract covering six plants around the country expires April 23.

About 10 Titan strikers are currently on strike for a second time at Smurfit-Stone Container where Teamsters Local 147 walked out December 31. Two carloads of strikers are making the trip to Mansfield, Ohio, for the March 25 solidarity rally for USWA Local 169, locked out at AK Steel since September.

Another 500 Steelworkers have been on

strike against Titan Tire's plant in Natchez, Mississippi, since September 1998. Titan refused to negotiate with the union there after purchasing the plant.

In February, Polk County district judge Artis Reis ruled Local 164 to be in contempt of a court order imposed in the early days of the strike that restricted picketing. The judge asserted that the unionists used threatening and intimidating language as scabs were leaving the plant parking lot on two particular days in December.

At a sentencing hearing March 10, Local 164 was ordered to reimburse Titan for attorney fees the company incurred in pursuing the case against the union. The judge declined to impose harsher sanctions. The episode has led to discussions among strikers on how to organize more effective picketing at the plant gate.

In another matter, Iowa Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) officials in early March "proposed" \$150,000 in fines against the company for "willful" and "serious" safety violations in connection with a deadly incident last year.

A massive explosion and fire erupted November 24 as a tanker truck containing the highly flammable chemical heptane was

Colombia: one-day strike rejects gov't austerity



More than half a million public sector workers held a one-day strike March 16 to protest government austerity measures. In conjunction with this action, tens of thousands of workers, students, and peasants held demonstrations all over the country. Colombian president Andrés Pastrana's administration deployed 70,000 troops to "maintain order." Above, students at National University lead antigovernment chants during demonstration on Bogotá's Bolívar Plaza in support of the strike.

being unloaded.

One worker, truck driver Douglas Oswald, 25, was killed instantly. Valves on pipes used to unload the chemical into the plant were improperly set. For more than an hour, 2,000 gallons of the material spilled onto the ground and into the street, and a passing car sparked the explosion. Initial media reports sought to cast suspicion on the strikers for the blast.

Days after the state fine was announced, pickets observed an injured strikebreaker being taken from the plant by ambulance.

Titan personnel director Joyce Kain ran out of the plant, pushing and slapping strikers videotaping the incident. Strikers report that rescue crews have responded to some 40 serious emergency calls at the plant over the course of the strike.

For more information on the April 29 solidarity rally, call USWA Local 164 at (515) 262-4935.

Ray Parsons is a member of United Steelworkers of America Local 310 at Bridgestone/Firestone in Des Moines.

LETTERS

Che talks to youth

I have just finished reading *Che Guevara Talks to Young People*. It has deepened my understanding of the Cuban Revolution and of the Cuban people and what has motivated tens of thousands of fighters who "made a contribution to African independence, freedom and justice, unparalleled for its principled and selfless character," as Nelson Mandela said when he visited Cuba in 1991 to thank Cuba for its help against South African apartheid. He continued, "For the Cuban people, internationalism is not merely a word but something we have seen practiced to the benefit of large sections of humankind."

This book explains what motivates the thousands of doctors and teachers who have volunteered to go to the poorest and often the most dangerous areas of the Third World over the 40 years of the revolution. When some Cuban teachers in Nicaragua were murdered by U.S.-backed counterrevolutionaries, thousands more volunteered to re-

place them.

Elementary school "Pioneers" have told us, with pride, that they have given up their favorite summer camps to house thousands of Chernobyl children and a parent. This treatment for radiation sickness is given free of charge despite severe material difficulties in Cuba induced by the U.S. blockade. Thousands of students from Third World countries are being educated in Cuba with the proviso that they return home to help their people. Cubans volunteer in their thousands when there is a special push on to gather crops or rebuild hurricane-battered houses.

These volunteers often include doctors, professors, and government officials. Che frequently took part in spite of heavy responsibilities as president of the National Bank and later as Minister of Industry.

Surely these Cubans are an extraordinary people! But Che explains to the youth—no, Cubans are what they are because they are making a revolution and in the process are trans-

forming themselves.

He was convinced that without the moral factor, there is no revolution. A revolution that does not understand and put into practice Marxism's cardinal rule, "Workers of the World Unite!" will inevitably degenerate as happened in the former Soviet Union. As the preface points out, "Che appraised reality from an ethical standpoint—in order to improve it."

Anyone who is revolted by capitalism's inability and unwillingness to solve the problem of hunger for millions of human beings in the midst of plenty and is disgusted with its cynicism, lies, brutality, and corruption should read this book.

*Bea Bryant
Blenheim, Ontario*

Pool funds for 'Militant'

I am incarcerated in a Texas prison and was once a subscriber to your paper. It is very informative and addresses issues not covered by the mainstream media. I would like to request a complimentary subscrip-

tion or a few issues until my financial situation changes. Texas prisoners are not paid, we are placed in a precarious situation. Nevertheless, my intention is to allow other inmates here to read it and hopefully after they read it, we will be able to pool our resources for a subsidized subscription.

*A prisoner
Amarillo, Texas*

Myths about hunger

Last week the *Militant* had an article on hunger in the United States. Currently I'm reading a book called *World Hunger—Twelve Myths*, by Frances Lappe and others. This book gives the evidence for an argument the *Militant* has been making for years. There is plenty of food in the world, the problem is that it is not being distributed to those who need it.

Lappe has shown that education and health care are two concrete ways to help eliminate

hunger. She shows that these are the measures that have been advanced by the Cuban government.

She also shows that while the so-called Green Revolution has failed to eliminate hunger, most of the hunger that has been eliminated in the world is because of the Chinese Revolution.

This book is short, well documented, and easy to read. I believe the information is important to the communist movement.

*Steve Halpern
Philadelphia, 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.

Striking meat workers in New Zealand gain strength as support for fight builds

BY FELICITY COGGAN

HASTINGS, New Zealand—Four weeks into their strike against lamb and venison processor Progressive Meats, workers on the picket line here remain determined to continue their fight.

The 170 union and nonunion workers walked out February 21 over the company's contract demands. These included extending the current eight-hour shift to 10 hours with rotating days off instead of weekends, replacing paid breaks with unpaid ones, instituting a piece-rate system that would mean workers not getting paid for the first half hour of any breakdown, and cutting staff in some areas where new machinery is being installed.

To counter the company's current complicated and divisive skill and productivity-based pay system, the workers are demanding a pay raise of 80 cents an hour on their hourly base rate of NZ\$10 (NZ\$1.00=US 48 cents). The company is refusing to negotiate while workers are still on strike.

At a union meeting March 11, workers voted to continue the strike until their demands are met. They are picketing the plant five days a week from 6:00 a.m. until late afternoon. The early start is to coincide with the arrival of a trickle of workers who have crossed the picket line since the strike began—about 15 in all. The company is attempting to run the plant with these workers and management staff. Picketers reported that the company boasted that one week 600 lambs had been processed—only about one-tenth of normal production. They



Militant/Felicity Coggan

Workers at Progressive Meats picket for better contract

also reported an episode where meat inspectors rejected products processed by management staff because of poor hygiene levels.

The company has made a number of attempts to undermine the strike, such as calling workers at home to encourage them to return to work and organizing separate departmental meetings to pressure the workers. A number of employees refused to attend these, while others walked out of them. Strikers on the picket line comment that workers are feeling more united and determined as the strike goes on, and that this

was reflected in the mood at the last meeting. One of the picketers, who was previously a representative elected by the non-union workers, explained that he had rejoined the union as a result of the strike, as had a number of others.

Many workers now have other jobs, picking fruit or working in other local meat works, but drop by on breaks or before or after work.

Picketers have been struck by the breadth of support from motorists, bicyclists, and pedestrians passing on the busy highway out

of town. Some have stopped to donate money, including a truck driver who contributed \$40.

Robert, an experienced meat worker who had started at Progressive only four weeks before the strike, said, "The reason we're getting such a lot of support is that other people are being ripped off too. And we're getting support from a lot of women. Attitudes are changing. When others see people striking they say, 'I wish I could get a little bit back from my employer too.'"

The strike has also begun to attract more organized solidarity. Workers at Advanced Foods Ltd. in Waipukurau, an hour's drive away, threatened to strike when asked to process some of Progressive's meat. After two meetings failed to persuade them otherwise, the company decided not to process it.

Wharfies (longshoremen) are considering refusing to handle Progressive products destined for export if the company does not begin negotiations with the workers.

The strike at Progressive follows the fight by 1,000 meat workers at the Alliance Group's Lorneville plant in the South Island in January that pushed back some of the company's demands for shift work, speedup, and pay cuts, and strengthened the union. Over recent weeks government-employed meat inspectors have been working shorter hours to press their claim for a 12 percent pay increase.

Over the last two decades meat workers have faced substantial cuts in wages and conditions. Many large plants closed and layoffs and speedup have occurred in those remaining open. More nonunion plants have been opened and shift work now exists in a number of places. One Progressive striker—like many who work there a veteran of one of the large nearby plants that has closed and an experienced lamb boner—explained that he used to earn \$22 an hour in the mid-1980s. Now he earns just over \$12 an hour for the same work.

Further job losses were foreshadowed when the Alliance Group announced March 17 the closure of the sheep meat processing chain at its Sockburn plant in Christchurch later this year. Up to 200 of the 290 union members at the plant will lose their jobs as part of the company's restructuring. [As we go to press the meat workers have returned to the job under terms of a proposed new contract.]

Felicity Coggan is a member of the National Distribution Union.

Boeing strikers march back stronger

BY ERNIE MAILHOT

SEATTLE—After 40 days on strike against Boeing, thousands of engineers and technicians marched back into work together to celebrate pushing back a major concessionary contract.

The previous day they had voted to ratify a new three-year agreement that removed most of the takebacks previously demanded by the company. Brent McFarlane, a technician at Boeing, expressed a common sentiment among the strikers when he said that he wasn't satisfied with the latest contract, but, more importantly, "we won most of what we wanted and we're now stronger as a union."

The vote totals were virtually the same for both the engineers and technicians—71 percent for the new contracts and 29 percent against.

Some 22,000 engineers and technicians are represented by the Society of Professional Engineering Employees in Aerospace (SPEEA), the second largest union at Boeing, although not all belong to the organization. According to the union, 18,000 honored the picket lines for the duration of the strike, many more than are SPEEA members.

Among the key issues that prompted the rejection of the company's two previous contract offers were the placing of wage increases at the discretion of supervisors, cuts in benefits such as the life insurance package, and the refusal to give a signing bonus.

The contract settlement guarantees engineers a 9 percent wage raise and technicians 10 percent. Boeing also backed off its attempts to get SPEEA members to pay part of their medical premiums and has restored health coverage for early retirees and new hires.

At meetings before the strike vote, many SPEEA members expressed that they could have gotten more. Several workers came with signs that simply said "NO." One worker objected to the bonus, saying, "Since bonuses for others are based on last year's performance, why would [the union's negotiator] accept a bonus tied to a carrot over



Militant/Scott Breen

SPEEA workers rally in Seattle

our heads."

The settlement gives SPEEA workers \$1,000 within 30 days after they are back to work, another \$500 after 225 planes are delivered in the year 2000, and another \$1,000 if 491 planes are delivered by next March. Since the 491 figure is based on a business plan from before the strike it is highly unlikely that it will be met.

During the strike Boeing management said that the SPEEA members were being unrealistic and that the company would not offer any major changes in the contract rejected earlier. With fanfare the bosses "imposed" their final offer several weeks into the strike.

In the face of this, the strikers showed their resolve by staying solid on the picket lines and organizing a series of marches and rallies, which began winning solidarity from other unionists and fighting workers. These included Steelworkers locked out by the Kaiser Aluminum company and the strikers at Valley Manufactured Housing in eastern Washington. The AFL-CIO and several national unions pledged financial support.

While company executives tried to play

down how much the strike was affecting production, three dozen scheduled jetliner deliveries were missed and the company's development work was slowed, including its Joint Strike Fighter program.

McFarlane pointed out that he had resigned from SPEEA at one point "because it wouldn't do things like this," referring to the strike. "But I rejoined about a year ago when SPEEA joined the AFL-CIO." McFarlane went on to say that the union was now much stronger for future battles. Noting that SPEEA had no strike fund he said, "That's something we definitely need now."

One striker on the picket line earlier had stated to the agreeing nods of other pickets, "SPEEA is now SPEEU. We were an association. Now we're a union."

N.Y. cops kill another Black man

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

NEW YORK—City cops killed Patrick Dorismond, a 26-year-old Black man, with a bullet through the heart in downtown Manhattan March 16. The killing comes just a couple weeks after the police shot to death 23-year-old Malcolm Ferguson in the Bronx, and after four cops were acquitted in February of all charges in the 41-bullet barrage that killed Amadou Diallo a year earlier.

After work as a security guard on the afternoon shift, Dorismond and a friend stopped by a nearby midtown cocktail lounge for a beer. They then walked out on the street and were waiting for a taxi when an undercover cop with two others close by approached the Black youth and asked him if he had any marijuana for sale. Dorismond angrily responded to this harassment and a scuffle ensued. Within 20 seconds one of the other plainclothes cops, Anthony Vázquez, fired the shot that killed Dorismond.

"My son is not a criminal," asserted Marie Dorismond, a Haitian immigrant at a news conference outside her East Flatbush apart-

ment building. She was responding to accusations made by Mayor Rudolph Giuliani, who asserted that Dorismond's "pattern of behavior" and actions the night of the shooting contributed to his death.

Police Commissioner Howard Safir, in a further effort to turn the victim into the criminal, told the press that Dorismond had a long police record that included charges of robbery, assault, and illegal possession of a weapon. However, "a check by other public officials," admits the *New York Times*, "suggested a different picture." Dorismond had been ordered to do a few days of community service as a result of two separate disorderly conduct charges filed against him.

According to Marie Dorismond, her son's "dream" was to become a police officer. "He hated the attitude that police have that young Black men are criminals," she said. "He wanted to become a police officer to change that attitude, to help young kids from getting into trouble. But the attitude he wanted to change killed him." "The police will say it was an accident," she stated, "their supporters will say it was a tragedy, and the police will go unpunished again."