

THE MILITANT

INSIDE

Deadly Firestone tires
point to profit drive

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A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

VOL. 64/NO. 34 SEPTEMBER 11, 2000

Socialist: 'Mobilize against cop brutality'

The following statement was released by James Harris, Socialist Workers candidate for U.S. president. A production worker and member of the United Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Employees in Atlanta, Harris has been a long-time fighter against police brutality and the death penalty. He and running mate Margaret Trowe have participated in numerous actions against police brutality and have helped to build the August 26 march on Washington. Harris is among those attending the demonstration.

The Socialist Workers campaign and the Young Socialists salute the tens of thousands of working people, farmers, youth, and other opponents of police brutality, the death penalty, and racism who join the August 26 rally in Washington. This fight is part and parcel of the growing resistance of workers and farmers across the country to the relentless and brutal assault on our conditions of life, democratic rights, and union organization by the employers and their government.

Police violence, "racial profiling" and racist harassment, the skyrocketing imprisonment of now more than 2 million work-

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Meat packers in St. Paul respond to bosses' attacks

BY TOM FISHER

SOUTH ST. PAUL, Minnesota—The bosses at the Dakota Premium Foods meatpacking plant here are intensifying their offensive against the new union that workers voted in last month. Workers, in turn, are responding to the company's new lines of attack.

According to members of the in-plant leadership committee established in the course of the union-organizing struggle there, many workers at the plant have been called into individual meetings with company lawyers and the head of personnel. At these meetings, the bosses try to pressure workers into signing a statement to the effect that "I am willing to testify on my opinion about the election proceedings."

The company's excuse for these meetings is its professed concern about the democratic character of the July 21 union election, in which workers voted overwhelmingly for the union 112-71. The company has filed a challenge to the election with the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB), which is scheduled to conduct a hearing August 29. The union representation victory, in which workers voted to join United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) Local 789, was the result of a hard-fought seven-week effort to organize a union. This effort began June 1 after workers staged a seven-hour sit-down strike demanding improvements in conditions—especially a reduction in the brutal line speed.

Some 220 workers are employed in the

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Phone workers gain in strike at Verizon

Workers strengthen union rights in fight for contract

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

Through a militant strike against telecommunications giant Verizon, some 86,000 workers, from Maine to Virginia, emerged victorious after two and a half weeks. The gains won have put these workers in a better position to continue the fight to strengthen their unions and assert their right to improved working conditions and dignity on the job.

A tentative settlement was announced August 20 by officials representing the two striking unions—the Communications Workers of America (CWA) and the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers. The agreement ended the walkout for some 50,000 of the workers, primarily in the New York and New England areas.

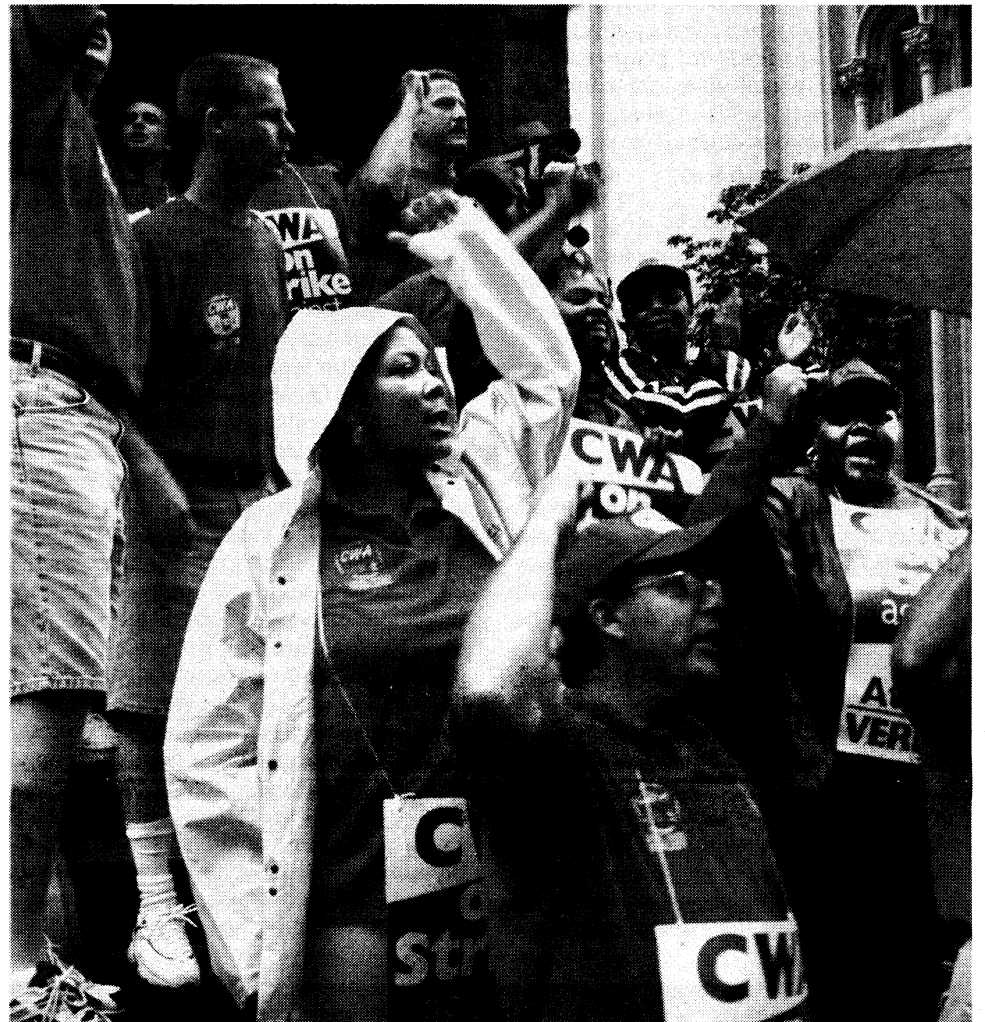
Three days later the company and union representatives reached agreement on several outstanding issues, providing further concessions to the union and clearing the way for the remaining 36,000 workers to get back to their jobs.

Workers won a central demand in their strike—removing obstacles to the union's ability to organize the fast-growing wireless division of the company, where currently fewer than 50 of about 32,000 employees are union members.

The new agreement allows for "card checks," where potential members indicate their desire to join simply by signing a card. Once 55 percent of the workers in a shop sign up, the union can be recognized.

The unions also won the right for their members to install the high-speed Internet access for customers who sign up for Verizon's Internet services. Much of this

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Militant/Nancy Cole

Striking phone workers rally in Philadelphia August 18. Unions emerged victorious from two-and-a-half week strike against Verizon, boosting efforts to organize workers in wireless division and winning wage increases and other concessions.

Rightist attacks mark polarization in Germany

BY CARL-ERIK ISACSSON

STOCKHOLM, Sweden—In a sign of the growing social crisis and polarization in Germany, a sharp rise in violent attacks by ultraright and fascist groups has taken

place there in recent months.

The rightists feed on resentment against the established political parties, while targeting certain sections of the population for the social problems generated by capital-

ism—immigrants, gays, physically disabled people, and workers who are homeless, among others.

Meanwhile, capitalist politicians are proposing to crack down on rightist and racist attacks with measures that would curb democratic rights.

A group of fascists killed an African immigrant, Alberto Adriano, in the town of Dessau, in eastern Germany, on June 11.

On July 27 a shrapnel bomb detonated outside the commuter railway station in the western city of Düsseldorf, wounding nine immigrants returning home from their daily German-language class. The nine were originally from Ukraine, Azerbaijan, and Russia; six of them were Jews.

In the eastern town of Eisenach, two African immigrants were attacked by a group of nazi skinheads shouting *Sieg Heil*.

Two Jewish cemeteries were desecrated in the western state of Rhineland-Palatinate and an explosive device was found outside a Jewish family's home in Bavaria August 6. The number of Jews in Germany has grown over the past decade through immigration from the former Soviet Union, from 29,000 at the beginning of the 1990s to 85,000 today. Düsseldorf has become a center for this immigration, with 5,100 recently arriving there from Russia.

The attacks have not gone unanswered. In response to the Düsseldorf bombing,

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An appeal to 'Militant' readers

Dear Reader,

We urge you to join and contribute to the campaign to raise \$125,000 for the *Militant* and *Perspectiva Mundial*. Fighting workers, farmers defending their land, and youth resisting the brutalities of capitalism need the socialist publications and a working-class voice in English and Spanish now more than ever.

Between September 4 and November 13, every reader of the two publications can help reach out to all who value the unique role of the *Militant* and *Perspectiva Mundial*, and ask them to make a generous contribution. The fund will help finance the basic operating expenses, reporting trips, and other costs of producing the two periodicals.

Workers and farmers are the only source of funding for the *Militant* and *Perspectiva Mundial*, just as they are the correspondents, distributors, and readers of these periodicals. That's a proud work-

ing-class tradition. No funding comes from bosses, bankers, or wealthy advertisers. That's the way we want to keep it.

In the last few months, a growing number of workers who are part of a new and growing militant vanguard developing across the United States have found that they need these publications for the struggles they are involved in. Many have said they appreciate the truthful coverage of social struggles that the socialist papers provide and the way it helps connect fighters with each other, in the United States and internationally. They also welcome articles, editorials, and features that explain broader political questions that working people need to understand to confront the capitalist world we live in and be able to transform it.

Consider the following examples:

- What other newspaper has been covering the emerging social movement in

Continued on Page 4

Protesters condemn killing by Toronto cops

BY ROBERT SIMMS

TORONTO—"I want justice. I want the real story to be out," Katherine Vass told the *Toronto Star* after an August 17 meeting to protest the killing of her father, Otto Vass, at the hands of Toronto police. Four police officers beat Vass to death eight days earlier.

She told the newspaper she and her sister Anne are upset that the officers involved are not behind bars. About 30 people attended the meeting. The day before about 100 people demonstrated outside Toronto police headquarters to denounce the killing.

The day after the August 9 killing, the police began a disinformation campaign against Vass. Police "sources" told the newspapers and broadcast media that Vass was beaten in the store by three other men. They claimed Vass had punched a police officer and twice tried to reach for the policeman's gun. Several stories were printed about Vass's alleged mental illness of manic-depression, of a previous arson charge, and of his resistance to court-ordered child support payments.

Stories to deflect attention

"None of that has any relevance at all, none at all," an impatient Dudley Laws, leader of the Black Action Defense Committee, told the neighborhood meeting on August 17. "These are stories by police supporters who are just trying to deflect attention from the fact that four policemen beat a man to death."

Laws called for several prominent civil rights organizations to join the family in holding a joint press conference where the date could be publicly set for a mass demonstration to demand that charges be laid against the police involved and that they be jailed.

Several people witnessed the police beating of Vass early in the morning of August 9 in the parking lot of a 7-Eleven store. Two police officers escorted him out of the store after being called there in response to an in-store argument with other customers that resulted in some magazine racks being overturned.

Then one, without any action on Vass's part, shoved him to the ground, according

to Amir Hameed, a recent refugee from Pakistan who saw the whole incident from across the street.

The two policemen punched him, beat him with the baton, and kicked him. Then two more police arrived and pinned Vass to the ground while the original two continued the violent beating. Paramedics who arrived were unable to revive him.

Beating lasted several minutes

"He was just screaming in pain," said Hameed. "He never hit an officer—they never gave him a chance, and he never tried to. They were beating him worse than an animal." His friend Asim Abbasi, also a refugee from Pakistan, gave the same account. They said the beating lasted several minutes and the police hit him about 50 times. Another woman, who has not released her name, also saw all but the start of the incident. "There was nothing he could do. I was horrified. I in fact yelled out, 'Stop.' But I was way above them."

The Special Investigations Unit has taken the unusual step of withholding the results of the autopsy, but "sources" quoted by the press have confirmed that Vass was hit on the head with a "blunt object consistent with a police baton."

The August 16 demonstration outside police headquarters was called by the Committee to Stop Targeted Policing. Representatives of the Ontario Coalition Against Poverty, the Canadian Auto Workers, Street Health, and the Black Action Defense Committee spoke at the rally. Protesters chanted at the police who guarded the building, "Who killed Otto Vass? You did. You did."

John Steele, mayoral candidate of the Communist League in Toronto's November municipal election, attended the rally and distributed a statement explaining that the killing was not an isolated incident. "Over the past 15 years Toronto police have shot, killed, and beaten many Black youth, former mental patients, and other working people. The brutality of the Toronto police is standard operating procedure," the statement said. It called for meetings and demonstrations to demand that the police guilty of this crime be charged, convicted, and punished to the full extent of the law.

Carpenters union pickets NY store



Militant/Hilda Cuzco

NEW YORK—Accompanied by a mean-looking, giant inflatable rat, about 20 union workers from different locals of the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America picketed in front of a D'Agostino's supermarket here August 17. They were protesting the fact that the owners hired a nonunion contractor to do repair work on the roof of the store.

"We want the contractor to hire union workers," said Anthony Pugliese, organizer for the carpenters union, while some motorists honked in support, among them a group of striking telephone workers. "We are also talking to the workers there to join the union. We don't want them to exploit the workers with low wages and no benefits," he added. Linnea Nelson, 27, a carpenter's apprentice and member of Local 157, showed up at the picket line "to support the union's efforts. I love these rats, because it encourages the picket lines."

Another picket, José Soto, 40, explained, "I was a nonunion worker for a long time, with no benefits. When I needed to go to the hospital I had to pay it myself. Now I can go for health treatment through my union."

—HILDA CUZCO

Canada's ruling rich need a police force with the brutality shown by Toronto's cops, he said in an interview. "Every time the police get away with crimes like this they are emboldened to go further. The labor move-

ment and all opponents of police brutality should fight to push this back. The example of the August 26 national march on Washington against police brutality should be emulated here in Canada and elsewhere."

Perspectivamundial.com needs volunteers

The September issue of *Perspectiva Mundial*, printed August 24, will also be the first that can be viewed at perspectivamundial.com, the magazine's new web site. The paper's editors are appealing for volunteers to help prepare future issues for the web page.

Perspectiva Mundial is the monthly Spanish-language socialist magazine that carries a selection of key articles translated from the *Militant*.

The cover of this month's print edition features the July 21 union representation victory by packinghouse workers at Dakota Premium Foods in Minnesota. The headline reads, "Meat packers win a union—now preparing to fight for contract."

The issue also contains a report of victorious strikes by the United Mine Workers in Wyoming and New Mexico, and two features—an extensive report on the recent Active Workers Conference in Ohio, and chapter 2 of *The History of American*

Trotskyism, by James P. Cannon.

Preparing articles for the web

In the first stage of preparing a *Perspectiva Mundial* issue for publication on the web, staff writers will convert the articles into a simple digital text file. Next, a volunteer will copy the articles from these files onto special web-page templates.

The articles will then be transferred from the computer's hard drive onto the web via a server—a remote computer—that hosts the files. Once there, they can be accessed around the world through the Internet.

Fluency in Spanish is needed. Volunteers must be able to use a word-processing program, and some familiarity with e-mail and other basic online functions will be a help.

Most important is the commitment to getting *Perspectiva Mundial* on the web on time every month. Potential volunteers can contact *Perspectiva Mundial* at Themilitant@compuserve.com

THE MILITANT

The death penalty, ruling-class weapon

Under the Clinton-Gore administration the pace of executions has stepped up, while cops have carried out executions of working people on the street. The 'Militant' not only reports on the fight against the death penalty but explains it as a crucial class question. Don't miss a single issue.



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Signed articles by contributors do not necessarily represent the *Militant*'s views. These are expressed in editorials.

Germany: Rightist attacks mark polarization

Continued from front page
more than 2,000 people took to the streets of the city to protest chauvinist violence.

While the big-business media associates the rightist and racist violence with the crisis in eastern Germany, attributing it to the high unemployment there, the facts indicate that fascist-like groups have also organized substantially in the western part of the country, where some of the recent attacks have taken place.

In eastern Germany, the government has liquidated antiquated industrial and other enterprises. While it has been unable to reimpose capitalist social relations in the former East Germany, and in fact has been forced to pump huge amounts of funds as social transfer payments, conditions there are marked by disproportionately high unemployment and social dislocation.

But the social crisis and political polarization are not limited to the eastern region. Despite the economic boom that capitalists and many in the middle classes are currently enjoying in Germany, working people face an increasingly uncertain future, and the country's rulers have launched attacks on workers' hard-won social gains.

Unemployment, which reached double-digit figures nationwide in 1997, has gone down somewhat, but it remains at 7.7 percent in the west and 17.4 percent in the east.

Government actions embolden rightists

Meanwhile, the Social Democrats and Greens won approval in parliament for nearly \$30 billion in tax cuts, the lion's share going to corporations. The tax restructuring is expected to encourage corporate mergers, accompanied by downsizing and layoffs. The government is now preparing to launch an assault on workers' pensions.

The social crisis has spawned an array of rightist outfits, who thrive on the fear of the future that millions in Germany feel today. Ultrarightist groups such as the National Democratic Party of Germany (NPD) raise the banner of "Jobs for Germans first!" seeking to scapegoat immigrants for the persistent unemployment.

"If there are attacks on foreigners in Germany, that is of course a sorry tale, but it is the responsibility of the established parties who continue to allow uncontrolled flows of foreigners—now with a green card—while they are not in a position to guarantee the right of all Germans to work," stated NPD leader Udo Voigt in early August.

The fascist-minded NPD leader was referring to a recent government "green card" initiative to offer work permits to 20,000 computer specialists and other professionals from abroad. Many of them will come from Russia, eastern Europe, and Asia. This is part of the Schröder government's effort to attract new investment.

Despite the rightists' demagoguery, the government in Berlin has carried out increasing attacks on the rights of immigrants in recent years, restricting asylum laws and deporting immigrant workers from Germany. In fact, these reactionary actions by the ruling parties have emboldened the fascist-minded groups to take German nationalist demagoguery even further.

To cover up the government's position, Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer of the Green Party blamed a "silent majority" for



Marchers in Düsseldorf protest July 27 racist attack, in which bomb exploded in city's railway station, injuring nine immigrants. Recent mobilizations in other cities, including Hamburg on August 20, have also responded to rightist and fascist attacks.

abetting the rightist assaults by not speaking out against them.

In line with this stance of blaming working people for the consequences of the employers' own system, liberals and other groups have gone on a campaign to lecture people about being "tolerant." Schröder's spokesperson, Uwe-Karsten Heye, announced after a meeting with Paul Spiegel, leader of the Central Council of German Jews, that an advertising campaign would begin next month in which famous German personalities would exhort the nation to show "zero tolerance" for racists.

Threat to democratic rights

At the same time, the Schröder administration has taken advantage of the wave of ultrarightist attacks to call for reinforcing the cops. "We need the full force of the police" to confront "extremism," the Social Democratic chancellor declared.

Other proposals by capitalist politicians include the creation of special courts for so-called hate crimes, a measure that if enacted can be used by the authorities to go after militant workers, antiracist fighters, and others deemed "hateful" by the rulers.

Many bourgeois politicians are now proposing that the NPD be banned. That group is the best-organized far-right party in the

east. The other two prominent rightist parties are the Republicans and the German People's Union (DVU), who are stronger in the west.

On August 12 Ernst Uhrlaub, the government official in charge of the secret service, called for the NPD to be banned.

So far, top government officials have been reluctant to propose a ban because it is likely to be overturned by the constitutional court, which would be a political defeat for the government.

Nonetheless, the minister for home affairs in the federal government and the ministers of home affairs in the state governments have announced they are considering a ban, and may apply for one in the constitutional court by October.

Meanwhile, in Düsseldorf and Karlsruhe, the local authorities banned two demonstrations by fascists who had applied to march August 17 to commemorate the anniversary of the death of Rudolf Hess, the deputy of Adolf Hitler.

Ban would give bosses weapon

A government ban on rightist groups is a threat to working people. It would give the employers, their government, and the police additional powers to use against the working-class movement and others who

really will wage a fight against the fascists, and would simply help the fascists pose demagogically as victims of repression.

As Berlin has become bolder in attacks both on workers at home and in its foreign policy, it has been more favorable to efforts to prettify the ruling class's own history, and in particular to shake off the hypocritical version of history imposed by the imperialist victors who defeated the German rulers in World War II.

A sign of this shift was the awarding of the prestigious Konrad Adenauer Prize for literature to the historian Ernst Nolte by the Deutschland Foundation, a conservative, mainstream group. Past recipients include former Chancellor Helmut Kohl. Nolte has argued that Hitler's anti-Semitic policies had a "rational core" and that Nazism was in essence a response to "Bolshevism."

In accepting the prize Nolte said, "We should leave behind the view that the opposite of National Socialist goals is always good and right." He added that because Nazism was the strongest of all counterforces "to Bolshevism, a movement with wide Jewish support," Hitler may have had "rational" reasons for attacking the Jews.

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

Vancouver meat packers stand up to lockout

BY BEVERLY BERNARDO

VANCOUVER, British Columbia—After rejecting a steep concession contract, 400 workers were locked by the meatpacking company Fletchers Fine Foods here on August 19. Workers immediately set up picket lines at the plant gates.

The company had prepared for the lockout the day before when a vote on the contract was scheduled to take place. Management shut down all production and ordering workers to clean out their lockers and then cast their ballots in the lunchroom. The vote was 345 to 13, a solid 96 percent, against the contract.

Members of United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) Local 1518 are standing up to an antiunion drive by the bosses. The proposed contract cut the base rate of pay by 40 percent, from \$16.50 to \$10.00 an hour. Other concessions demanded were reducing the maximum vacation time to four weeks from the present seven weeks, lengthening the probationary period to 90 working days from the current 60, and reducing the shift premium to 35 cents from the current 50 cents.

The shift premium would be paid after 6:00 p.m. rather than after 4:00 p.m.

One measure most humiliating to workers was limiting use of the washrooms while on the job to 20 minutes a week. Workers would be forced to pay the company double

and even triple time for any time over that amount.

Fletchers demanded the vote on the contract by invoking section 78 of the British Columbia Labor Code, in which companies can force votes on their offers one time during contract negotiations.

Workers at the plant process pork. The company has a kill operation in Red Deer, Alberta, where it was successful in imposing a similar contract after a 10-week strike by the union in 1998.

Company forces cuts elsewhere

The previous contract expired on May 31 and Local 1518 members at Fletchers had mandated the bargaining committee to refuse to negotiate concessions. UFCW members at Maple Leaf Foods, owned by the McCains—one of Canada's wealthiest families—waged a six-month strike in an unsuccessful attempt to oppose these draconian concessions in Burlington, Ontario. Maple Leaf closed its Edmonton plant after union members there rejected wage cuts.

Fletcher workers had ratified a contract in 1997 that included modest annual wage increases in a three-year contract. But in August 1998, after the defeat of the Red Deer strike, Fletchers management threatened to close the Vancouver processing plant unless workers agreed to similar conces-

sions. UFCW members soundly rejected this ultimatum.

Workers at Fletchers join fellow UFCW Local 1518 members at Superior Poultry on the picket line. The 225 unionists at Superior Poultry in nearby Coquitlam went on strike for a first contract on July 23. Superior Poultry workers start at \$7.15 an hour and few make as much as \$10 an hour. Management at Superior is operating the plant with around 50 workers who have crossed the line. The bosses have also hired a squad of goons who threaten and try to intimidate the strikers—the big majority of whom are immigrant women.

A support rally at the picket line in front of the Coquitlam plant was called for August 22. All unionists and other supporters were encouraged to attend. Several workers from Fletchers have already been out to the line at Superior to express solidarity.

"After I read the material from the union web site, I wanted to give my support and to see for myself whether the conditions described in the union bulletin really existed," said Julio Caballero, a union member locked out at Fletchers.

Beverly Bernardo is a locked-out member of United Food and Commercial Workers Local 1518 at Fletchers Fine Foods in Vancouver.

From Pathfinder

New International no. 4

The Fight for a Workers and Farmers Government in the United States

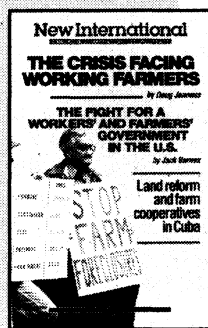
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Available from bookstores, including those listed on page 12

'Militant' to launch drive for new readers

BY MAURICE WILLIAMS

Socialist workers and Young Socialists are planning to kick off an international subscription drive September 9 to win new readers to the *Militant* and *Perspectiva Mundial*. The circulation effort will coincide with two months of intensive campaigning for the Socialist Workers presidential ticket of James Harris and Margaret Trowe, along with dozens of other candidates for federal and state office. The nine-week drive will end November 12.

The circulation campaign will also include selling copies of the Marxist magazine *New Internationalist*, an invaluable tool for working-class fighters and fight-minded youth who want to broaden their knowledge of the labor movement and delve more deeply into theoretical questions addressed in the *Militant* and *PM*.

The new pamphlet, *The Working Class and the Transformation of Learning: The Fraud of Education Reform under Capitalism*, will be a key part of the campaign. Pathfinder Press has decided to make this pamphlet available for \$1—\$2 off the cover price—to anyone who purchases a subscription to the *Militant* or *PM*. The pamphlet gets to the heart of political questions facing working people, including the bosses' need for cops and executions to maintain capitalist social relations and the bourgeois state.

A growing number of workers and farmers resisting the attacks by the employers and the government today are finding the *Militant* and *Perspectiva Mundial* a necessary part of their struggles. This is true both for the news and information on strikes and



Militant/Roy Inglee

Striking phone workers on picket line at Verizon repair facility in Delaware check out the *Militant*. Subscription drive will increase readership among workers and farmers.

protests happening around the country, and for articles that take up broader political questions and issues, both in the United States and around the world.

Partisans of the papers will be using the nine-week campaign to take extra time and

make special plans to introduce the socialist publications to co-workers on the job, vanguard fighters in the labor movement, activists against police brutality and capital punishment, farmers fighting to defend their land, protesters against the U.S. Navy bomb-

ing of Vieques, defenders of immigrant rights, and others. The campaign will also involve going door to door in working-class communities, farm areas, and mining regions.

The *Militant's* coverage of the struggles by meat packers, as well as coal miners and other working people in mining areas, has helped boost the number of workers in these industries who are readers of the paper. One miner who works in the western coalfields helped a *Militant* supporter distribute the paper to striking miners—who bought five subscriptions—in Kemmerer, Wyoming. Efforts like these have expanded the subscription base among workers in the coalfields where a rising social movement is developing over life and death questions of safety and health care.

The sub drive will increase the *Militant's* circulation on college campuses where the death penalty and cop brutality are among the biggest political topics of discussion. Many students will want to read the socialist newsweekly, which gives a working-class view on these political issues.

Sales of *Perspectiva Mundial* will build on the success of the previous drive, when the campaign went substantially over the goal. It registered results in reaching out to immigrant workers, many of them from Central and South America who bring class-struggle experiences to the United States. These workers are gaining more confidence to fight and are a central part of leading struggles in packing plants, garment factories, and other industries across the country.

The sales campaign is linked to reaching out to vanguard layers of workers and farmers who will become a class struggle leadership in the working-class movement. The *Militant*, *PM*, and Pathfinder titles are natural tools for helping to advance the battalions of working people who will lead the transformation of the unions and open the fight to transform society.

Maurice Williams is the director of the subscription drive.

An appeal to 'Militant' readers

Continued from front page

coal-mining regions around the fight for health care? Worker-correspondents for the *Militant* and *Perspectiva Mundial* were at the recent series of hearings in several cities on the protection of miners from the coal dust that causes black lung disease. You can read the powerful testimony by miners who exposed the coal bosses for sacrificing workers' health and safety to the profit drive, and demanded the federal government protect miners' health care.

- When the U.S. government launched a commando-style raid by 150 federal cops on a home in Miami, seizing Cuban six-year-old Elián González, the *Militant* and *Perspectiva Mundial* were virtually the only voice that offered a clear working-class response. They campaigned both to demand that Washington return the child to Cuba and to explain why the raid was a move by the U.S. rulers calculated to reinforce the powers of the hated immigration cops. They pointed out how the Clinton administration used the case to reinforce the broad authority of the executive branch to determine immigration and foreign policy.

- The socialist publications have provided feature coverage of how workers and farmers in Cuba are organizing—from factories to farm cooperatives—to confront the effects of the world capitalist economic crisis, and the political initiatives by the revolutionary leadership to win a new generation to a working-class course.

- Firsthand coverage from Europe, southern Africa, South America, the Caribbean, and the South Pacific on struggles of workers and farmers.

- The *Militant* has reviewed and printed the introduction to the new Pathfinder pamphlet, *The Working Class and the Transformation of Learning: The Fraud of Education Reform under Capitalism* by Jack Barnes. It explains why working people are the only force that can transform education—into universal and lifelong learning—through a revolutionary reorganization of society. And it presents other issues such as the death penalty and the fight for social security as the class questions they are.

These are just some illustrations of why many working people value the *Militant* and

Perspectiva Mundial and will be glad to contribute to ensure they continue to publish.

The *Militant* and *Perspectiva Mundial* Fund will get a boost as it is carried out together with the campaign to win new subscribers to the two publications, which are also the campaign newspapers for the Socialist Workers candidates, James Harris for president and Margaret Trowe for vice president.

Supporters of the socialist publications are now mapping out plans in local areas to raise the funds needed to continue this kind of coverage every week. Partisans of the working-class periodicals will send out

mailings to subscribers, talking to co-workers about the fund, organizing public fund-raising meetings in their cities, and digging deep into their own pockets to make a contribution. Please make a pledge and join in these efforts.

To help with the fund campaign or to make a contribution, contact your nearest distributor. Please make checks and money orders payable to the *Militant*, earmarked *Militant/Perspectiva Mundial* fund, and send them to the *Militant*, 410 West Street, New York, NY 10014.

In solidarity,
Martin Koppel
Editor

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—YOUNG SOCIALISTS AROUND THE WORLD—

YS joins miners' victory celebration

The Young Socialists is an international organization of young workers, students, and other youth fighting for socialism. For more information write to the Young Socialists, P.O. Box 33, Times Square Post Office, New York, NY 10018, or call (212) 695-1809, or send an e-mail to: young_socialists@hotmail.com

BY ANA RAMIREZ
AND CHESSIE MOLANO

TSE BONITO, New Mexico—Members of the Young Socialists from Los Angeles and Tucson, Arizona, joined victorious coal miners in an August 13 celebration of their ratified contract, which successfully ended a nearly three-month strike at the McKinley mine here.

The miners beat back the aggressive attacks by Pittsburgh and Midway Coal Co., which had been pressing to extend the workday to 10–12 hours, undercut workers' health care, and cut back overtime pay.

Supporters of the *Militant* were invited to a traditional Navajo barbecue by United Mine Workers of America Local 1332 and the women's auxiliary. The celebration was attended by a predominantly Navajo crowd of 40 miners and 80 family members and supporters.

A few *Militant* supporters, including three Young Socialists, were warmly welcomed at the miners' victory celebration. Several workers expressed interest in the *Militant* and commented on a number of political questions, from the Cuban revolution to defending bilingual education. A number of miners had been reading the so-

cialist newsweekly closely throughout the strike, and many took time during the victory celebration to talk with members of the Young Socialists and other supporters of the paper.

One miner, Gilbert, who was very interested in the Socialist Workers Party's political perspective in the 2000 presidential elections, spoke about the racist discrimination he had experienced throughout his school life, and was interested in hearing about the fight for bilingual education in California. He invited us to return.

These coal miners have a history of struggle that needs to be told. For many, this was not their first strike against P&M. Talking to these coal miners was an important experience for the Young Socialists. It gave us confidence and fueled our fighting spirit for future struggles.

Many miners here, who have worked for more than 20 years at the McKinley mine, struck the company in 1987. The 1987 strike was a long strike where the workers won affirmative action for Navajos in the contract. According to miners we spoke with, the contract states that P&M must hire a worker who is Navajo for any positions unless no Navajo is qualified. This previous strike experience was still fresh in strikers' minds.

In the latest victorious strike, young coal miners were active. The company was relying on the new miners and young people to break the strike, but to their disappointment they stood firmly on the picket line. This was a sign of the strength and solidarity among the workers.

The president of the women's auxiliary, Phyllis Shanklin, explained the crucial role that women played in the strike and gave us a copy of a bulletin she had written on their experience. Among other things, it described the fears women have of the risks their husbands take at work, and the leading role played by women in drawing needed support to the struggle.

One miner had been close to deciding to cross the line and return to work, pointing to the financial stress the strike was putting on his family, but the women's auxiliary organized fund-raisers to help all the families of miners pay utility bills. They organized to supply food as well as offer emotional support. The efforts of these women were part of the glue that held the strike together.

One woman told us that being a part of the women's auxiliary had given herself and others an independence and confidence they hadn't had before.

Being at this celebration we were able to see that every bit of solidarity the miners received—the united efforts of the miners, women, other family members, and young people—is what led them to victory. Their story will be inspiring to the miners of Black Mesa and Kayenta, whose contract expires August 31, and also to other workers and young people around the world.

Ana Ramirez is a YS member in Los Angeles; Chessie Molano is a YS member in Tucson. Young Socialist Louis Turner in Tucson contributed to this article.

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In California, Trowe meets packing workers

BY BERNIE SENTER

SAN FRANCISCO—Socialist Workers vice-presidential candidate Margaret Trowe spoke to meat packers and farm workers during a two-day swing through the San Francisco Bay Area and Fresno, California.

Trowe was joined by two campaign supporters at Galileo, a meatpacking plant in San Lorenzo organized by the United Food and Commercial Workers union. One of the campaign supporters, Deborah Liatos, works at the plant and is also the Socialist Workers candidate for Congress in the 8th Congressional District.

Trowe spoke with many of the workers as they walked out of the plant. She explained that she was using the campaign to give a voice to the resistance of workers and farmers. Meatpacking workers in Minnesota, coal miners in the West, and telephone workers at Verizon in New York show that it's possible for workers to win if they stand up to the bosses' attacks, she said.

The increasing number of immigrant workers with experiences from their countries helps to strengthen the working class in the United States, she explained.

"The Socialist Workers campaign believes that out of this resistance workers must take on the power of the capitalists who represent the interests of the rich and replace them with a government of workers and

farmers," explained Trowe.

"The work here is very fast. It's important to stand up to the exploitation that workers face," said one Galileo worker.

Two copies of the *Militant*, two copies and one subscription to *Perspectiva Mundial*, and one copy of *The Working Class and the Transformation of Learning* were sold during this visit to the plant gate.

"The itinerary of the socialist campaign is different than the capitalist candidates'. We're following the lines of resistance of working people," Trowe said to a campaign rally held in San Francisco.

Trowe explained that she had just come from Louisiana where she spoke to workers at a fabrication yard that had just voted in the union.

Her next stop is Los Angeles and then Australia and New Zealand as part of the effort of the socialist campaign to reach out to the struggles of workers and farmers internationally.

"The resistance of working people is leading to revolutionary struggles that will overthrow capitalism and establish a workers and farmers government," she said. "The capitalist parties are both claiming responsibility for the boom. It's a real boom, fueled by the speed up on the assembly lines and the cuts in safety, by cuts in the social wage like social security and health coverage, by the

Harris joins Pittsburgh phone workers' picket



Militant/Paddy Joe Hughes

Socialist Workers presidential candidate James Harris, right, and campaign supporter in Pittsburgh exchange views with phone workers during Verizon strike.

squeeze on farmers and by increased cop brutality and use of the death penalty. And it's fueled by the ideological offensive by the rulers."

A collection at the rally raised \$685 to fund the ongoing efforts of the campaign.

Three campaign supporters accompanied Trowe to talk with meat packers and farm workers in Fresno. They set up a campaign table at a local store near a large UFCW-organized meatpacking plant, which is also located near many large farms.

Trowe received a warm reception as she spoke with dozens of workers. Many nodded in agreement at what she said.

"I just want to let you know I support what you are doing," said one of the meat packers who spoke to Trowe as he bought a copy of the *Militant* and the pamphlet *The Working Class and the Transformation of Learning*.

In all socialist campaigners sold five copies of the *Militant*, six of *Perspectiva Mundial*, and two subscriptions to the Spanish-language publication as part of the effort.

Bernie Senter is a member of the International Association of Machinists.

Socialists file for Florida ballot spot

BY BILL KALMAN

MIAMI—"For the first time ever in a presidential campaign, working people in Florida will have an opportunity to consider the working class alternative to the parties of big business," said Rollande Girard, Socialist Workers candidate for mayor of Miami-Dade County, at an August 16 press conference here.

Supporters of James Harris and Margaret Trowe, Socialist Workers candidates for U.S. president and vice president, submitted the names of 31 electors of the socialist ticket to the Department of State in Tallahassee to place the party on the ballot.

Changes to Florida's constitution in 1998 ended the requirement of collecting tens of thousands of signatures to place a presidential candidate on the ballot. The socialist campaign in Florida is running write-in candidates for U.S. Senate and mayor and commissioner of Miami-Dade County.

Girard also announced an important legal victory for working class candidates in Florida. On August 15, after eight years in litigation, U.S. District Judge Michael Moore signed an order declaring Florida's bonding statute unconstitutional. This statute requires parties in the state to post a \$10,000 state bond and a \$5,000 county bond in order to run candidates for public office.

Two democratic procedures were challenged in 1992 by the Socialist Workers Party and Green Party as a violation of the First and Fourteenth Amendments to the U.S. Constitution. These were the bonding statute and a required "checking" fee of 10 cents for each signature collected on petitions to achieve ballot status. The checking fee totaled thousands of dollars, and proved to be a nearly insurmountable obstacle to ballot status for parties opposing the Democrats and Republicans.

In 1996 the district court struck down this statute, "permanently enjoin[ing] all supervisors of elections from enforcing an unconstitutional provision with respect to any minor political party." The court, however, left standing the bonding statute, declaring it a "moot point," since the state wasn't enforcing the law. But less than one month after this judgment, the Florida state government demanded that the Florida SWP pay this bond.

The lead lawyer for the SWP and Green Party, Randall Berg, executive director of the Florida Justice Institute, appealed this and the 11th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals sent the case back to Moore. Berg, the SWP, and Green Party asked that the bonding statute be declared unconstitutional, and that all lawyers fees for the plaintiffs be paid by the state.

In a press release sent out by the Florida Justice Institute, Berg described the August

15 court ruling as "a tremendous victory for the democratic process." He added, "The court's order could not come at a better time. Few realize that the political process is not open to all parties, but is instead limited to those who can afford to abide by state regulations, such as the one struck down by the court today. For years the state of Florida has threatened the elimination of any party that did not post a bond. Only the Demo-

crats and Republicans could afford a bond. It was Florida's way of excluding minor parties from the political process."

Bucky Mitchell, senior attorney with the Division of Elections, said, "We knew it was constitutionally suspect..." As part of the settlement, the state agreed to pay the parties \$175,000 in legal fees, and to send the court order to state attorneys throughout the state and to election officials in all 67 counties.

'Interests of two classes are irreconcilable'

The following article appeared in the August 14 issue of the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* under the headline, "Socialist party's presidential hopeful delivers a hard left here."

BY JEFFREY COHAN

As the Socialist Workers Party presidential candidate, James Harris is making a campaign promise that he should have no trouble keeping.

"You don't have to worry about us moving toward the center," Harris pledged to a cadre of 18 fellow revolutionaries during a campaign stop in Pittsburgh yesterday. "We're not doing that."

Indeed, should Harris and company move any farther to the left, they will fall off the political spectrum altogether.

If elected, which won't happen this year, Harris says he would nationalize major corporations, dismantle the U.S. military, and arm workers and farmers.

In other words, if you like Castro's Cuba, you would love the United States under a Harris administration.

"We have lots of ideas. You can look at the books," Harris said, motioning toward the shelves in South Side's Pathfinder Book Store, the venue of his campaign appearance yesterday.

The store, a retail arm of the radical Pathfinder Press, offers "The Collected Works of Karl Marx and Frederick Engels," Malcolm X's "By Any Means Necessary," and the "Writings of Leon Trotsky," among other revolutionary guides.

In case you didn't notice, Harris, 52, ran for president on the National Socialist Workers ticket in 1996. You could say he was a third-party candidate, but he finished tenth, attracting 8,476 votes, nowhere near the amount that went to, say, John Hagelin of the Natural Law Party (113,670) or Monica Moorehead of the Workers World Party (29,083).

He did finish almost 3,000 votes ahead of "None of These Candidates" (5,608), an option on the ballot in Nevada.

A garment worker on leave from his job

at a Marshall's distribution center in Atlanta, Harris is running on a ticket with a meat packer from Austin, Minn., Margaret Trowe.

This year, Harris and Trowe expect to appear on the ballot in 11 states, but not in Pennsylvania, where their party has no hope of collecting the 20,000 signatures needed. To vote for Harris, move to New York.

But he figured it still made sense to campaign here. This, after all, is no ordinary campaign.

Harris harbors no illusions about winning. Rather, his quixotic bid for the presidency is an effort to promote class consciousness among workers—and to lay the groundwork for a socialist revolution.

"There is no revolution that has ever been achieved at the ballot box. The ruling classes prevent it," Harris said, citing the example of Chile, where democratically elected Socialist President Salvador Allende was assassinated in a U.S.-supported coup in 1973.

"Real politics is carried out through mass actions and activities," Harris said, meaning demonstrations and strikes. "The struggle comes first."

Harris offers a variety of models for effecting dramatic change, including the economic boycotts and mass demonstrations of the Civil Rights movement, the overthrow by Castro's forces of Cuban dictator Fulgencio Batista, and the combination of violence and protests that brought down apartheid in South Africa.

"What we are talking about is far more important than winning a political race right now," Harris said.

"Our basic problem as working people is we don't think of ourselves as a class and we don't think we can do it," he continued. "We don't think working people can run this society."

In contrast, wealthy Americans have a better-formed class consciousness, Harris said, giving them an advantage in repressing workers.

"The interests of the two classes are irreconcilable," he said.

And a political system controlled almost exclusively by two middle-of-the-road parties isn't helping any, he added.

"There are differences between [Democrats and Republicans]," Harris said. "But what they both seek to do is truncate and prevent the organization of workers as a class."

Regardless, Harris sees class warfare, in some form, as inevitable in the United States.

During his speech yesterday, he urged his audience to prepare themselves, to study the history of successful revolutions, and to spread class consciousness among workers and farmers.

"The explosions are going to take place. The fights are going to take place," Harris said at the crescendo of his hour-long speech. "What will determine whether we win or lose is what we do now."

Campaigning to get Harris and Trowe on the ballot

Colorado
Minnesota
New Jersey
Utah
Washington State
Florida
Iowa
Mississippi
New York
Washington, D.C.
Rhode Island
Louisiana
Vermont
Wisconsin

On ballot
Petitioning completed
Still petitioning

Arizona tomato workers vote for UFCW

BY LOUIS TURNER
AND BETSY McDONALD

WILLCOX, Arizona—After a nine-month organizing drive, workers at the tomato producer Eurofresh voted 116-70 to join United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) Local 99.

"*Ganamos! Ganamos* (We won! We won!)" was the response of organizers and workers to this victory July 20. Some 350

tomato workers had walked out of the hot houses of Dutch-owned Eurofresh Inc. on Nov. 12, 1999, in response to the company issuing a new pay structure that doubled the amount of work for about the same pay. But workers' dissatisfaction with the company began long before they walked off the job. The workforce is entirely Mexican, and many cite the disrespectful treatment by the company, and poor sanitary and safety con-

ditions, as additional reasons for the union-organizing effort.

"We were tired of the poor conditions and they treated us like burros, like we were stupid," union leader Jesús García said. "We knew nothing about the unions here. We called all the unions in the telephone book and the UFCW was the first to come help us organize."

The tomato workers stayed out for two

weeks before going back to work, having signed up more than 300 people on UFCW union cards. Over the next nine months García and Rito Gutiérrez led an in-plant organizing committee, which spoke with every worker in the plant.

As the company's antiunion propaganda intensified, home visits were organized as well. Union supporters held rallies outside the plant with signs saying, "*Si se puede, UFCW*." Two days before the vote, 200 workers showed up at a union rally, a good sign that the organizing drive would be a success.

The union victory took the Eurofresh tomato workers on the road to becoming the first farm workers in the state to be covered by a union contract, which is now the next step in the fight.

There are 56,000 agricultural workers statewide in a \$6.3 billion industry.

When the UFCW began to help organize the workers, Eurofresh hired Michael Saqui, a lawyer from Fresno, California, to keep the union out. Saqui filed several unfair labor practice charges against the UFCW before the vote and the board disqualified 150 packinghouse workers from voting, ruling they were not agricultural workers. Unionizing efforts by farm workers are controlled by the Agricultural Employment Relations Board, empowered by the Agricultural Employment Relations Act, not the National Labor Relations Board.

Also, before the election the company put a number of workers on piece work as an incentive to make more money without the union. That attempt at bribery ended after the vote. Eurofresh has put 70 in-plant organizers on tasks such as picking up garbage and constructing new hot houses in an effort to keep them from talking union to the other workers.

A week after the election, Eurofresh filed 13 charges against the union with the state Agricultural Employment Relations Board. The charges accuse the union of threats, coercion, and intimidation of workers before and during the elections. These legal challenges will delay any negotiations of a contract. Meanwhile, the company has continued to expand and hire workers. Among the 600 workers now employed, "Everybody wants to sign" for the union, Jesús García said.

Mary Valencia, one of the 70 sent to do construction work, said, "We won't get union insurance until we get the contract. We are trying to get everyone together to get the contract." The in-plant organizers are meeting with the other workers to decide what demands should be in the pact.

The organizing committee is planning a victory celebration for August 26 here, and has invited everyone who supports the struggle to participate.

Farm workers march for rights in Washington

BY ERNIE MAILHOT

MATTAWA, Washington—Three thousands farm workers and their supporters held a five-mile march here to demand amnesty for undocumented workers, fair wages for apple pickers, and the right to organize into unions.

Organized by the United Farm Workers of America (UFW), the August 6 action took place just weeks after a similar-sized action organized by farm workers in Pasco, also in eastern Washington. "*Si se puede!*" and "What do we want? Amnesty!" were popular chants during the march.

More than 100,000 workers are employed by agribusiness in Washington State. According to the UFW, most are undocumented. The demand for legislation granting amnesty for undocumented workers is officially supported by the AFL-CIO and has been more prominent at labor activities around the country this year.

Hector, a farm worker who picks feed corn, explained he was at the rally because even though he has been in the United States for 10 years, he could be deported at any time. "I have no choice," he said. "If I'm kicked out I'll just have to come back." Hector said his situation was better than others, since he has a steady job. "I'm here for people like my brother. Right now he has a three-week job for a contractor. He works seven days a week for 16 hours a day cutting hay on only three hours sleep a day. He gets \$7 an hour with no overtime. Some of the American workers get \$20. At the end of the three weeks he'll have some money, but if he gets hurt or has an accident driving home it'll all be gone."

Another popular slogan at the march was "*No copete*." Meaning "crest," this refers to the policy of the apple growers who make workers overfill their bins. One of the apple pickers, who didn't want to give his name, explained that when the bins are loaded onto trucks the bosses take the extra apples and fill other bins.

"I estimate the majordomo where I work fills around 70 bins with the extra apples," he said. "They are robbing the apple pickers because we don't get paid for the extra bins." With the apple harvest starting, one of the main demands of the farm workers is for higher wages.

Many of the farm workers explained that in recent years the low wages they get paid per bin of apples they pick has actually decreased.

The farm workers and their family members who made up the big majority of the



Militant/John Naubert

"We demand amnesty for all," reads sign on Washington State march organized by United Farm Workers union. Workers also called for wage increases for apple pickers.

marchers were from throughout Washington State. Among others participating were students from Olympia, and mostly Mexican unionists on strike against Valley Manufactured Housing (VMH) in Sunnyside.

These workers will celebrate the one-year anniversary of their contract fight August 25. Rogelio Montes, a leader of the VMH strikers, explained that they were there "to support people without documents and build solidarity between unions. The farm workers have given us a lot of support and we need to have respect for all of our rights, including the right to organize," he said. "We can see the increase in workers' struggles and they are becoming connected because the bosses violate our rights, especially those of the undocumented. We need amnesty so workers can have a voice at work and not

fear the boss."

Among the speakers at the rally following the march was Arturo Rodriguez, the national president of the UFW, Lupe Gamboa, a central leader of the Washington State UFW, a representative of the Washington State AFL-CIO, a number of religious leaders, and at least one Democratic Party candidate for congress.

Supporters of the Socialist Workers Party candidates for national and statewide offices got a good response to their campaign literature table, including from several farm workers who stopped at the table for extensive discussions on the state of the labor movement today.

Janne Abullarade and Carmen O'Reilly contributed to this article.

FBI, Labor Dept. probe UAW in Detroit

BY IRENE HUTTON

DETROIT—The government and big-business media here are using a lawsuit filed by auto workers, alleging corruption among union officials, to give cover to and justify a

FBI and U.S. Department of Labor investigation into the United Auto Workers (UAW).

The class-action suit, filed August 7 in the U.S. District Court, began with 21 plaintiffs from United Auto Workers Local 594. It charges that the settlement of the 1997 strike at the Pontiac General Motors truck plant was delayed to get the sons of UAW officials hired, and that some members of the Local 594 bargaining committee accepted bribes in the form of unjustified overtime payments in the amount of \$200,000.

A major demand of the 87-day strike was that GM hire 600 more workers to end the overtime that was being forced on the 6,000 workers in the plant. The workers were also denied earned vacations and days off.

The strike was one of several against the big automakers in the summer of 1997. Combined with a strike against a GM plant in Oklahoma City, it cost GM nearly \$500 million by stopping the production of more than 70,000 pickup trucks. The strike ended when the company agreed to hire more workers, putting a brake for a time on their drive to cut thousands of jobs.

The real target of the lawsuit is the UAW, not General Motors. The suit seeks \$50 million in compensatory damages from GM and the UAW, and \$500 million in punitive damages from the UAW. The suit challenges the right of auto workers to run their own union without government interference.

The *Detroit Free Press*, notorious for its several-year union-busting drive against the newspaper workers' unions, reports that the FBI and U.S. Department of Labor investi-

gation goes back two years but was intensified this summer as the lawsuit was filed. According to the press reports, union members say federal investigators and GM attorneys were inside the plant during the scheduled two-week shutdown in July, seizing and studying internal UAW documents from the 1997 strike. The investigation was prompted in part by allegations by UAW Concern, a group based in Kalamazoo, Michigan.

Big-business media backs probe

Support for the federal probe and the antiunion lawsuit is being encouraged by the daily big-business newspapers here. In a front-page article entitled "UAW workers flock to join GM suit," the *Detroit Free Press* reports that more than 100 additional workers at GM's Pontiac plant signed up in the class-action lawsuit. They are each paying \$100 to help fund it. The organizers of the lawsuit plan to pass out hundreds of donation and sign-up forms in the Pontiac East truck plant, which employs 3,400 workers.

In the same issue, the *Detroit Free Press* ran an incendiary editorial entitled "Sellout? UAW members need to know what bargain-ers did." The editorial began, "The old adage says where there's smoke, there's fire. And there is enough smoke pouring from the Solidarity House headquarters of the United Auto Workers to have federal investigators hunting for flames."

"One way to clear the smoke is to deal with the fire," the big-business paper concludes, backing the government intervention into union affairs.

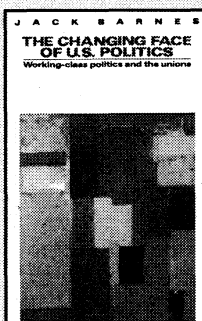
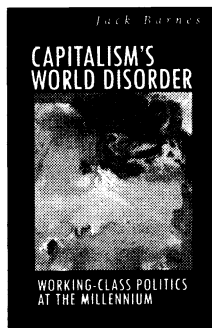
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Farmers to USDA: pay our compensation now

BY DAN FEIN

EPES, Alabama—Some 300 Black farmers attended the 33rd annual meeting of the Federation of Southern Cooperatives (FSC) here. Many came especially on the first day of the August 18-19 meeting to get answers to why they had not received their \$50,000 check promised by the U.S. Department of Agriculture as part of the settlement of a discrimination lawsuit filed by farmers who are Black against the USDA. Another 100 or so USDA, credit union, and FSC staff members were also present.

In March 1999, the farmers' class-action lawsuit, *Pigford vs. Glickman*, was settled through a consent decree signed by federal judge Paul Friedman. The lawsuit was in response to decades of racist practices by the USDA, in particular denying loans and disaster relief. Thousands of Black farmers have lost their lands through foreclosures because of such government practices.

The consent decree established two "tracks" for farmers involved in the suit. Track A offered farmers \$50,000 and cancellation of debts to the government, supposedly with only limited documentation of discrimination required. One of the things a successful claimant had to find was a white farmer in similar circumstances who did receive loans from the USDA.

Track B allowed a farmer the possibility of collecting a higher sum than \$50,000, and cancellation of government loans, if they could show documents proving racism. However, the decision would be made by an arbitrator and farmers filing through Track B could end up with nothing. It was a gamble.

A total of 20,675 farmers are involved in the settlement. The overwhelming majority—20,488—chose Track A because it was supposed to be the simplest and fastest way to get some monetary compensation. However, the majority of the farmers at the meeting had not yet received their checks.

It was reported that 88 percent of Track A cases have been adjudicated. Of these, 39 percent have been denied. Of those 61 percent approved, 40 percent have not yet been paid. Some \$330,100,000 has been paid out so far.

Most of the questions to the lawyers on the speakers panel centered on why they haven't received their checks yet. Farmer after farmer told stories of receiving a letter from the government saying the check would be sent out within 60 days. Then another letter would arrive saying: make that 90 days. The 90 days would go by and still no check.

Farmers furious at gov't stalling

Farmers were surprised and outraged to hear from the panelists that the government could appeal a decision already made by the adjudicator to pay a farmer the \$50,000.

Randi Roth, the "independent monitor" who hears such appeals, was on the speakers panel. She stated that a government appeal may be the reason why the checks have not arrived, and told farmers they could leave her their names and she would investigate whether their case was being appealed.

Many farmers said they thought the "independent monitor" was only an avenue for farmers in Track A whose case had been denied by the adjudicator.

Rose Sanders, for the law firm of Chestnut, Sanders and Sanders, one of the firms representing the farmers in the lawsuit,

stated, "The process is flawed." She complained to Roth about the short deadlines for filing paper work.

A woman farmer who took the floor after Roth's comments said, "We've been fighting this for three years. I'm tired of the lies. Let's march on the White House and let our concerns be known."

The next day, the South Carolina caucus of the Federation of Southern Cooperatives brought a motion to the business meeting to circulate a petition protesting the fact that approved cases go before the monitor.

Charles and Fannie Fletcher from southern Georgia came to the meeting with their seven-year-old daughter Lakeisha. They grow tobacco, peanuts, and corn, and raise hogs, goats, and sheep. They have filed a claim but have yet to receive any money.

Charles Fletcher said in an interview, "I tried many times to borrow money from the USDA and was always denied. I had to borrow from private sources at a higher interest rate. It's disgusting to see how they work."

The two farmers work jobs off the farm to pay the bills. Charles Fletcher previously worked 10 years in a railroad shop and eight years for Wal-Mart. He now sells fertilizer and household cleaning items. Fannie Fletcher works in home care.

Two weeks ago, Charles Fletcher said, the price they got for their tobacco was \$1.45 per pound and they paid 84 cents per gallon for the gas used to cure the tobacco. "Now the price I receive for the tobacco is \$1.39 per pound and I'm paying \$1 per gallon for the



Militant/Jeanne FitzMaurice
Georgia farmers Charles and Fannie Fletcher, with daughter Lakeisha, at Federation of Southern Cooperatives meeting. They are among many outraged Black farmers who have not received USDA payment from settlement of class-action discrimination suit.

gas. That's the way it is for everything on the farm—costs go up and income goes down."

Southern Georgia and Alabama are in the third year of a drought. Charles Fletcher, whose farm has no irrigation, said, "When my tobacco got two feet high it stopped growing, until we got a little rain. That meant the worms got the tobacco and I had to spray more. Water wells cost a lot of money. Us little farmers cannot afford them. My watermelons came up and died this year due to the drought. Others had corn in the field that burned up from the drought."

A couple who farm in Mississippi, and asked that their names not be used, said in an interview, "We received our check in June 2000. Maybe we got it because we had no

outstanding loans with USDA."

Ernest Howard from Clarendon County, South Carolina, said he has not received a check. "They use all kinds of strategy to hold back payments," he said. "After the USDA was proven racist, you should not have had to find a white counterpart who did get loans in order to collect."

Howard's problems from the government's racist practices go back to 1982 when he filed for bankruptcy. He helped organize a number of other farmers in South Carolina to join the suit.

Dan Fein is a textile worker in Atlanta and Socialist Workers candidate for U.S. Congress in the Fifth District.

Deadly Firestone tires point to profit drive

BY RAY PARSONS

DES MOINES, Iowa—The Bridgestone/Firestone tire giant is embroiled in what has become a mushrooming scandal over faulty tires that tear apart and cause deadly accidents. By the latest count, 62 deaths and 100 injuries have resulted from crashes of vehicles, largely involving Ford Explorers using Firestone tires.

In early August an increasing number of deaths and injuries from rollover crashes of Ford pickup trucks and sport-utility vehicles equipped with Firestone ATX, ATXII, and Wilderness AT tires came to light in daily media reports. The tires' tread separates from the body of the tire, with tragic results at highway speed.

The problem was exposed much earlier when the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration opened an investigation May 2.

Since the moment the revelations became widely publicized, Firestone and Ford have pointed the finger of blame at each other. Firestone initially defended the quality of their tires and delayed a replacement recall. The company finally issued a piecemeal recall August 9.

Four days later, Ford announced that, according to its statistical analysis of the defective tires, most were produced by replacement workers at the Decatur, Illinois, Bridgestone/Firestone plant during a 1994-95 strike. The report was designed to further distance the automaker from liability in the car crash lawsuits—especially around their rollover-prone SUVs—that are multiplying with each passing day. It also attempted to put the blame on a section of the workers at the tire company.

Bridgestone/Firestone claimed that Ford advised vehicle owners to inflate the tires to only 26 pounds per square inch of pressure, off from the 30 pounds recommended by the tire maker. An August 20 news report exposed an internal Ford document admitting that the Ford Explorer was at risk for rollover when tires were inflated at the higher pressure.

In fact, the two companies work together in the design and testing of tires as new vehicles are developed. In a report in the May 22 *Rubber and Plastics News*, an industry magazine, Dick Baumgardner, a former Firestone employee and now an "expert witness" in product liability lawsuits, said that automakers commonly ask for changes in specifications to meet various requirements. "I think they stripped this [tire] down too far," he said.

Early reports attempting to blame replace-

ment workers in the Decatur plant during the strike have spurred much discussion among workers on the job at Bridgestone/Firestone. Some veterans of the 1994-95 strike have latched on to these reports, blaming strikebreakers as "unqualified" and the sole source of the defective tires.

Other workers say the faulty tires are a product of the continual cost-cutting and speedup Bridgestone/Firestone bosses carry out in the design of tires, the materials used, the tire-making process, and quality inspection. They point to their own experiences of deteriorating working conditions, 12-hour shifts, assembly speedup, and other attempts to squeeze more work out of them as a key factor that leads to such deadly results.

United Steelworkers of America (USWA) officials, particularly in Decatur, have tried to rally union members to back the company through defending the overall quality of the product.

Steelworkers issue strike notice

BY RAY PARSONS

DES MOINES, Iowa—The United Steelworkers of America (USWA) has given 14-day notice to strike at Bridgestone/Firestone if contract talks fail to reach an agreement. The negotiations affect 8,000 rubber workers at nine plants around the country.

The August 18 announcement came as a months-long scandal over defective Firestone tires deepened. By latest count, 62 deaths and 100 injuries have resulted from car crashes involving vehicles, mostly Ford Explorers, using Firestone tires.

The contract talks between the USWA and Bridgestone/Firestone bosses have dragged out for months, and the unionists have been working "day to day" under an extension of the last pacts.

Workers at six plants are covered under the "master agreement" that expired in April. Separate contracts at three other plants have also expired, and the union is seeking to win a new pact bringing together all nine plants.

In 1994-95 a hard-fought strike was lost by the United Rubber Workers (URW) at Firestone. The URW was merged into the USWA, as the unionists fought to get back into the plants with their union intact. For the most part, a new contract signed in December 1996 was on the bosses' terms.

Twelve-hour shifts and a drastic speedup were imposed as continuous operations were established. Unionists returning to the

The recall of the tires implicated in dozens of deaths and injuries is growing to enormous proportions, with 6.5 million being recalled. Bridgestone/Firestone has agreed to pay for tires made by its competitors to be used as replacements. On August 21 Ford announced the extraordinary step of idling three truck assembly plants for two weeks in order to free up 70,000 tires for use as recall replacements.

Meanwhile, the USWA has given a 14-day notice to strike at Bridgestone/Firestone if contract talks fail to reach an agreement. The negotiations affect 8,000 rubber workers at nine plants across the country who have been working for months under an extension of previous contracts (see accompanying article).

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

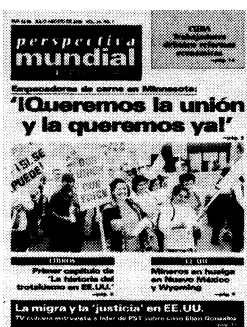
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Socialists in rail, steel unions take steps to join in with fighting working-class vanguard

BY SAM MANUEL
AND JACK WARD

Rail workers and steelworkers who are members of the Socialist Workers Party held national meetings August 19-20. The gatherings focused on how to further integrate the party's work into the actions of a new vanguard of workers—being forged in mines, mills, and factories across the country—who are fighting back against the employers' speedup, attacks on safety conditions, longer hours, and other forms of the intensification of labor.

The rail workers, members of the United Transportation Union (UTU), met in Washington, D.C., and the members of the United Steelworkers of America (USWA) in Philadelphia.

Participants discussed how they could become more deeply involved in these developing struggles. They discussed how to restructure and transform their local work, so their day-to-day functioning converges with that of vanguard workers, especially those in the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA), the United Food and Commercial Workers union (UFCW), and the Union of Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Employees (UNITE). These unions are in industries where attacks by the employers have been especially intense, where resistance is growing, and where members of the SWP and Young Socialists have made the most progress in becoming an integral part of the struggles.

The meetings of socialist steelworkers and rail workers took place a week after the national fraction meeting of socialists active in the International Association of Machinists (IAM), where the same issues were discussed (see last week's *Militant*).

Resistance spreads

Reports and discussion at these meetings focused on a number of examples of workers' resistance. Packinghouse workers in the Upper Midwest are standing up to the bosses' offensive, both through struggles to establish union organization and to use existing union structures to wage an effective fight. There have been strikes, rallies, and meetings by coal miners and others in coalfield communities, including the recent strike victory of coal miners in Wyoming and New Mexico against Pittsburg and Midway Coal Co. (P&M).

Richard Pauling, a steelworker at the Bridgestone/Firestone plant in Des Moines, Iowa, described to the meeting of steelworkers a number of strikes and lockouts involving USWA members. These included the strike at Titan Tire and lockouts at Kaiser Aluminum and AK Steel. In each of these fights, the bosses are attempting to break the union and impose qualitatively worse conditions on the job.

The meeting also grappled with how communist workers should respond to the recent revelations about faulty Firestone tires that have caused the deaths of dozens of people in rollover accidents (see article, page 7). John Staggs from Philadelphia stressed that workers need to emphasize that Firestone is responsible not only for speedup in the plants but also for cost-cutting in making the tires. "Whenever the capitalists show a disregard for human life, the labor movement needs to go after it," he said.

The steelworkers in Philadelphia joined a Militant Labor Forum Saturday evening, featuring speakers who are part of the growing resistance.

Luis Tlaseca, of the Kaolin Workers Union, spoke about the fight of mushroom workers for a union contract at Kaolin Mushroom Farms in nearby Kennett Square, Pennsylvania. He was joined by Jack Ward, an underground coal miner from southern Illinois, who just returned from a celebration by miners and their supporters of the victory against P&M at its McKinley mine in New Mexico.

Both speakers pointed to brutal attacks that are fueling the fightbacks. Tlaseca emphasized the speedup at Kaolin, where workers must pick, cut, and package about double the number of mushrooms as they did 15 years ago for the same wage—and in the same amount of time! New hires who



Militant/Jack Parker

July 26 United Mine Workers rally in Denver to support miners in Wyoming and New Mexico, who won strikes and thwarted bosses' demands for 12-hour days. Socialist workers are taking steps to further integrate themselves into the emerging worker and farmer vanguard and to organize themselves to act more effectively within it.

cannot make the minimum rate are fired. The work is seasonal, with short hours in the winter and massive overtime in the summer. The bosses' increasingly callous attitude to the workforce, Tlaseca said, galvanized workers to organize in the early 1990s.

"Today we are still fighting for a contract," he said. "The leadership of the union was fired seven years ago. We just won a ruling by the labor board, and I was recently able to start back to work. The fight to win recognition and a contract has intensified. We are getting out to other strikes to support others and to get the word out about our struggle," he said.

Social movement in mining areas

Jack Ward described the social movement against attacks on safety, work conditions, medical benefits, and conditions of life in coal-mining communities. This was reflected in the strikes against Pittsburg and Midway where families, workers, members of other unions, owners of small businesses, and others in the community all got involved, helping to secure the victory. With this support, the miners pushed back company attempts to impose the 12-hour day and a cut in health care.

The UMWA local in Kemmerer, Wyoming, formed the "Miners' Backbone," an organization of women who organized marches, rallies, and picketing that played a significant role in gaining the victory. The striking miners leafleted plant gates to reach refinery workers in the Paper, Allied-Industrial, Chemical, and Energy Workers International Union (PACE) at Chevron refineries near Los Angeles and Salt Lake City and held a rally of both locals at the P&M headquarters in Denver. P&M is a subsidiary of the Chevron energy giant.

"These victories will be an impetus to miners whose contracts are coming up at the Peabody mines and to nonunion miners who are turning to the union as they look for a way to fight," Ward said. "Miners at P&M are already discussing what they can do to strengthen others' struggles."

At recent hearings sponsored by the Mine Safety and Health Administration, the government agency proposed doubling the levels of coal dust allowed in underground mines. Miners have organized to speak at these hearings, exposing how such an increase in coal dust will lead to a rise in black lung and a heightened risk of mine explosions. Black lung remains the number-one killer of coal miners today.

Ward pointed to recent disasters in which miners have lost their lives, such as the explosion at the Willow Creek mine in Utah that killed two young workers. Soon after that disaster, a young contract miner at the Blacksville no. 2 mine in West Virginia was killed on the job. Earlier this year, miners

who work for another contractor, Webnic Construction Services, at the same Blacksville mine voted to join the UMWA.

"This was a breakthrough for the union," Ward said, "one that points the way forward for miners—whether the growing numbers hired as contractors, or directly by the mine—to forge the kind of unity needed to confront the conditions that lead to death and injuries."

Struggles in rail

In a report to the meeting of socialist rail workers, Chris Rayson, a conductor working for the Burlington Northern and Santa Fe railroad in Seattle, gave some examples of resistance by workers in the rail industry. These include the victory against discrimination and for affirmative action resulting from several lawsuits by Black workers at Amtrak. One of these suits was filed by the Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees (BMWE), which organizes workers, many of them Black or Spanish-speaking, who do the hardest work digging up and laying down track.

Rayson also noted the successful unionization drives by van drivers who transport rail crews. In the past, these jobs were organized by rail unions before being contracted out to nonunion companies paying the minimum wage and offering little or no benefits.

Andrea Morell, an assistant conductor on the Metro Boston Transportation Authority (MBTA), reported on a successful fight by workers there. In a transparent move to bust the union, MBTA officials attempted to end the contract with the UTU workers employed by Amtrak and bring in Herzog Transportation Services. This nonunion outfit in turn sent out letters to union employees to "apply for jobs they already had," Morell explained. To this day not one worker has agreed to do so.

Last February, the BMWE struck the Union Pacific railroad's central corridor in the Midwest to protest plans to contract out production of panel sections at a Wyoming plant. Three months later the union set up picket lines for three hours in Ohio, West Virginia, and Maryland against the Norfolk Southern railroad to protest the layoff of 600 union members in violation of seniority and bidding rights protected by the contract. The strike was ended by union officials after a court granted the company a restraining order. Several railroads went to federal court in June seeking a court order requiring the BMWE to give 10 days notice before striking.

Transforming union functioning

The SWP today is organizing to get its members into workplaces and unions where a more generalized resistance is developing to the conditions and indignities bearing

down ever more harshly on workers.

"There is a social movement in the coalfields around health and safety issues, which affect whole regions," Ward said. "What is developing in packinghouses in the Midwest is part of the beginnings of a broader movement. Organizing drives in Nebraska and actions by workers in union plants in Iowa are part of this picture."

"Garment workers were among hundreds of other workers who marched on May Day in New York, helping to reclaim the day for the working class," Ward said. "Garment workers also made up part of the 20,000 workers who rallied for immigrant rights in Los Angeles recently."

"It will take a movement to organize the hundreds of garment shops in cities such as Los Angeles and New York, and workers are beginning to respond," he said. Ward noted that socialist workers in the garment industry "are going through real experiences on the job." In Miami, for example, nonunion workers signed a petition to support an organizing drive by meat packers at Dakota Premium Foods in South St. Paul, Minnesota—"because they need a union too," Ward said.

Speakers at the Philadelphia meeting pointed out that resistance by union steelworkers has not been centered in the giant steel mills where socialists have several local fractions. Many members of these fractions have found themselves in situations where they are not part of skirmishes or struggles, and are not able to function on the level of those of socialists in the garment, mine, or meatpacking unions. The meeting voted to recommend that these fraction members change jobs and join other fractions, guided by discussion and decisions of the branches of the Socialist Workers Party to which they belong.

Both the rail workers and steelworkers meetings set deadlines to establish fractions of two socialist workers who work together in the same plant, mine, or mill along with common co-workers. Only by doing so, they affirmed, is it possible to carry out party campaigns, respond to developments on the job, and figure out how to become integrated in working-class struggles, setting an example for co-workers and fellow fighters.

Prior to these meetings, most participants did not have another party member on the job, something that depoliticized their work, making it less consistent and revolutionary.

Answering craft prejudice, arrogance

Following the example set by socialists in the IAM, both national fraction meetings set goals to sell the new pamphlet, *The Working Class and the Transformation of Learning: The Fraud of Education Reform Under Capitalism* by Jack Barnes. Socialists in the UTU set a goal of selling 25 pamphlets and socialist steelworkers set a goal of 35. To help reach workers who are cleaners, carmen, van drivers, and janitors, the UTU fraction decided that a third of their goal would be copies of the Spanish-language edition of the pamphlet.

In a letter to the party's Trade Union Committee following the meeting, Andrea Morell reported on the discussion at the meeting on a sentence in the pamphlet asserting that the rail barons don't need for rail workers to be literate in order to keep the trains running. The Trade Union Committee had asked the meeting to take up the point, since several rail workers had questioned the accuracy of the statement.

"As workers on freight and passenger railroads throughout the country with years of experience among us," Morell wrote, "we felt we were competent to conclude that literacy is not a necessity for operating trains safely and efficiently. Instead, it is used by the bosses to serve their class purposes, which have nothing to do with the 'safe and smooth' operation of trains, as borne out every day on this country's railways."

"The literacy tests are used to exclude workers from the operating crafts, in particular Blacks and immigrant workers," she wrote. "Many such workers who apply are actually experienced railroad workers in other crafts or departments, whose skill lev-

Continued on Page 10

Miners expose bosses on coal dust hazards

BY JACK PARKER
AND JAN MILLER

SALT LAKE CITY, Utah—"I come from a mining family. Both my grandfathers were diagnosed with black lung. My paternal grandfather could hardly breathe—just to walk to the car could take an hour," said Brad Allen, the safety committee representative from United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) Local 1984 in Rangely, Colorado.

Allen, a miner with 12 years' experience who works at Blue Mountain Energy's Deserado mine, was one of a number of UMWA members representing their locals who testified at the third of a series of public hearings held by the Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) on its proposal to change the current system for sampling, detecting, and controlling dust in coal mines.

Hundreds of miners attended the three hearings, held between August 7 and 17 in Morgantown, West Virginia; Prestonsburg, Kentucky; and Salt Lake City, Utah.

"According to NIOSH [National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health], between 1987 and 1996 there were 18,245 deaths from black lung in this country," noted Cameron Montgomery, vice president and safety committee chairperson of UMWA Local 2176 at the Trail Mountain mine near Price, Utah. "That comes to one death every six hours."

"Ninety-three percent of all those who apply for black lung benefits are denied and rejected," Montgomery said.

"On May 17 thousands marched in Washington, D.C., and I was fortunate to be one of the 17 people from the West who went," Montgomery said, referring to the UMWA-sponsored demonstration held that day to defend the protections contained in the Coal Act, the law that guarantees health benefits for retired miners. This protest was the most visible part so far of the broad-based campaign the UMWA is waging to force the federal government to protect coal miners' health care—including prevention of black lung, as pneumoconiosis is commonly known.

Responding to the public outcry generated by the miners' campaign, MSHA has come up with a plan that proposes changes in the method used to check for compliance of dust limits in coal mines—limits that have been set to prevent lung disease. During the past 30 years, dust sampling had been left to mine operators. This led to extensive and well-documented falsification of test results. MSHA now proposes to do all the testing itself.

The meeting in Salt Lake City began with a slide presentation narrated by MSHA administrator Marvin Nichols, who chaired the event. He stated, "We want to prevent the confusion of the previous hearings." As the hearing progressed it became clear that the problem for the agency officials was not "confusion" but the miners' insistent demand for protection from the coal dust. As Brad Allen summed it up, "Measure the amount of coal dust a miner sucks into his lungs—don't give us some tricky formulas."

"This falls far short of what's needed to protect miners in this country," said Joe Main, administrative health and safety representative for the UMWA. "Promises by the government are not well accepted by miners. Send it back to the drawing board."

Miners take the floor

Main was the first of more than 10 UMWA members who took the floor to testify against MSHA's proposal. Joining him were Jim Weeks, an occupational health expert on the international staff of the union, and Jim Stevenson, UMWA District 22 health and safety representative from Price, Utah. They testified along with miners from District 20 in Alabama and District 12 in southern Illinois who flew in for the hearings. In addition, UMWA miners from all three organized underground mines in the West—Deserado, Trail Mountain, and Deer Creek in Huntington, Utah—took the floor to express their views on MSHA's proposal.

Not one UMWA representative spoke in favor of the proposed law. Each detailed significant shortcomings in the plan and called for MSHA to rework its proposal.

Speaking at the hearing in Morgantown, Dennis O'Dell, health and safety representative from District 31, pointed out that the 700-page document was not easy to understand. O'Dell told MSHA the rules are "quite complicated" and they do not make clear "what is enforceable and what is not."

"Miners are confused by the plan," Jim Stevenson of District 22 explained. "It's too fuzzy, miners don't know what to expect."

Stevenson was one of many speakers who pointed to a big problem the miners had with the MSHA plan. MSHA proposes a limit of 2.0 parts per cubic meter of respirable coal mine dust during each shift. This is the limit set by the current law. NIOSH proposed to reduce it to 1.0 part per cubic meter. "Limiting dust to 1.0 part would effectively eliminate black lung," Jim Weeks told the *Militant*.

Although the MSHA representatives at the hearing were repeatedly asked why they were not proposing a 1.0-part limit, they never answered that question.

Actually, the MSHA plan will allow coal dust to accumulate to a level of 2.33 parts per cubic meter. MSHA claims this is the standard mathematical deviation that insures accurate testing. Several speakers challenged MSHA's approach, suggesting there was no need to go above the 2.0 level. This was another question that miners say was never adequately answered.

Another bone of contention over MSHA's testing methods was why the technology for continuous dust sampling had not yet been developed. UMWA members also explained that it was possible to get black lung in other areas of the mine besides working on the long wall—the main place MSHA proposes to test.

A big problem that miners raised was MSHA's plans to conduct their tests for only 480 minutes—eight hours—per shift. "A full shift is 10 hours where we work," said Dwight Cagel, a UMWA member from Jim



Militant/Stu Singer

Coal miners rally in Washington May 17 in defense of lifetime health benefits. Hundreds of miners attended recent hearings to demand the federal government protect coal miners' health care, including prevention of black lung disease.

Walters No. 7 mine who had come from Alabama to testify.

Cagel described a problem many miners currently face. Often they are forced to work 10 to 12 hours a day with overtime. "We have 'hot seat' replacement," Cagel said, describing how the mine bosses are getting more out of their workforce by having one miner take over for another without ever shutting the machinery off at shift change.

"Testing only six times a year [the MSHA proposal] takes us back from where we are now," Jim Stevenson said, hitting on another weakness of the plan. "That is simply not enough times to keep the companies honest."

Stevenson's remarks clearly irked MSHA administrator Nichols. "We would need 200 additional people and \$20 million to do what you propose. If you want to go before Congress and ask them for the money, you are welcome to try."

"This plan is a slap in the face to those of us who have tried to get better regulations," Stevenson replied. "If this is passed there will be tens of thousands of more black lung cases."

Stevenson insisted that the proposed plan allows the coal operators too much discretion. We need to "let the miners participate but not one coal operator will agree to that."

Helmets not the solution

Several speakers pointed to problems they had with Airstream helmets, a device the companies are permitted to use to control dust inhalation while working on the long wall face. The helmets are heavy and cumbersome, make it difficult for miners to communicate with one another, and tend to fog up from condensation. Because of this, several of the UMWA members testified, many miners do not wear them.

Larry Kuharcik, a miner at Consol's Blacksville No. 2 mine, explained at the West Virginia hearing that the helmets are not enough for those working on the long wall. "Downplaying the dangers those workers face is unacceptable." He said in the past 10 months, 26 miners from

Blacksville have been diagnosed with black lung disease.

The MSHA-proposed regulation will allow companies to use Airstream helmets if they can prove that "all feasible engineering controls are not enough to achieve compliance" with the law. This point particularly concerned Jim Stevenson. "Once you open the door the companies will walk right through it. Give them an excuse and you can bet you will find 100 requests to stop making engineering changes and require that we use helmets," he said. "This will stop them looking for ways to make engineering improvements."

Toward the end of the Salt Lake City hearing, Brad Pay, another miner from Trail Mountain with 19 years' experience, including 14 on the long wall, took the floor and expressed the concerns of many miners at the meeting. "I am hear to tell you things that I have witnessed and seen. I have seen foremen tell miners to hold shear speeds down to limit the dust when MSHA inspectors were coming. They threatened the shear operators if they didn't do it."

"The shear operators were intimidated," Pay reported. "They were told we would lose contracts if they didn't go along with what they were told—and I work in a union mine."

"I've seen people get overtime pay to come up with good sample," Pay added. "The company knew MSHA was coming and as soon as they left we would go back to production with so much dust that you couldn't see the guy standing next to you."

"I've seen MSHA inspectors look the other way, ignore things," Pay said. "Conditions change from day to day. During sampling periods, traffic was stopped and some areas were never sampled. Eight hours is a problem. We have still got two hours to go. Things change as soon as MSHA leaves."

"How many miners must die before the money is spent for a proposal that will work for miners?" one miner asked. "Don't make estimations and projections on my health."

Tony Lane, a member of United Mine Workers of America Local 1248, contributed to this article.

Miner killed at West Virginia prep plant

BY FRANK FORRESTAL

PITTSBURGH—A 23-year-old miner, Dan Dalton, was killed August 16 in a fall at the Blacksville No. 2 mine in northern West Virginia. Dalton was employed by Boyce Grabeal & Sayre Inc. (BGS), a mine contractor, that had been hired by Consol to upgrade the company's prep plant. He fell into a tank while installing a piece of machinery. The fatal accident is being investigated by state and federal inspectors.

Blacksville No. 2 is a longwall mine owned by Consol Coal Co., the largest U.S. underground coal company. The coal giant is notorious for hiring nonunion contract miners at its mines.

"We have good relations with our employees," said BGS vice president Arnold Graybeal before the recent fatality. "We are very safety conscious and have an excellent safety record."

Recently, the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) won union recognition for another contractor, Webnic Construction Services, which has been working at Blacksville No. 2. The union is pursuing unionization of BGS, according to a UMWA press release. The union victory at Consol is an important step forward for the union, one that was noticed with a certain level of anxiety in the big business press.

According to the Mine Safety and Health Administration, more than 181 mine contract workers have been killed while working on mine property between 1990 and 1998, and half of those deaths were in West Virginia.

The recent death was not the first mine contractor killed at Blacksville. In 1992, three miners were killed in an explosion while closing a shaft at Blacksville No. 1. A Consol engineer was also killed in the blast,

and two others were injured.

In response to this situation, the UMWA is making an effort to organize contract miners into the union. Many of these miners are laid-off union miners and would jump at the chance to join the union.

There were two additional fatal coal mining accidents reported last week. A 36-year-old shuttle car operator was crushed to death August 14 by another shuttle car at Dakota Mining in Van, West Virginia.

On August 15, an underground miner was killed at Manalapan Mining Co., Mine No. 16 in Kentucky. So far this year 22 coal miners have been killed nationwide. Eight coal miners have been killed in Kentucky and five in West Virginia.

Frank Forrestal is a member of United Mine Workers of America Local 1248 in Pennsylvania.

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Socialists launch effort to raise Pathfinder sales

New pamphlet is at heart of campaign to sell books working people need

BY GREG McCARTAN

A campaign by socialist workers in the United Kingdom to increase sales of Pathfinder to bookstores and other outlets is bringing about some impressive results. This past week a "superstore" in the center of London placed an order for 296 Pathfinder books.

Pathfinder supporter Celia Pugh said in a telephone interview that the buyer ordered 10 copies of *Capitalism's World Disorder* by Jack Barnes, noting that it "looks like an attractive book" after reviewing the political questions addressed in it, as well as its cover. A total of 81 titles were ordered,

sian Revolution.

With another buyer Pugh discussed the debate around Darwinism and the reactionary notion being advanced that men and women are fundamentally different in their capacities. As a result, the buyer ordered six copies of *Cosmetics, Fashion, and the Exploitation of Women*; six of *Woman's Evolution*; and three of *Sexism and Science*. "These books have a real historical and political edge to them," the buyer said.

Pugh added that the Pathfinder Bookshop in London also had one of its best Saturdays in some time, selling \$350 worth of books. A number of titles by Malcolm X

skills of proletarian pamphleteering. It is a basic piece of communist propaganda, touching on the most fundamental question of class society and how a world organized to meet the needs and hopes of working people would be a qualitatively different place to live."

Sales of the books have unnecessarily fallen this year, Waters pointed out. The party can "take advantage of the broadening opportunities to get out with our book tables onto the streets, to factory gates, to farm gatherings, and onto campuses," which takes political leadership to carry out on a consistent basis in every city.

Waters also urged every party unit to build on the success of last year's campaign to sell *Capitalism's World Disorder* by Jack Barnes. In the range of 100 new accounts were opened, many of them in "smaller stores and other locations recommended to us by vanguard workers and farmers who we asked for suggestions. Thousands of dollars of books were sold," Waters said. She encouraged the party's trade union fractions, as well as SWP branches, to organize to return to each of them by the end of the year to seek additional orders, inviting the Young Socialists to join the effort through its local chapters.

Waters pointed out the sales opportunities offered by the substantially upgraded new printings of Pathfinder books as they are digitized and printed with improved type and formatting, and with new prefaces or introductions when possible. To increase sales of these new reprints, Pathfinder is making a standing offer to members of the Pathfinder Readers Club of a 30 percent discount on all newly digitized titles during the first two months after they come off the presses. "This means bookstore directors will have to pay special attention to each new reprint after it comes in," Waters said, "organizing special displays and making announcements at branch meetings, as well as at forums, and other appropriate events."

To aid this effort Pathfinder produced an attractive leaflet in English and Spanish that can be used by supporters of the Socialist Workers 2000 election campaign promoting a package of five books and pamphlets. This includes the new pamphlet, *Capitalism's World Disorder*, *The Changing Face of U.S. Politics*, and *New International* nos. 10 and 11. The titles are available at 25 percent off on presentation of the leaflet at any book table or Pathfinder bookstore.

Interest in Spanish-language titles

Four Pathfinder supporters set up a booth at the La Reforma conference, held in Tucson, Arizona, August 3-6. La Reforma is the National Association to Promote Library and Information Services to Latinos and the Spanish Speaking. Many of the 500 people in attendance were librarians. "We got the Pathfinder catalog and brochure featuring our Spanish titles into the hands of many librarians there," said Nan Bailey, "and made a number of contacts who we can follow up on with visits in local areas. We sold about \$170 in literature off the table, including 33 of *The Working Class and the Transformation of Learning* in Spanish and English, which we sold at a special \$1 promotional rate."

Socialist workers take steps to join with vanguard

Continued from Page 8

els vary and can be quite demanding—as in laying track switches, for example.

"Literacy, as a supposed requirement to do the job, is also used to inculcate a false sense of superiority among conductors and engineers over cleaners, maintenance of way workers, and others, thus fostering divisions among workers on the railroad," Morell noted. "Divisions act against the most basic thing railroad workers actually do need to get trains over the road with as little injury to themselves and the public as possible—and that is solidarity."

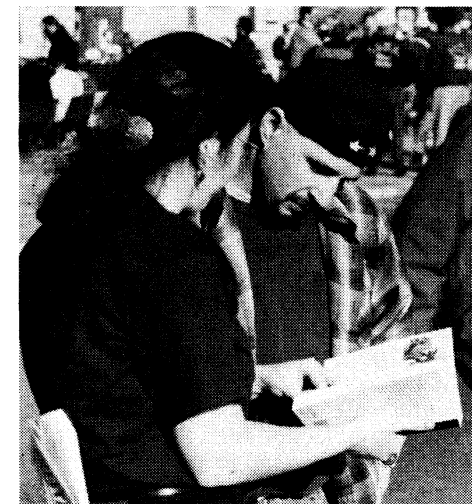
In her letter Morell explained that having the discussion on issues "raised around the pamphlet was a real strengthening of the political discussion that was at the heart of our meeting: that is, are we railroad workers with pride of craft and defense of relative privileges? Or are we communists—professional revolutionists—who have been

Pathfinder has a wide range of titles in Spanish that are reaching workers in increasing numbers in the United States. More libraries are expanding their Spanish-language sections as are bookstores and other outlets across the country. As more and more workers whose first language is Spanish enter into strikes and other struggles, there is interest in and need for the books published by Pathfinder on the lessons of 150 years of working-class battles and a Marxist analysis of developments today.

Several young people from the University of Arizona stopped by the table, including activists in Los Derechos, an immigrant rights organization. A bee farmer purchased *New International* no. 4 on the alliance of workers and farmers, *The Working Class and the Transformation of Learning*, and a copy of *La Gaceta de Cuba*, a cultural magazine from Cuba. The owner of a Latino bookstore in Santa Ana, California, invited a Pathfinder representative to visit his store to update the stock of Pathfinder titles and encouraged the team to participate in an upcoming Latino book fair in Bakersfield.

In Minneapolis-St. Paul, socialist workers and Young Socialists kicked off the campaign to sell the pamphlet in combination with a Militant Labor Forum featuring Rebecca Ellis, Socialist Workers candidate for U.S. Senate, to discuss some of the many political questions addressed in its pages. Afterwards, one participant, who is a production worker at the 3M corporation, started talking it up on the job and got a co-worker interested in organizing a class on the pamphlet.

"Together with the effort to upgrade attention to ads for Pathfinder books and the Pathfinder Readers Club in the pages of the *Militant* and *Perspectiva Mundial* this fall," Waters said, "these special measures—if consciously led by the branches, fractions, and Young Socialists chapters—can begin to change the direction of Pathfinder sales over the next six months. We can start to bring our sales in line with the growing political opportunities that exist to introduce vanguard fighters to communist politics, as their conditions of life, work, and common struggle make them increasingly open to looking at every aspect of the world with new eyes."



Militant/John Sarge
Selling *Capitalism's World Disorder* at march and rally of locked-out steelworkers in Mansfield, Ohio, in November.



Militant/Martin Koppel
Pathfinder booth at international book fair in Havana in February. Many Cubans were eager to check out Pathfinder titles explaining U.S., Cuban, and world politics. New book sales campaign will meet political thirst among working people in struggle.

something that "will make some of our sections more meaty," the buyer said. "These are the sorts of books we can put on feature tables for displays," she added.

The order included five copies of *The Working Class and the Transformation of Learning* by Barnes, and equal numbers of *Socialism and Man in Cuba* by Ernesto Che Guevara. Orders for 508 books and pamphlets have been placed through 14 visits Pathfinder supporters have made to stores in the country over the past two weeks.

Pugh said that because of a number of political debates raging in Britain today, Pathfinder titles received serious consideration by the book buyers at the store, many of whom are young. "Education reform" is one of the big issues being pushed by the Labour government" of Anthony Blair, Pugh said. "Many working people know the education system is a disaster and are looking for political answers. That is the reason for the interest in *The Working Class and the Transformation of Learning*."

Titles by and about Cuban revolutionary leader Ernesto Che Guevara are also carried by many bookshops," Pugh said. "There is a general interest in his life and work. I described the character of the books by Pathfinder, such as Che's *Bolivian Diary*, and the importance of the footnotes, glossary of names, index, and introductory material," she said. "A young salesperson overheard our conversation, came over, and said, 'I'll buy that book. You need to figure out the issues in books, and if they don't help you do that it's a problem.'" Pugh said the buyer ordered 10 copies of the *The Bolivian Diary of Ernesto Che Guevara* and 10 of *Che Guevara Speaks*.

The purchase included one each of the series on the Communist International in Lenin's time, a five-book series of documents and proceedings of the workers international in the years following the Rus-

were purchased by a woman from Spain doing a research paper on the revolutionary leader.

Pathfinder supporters in London are organizing a "second wave" of appointments with bookshops in the city, said Tony Hunt. Sales are also being organized out of Manchester to Liverpool, Leeds, and Lancaster.

International book sales campaign

The sales in the United Kingdom are the first fruits of an international campaign to step up sales of Pathfinder books and pamphlets. The campaign aims to meet "the political openings before the party and Young Socialists to expand sales of our literature as we extend our integration into a fighting vanguard of workers and farmers across the country," wrote Mary-Alice Waters in a recent letter to branches of the Socialist Workers Party. Waters is a leader of the SWP, author and editor of numerous Pathfinder titles, and editor of *New International*.

"Just today we've received orders for 250 copies," said Mike Taber from the offices of Pathfinder Press August 23. He was referring to *The Working Class and the Transformation of Learning: The Fraud of Education Reform under Capitalism* by Jack Barnes, the newest Pathfinder pamphlet. "Several are large orders in preparation for the August 26 march on Washington against police brutality."

Pathfinder supporters, socialist workers, and members of the Young Socialists have kicked off a campaign to sell this pamphlet. This effort is one of the ways they are taking steps to systematically increase sales of the entire array of Pathfinder books.

The new pamphlet offers "every branch and industrial union fraction of the Socialist Workers Party—and every unit of the Young Socialists," Waters wrote, "the opportunity to learn and relearn the joys and

To transform education, society must be revolutionized

***The Working Class and the Transformation of Learning: The Fraud of Education Reform Under Capitalism*, by Jack Barnes. Pamphlet, 38 pages. Pathfinder, New York, 2000. Available in English, Spanish, and French. \$3.00. Special offer: \$1 with a subscription to the *Militant*.**

BY CHRIS RAYSON

SEATTLE—This new, must-read Pathfinder pamphlet by Jack Barnes explains why a revolutionary movement led by the working class is key to transforming education from mind-numbing schools of obedience training, as it is under capitalism, to real universal and lifelong learning, when workers and farmers have taken state power and transformed social relations and values.

"Until society is reorganized so that education is a human activity from the time we are very young until the time we die, there will be no education worthy of working, creating humanity. There will only be the

IN REVIEW

pretensions to education or to technical expertise of a small group of people," Barnes explains.

"The working class cannot begin with how to change things so that youth get a better education. We have to begin with how to transform the values of society, not just the economics...To be meaningful, education has to create the possibilities for society as a whole to advance, instead of reinforcing the exploitation of the majority by the few. Until then, the only 'liberal education' available to any fighter who wants one is political education within the workers movement."

As Barnes notes in a useful introduction that places the topic in the context of the growing working-class resistance taking place today, *The Working Class and the Transformation of Learning* is an excerpt from a talk given to workers and youth at regional socialist educational conferences in April 1993 in Greensboro, North Carolina, and in Des Moines, Iowa. The talk was incorporated into the book by Barnes titled *Capitalism's World Disorder: Working-Class Politics at the Millennium*.

At the Greensboro conference, a packinghouse worker from Pittsburgh asked Barnes what his response would be to students who say, "Why should I go to school, pay \$30,000 or whatever before graduating, and then get a job making \$7 or \$8 an hour, while mine workers, auto workers, and other union members make \$12 or \$15 an hour? Workers don't have a college education and I do. Why should I support their strike when they make so much money already?"

This was an opportunity to explain a number of questions related to education as class questions—the opposite of how they are obfuscated by capitalist politicians and "opinion molders."

No relation between 'skills' and income

Barnes replied that, despite the mystification promoted by defenders of the status quo, there is no connection between the actual skills taught in college and the income of college graduates, and, secondly, that there is no fixed "income pie" where a group of workers winning higher wages means lower incomes for everybody else.

In footnotes that amplify Barnes's points, the pamphlet cites a statement by Karl Marx in *Capital* that, in contrast to "other commodities, the determination of the value of labour-power contains a historical and moral element." Wages are determined by what workers, through struggle with the employers, have been able to establish over time as the "socially acceptable minimum standard of living." What labor achieves in defending the worst-off layers of the working class strengthens the entire class.

The portion of the value created by workers beyond what bosses pay out in wages—termed surplus value—is the capitalist's profits, interest, and rent. The propertied owners of industrial, banking, commercial, and landowning capital are driven to maximize their share by reducing workers' wages.

As the pamphlet points out, capitalists also "pay out part of this surplus value to layers of professionals and supervisory personnel whose services in the great majority of cases contribute nothing to production but help maintain and reproduce the class relations, privilege, domination, and rule of the bourgeoisie."

In the introduction, Barnes points to how this unceasing battle between capital and labor over the surplus value is unfolding in some of today's strikes and other working-class struggles. Workers, many of them immigrants, are pressing for more livable wages and for dignity on the job, after an offensive by the employers that has driven down real wages and brutalized working conditions, in some cases to the very limits of human endurance.

Barnes cites one telling example, where the lowest-paid workers in unionized hotels in Minneapolis and St. Paul, who in June waged a strike that shut down most of the major hotels, now make nearly \$1.50 more per hour than starting workers on the cut or kill floors of a major union packinghouse in Los Angeles. At the opening of the 1980s, just prior to a major assault by the meatpacking bosses on working conditions and pay, packing house workers' wages had been 13 percent higher on average than

those in other manufacturing jobs.

This irreconcilable conflict between capital and labor is what marks education as a class question.

"Schools under capitalism," Barnes points out in the introduction, "are not institutions of learning but of social control, aimed at reproducing the class relations and privileges of the prevailing order. The deference and obedience the rulers seek to inculcate in the classroom are backed up on the streets by cops' clubs and automatic weapons."

Barnes points to the rising number of executions of working people in the



Top: auto assembly line. "It's a lie that the capitalist class needs for workers to be educated. They need for us to be obedient, not educated," says Jack Barnes. "Do you have to be literate to work on the railroad? In an auto plant? I don't think so: everything is color-coded, or number-coded." Above: hotel workers in Minnesota picket during June strike. Wages are determined through struggle between labor and capital.

United States—both the state-sanctioned kind and the summary executions without a trial by police on the street. He also points to the staggering number of workers killed or maimed on the job as the employers continue to increase productivity through a relentless assault on working conditions.

Under capitalism, education serves to try to instill obedience in working-class youth and teach them that they have no life worth looking forward to. "It is not true," Barnes says, "that the capitalist class needs for workers to be educated; it is a lie. They need for us to be obedient, not to be educated. They need for us to have to work hard to make a living, not to be critical. They need for us to consume all we make each week buying their products. Above all, they need for us to lose any desire over time to broaden our scope and become citizens of the world."

As a result, it is not uncommon for working-class youth to graduate or drop out of high school illiterate. Many workers are illiterate or functionally illiterate but become competent at their jobs. "Do you have to be literate to work on the railroad?" Barnes asks, "In an auto plant?... I don't think so; everything is color-coded, or number-coded. You don't need to be literate. Let alone be educated. Let alone have pride, self-respect, and initiative.... That kind of education would be a danger for the rulers."

Literacy tests in industrial jobs such as the railroad, for example, have nothing to do with learning the job itself, which has always been through working with and learning from co-workers. Rather, bosses have used literacy tests on the railroad to weed out workers, especially Black and immigrant workers. These are used to instill craft consciousness among "skilled" workers in order to reinforce divisions within the workforce.

For "the educated," Barnes remarks ironically about those who go on to college, education in class society is meant to give them

"a stake in thinking they are going to be different—slightly better off, slightly more white collar—than other people who work all their lives.... They want you to be comfortable supervising, 'orienting,' and testing workers—directly and indirectly. They want to be able to count on you as a stable supporter of the capitalist system. It is not education, it is confusion and corruption."

Education as universal, lifetime activity

This pamphlet approaches education from an opposite, working-class point of view. It explains education as a social, not individual, question and as a struggle by the working class to transform learning into a universal and lifetime activity rather than a way for individuals to try to get ahead under capitalism's "devil take the hindmost" values.

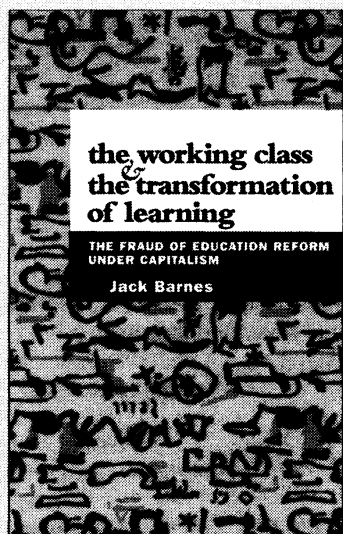
As Barnes notes, the communist approach to education is part of preparing workers and farmers "for the greatest of all battles in the years ahead—the battle to throw off the self-image the rulers teach us, and to recognize that we are capable of taking power and organizing society, as we collectively educate ourselves and learn the exploiters in the process."

From meat packers in St. Paul, Minnesota, who surprised the bosses by winning a rapid union-organizing victory, to farmers who are getting a clearer picture of how the government represents a class of exploiters, many working people engaged in struggles today will find *The Working Class and the Transformation of Learning* well worth careful study and an aid in their fights.

Get your copy at the nearest Pathfinder bookstore (see directory on page 12) or directly from Pathfinder, 410 West St., New York, NY 10014.

Chris Rayson is a member of the United Transportation Union and works as a switchman in Seattle.

NEW!
FROM PATHFINDER



The Working Class & the Transformation of Learning

The Fraud of Education Reform under Capitalism
By Jack Barnes

"Until society is reorganized so that education is a human activity from the time we are very young until the time we die, there will be no education worthy of working, creating humanity. That is the historic truth." \$3

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Available from bookstores listed on page 12.

Meat packers in St. Paul defend their union

Continued from front page

beef slaughterhouse, the big majority of whom are Spanish-speaking immigrants. The company is owned by Rosen's Diversified, Inc., (RDI) a major beef processor.

The lawyers for the bosses claim no pressure is involved in the meetings with individual workers, and that whether or not workers sign the statement will have no impact on their standing at work.

"The purpose of the company in trying to get workers to sign the statement is not just to use in the upcoming NLRB hearing," said Francisco Picado, a full-time organizer for the union. "The statement is very vague and can be used to present the opposite of the intentions of those who sign it. Some workers were told that signing the statement would indicate willingness to speak on behalf of the integrity of the elections. The purpose is to intimidate the workers at Dakota and to trap them in red tape. It is to get them to think that what will be decisive in the fight against the company will be the legal proceedings, not their ability to act collectively and affect production, as they showed so powerfully they could do in their sit-down strike."

"The purpose is also to draw workers into collaboration with the company,"

According to workers in the plant, company bosses have also been on a campaign to meet with workers individually to demand information about the union and its leaders in the plant. "Who distributes the *Workers' Voice*?" they ask, referring to the bilingual in-plant union newsletter. "Where did you get the copies of the *Workers' Voice* to distribute? Who gave them to you?"

One worker the company has singled out

for attack is Samuel Farley, a boning worker and one of the leaders of the June 1 strike and union-organizing drive. Farley is one of four Black workers in the plant.

The company made it impossible for Farley to qualify on the job he performed in the middle of the boning room. Farley was recently disqualified from his knife job. Instead he was moved to operating the wizard knife in an isolated area of the boning department, where few co-workers can talk to him. There the bosses keep close track of his work, time his bathroom breaks, and follow him to his locker.

"In fact, I am much faster than my trainer," Farley told the *Militant*. Two boners are now doing the operation that Farley was doing. "The company is trying to isolate me and set me up."

A delegation of workers who are supporters of the union fight, led by a worker in the boning department, Miguel Olvera, went to the manager's office August 21 to support the pro-union worker.

"We must see this as an attack on a co-worker and a leader of our fight," said Matias Loya, a supporter of the union in the boning department. "I don't care about race, origin, or language. It is an attack against a co-worker and we have to see it that way. Everyone has to see that if they get Samuel, they will come after the others."

Workers report that the company has a record of discriminating against Blacks and other groups of workers. The parent corporation, RDI, last August was judged guilty by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission of participating in and allowing the sexual harassment—abusive gay baiting—of male workers in its plant in Long Prairie, Minnesota. The company was fined \$1.9 million because of its responsibility for the attacks.

The company has attacked some union supporters by claiming in certain instances that their immigration papers are not in order.

Bosses keep pushing line speed

The company maintains a line speed well above the 95 cattle an hour it negotiated with workers during the June 1 sit-down strike. Workers say the line speed varies, but that it frequently moves as fast as 115 per hour. "The company manager, Steve Cortinas, told us at the company meeting on August 10 that the weight of the cattle makes the chain move faster," said Amy Roberts, a worker in the boning department. "He also

claimed that the machinery malfunctions."

"However, we know what he says is not true. The company is not only attempting to push for immediate profits. It is also trying to assert that the union cannot have any control. It wants to maintain the idea that the company is the total boss."

A member of the in-plant leadership committee reported to the *Militant* that at their August 17 union meeting the meat packers present discussed the need to reassert the validity of the July 21 union election victory. They were outraged that the company was challenging the wishes of the workers. They decided that a petition would be circulated in the plant to reaffirm that the union

election registered the will of the workers in the plant and was therefore democratic. This is now being carried out.

Workers at the meeting discussed again the shop steward elections and the responsibilities of shop stewards. "The election is very important," Miguel Olvera told the *Militant*. "We will work with the newly elected stewards to record company abuses and work with them on how to conduct themselves as stewards. We will work with them to fight the disciplining by the company and to fight all the other problems that are considered normal now." It was concluded that the shop steward elections would be conducted August 24.

Striking phone workers score gain

Continued from front page

work had been previously done by nonunion contractors.

The three-year pact provides for a 12 percent wage increase and 14 percent raise in pension benefits. It significantly limits Verizon's ability to force workers to relocate to other jobs within its 12-state area. No more than 0.7 percent of the workforce would be required to transfer in any given year. Verizon's original proposal was to be able to transfer up to 10 percent.

"The concessions by Verizon are the largest and most public victory for the CWA so far at a high-tech company," noted an article in the August 22 *Financial Times* of London. Verizon is the largest provider of local and wireless telephone service in the United States.

"There was a lot of tension" on returning to work, stated union militant Rob Anderson, who spent five hours in jail the previous week after being arrested for "jeering" at one of the managers.

On a picket line in New York, Bob Hines, a cable splicer for 30 years and president of Unit 22 of Local 1300 in Pennsylvania, described some of the conditions the workers face daily. "Service representatives who need to use the bathroom have to raise their hands" for relief in their work station. "Then they have to enter a code into the computer that sets the time when they left their station, and sometimes the supervisor will follow and time you in the bathroom."

The new pact provides operators and customer service workers up to five 30-minute periods each week in which they can do work other than taking calls.

Mandatory overtime was the main issue over which 36,000 of the unionists remained on the picket for an additional three days. The agreement reached August 23 permits the company to require customer service representatives to work as much as 7.5 hours of overtime a week, down from as much as 15 hours. Other union employees' overtime will be capped at 10 hours a week now, and 8 hours in January. Verizon also conceded a bilingual salary differential, in which workers who do jobs that require more than one language will receive 3.5 percent more pay.

The solid strike was an inspiration to some of the union's newest members as well those with many years at the company. In Philadelphia, Charise Smith, a business consultant for 10 months at Verizon who had never before been in a union, commented, "When we went out together that first day, I realized it was for a good cause. I realized we did have power and that the union means something."

Laura Anderson in New York and Nancy Cole in Philadelphia contributed to this article.

MILITANT PUBLICATION SCHEDULE

This will be a two-week issue of the *Militant*. The next issue, no. 35, will be printed on Thursday, September 7.

— CALENDAR —

NORTH CAROLINA

Charlotte

Labor Day Parade. Mon., Sept. 4. Assemble 9:30 a.m. at 6th and N. Tryon. March at 11 a.m. Rally, Noon to 5 p.m. at Independence Park at 7th and Independence. For more information, call (704) 483-3060.

OHIO

Mansfield

One Year of Solidarity. Join the locked-out members of United Steelworkers of America Local 169 at a rally to mark: "One Year of Solidarity" standing up against AK Steel's corporate greed. Sat., Sept. 9, 12 Noon. Town Square of Mansfield. Speakers, food, and refreshments. For more information, call Local 169, (419) 522-9375.

Hear Margaret Trowe, Socialist Workers candidate for U.S. vice president, on her tour in New Zealand

Christchurch

Fri., Sept. 1, 7:00 p.m. Gloucester Arcade, 129 Gloucester St. For more information, call (3) 365-6055.

— MILITANT LABOR FORUMS —

NEW YORK

Upper Manhattan

The Battle Over Teaching Evolution. Speaker: Craig Honts, Socialist Workers Party. Fri., Sept. 1, 7:30 p.m.

AIDS Crisis in Africa. Speaker: Peter Thierjung, Socialist Workers Party. Fri., Sept. 8, 7:30 p.m. Both events to be held at 540 W. 165th St. Donation: \$4. Translation to Spanish. Tel: (212) 740-4611.

NEW ZEALAND

The Reunification Struggle in Korea

Speaker: Tom Lewis, long-time unionist and socialist who visited Korea as a seafarer before and during the Korean War.

Auckland

Sun., Sept. 3, 4:00 p.m. La Gonda Arcade, 203 Karangahape Rd. Donation: \$5. Tel: (09) 379-3075.

Christchurch

Sat., Sept. 9, 4:00 p.m. 129 Gloucester St. Donation: \$3. Tel: (3) 365-6055.

Where to find Pathfinder books and distributors of the *Militant*, *Perspectiva Mundial*, *New International*, *Nouvelle Internationale*, *Nueva Internacional* and *Ny International*.

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Work of supporters of socialist movement is feature of conference

BY PATRICK O'NEILL
AND GREG MCCARTAN

OBERLIN, Ohio—The work of supporters of the communist movement marked the Active Workers Conference, both in numbers present—some 140—and in the indispensable contributions they make to increasing the striking power of a proletarian party.

A large display about the Pathfinder Reprint Project was featured in the main conference meeting hall. Alongside it were tables full of 95 books and pamphlets supporters have put in digital form since early 1998, making possible their production by Pathfinder's print shop in New York.

Two leaders of the supporters' nationally coordinated efforts spoke at the closing conference session. Ruth Cheney, a member of the Reprint Project steering committee, reported the volunteers' progress and new goals. Sara Gates from Seattle outlined the accomplishments and new goals of supporters in raising monthly financial contributions to the Socialist Workers Party.

"Starting this month, we aim to increase our monthly production to six completed titles," Cheney said in an August 14 phone interview. "Our goal is: 30 more books by the 42nd anniversary of the Cuban Revolution—January 1, 2001!" Volunteers plan to "have 50 percent of Pathfinder's titles converted to computer files and production-ready on compact discs by May Day of next year."

Fruits of volunteers' efforts

The two-year-old project has built momentum as the fruits of the volunteers' efforts—the books and pamphlets—have multiplied and been put to use by communist workers and youth. The "reprint army" has grown substantially this year, winning recruits in the United States and other countries.

The conference display charted the progress. During the first 5 months of the project supporters produced only 2 books.

Over the next 13 months, 38 books were produced for a rate of 2.9 per month. From August 1999 through July 2000, supporters turned in 51 digital books to Pathfinder for its shop, for a monthly rate of 4.25. To meet the new goals, volunteers will step up the pace to 6.3 books per month.

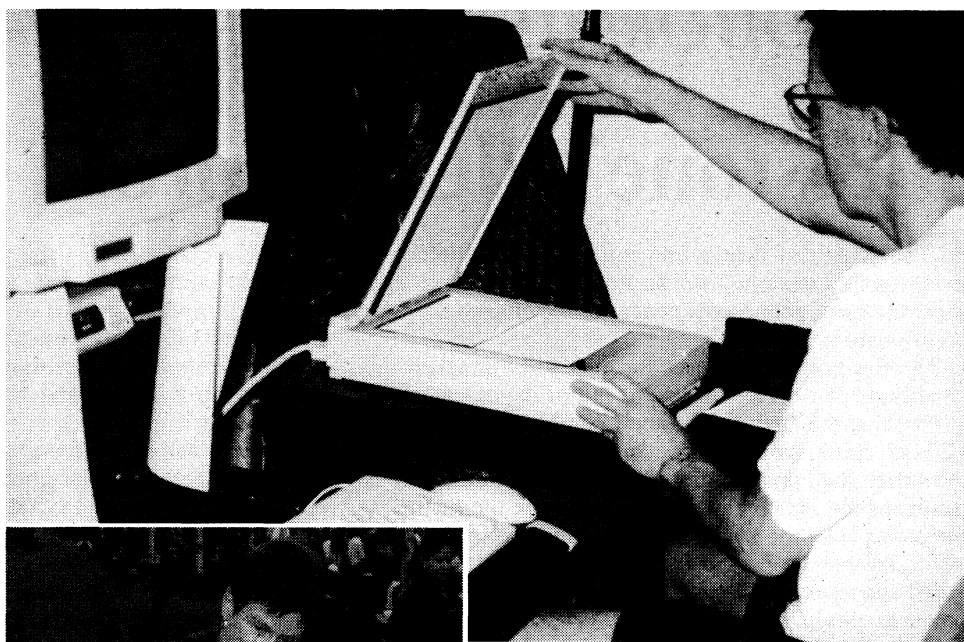
"The work of the Reprint Project is to make the continuity of the communist movement, the line of march of the working class, and a Marxist explanation of today's world accessible to vanguard workers and farmers," read the first panel in the display. That panel featured photographs of socialist workers and youth selling Pathfinder books on the streets, at strikes and demonstrations, and at book fairs, as well as a number of pictures of union rallies, organizing drives, and picket lines. Pride of place was given to a group photograph of workers at Dakota Premium Foods in St. Paul, Minnesota, the night before the union representation vote there.

As volunteers convert the titles from film to computer-based technology, they update the typography and make the books and pamphlets more readable. The new technology also makes it possible to print short runs to respond rapidly to demand generated by political events.

A few days after the conference, Joanne Murphy, a party supporter from Iowa, wrote a letter to SWP national secretary Jack Barnes saying how much she had appreciated the gathering politically, including the proofreading workshop she had participated in.

In his reply to Murphy, Barnes pointed to a decisive aspect of the political contribution party supporters are making that is often not thought about. "In addition to meeting the goals of putting in digital form every book, pamphlet, and education bulletin produced by our movement," he said, "a much bigger accomplishment is being prepared."

"Together with the shop, they are help-



Photos Militant/(left) Carole Lesnick

Above: Pathfinder Reprint Project volunteer Warren Simons at work. Left: putting the books to use: literature sales table at janitors' union rally in Los Angeles, April 2000.



ing put in place, for the first time in history," Barnes said, "an irreplaceable, web-based infrastructure of digital propaganda production, decentralized so that no matter what financial, security, or other conditions may confront the communist party in the decades ahead, the program and legacy of the modern revolutionary workers movement can be prepared outside any physical 'brick-and-mortar' apparatus and then printed on presses wherever they can be found and whenever they can be paid for. "What the Bolsheviks would have given for that!"

Continued upward pace of production is

built on a solid infrastructure and increased skills at every stage of the production pipeline. But the goals can only be met with reinforcement of new volunteers, and some reorganization, Cheney explained. This was the goal of workshops held the last day of the conference on different stages of digitizing a book: indexing, proofreading, checking the proofread text, formatting, and graphics. Pathfinder's exacting standards, the criteria for each task, common problems and errors, and the ins and outs of software the volunteers use were all discussed.

Among the 60 or so volunteers who participated were around 15 who signed up during the conference. "We encouraged them to participate in the indexing workshop," said Cheney. To make the contents of the books as accessible as possible to new worker-readers, Pathfinder titles often include indexes as well as glossaries, photo signatures, maps, and footnotes. For each newly formatted book, renumbering the page references in the indexes is part of completing the job, called "concordance." At the moment indexing is an understaffed department, "a clog in the pipeline," she said.

After reviewing the project's productivity goals, said Dean Denno, organizers of the indexing workshop focused on "the political importance of indexes and the reasons for concordance. We went through the entire process as experienced by a volunteer, from getting an assignment, to use of the Internet-accessible database where the production flow is centralized. We also reviewed how to avoid some common errors," he said.

"Some new volunteers are afraid they can't work in the project because they've seldom used a computer," Cheney said. The workshops and other training help overcome that trepidation.

Peggy Brundy, who helped lead the workshops on indexing and format checking, reports that 35 people attended the indexing workshop. Six signed up to join the project and 10 for new pledges to keep the project self-financed by the volunteers themselves.

Tom Tomasko is a member of the steering committee and also helps organize graphics production. Referring to two software programs used in the graphics work, Tomasko said, "Along with other volunteers, I learned some things in the workshop, including some new tricks in Quark. And having no experience whatever in Photoshop, I saw that I could also master enough of this program to do what we need for our books."

Proofreading skills

Through discussions at the conference and the proofreading workshop, a number of volunteers "agreed to take on additional responsibility for organizing this step in the production work flow," said Holly Harkness from Atlanta. This includes setting up a help desk for the proofreading team and updating a bulletin providing guidelines to the proofreading checkers who review all work before sending it on to be formatted. "We made progress in defining our standards and procedures for that critical stage of our work," she said. Thirty volunteers attended the workshop, including three who hadn't been involved in the project before.

This was a rewarding conference for the supporters, said Cheney. Many came to a new appreciation of how integral their work is to building a working-class vanguard today. More clearly than ever before, "we see

Continued on Page 14

Che's Bolivian diary by Pathfinder is 'better value'

BY MIKE TABER

Two sharply different editions of Ernesto Che Guevara's *Bolivian Diary* were reviewed in the *Times Literary Supplement* of London, which contrasted favorably the value of the Pathfinder edition with a reissue by a major British-based publishing house.

Guevara's diary gives a day-by-day account of the 1966-67 effort to launch a continent-wide revolutionary front centered in Latin America's Southern Cone. It also contains valuable lessons in revolutionary leadership that can be studied and learned from.

The new edition by Pimlico, a division of Random House in the United Kingdom, however, does nothing to aid that process. Hoping to tap into the renewed interest in

the Argentine-born leader of the Cuban revolution, Pimlico reissued the 1968 edition published there by Lorrimer Publishing. Other than a short introduction and a three-page postscript, nothing new has been added. Virtually no annotation has been prepared that would make Guevara's text comprehensible to readers who are not already very familiar with the subject.

A new introduction by Jon Lee Anderson argues that Guevara's revolutionary perspective was wrong. "Che's diary is...the rendition of a colossal personal failure," Anderson opines. The book's main value is "eloquently detailing the eternal conflict between man's search for ideals and the vicissitudes of reality in a physical world." Anderson is the author of a biography of Guevara that expounds that view for 832 pages.

Pathfinder edition

In contrast, Pathfinder Press published a new edition of the *Bolivian Diary* in 1994, making Guevara's account available in English for the first time in decades. Edited by Mary-Alice Waters, Pathfinder's edition features a new translation and includes extensive footnotes, chronology, glossary, index, maps, and additional documents of the struggle that make the book accessible to new generations of working people and youth.

In a June 30 review of the Pimlico edition, the *Times Literary Supplement* noted the superiority of the Pathfinder edition.

"There is nothing particularly to recommend this edition" by Pimlico, reviewer Nicola Miller wrote. "The publishers have clearly taken a decision to keep footnotes to a minimum...and there is no bibliography or index.... I suspect that many readers, especially those under the age of forty, would welcome more help than is given in de-

coding a framework of reference that is no longer common currency. In that respect, the Pathfinder edition of 1994, edited by Mary-Alice Waters, is better value."

CIA-backed edition reissued too

As if to underscore this fact, a second major publisher recently reissued the *Bolivian Diary* in an edition not designed to aid readers seeking the truth. Cooper Square Press, an imprint of Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, has published a facsimile of the 1968 edition published by Stein & Day under the title *The Complete Bolivian Diaries of Che Guevara and Other Captured Documents*.

As its name suggests, the Stein & Day edition was published with the backing of Washington and the Bolivian military dictatorship, for which these were indeed "captured documents," issued without the authorization of Guevara's widow. The U.S. government and its Bolivian subordinates—who stole the diary from Guevara when he was taken prisoner and then summarily executed in October 1967—aimed initially to publish a distorted version, omitting certain passages and altering others, confident that they could get away with it since they thought they had the sole copy. These efforts were frustrated when Cuba obtained a copy of the diary and arranged to have it published in millions of copies throughout the world.

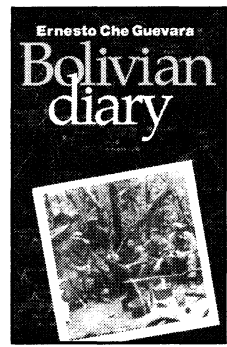
The Cooper Square Press edition contains a new introduction by Henry Butterfield Ryan, a retired U.S. foreign service officer. It also includes the original introduction by Daniel James, a long series of slanders against Guevara and the Cuban Revolution.

Ryan admits the shady origins of this edition, saying, "Can one doubt that the U.S. government, and probably the CIA, helped Stein and Day obtain the diaries?" But that's irrelevant, he adds. "For today's reader, however, the provenance of the diaries has little importance."

Get your Pathfinder edition now!

FROM PATHFINDER

The Bolivian Diary of Ernesto Che Guevara



Guevara's day-by-day chronicle of the 1966-67 guerrilla campaign in Bolivia. A painstaking effort to forge a continent-wide revolutionary movement of workers and peasants capable of seizing state power. Includes excerpts from the

diaries and accounts of other combatants, including "My Campaign with Che" by Bolivian leader Inti Peredo. **\$21.95**

Available from bookstores, including those listed on page 12, or write Pathfinder, 410 West St., New York, NY 10014. When ordering by mail, please include \$3 to cover shipping and handling.

Firestone's deadly profit drive

The scores of deaths and injuries due to defective Bridgestone/Firestone tires on Ford Motor Co. vehicles show the inevitable consequences of the employers' brutal drive for profits.

The tire company bosses have steadily attacked the conditions of workers for years. Out of the defeat of the 1994-95 strike against Firestone, the company imposed 12-hour shifts, assembly speedup, and other attacks on job safety and human dignity. Together with their callous disregard for the conditions of workers in the factories, Firestone has produced many thousands of faulty tires, which have so far been responsible for at least 62 people killed and more than 100 maimed. And the numbers continues to climb.

These deadly defective tires are not an aberration caused by the breakdown of an otherwise safe system. Rather, such outrages are the inevitable result of the lawful workings of capitalism, driven by profit at the expense of human life and limb—in the factories and on the streets. For the bosses, "it's just business." Workers in the tire plants see this take place as company engineers scheme at how to shave a few ounces of rubber out of a tire, or a few minutes from the molding and curing process, to squeeze more tires out of workers.

Just as the bosses are responsible for the needless deaths on the roads, they are also responsible for deaths, disabling injuries, repetitive-motion injuries, and unhealthy working conditions in the plants.

The revelations about the bad tires and the enormous recall now under way come as 8,000 workers at Bridgestone/Firestone, members of the United Steelworkers of America, are seeking to make up for the assault on wages, working conditions, and dignity through years of concession contracts and the 1995 setback for the union. Contract talks covering nine plants across the country are taking place, with a September 1 strike deadline recently announced by union officials.

The rubber workers, who daily face the callousness of Bridgestone/Firestone on the shop floor, need to take the moral high ground and put the blame for the faulty tires on the real culprits—the company and its kin at Ford.

Workers at Bridgestone/Firestone and Ford must reject every effort to convince us to defend "our" company or "our" product in face of the growing exposures of the bosses' tire safety disaster. Identification with the company cripples the ability of workers to defend safety—both job conditions and the safety of the commodities they produce.

Ford has issued reports to the media that attribute the tire defects to replacement workers at the Bridgestone/Firestone plant in Decatur, Illinois, during the 1994-95 strike. Never mind that these reports are inaccurate and misleading—mounting evidence shows faulty tires were produced at Bridgestone/Firestone for many years. But this approach is a self-serving attempt to deflect blame away from Ford bosses and the fact that Ford's Explorer sport-utility vehicle, even according to the company's own reports, is prone to flip over at normal highway speeds.

Ford's attempt to blame a section of the workforce at Firestone must be rejected by all unionists committed to strengthening our ranks today. Both the Bridgestone/Firestone and Ford bosses are responsible for the design of the tire. And the tire bosses are responsible for the organization of production and inspection. The blood is on their hands.

In the book *Capitalism's World Disorder*, Jack Barnes says, "Class-conscious workers must take questions such as safety seriously. Labor must convince broad layers of the population as a whole that it is the working-class movement above all that cares about these questions. We must be able to assert with complete confidence and integrity that the stronger and more militant the union, the safer the operations of the industry, whatever it may be. This is a fundamental matter of class pride, of self-respect, of the morale of the working class. It is a question of the working class taking the moral high ground in the battle against the exploiting class and for human solidarity."

By taking this course, labor can champion life-and-death safety questions and forge the kind of working-class unity in action that is needed today to confront the worsening conditions of work and life imposed on us by our common enemy—the capitalist class.

Harris: 'Mobilize against cop brutality'

Continued from front page

ing people, and executions—whether by cops on the streets, in prisons, or through state-sanctioned murder—are part of a seamless pattern of violence against working people in this country. Bringing to Washington our demands for an end to this brutality puts the responsibility exactly where it should be: on the Democratic and Republican parties, who act in the interests of the super-wealthy rulers of this country.

I am traveling to the march with fighters from Valdosta, Georgia. They have been waging a struggle for justice for Willie Williams, found dead in his jail cell one day after being arrested by deputies of the Lowndes County sheriff's department. Others are coming to the march from New York City, where tens of thousands, through their continual mobilizations, put the question of police brutality at the center of politics in the city and dealt blows to the administration of Mayor Rudolph Giuliani. Participants include many from St. Louis, where recent actions condemned the police killings of Earl Murray and Ronald Beasley.

The violence and racism that permeate every institution of capitalist society in the United States is not accidental or the result of a few bad apples or misguided policies. They are part of the necessary workings of a system that defends the prerogatives, power, and interests of an imperialist ruling class, one that extends its brutality at home to workers and farmers worldwide.

Violence, racism, national oppression, and exploitation are what the capitalist rulers have to offer. They can find no way out of the crisis of their system other than to attack, assault, and attempt to pacify those who create all the wealth in society and who hold tremendous social and economic power in their own hands: working people.

The extent of this violence cannot be understated. Thousands of working people are executed by a policeman's bullet, chokehold, or hog-tying. An unofficial survey of local newspapers puts deaths at the hands of police and prison guards between 1990 and the opening of 1998 at 2,000—clearly just the tip of the iceberg. During that same period, 312 people across the United States were killed in prison death chambers.

Both Albert Gore and George W. Bush are champions of these weapons of class terror, calling for more cops, restricted rights of appeal and parole, and stiffer penalties, including capital punishment. The Clinton-Gore ad-

ministration put in place the 1994 Federal Death Penalty Act, which made some 60 additional federal offenses punishable by death, and the 1996 Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act, which further restricts federal court appeal rights of those in state prisons.

For his part, Bush has presided over 136 prisonhouse state killings during his five years as governor—fully one-fifth of all those in the United States since 1976. A shroud of silence prevents an accounting of how many more working people were killed in that state during those years by Texas Rangers, local police, *la migra*, sheriffs and their deputies, and rightist thugs—often including the former list in civilian clothes.

State-sanctioned, or state-encouraged, murders on the streets and in the prisons combined, however, still fall far short of the numbers of workers killed each year as a result of the employers' profit-driven speedup, brutal intensification of labor, and lengthening of hours. Both life and limb of workers in the United States are being sacrificed on the altar of sharpening competition for markets among U.S. capitalists, and between them and their rivals worldwide.

The march in Washington, strikes by coal miners and telephone workers, union organizing struggles by meat packers, rallies to demand equal rights for immigrants, and other protests and actions by working people point in the opposite direction from what the capitalist rulers and the Democratic and Republican parties are driving us toward.

These struggles point to a world where human solidarity and social progress are primary, where the needs and interests of working people come first. The Socialist Workers campaign points to the possibilities and necessity of mounting a revolutionary struggle by tens of millions in order to replace the government of the capitalist minority with one of the majority, workers and farmers. Such a government would make it possible to begin to transform the dog-eat-dog society of capitalism, with all its inherent brutalities, into one where the creativity, productive capacities, and human solidarity of working people can open a new era of social progress, not only in the United States but worldwide.

Margaret Trowe and I urge you to join with us and the Young Socialists in this campaign and in every instance where fellow working people take the road of resistance and struggle.

Socialists file for ballot status in NY

BY JOE BROOKING

NEW YORK—Supporters of the working-class campaign of James Harris for U.S. president and Margaret Trowe for vice president took another step forward this week, fulfilling requirements in Florida, Rhode Island, and New York. In Wisconsin, supporters collected half their goal of 3,000 signatures to place the socialists candidates on the ballot. Socialists in Rhode Island filed 2,180 signatures, more than double that required for ballot status.

The socialist campaign celebrated a double victory this week in New York, filing more than 30,500 signatures to place the presidential ticket, as well as senatorial candidate Jacob Perasso, on the ballot. Several days later supporters turned in 6,643 signatures for Paul Pederson, SWP candidate in New York's 12th Congressional District. New York election law demands that candidates for statewide election must file 15,000 signatures to secure a ballot slot, and 3,500 to get on the ballot for congress.

At a press conference right after filing, Pederson was interviewed live on WLIR, a talk radio station with a largely Black audience. In response to a question from interviewer Bill Lynch about which congressional committee he would like to sit on, Pederson explained that the socialist campaign was part of helping to advance the struggles of working people in the unions and on the streets. "These are the sort of struggles that can really change society," he said. Pederson pointed to the upcoming August 26 march on Washington against police brutality as an example of the actions the campaign is a part of. Lynch noted the importance of the "Redeem the Dream" march, and urged his listeners to participate.

Asked why he was running against prominent liberal Democrat Nydia Velasquez, Pederson pointed out he was running against both a Democrat and Republican, offering a working-class alternative to the two parties that represent the super-rich minority. He pointed out that liberals play a special role in "helping to keep working people within the Democratic Party and the arms of the two-party system," rather than charting a course of independent working-class political action in their own interests. As resistance by workers and farmers to the attacks by the employers and the government deepen, he said, the necessity and possibility of breaking from the two-party system increase.

Jacob Perasso took advantage of being in the state capital to introduce the socialist campaign to red-shirted pickets on duty outside the Verizon office in downtown Albany. He found strikers interested in a discussion on the roots of the bosses relentless profit drive and its impact on working people.

One striker, who had returned from vacation in Thailand, noted that massive capitalist investment in that country had brought with it large concentrations of industrial workers in urban centers and the possibility of these workers forging powerful unions. Lingering after his picket shift had finished, he explained that he was enjoying the opportunity to "talk about world politics with the socialists."

Supporters' work feature of conference

Continued from page 13

the books as weapons for working people," she emphasized. "What would it be like—a world without these books?"

Sara Gates explained that supporters surpassed the goal of contributing \$200,000 a year to the party, hitting what would be a total of \$235,000 this year. These contributions "mean that the party can make the politically bold and necessary moves" to go where fights and brewing struggles by working people are shaping up, Gates said to the closing session.

"We are making it easier for the party to make the decisions that are politically necessary in these times of structuring the party through mass work," Gates said, "including using the newly printed and reprinted books, pamphlets, and magazines in the most extensive manner."

In June, 270 people made monthly financial contributions, Gates said. The collections and work to keep track of contributions is organized by party supporters locally and coordinated nationally. "A committee meets every month and sends out a mailing summarizing the financial picture, passes on ideas, and includes a four-month chart of each area's contributions," Gates explained. "Regular monthly meetings with supporters organized by party branches have contributed to the steady rise in monthly pledges."

Gates announced plans to raise the annual contributions by the end of the year to \$250,000. A second goal "is for every area to send in their pledges every month in full and on time. We pledge to do our part for the party as it deepens its participation in worker and farmer struggles, which have inspired us at this conference. On to one-quarter of a million dollars in supporter contributions by the end of year 2000! We can do it! Sí se puede!" said Gates to extended applause.

St. Louis Teamsters win cement strike

BY JAY RESSLER
AND MARTY RESSLER

ST. LOUIS—Most of the 285 striking members of Teamsters Local 682, which organizes cement drivers in St. Louis and St. Louis County, returned to work victorious August 18 after an eight-week strike against bosses belonging to the Material Dealers Association (MDA). Solidarity from workers in St. Louis, and especially from construction workers, proved decisive.

The confrontation sharpened only a few days before when the Associated General Contractors, the association of bosses who run most construction in the area, ran a full page ad in the Sunday edition of the St. Louis *Post-Dispatch* threatening to "move forward in the most expedient manner to obtain concrete for our projects." At that point talks had been deadlocked for three weeks.

In response to these union-busting threats, representatives of Local 682 announced at a press conference they would begin picketing job sites starting Monday morning, August 14. Throughout most of the strike picketing was limited to MDA-affiliated sand and cement yards.

At some job sites, like Barnes-Jewish Hospital, one of the largest in the area, construction bosses set up a "dual-gate" system in a move to limit Teamster pickets to gates where scab cement trucks attempted deliveries, without affecting work of union construction workers.

Bob Carmack, a union steward and member of the Local 682 negotiating committee, said Teamsters had not picketed Barnes-Jewish Hospital because a no-strike agreement was in effect between construction unions and contractors. "As far as we were concerned, when they set up the two-gate system, they nullified the no-strike agreement. We waited until they put up the two gates; we shut down Barnes on Monday," he said.

Pickets were set up at a number of the bigger construction sites in the area where members of building trades unions honored picket lines. All told about 16 sites were shut down.

Local 682 also organized flying picket squads. When these reporters arrived at one gate to a ready-mix yard to talk to Teamster pickets over a dozen workers were on duty. As soon as a scab truck left the yard half of them jumped into cars and took after it. Carmack explained, the pickets followed them "to the jobs, and appealed to the cement finishers, laborers, and other workers on a site to walk off the job."

Nathaniel Day, a striker who is Black with 27 years on the job, said that the companies' offer was for a raise of 90 cents per hour for each of five years, including both wages and benefits. "But we're holding out for \$1.05. Fifteen cents doesn't sound like much of a difference, but this is the pattern that was agreed to by one company." The MDA-affiliated bosses took the position that Interface Materials Inc., the company that

signed the pattern contract was a "small, minority-owned firm," and should not set the pattern. "That's just a cop-out," one striker chimed in.

The new contract will increase the wage-benefit package by \$1 an hour each year. A \$500 signing "bonus" was added. The con-

tract also lengthened the probationary period for new drivers from 30 days to 45 days.

Carmack said, "I think it was the best we could do considering the length of the strike. I don't like signing bonuses, it's a one shot deal that doesn't really make up for the five-cents-an-hour raise." Over five years this

would amount to \$1,500. He added, "The biggest accomplishment of the strike was that we equalized the contracts in the area."

One of the 15 struck ready-mix companies, West Star, which has five drivers, refused to sign the contract. Teamsters vowed to continue to fight until they do.

Record numbers of undocumented workers die crossing the U.S. border

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

A record number of undocumented workers seeking to enter the United States from Mexico through the Sonoran Desert into Arizona have died this year—more than 60—most from dehydration and sunstroke, according to an article in the August 5 *Economist* magazine. To reach the nearest town, those crossing in this desert area must hike 30 or 40 miles through brutal temperatures that in the summer regularly exceed 110°.

The Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) Border Patrol cops have been stepping up their presence in the Tucson area in an effort to harass and send back to Mexico those crossing the border. They claimed to have captured some 520,000 immigrants in this sector over the past nine months, up from 387,000 for the whole of the 1998 fiscal year.

Since passage of the 1996 Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act, which won bipartisan backing and was promoted by the Democratic Party administration of William Clinton, the INS has been expanded into the largest federal police force with 15,000 officers carrying weapons and authorized to make arrests.

According to the Mexican government, Washington's stepped-up cop operation has since 1996 figured in nearly 1,000 border-crossing deaths, most from heat exposure and dehydration.

In its latest attack on democratic rights, INS commissioner Doris Meissner announced plans in early August to beef up the presence of Border Patrol cops at the Sky Harbor International Airport in Phoenix and Las Vegas McCarran Airport, sup-



Border patrol cop with infrared goggles

posedly to stop "immigrant smuggling." According to Karen Dorman, who is in charge of the Las Vegas INS office, the Border Patrol cops will be watching for groups of people where a single person buys tickets on their behalf, as well as viewing late boardings by groups of people as suspicious behavior.

This harassment effort, dubbed "Opera-

tion Denial," includes increased coordination with state police in Nevada and Arizona. Individuals stopped by highway police for possible traffic regulation violations may also now have to face interrogation by INS cops over their immigration status, according to Dorman.

Meanwhile, the newly elected president of Mexico, Vicente Fox, is appealing to Washington for increased cooperation between the two governments over immigration matters. In a meeting August 17 with U.S. president William Clinton and Canadian prime minister Jean Chretien, Fox called for what he described as a "European Union" type arrangement among the United States, Canada, and Mexico.

His plan would formalize and better organize Mexico as a reserve army of labor for U.S. employers as needed, and on their terms. Fox called for increasing the number of Mexican workers allowed to "legally" cross the border to take jobs in exchange for a greater police presence by Mexican authorities in border areas. Within five to 10 years,

he claims, this could lead to a border that "begins to open, under regulated conditions."

In an editorial comment, the *Financial Times* endorsed Fox's proposal as "a sensible one." Saying, "The best way to deal" with labor shortages "is to legitimize labour flows." The British financial daily added, "Such a move might be politically unpopular in parts of the United States. But the U.S. has much to gain from such an approach."

Locked-out Ohio Steelworkers to rally September 9

BY TONY PRINCE

CLEVELAND—Steelworkers in Mansfield, Ohio, are marking the one-year anniversary of their fight against the lockout by AK Steel with a rally September 9 in the Mansfield town square. The workers were locked out of their jobs by what was then Armco Steel at the end of August last year when they refused to accept the company's contract offer.

Members of United Steelworkers of America (USWA) Local 169 have confronted harassment from hired AK Steel thugs, an antiunion propaganda campaign by AK Steel combined with pro-company coverage of the fight in the *Mansfield News-Journal*, and a flood of court injunctions, legal suits, arrests, and police harassment.

The Steelworkers have hosted rallies attended by thousands in November and March, and locked-out workers have spoken at union meetings around the state and traveled to rallies in Michigan, Iowa, and other states. They have attended national labor gatherings, including in Pittsburgh and Chicago. Yard signs supporting the union are in evidence all over Mansfield and neighboring towns. Both pro-union and antiunion

billboards dot the highways.

In early August three "steel analysts" toured the Mansfield plant. Wally Best, of the Wall Street investment firm Morgan Stanley, said afterwards that the plant is "better now than before the lockout," and added, "the tour was positive in terms of how Wall Street looks at things." David MacGregor, from an outfit called Midwest Research, gushed, "Wall Street considers AK the most highly regarded steel management team in the American steel industry."

AK Steel reported a net income of \$49.1 million, or 44 cents per share, for the second quarter of the year 2000, compared to \$29.7 million, or 27 cents per share, for the second quarter of 1999. The *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* referred to the company as "the nation's most profitable unionized steelmaker."

The National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) has weighed in on the side of the employers, rejecting the union's charge of unfair labor practices by the company. On July 31 the regional division of the NLRB ruled that the lockout "was utilized by the employer (AK Steel) as a legitimate economic weapon in an effort to pressure the

union to accept its position on a succeeding contract." The board claimed that the employer "demonstrated a good faith effort" to reach an agreement.

A sister local of Local 169, USWA Local 1865 in Ashland, Kentucky, is now preparing for a possible contract dispute. The pact at AK Steel's facility there expires on August 31. The local's newsletter reports that AK Steel has moved at least 16 trailers onto the property, and has closed Armco Road, the back entrance to the plant, by installing a fence with a gate and guards. The local has called a rally August 28 in Ashland, at the union hall at 734 Carter Avenue at 3:00 p.m.

As part of building solidarity and publicizing the September 9 rally in Mansfield, union activist Ray Delarwelle estimates that as many as 50 members of Local 169 will go to the August 28 rally in Ashland. They will also participate in Labor Day parades in Mansfield, Cincinnati, Cleveland, and Detroit. For more information on the September 9 rally, call (419) 522-9375.

Tony Prince is a member of the Union of Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Employees in Cleveland.

The Eastern Airlines Strike Accomplishments of the Rank-and-File Machinists and gains for the Labor Movement

Ernie Mailhot, Judy Stranahan, and Jack Barnes

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—LETTERS

Write more on evolution

Brian Williams's article ["The battle over teaching evolution heats up," August 28 issue] is an excellent exposition of the need to combat the injection of religion into the state. Note how the presidential candidates from the Democrat and Republican parties have proclaimed their faith emphatically and loudly at every opportunity. (George Walker Bush during the primaries even went so far as to claim Jesus Christ as his favorite philosopher,

and given the denouncements heaped upon the state by said "philosopher," isn't there a question of why Mr. Bush would seek political office? Of course little needs to be said of Albert Gore's choice for vice-president—the Gore campaign and the media have made sure we are all quite aware that Joseph Lieberman's primary qualification for that position is his faith.)

I would only add that evolutionary scientists are also not above "[fetishizing] existing class rela-

tions and [obfuscating] an understanding of the development of human society and the modern class society," as Brian Williams put it. The whole endeavor of sociobiology and "evolutionary psychology" are to root class rule and the differential oppression of various sectors of the working class in "our" genetic makeup as the result of biological evolution. This used to be known as "biological determinism" or "Social Darwinism." But then Karl Marx made the observation

that the central ideas of any age are the ideas of its ruling class, thus this betrayal of science by scientists should come as no surprise. An article on this might be helpful, however.

I also have a question. Are we going to see a full treatment of the Nader candidacy? The petty bourgeois left, including the protesters at both Democrat and Republican conventions, are quite openly—and furiously—debating and advocating a vote for Nader and the

Green Party (which is also overdue for some exposure from your paper).

*John Warne
Indianapolis, Indiana*

The letters column is an open forum for all viewpoints on subjects of interest to working people.

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.

New military-backed government in Fiji targets workers and farmers

BY MICHAEL TUCKER

AUCKLAND, New Zealand—Fiji's military-backed government has moved rapidly to consolidate its hold on office, sealing the overthrow of the Labour Party-led government of Mahendra Chaudhry, and has begun carrying out new attacks against working people.

The new government was handed power by the military on July 28, two days after the army cracked down on the rightist forces led by businessman George Speight, arresting Speight and hundreds of his supporters.

Speight led a coup attempt May 19 in the midst of an antigovernment protest campaign orchestrated by opposition parties linked to Fiji's ruling high chiefs and local capitalists. Rightist gunmen, many of them army officers and soldiers, seized control of the parliament, taking hostage 34 members of the Labour Party-led government. Ten days later the military high command declared martial law, revoked the constitution, and dismissed the Chaudhry government, which had won a landslide election victory the previous year.

The rightist forces led by Speight assert that Indo-Fijians hold power and privilege in Fiji. They call for the supremacy of indigenous Fijians to be guaranteed and for Indo-Fijians to be excluded from holding positions of high office. The demand for "indigenous" supremacy is raised by Fiji's chiefly aristocracy as they seek to assert their traditional authority and prevent their power from being undermined. Spokespeople for the Great Council of Chiefs and the military, while expressing opposition to Speight's "methods" in carrying out the coup, declared their support for his aims. The council, which is an assembly of Fiji's high chiefs, considers itself the highest authority in Fiji.

Fijians of Indian descent, the big majority of whom are workers and farmers, make up around 43 percent of Fiji's population.

The rightists occupied the parliamentary compound in the capital Suva for two months, leaving and returning with relative freedom, while the coup leaders negotiated with the military. Gangs of Speight supporters carried out a campaign of violence, targeting Indo-Fijians and opponents of the coup.

Following an agreement signed July 9 by Speight and military commander Commodore Frank Bainimarama, the hostages being held at parliament were released. In exchange, Speight and his supporters were granted amnesty. They agreed to hand over their weapons and leave the parliamentary compound. Soldiers who took part in the coup were to be reinstated at their posts. The agreement gave the Great Council of Chiefs authority to appoint a new president and government. Following their departure from the parliamentary compound, the coup leaders and supporters set up a new base at a school in Kalabu on the outskirts of Suva. The inauguration of the new government was postponed as Speight threatened to foment new unrest unless more of his supporters were included in central government posts. Rightist gangs stepped up their arson, looting, rape, and violence along the Suva-Nausori corridor where they were encamped and around Labasa, the main town on Fiji's second largest island of Vanua Levu. Both regions were centers of support for Speight's coup.

Arrest of rightists

The standoff was resolved when the military launched their crackdown on the rightists. Speight and several supporters were arrested following a shoot-out at a military checkpoint July 26. The next morning military forces stormed the rightist encampment at Kalabu arresting around 400 rightist supporters, including central leaders of the coup. One was killed and 32 were wounded.

The following week troops moved against the rightist gangs around Labasa, arresting

around 150. One of the rightists was killed in a shoot-out.

While most of those arrested are being released on bail as they come before the courts, Speight and 12 other central coup leaders are being detained by the military on an island off Suva. Originally charged with unlawful assembly and firearms charges, most now face charges of treason or conspiring to commit treason. Speight has been charged on both counts.

The military says that the amnesty granted Speight and his supporters is void as they failed to return all the weapons taken from military armories that were used in the coup, as specified in the July 9 agreement.

Military boards are also investigating around 50 military personnel for offenses connected to the coup.

Successive constitutions since independence from the United Kingdom in 1970 have sought to enshrine the ultimate authority of the high chiefs to varying degrees, and to ensure their political control through an electoral system that divides the population by racial category for the purpose of voting. The development of a working class, however, has begun to cut through this racial set up, with the formation of trade unions organized on nonracial lines, and the formation by the unions of the Labour Party in 1985.

The new "interim" government appointed by the Great Council of Chiefs consists almost exclusively of indigenous Fijian chiefs, businessmen, and civil servants. The prime minister, Laisenia Qarase, a banker, has expressed chauvinist views against Indo-Fijians similar to those advocated by Speight, while blaming reforms being implemented by the Chaudhry government as the cause of the coup.

The government will draft a new constitution that will secure chiefly supremacy. Final decision on the provisions of the constitution will rest with the Great Council of Chiefs. Qarase projects the constitution will be promulgated by the end of 2001, with elections under the terms of the constitution to be held a year later.

Moves to reverse Labour measures

Meanwhile, the military-backed government has moved rapidly to begin reversing measures benefiting working people that



Fiji army troops march in Suva after May 19 rightist coup against Labour government

had been enacted or planned by the Labour Party-led government.

Labour had abolished sales taxes and introduced price controls and subsidies for basic foodstuffs, electricity, health care, housing, and education. For the first time, social welfare benefits were being introduced, and a new minimum wage was to be enacted. Grants were provided to resettle tenant sugarcane farmers whose farms were being reclaimed by landowners as leases expired.

Now, the price of electricity, fuel, and foodstuffs is rising. The government has announced a 12.5 percent pay cut for government sector workers, and compensation for evicted cane farmers has been withdrawn. Meanwhile, a new package of tax and other concessions has been announced for business investors.

According to official figures, 7,000 workers have lost their jobs since the coup, with the number expected to continue to rise, especially in the garment industry, which before May 19 employed 22,000 workers. The economy, which had a growth rate of around 7 percent in 1999, is expected to plunge into a long and deep recession.

"This new administration is furthering what George Speight started," declared Felix Anthony, general-secretary of the Fiji Trades Union Congress, speaking in Auckland August 5. The FTUC called a national day of action August 2 to protest the overthrow of

the elected government and constitution and the appointment of the military-backed administration. Most schools, farms, and factories shut down for the day in support of the protest, said Anthony. Meetings, rallies, and marches remain illegal under the martial law decrees issued by the military.

Fiji Labour Party leader and former prime minister Mahendra Chaudhry toured Australia and New Zealand early August to meet with government leaders, before traveling to India and the United Kingdom. He spoke to large meetings of mainly Indo-Fijians. The Labour Party and the FTUC are calling for the previous constitution to be restored and for the military-backed administration to be replaced by a broad "government of national unity." They are also calling on Canberra and Wellington to impose trade sanctions against Fiji.

The main imperialist powers with interests in Fiji—Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and the United States—have welcomed the moves by the military against Speight and his supporters, while continuing calls for the restoration of "constitutional" government.

Despite the military crackdown on Speight's supporters, rightist attacks continue in Fiji. A soldier and a police officer were killed in an ambush August 8, and an Indo-Fijian woman was killed in an arson attack on her home August 16.

Clearing of New Zealand killer cop sparks outrage

BY FELICITY COGGAN

AUCKLAND, New Zealand—"In our opinion, it is not acceptable for a man or woman to be shot for being angry," said Terry Wallace in a statement August 16. He was responding to the release that day of the report on the official investigation into the police shooting of his nephew, Steven.

Steven Wallace, a 23-year-old Maori university student, was shot in the early hours of the morning of April 30 on the main street of the small town of Waitara, after being confronted by three cops. He had been breaking windows in the town center, targeting the police station and fire station. For 20 minutes after he was shot, Wallace lay dying on the street, asking for help, while the cops refused to allow anyone to offer him aid or comfort.

The police report concluded that the police officer acted lawfully in self-defense and will not face charges. It claims that Wallace was armed with a baseball bat and that the cop "feared for his life." No on-duty police officer has been prosecuted for shooting a member of the public in New Zealand in the past 60 years.

The report's findings have provoked widespread anger among working people, sparking several protests, and rekindling debate about police racism and the role of the cops.

In a television interview, a Waitara Maori leader, Tom Hunt, pointed to the "anger, frustration, and dismay that the police have come out clearly in a way that protects one of their own; that he doesn't get treated the way the rest of us would expect to get treated if we shot someone down in the street."

Sixty young Maori and supporters protested outside the police station in Whangarei August 17, another 50 rallied by police national headquarters in the capital city of Wellington the same day. In Waitara, a small group marched through the town to the police station August 18.

The police presence in Waitara has been massively beefed up in the wake of the report's release, Hunt said in a telephone interview. Nothing has changed in the cop's attitudes to Maori since the controversy surrounding the April shooting, he said, with continued targeting of Maori youth and increasing the carrying of guns by the police. In a recent incident, police investigating a knife attack five miles away burst onto the Waitara marae (Maori meeting place) armed with pistols.

Meanwhile the report's conclusions have been triumphantly welcomed by police, who have even suggested that the cop who shot Wallace may return to duty in the town. Police Association president Gregory

O'Connor asserted on television that "police can now know that they can do their job, that they can take the necessary action to protect life and property without having to face the court when it's found they just did their duty."

Steven Wallace's mother, Raewyn Collingwood, responded angrily to attempts to whip up sympathy for the killer cop. "They say that the policeman is human, that he's got a life and it's been put on hold—what about mine? What about my son's? He hasn't got a life anymore," she said. "I just think that if this is our police force, that for anyone with kids—God help them, if the police can get away with this all the time."

The outrage expressed by working people at the findings of the report has again stirred apprehension in ruling circles about the growing lack of credibility of the police force and raised calls for a more convincing "impartial" investigation. The ruling Labour Party's Maori members of parliament called for an urgent review of police systems and processes, while reserving judgment on the case pending a report from a Police Complaints Authority investigation that they urged be "full, open and extensive."

Felicity Coggan is a member of the National Distribution Union