

THE MILITANT

INSIDE

U.S. socialist candidates
visit Maori fighters

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A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

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U.S. gov't frame-up of Wen Ho Lee collapses

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

As its effort to frame up Taiwanese-born scientist Wen Ho Lee shattered, the U.S. government agreed on September 10 to drop all but one of the 59 counts of an indictment that accused him of stealing U.S. nuclear weapons secrets and to release him from jail, where he had been held in solitary confinement since December. Lee, who had faced a life sentence, walked out of prison September 13.

"It's an astonishing development and an amazing retreat by the government," stated Steve Aftergood of the Federation of American Scientists, one of the many scientific and civil liberties organizations that has spoken out in Lee's defense.

As part of a plea-bargaining arrangement, Lee agreed to plead guilty to one count of unlawful gathering of national defense information. Lee pays no fine, nor is he to be subjected to any probation. He has already served seven months in prison.

Lee, a U.S. citizen, had been a target of a U.S. government "investigation" that goes back to at least 1995, as part of the U.S. rule-

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'Militant' campaigners are off to a good start

BY MAURICE WILLIAMS

The international campaign to win new subscribers to the *Militant* and *Perspectiva Mundial*, which began September 9, got off to a promising start in a number of places around the country.

In the New York Garment District, campaigners report they sold 10 subscriptions to the *Militant* in the first few days of the drive. "Six people bought *Militant* subscriptions at a literature table we set up at Columbia University one evening," said Olympia Newton, a member of the Young Socialists in New York. "We went there after getting a great response selling to people who were standing in line for the meeting where Fidel Castro was speaking, which is near Columbia. In the first hour two people bought *Militant* subscriptions there."

Newton said one worker at a grocery store in the area bought a *Militant* subscription together with the specially discounted Pathfinder pamphlet *The Working Class and the Transformation of Learning: The Fraud of Education under Capitalism*.

"He was very interested when I pointed out how the pamphlet approaches social questions from a class point of view, and told me about his experiences being harassed by the cops as a Black working-class youth."

September 16 Palestinian rights rally

Also talking to the crowd waiting to hear the Cuban president were some young activists who were leafleting for the September 16 rally in Washington to defend the right to return for Palestinian refugees. *Mili-*

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Canada nickel miners strike to defend union

Reject concession demands on safety, health, seniority

BY ROSEMARY RAY

SUDBURY, Ontario—Some 1,250 nickel miners are on strike here against Falconbridge Ltd., having rejected the company's contract offer by an overwhelming vote of 97 percent. The workers, who walked off the job August 1, are members of Mine Mill/Canadian Auto Workers Local 598.

Falconbridge, one of the world's largest producers of nickel, is demanding sweeping contract concessions from the union that would essentially gut seniority, health and safety, and union representation on the job, as well as increase the use of nonunion labor.

Four members of United Steelworkers of America (USWA) Local 5338 from Toronto traveled 250 miles north of Toronto to this mining city on the Labor Day holiday to express their support to the miners and learn more about their struggle. They joined hundreds of striking nickel miners and their families for a Labor Day picnic at the Mine Mill Campsite on Richards Lake.

The miners here welcomed the visiting unionists to their picnic. They were particularly interested in meeting and talking to Delroy Whitely, a steelworker who is on strike in Toronto along with 33 other workers against T.G. Metal for improved wages and benefits.

The miners explained that safety and defense of their union seniority rights are vital issues for them.

Falconbridge wants to divide its four mines and mill operation off from the smelter, making two independent business units with separate seniority lists for the miners.

Winston Richards, a miner with 29 years' service, said, "We can't accept losing our bumping rights with separate seniority lists. Older miners could get laid off or the particular mine they work in could close and they would lose the right to bump someone with less seniority. Falconbridge could get

rid of the older miners this way and our pensions would be reduced." For Richards a loss of seniority protection would be "like not having a union at all."

Falconbridge asserts that it needs to make "changes" to the union contract so it can

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Militant/Rosemary Ray

Miners picket Falconbridge smelter in Sudbury, Ontario. Christmas tree is a message to the boss about how long workers are prepared to stay out to defend their union.

Meat packers refute bosses' claims at hearing

BY BECKY ELLIS

MINNEAPOLIS—At an ongoing hearing of the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB), members of United Food and Commercial Workers Local 789 began their testimony in defense of their union September 5.

The hearing is being held because the

owners of Dakota Premium Foods filed a challenge to a July 21 union representation election in which the meat packers at the plant voted to join the United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) by a decisive margin. Dakota Premium is a beef slaughterhouse in South St. Paul, Minnesota, with a workforce of more than 200 meat

packers, mostly Spanish-speaking immigrants.

The company had previously presented its case over several days beginning August 28. It claimed the union pressured meat packers to vote for the UFCW by organizing a "ruckus" outside the voting area and other alleged intimidation tactics.

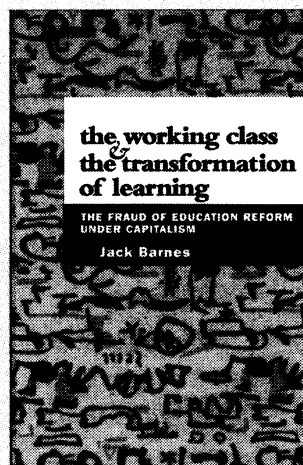
Miguel Olvera, a worker in the boning department, and José Flores, who works on the kill floor, opened up the day's testimony on behalf of the union. Both were observers for the UFCW during the election. They spent the entire afternoon at the voting area. Each testified that, while there were a number of workers outside the voting area in the company lunchroom, they had heard no loud noises. Olvera said he heard one voice say "Si se puede." This expression in Spanish translates into English as, "Yes, we can." It is a popular expression among pro-union workers in the plant and is the principal slogan of workers fighting the oppressive conditions in the factory. Flores said he didn't hear that chant.

Samuel Farley, another worker from the boning area, testified that he had been at the end of a long line in the hallway waiting to vote that afternoon. He said he heard no one say "Si se puede."

Olvera and Farley have been central leaders of the fight to win union recognition at Dakota Premium Foods since the workers there sat down in the company cafeteria June 1 and refused to work until the company

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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." \$3.00

Only \$1 with introductory subscription to the *Militant*!

Available from bookstores listed on page 8.

'Anti-child abuse' crusade in Britain targets rights — pages 3,10

Volunteers prepare new Pathfinder pamphlet in Swedish

BY CATHARINA TIRSÉN

STOCKHOLM, Sweden—Pathfinder Press is planning to publish *The Working Class and the Transformation of Learning: The Fraud of Education Reform under Capitalism* in Swedish. The pamphlet by Jack Barnes was published earlier this year in English, French, and Spanish.

Volunteers here are finishing the translation and editing of the text of the pamphlet into Swedish, and are now preparing to format and proofread it.

This pamphlet will offer youth and working people in this country a tool to understand from a class point of view what education and schools are under capitalism. As Barnes explains, they 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.”

“The pamphlet helps you look at the schools as part of something bigger, as part of the capitalist system,” said Kristoffer Skog, a member of the Young Socialists here who kicked off the discussion at a class on the pamphlet organized by his organization.

“Once it was explained from that standpoint, it was not a big leap for the young people who participated in the class here to understand this. Many students ask themselves, ‘What is the purpose of me being in school, what is it for?’”

Those attending the class drew on many

experiences of their own that helped illustrate the points made in the pamphlet. One recounted how he had written a paper on the conflict between the Israeli regime and the Palestinian people. He had worked hard, had a lot of verified facts, and knew the result was a good paper. But he got a low grade, according to the teacher because the paper was “biased.”

Schools enforces capitalist values

In fact, the teacher had acted according to the school regulations, the participants in the class concluded, after looking at the legally adopted high school curriculum that one person had brought to the class. According to the regulations, schools must instruct students in “democratic values”—that is bourgeois values.

One person attending the class took up a recent article in the *Militant* on the battle over teaching evolution in U.S. schools. Defenders of creationism, he noted, instill unscientific ideas to convince working people that they are objects, not the subjects, of history. That doctrine promotes the opposite of the perspective advocated in the pamphlet: “Explaining the communist approach to education is part of preparing the working class 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.”



Militant/Catharina Tirsén

Youths in Gothenburg, Sweden, protest deportation of Kurds in 1996. Pamphlet explains that “the deference and obedience that the rulers seek to inculcate in the classroom are backed up on the streets” by the cops’ efforts to intimidate working people.

Skog added, “At first you don’t understand why the introduction takes up the cops, the death penalty, and the union organizing fight by meat packers in Minnesota.” But discussing each of these questions makes it clear that the same approach is used—to view each one as a social question and how it affects working people’s ability to organize themselves as a class.

The increasingly brutal treatment of working people by cops is an issue in Sweden too. Several hundred people demonstrated August 27 to protest the decision by the district attorney not to charge two guards who had beaten Adonis Hocheimy after they accused him of traveling on the subway without a ticket. Hocheimy, who is Black, was beaten to the floor in a subway station. As he was lying on the ground, the guards put a knee on his neck and twisted it so it broke, making Hocheimy an invalid for life.

“Is murder a crime? If so, is it always a crime? If a policeman shoots a worker is it a crime? Why are cops hardly ever convicted when they commit a crime?”

These questions were raised by Björn Tirsén, also a member of the Young Socialists, in speaking at a Militant Labor Forum here. He quoted facts from a newspaper article about how the police in the county of Stockholm had been reported 1,284 times in 1998 for criminal actions, but convicted only in eight cases. This shows that “crime” is viewed differently by different social classes.

The pamphlet points out that “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 of markets among U.S. capitalists, and between them and their rivals worldwide.”

Youth whose minds are not yet blunted by living under capitalism react against the brutality and degradation that the ruling class imposes, brutality whose sole purpose is to perpetuate a system where profits for a few are valued higher than human beings.

Youth are put in schools for 12 years and many react to the hypocrisy of the “learning” these institutions provide, in some cases by dropping out, as do 20 percent of all high school students in the Stockholm area today. To these young people, as well as to working people of other generations, this pamphlet shows a way forward in the struggle to create a world fit for humanity.

“Education as a lifetime experience—I can not think of a better reason to make a socialist revolution. What better reason to get rid of the capitalist state, to begin transforming humanity, to begin building human solidarity?” These explanations, already available in three languages, will soon be available in Swedish too.

Catharina Tirsén is a member of the Metalworkers Union in Stockholm.

Native American activist fights frame-up

BY DONALD HAMMOND

CHARLOTTE, North Carolina—Native American rights activist Eddie Hatcher goes on trial on a first-degree murder charge September 18 in Robeson County, North Carolina. The Robeson County district attorney has indicated he will seek the death pen-

alty. Hatcher is accused of killing 19-year-old Brian McMillan in a drive-by shooting in the town of Maxton on the night of May 31, 1999. He was arrested the next day. He remains in jail and has not had a court hearing in over a year.

Supporters point to several inconsisten-

cies in the prosecution’s case, including the fact there is no forensic evidence tying Hatcher to this killing.

Hatcher earned the hatred of state authorities for his actions in the 1980s in defense of Native American rights and against racism. He was charged with kidnapping for taking over the offices of *The Robesonian* newspaper in Lumberton, North Carolina, in 1988. This action was in support of demands that the state governor investigate many unsolved murders, including that of a young Black man in Robeson County jail who died after being denied medical attention.

After being acquitted on federal charges, Hatcher was tried and convicted by the state of North Carolina. He served five years in jail and a year on parole for the kidnapping charge.

Advocates of justice for Hatcher will rally outside the Robeson County Courthouse at 8:00 a.m. on September 18, then go inside to witness the trial. They will rally again after the hearing. For further information contact the web site at www.eddiehatcher.org

THE MILITANT

Farm workers step up union fights

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UK: 'anti-child abuse crusade' targets rights

BY JIM SIMPSON

LONDON—In a move aimed at curbing democratic rights and eroding working-class solidarity, a prominent big-business newspaper here has launched what it calls a "crusade" to "name and shame" people previously convicted of sex offenses.

In a number of issues at the beginning of August, the *News of the World* published the names, photographs, and home addresses of 80 individuals who have served prison time for sexual assaults on children. To gain support for this move it seized on the abduction and murder in July of an eight-year-old girl, Sarah Payne.

The *News of the World*, a right-wing paper owned by magnate Rupert Murdoch, is demanding a "national register of sex offenders" be made public. Three years ago it promoted a national petition launched by a reactionary organization called People Power in favor of a law—a British version of the U.S. measures known as "Megan's Law"—that would provide for a public register; the petition gained 300,000 signatures.

In launching its current campaign the *News of the World* anticipated that, as in the past, vigilante street actions would swiftly follow. It sanctimoniously declared, "Our campaign will be counterproductive if it provokes any display of animosity to those we name." At the time of the newspaper's promotion of the People Power petition, vigilante action against alleged former sex offenders took place in Liverpool, Aberdeen, and north Wales.

Vigilante attacks

In the midst of the paper's latest campaign, mobs of up to 300 people took to the streets over a number of days and nights in early August in working-class areas of Portsmouth and Plymouth. Cars were overturned and set on fire. Houses of people alleged to have been previously convicted of sex offenses were besieged, bricked, and in at least one case set on fire.

The press reported that a 29-year-old Asian man was beaten by a gang of vigilantes after he was seen talking to children. Demonstrators chanted, "Sex crime, sex crime, sex crime—hang them, hang them, hang them!" One demonstrator was quoted as saying, "Why don't they just bang them up in the Maze?" The Maze is the prison in Northern Ireland where the bulk of Irish political prisoners were incarcerated.

In Oldham, near Manchester, a man who faced police charges for sex offenses was said by his attorney to have killed himself after neighbors hounded him from his home.

A fascist outfit called the National Democrats has been active around this issue, establishing a web site called Paedophile Action. It demands capital punishment for the

most serious sex offenses and the establishment of concentration camps for others convicted of serious offenses or a second minor offense. Its paper, the *Flag*, reported favorably on a People Power meeting and demonstration in January 1998 at which Curtis Sliwa, leader of the U.S. pro-cop vigilante group Guardian Angels, was present. According to Mike Whine of the Board of Deputies of British Jews, the National Democrats organized "anti-pedophile" demonstrations two years ago.

The national sex offenders register was established in September 1997 under the Sex Offenders Act, enacted by the last Tory government in March of that year with bipartisan support. All convicted offenders aged 10 and over are obliged to register. This includes adults convicted of unlawful consensual sex acts and young people involved in underage sex in violation of age-of-consent laws. The length of time they remain on the register depends on the severity of the sentence; an adult given a non-prison sentence would have to stay on the register for five years.

After its election in May 1997, the Labour Party government moved to strengthen the Sex Offenders Act, again with bipartisan support, introducing among other measures mandatory life prison sentences for people convicted under the act for a "second serious offense." The national register is held by police, who have the power to inform schools and members of the public about convicted child sex offenders living in their area.

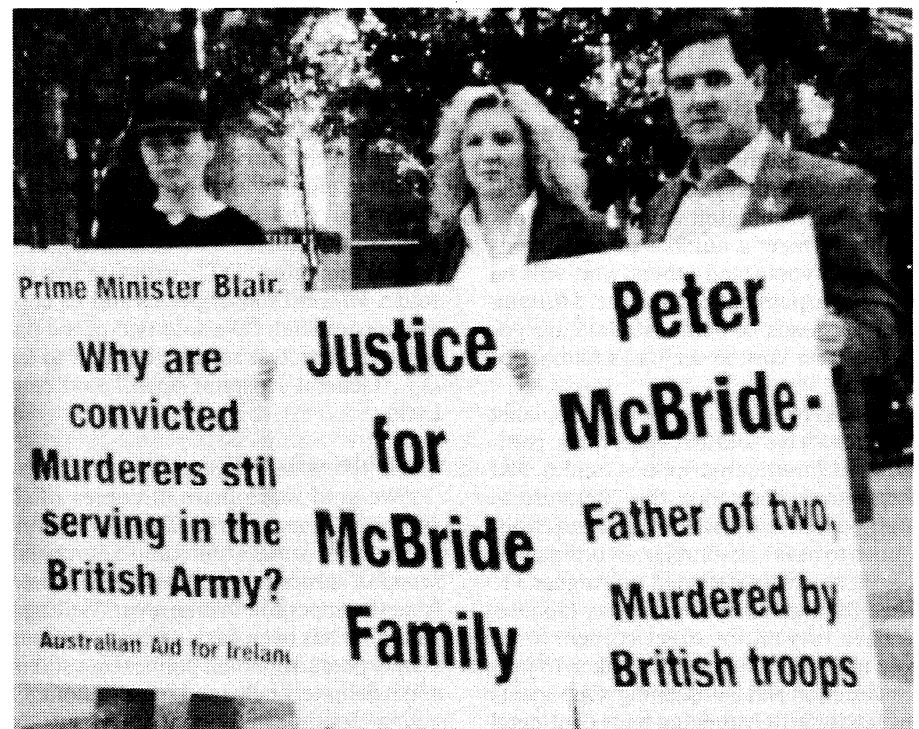
Recently the Greater Manchester police used similar powers to pass the names, ages, and addresses of eight men convicted under the Public Order Act for allegedly approaching prostitutes on the street. This information, along with photographs, was published August 23 in the *Manchester Evening News*, against the strong wishes of those concerned.

Ruling-class debate on how far to push

The *News of the World* campaign and resulting street actions have prompted a contradictory response inside ruling circles. The pro-Tory right-wing *Daily Telegraph* denounced the *News of the World* for the uncontrolled forces its campaign unleashed. "It is astounding that mob rule, violent attacks, arson and self-confessed 'intimidation,' directly incited by a newspaper... should not be condemned," the editors of the *Telegraph* opined in an August 10 editorial.

The editorial also targeted Sydney Rapson, a Labour member of Parliament (MP) from Portsmouth North, for refusing to condemn the street gangs. Referring to some of the rightist slogans raised at the

Protest in Australia demands justice for man killed in Belfast



Militant/Doug Cooper

Supporters of Irish nationalist struggle held a rally September 6 in front of the British consulate in Sydney demanding justice for Peter McBride, an 18-year-old Belfast man fatally shot in the back by British troops in 1992. Similar protests took place in other cities around the world. Two soldiers, Mark Wright and James Fisher, were convicted of murder and sentenced to life, then had their sentences commuted after serving only three years. They were reinstated in the British Army and served in the 1999 imperialist intervention in Kosovo. The protesters delivered an open letter to British prime minister Anthony Blair demanding justice for the McBride family. Signers included members of the New South Wales Parliament, officials of the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union, Maritime Union of Australia, and the Public Service Association.

street actions, Rapson said, "I don't agree that we should burn or castrate them but we have to concede some ground to reduce the tension.... I'm angry that pedophiles are placed in areas where there are large numbers of children. While it is sad that they have been ousted in such a violent way, there could be ways of making these places safer."

Rapson went on to organize a meeting between representatives of the vigilantes and the local council in an attempt to resolve their grievances. Labour MP Robin Corbett, chair of the parliamentary Home Affairs Select Committee, called for the *News of the World* to be prosecuted.

The police have also publicly divided over the issue. Anthony Butler, chief constable of Gloucestershire and spokesperson on

child protection issues for the Association of Chief Police Officers, said, "We have made a major step forward in the objective of improving the safety of children. I give my support to the *News of the World*." Later a spokesperson for the group said that Butler had been misunderstood.

The cop outfit was among a number of organizations, including the National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders, National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, and the Association of Chief Officers of Probation, who met with *News of the World* executives to push for an end to publishing names, addresses, and photos.

The paper did so in face of opposition from capitalist political figures and other big-business media who at the same time favor further strengthening of antidemocratic laws and the police. The Labour government's deputy prime minister, John Prescott, welcomed a proposal from Tory party leader William Hague that all convicted sex offenders face mandatory life sentences; that those released be electronically tagged indefinitely and supervised longer than the current 10-year maximum. "If you can get the consensus between political parties in the review of this legislation, that would be very welcome," Prescott said. "It sets a far different atmosphere to that we've seen down in Portsmouth."

John Wadham, legal director of a civil liberties pressure group, Liberty, called for the national register to be trimmed in the face of the new Human Rights Act, which reportedly incorporates the European Convention on Human Rights into British law from October 2. The act includes a conditional provision on the right to privacy. Removing some of the names will assist the police, Wadham said, accepting the basic framework of the reactionary campaign. "It is really an opportunity to make the register better focused on pedophiles and sex offenders who are a real danger to the public."

Workers and farmers in China mount protests

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

Workers and farmers in China have been conducting militant protests in response to worsening conditions on the land, factory closures, and job eliminations as the bureaucratic regime continues its course of promoting "market reforms" in the world's most populous workers state.

Tens of thousands of farmers in the southern Chinese province of Jiangxi staged protests in August against rising tax burdens and declining farm incomes. Facts about these events were confirmed by local Chinese officials August 30.

In what the *Washington Post* describes as a "small rebellion," farmers armed with sticks and tools attacked government buildings and did battle with the police. Farmers from several townships in the province demonstrated over the course of five days. The protests began in Yuandu where 2,000 farmers ransacked offices of the Stalinist-led government and some attacked homes of local officials who have enriched themselves. The revolt rapidly spread to nearby townships, with about 20,000 farmers joining the actions. Jiangxi provincial police responded arresting dozens of protesters.

Farm incomes plummet

Rural incomes in China—after years of increases—have fallen for four years in a row. This combined with a rising burden of taxes and government fees fueled the protests. Some farmers quoted in the media have said that they made \$50 a year from

each parcel of land and paid out more than half of that in taxes. Fertilizer fees and other planting costs also have to be paid.

Meanwhile, workers at the Meite Packaging plant in Tianjin seized six foreign managers and held them for 40 hours after they entered the factory to post a closure notice. The plant, which in the early 1990s was a state-owned company making pipes for a beverage packaging firm, was turned into a joint enterprise between the Chinese government and a U.S. corporation, and then placed under sole ownership of the Ball Corporation, based in Broomfield, Colorado.

"Every day since the beginning of August they [the workers] were there at the gate, protesting and trying to block deliveries and people from going in," stated Liu Qiuling, a retiree who lives next to the factory. "But the managers didn't meet with them."

Ball Corporation bought into four packaging plants in Tianjin as part of joint-venture partnerships. It announced plans to close three of these factories and consolidate the four into one located in a special "economic development zone," where the Chinese authorities offer foreign capitalist investors special tax breaks.

The company urged younger workers, mostly people in their 20s, to move with the plant to hold onto their jobs. The rest of the workforce is to lose not only their jobs but housing, health care, and pension benefits, which have been part the social wage won

by workers in state-owned factories since the triumph of the Chinese revolution and consolidation of a workers state some 50 years ago.

Instead, the company offered a one-time severance payment of about \$1,200. After the 40-hour factory occupation and stand-off, management agreed to increase this payment amount slightly.

Earlier in August, also in Tianjin, workers at a state-owned liquor company organized protests against plans by a German firm with investments in the plant to sell factory parts for scrap metal. The workers blocked a truck, insisting that the money from sales of this metal belonged to them.

Over the past year tens of thousands of workers at other plants in China have been carrying out similar protests over nonpayment of pensions and wages, to factory and mine closures. The U.S. big-business media reports on them only intermittently. "Taking foreign businessmen hostage is rare in China," the *New York Times* commented August 31. But, it added with a tone of concern, "the workers' frustrations that touched off the [Meite plant] incident are commonplace, leading to hundreds if not thousands of protests in recent years." The *Washington Post* informed its readers the same day, "Uprisings and riots have become common in China's cities and countryside as workers and farmers come face to face with a slowing economy and a government that is trying to extract more taxes and fees from a shrinking economic pie."

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'Militant' and 'PM' sub campaigners are off to a running start

Continued from front page
tant supporters have attended local planning meetings for the national demonstration as well as a teach-in at Columbia University. A number of newly politicized youth have been involved in these activities. The march and rally in Washington will be a good opportunity to meet a number of revolutionary-minded youth and others who will be thirsty for a publication like the *Militant*. Several busloads of demonstrators are going from New York as well as a number of other cities.

In Brooklyn, supporters of the socialist publications have sold 26 copies of the pamphlet, 4 *Militant* subscriptions, and 6 *PM* subscriptions. They took this literature to Farmingville, New York, where a reactionary move to pass anti-immigrant ordinances had been narrowly defeated on August 31.

The bill targeted immigrant day laborers who have to wait on street corners to be picked up by contractors to be taken to jobs in construction and landscaping. Opponents of that chauvinist campaign have continued to meet to discuss how to counter future attacks, and invited supporters of *Perspectiva Mundial* to future meetings.

"One worker explained that while he was

studying to become a teacher in Mexico, he had been active in political organizing in the countryside," said Luis Madrid. "He added that he also faced repression there. He bought a subscription to *Perspectiva Mundial*, along with the new pamphlet and a copy of *Che Guevara Talks to Young People* in Spanish.

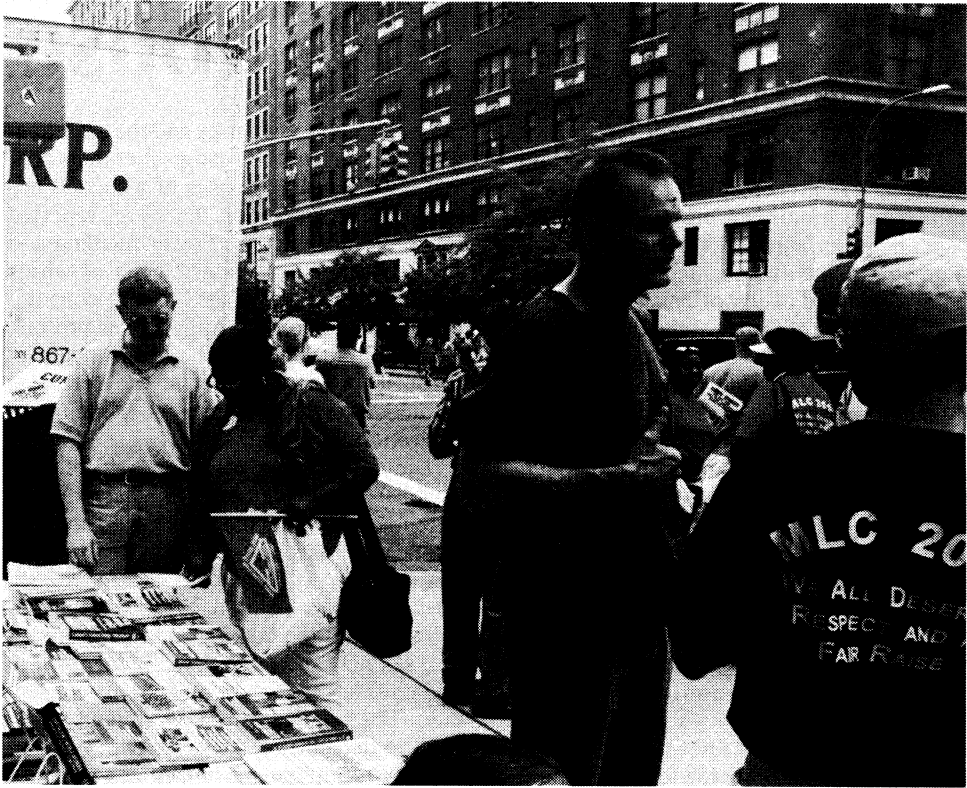
In Washington, D.C., campaigners have sold 5 *Militant* subscriptions and 25 copies of the pamphlet. "We sold two of the pamphlets at a protest around the fight to keep D.C. General Hospital open," said Janice Lynn.

Pamphlet sells well

"We sold more than 30 copies of *The Working Class and the Transformation of Learning*, 6 *Militant* subs and 5 *Perspectiva Mundial* subscriptions," said Seth Galinsky, from the upper Manhattan area. "Selling the pamphlet has been easy—because it immediately poses important political questions—and it definitely helps sell subscriptions. One guy, a Dominican, bought a *PM* sub from me after buying the pamphlet."

Target week

The *Militant* has set a special target week



Militant/Patrick O'Neill

Literature table at Labor Day parade in New York, September 9. On this first day of subscription drive, supporters of the *Militant* and *Perspectiva Mundial* in New York got a good response from workers to the socialist press and new Pathfinder pamphlet.

from September 30 through October 8 to plan an extra boost to the subscription campaign. Campaign supporters will organize to step up the pace of activities in that period.

Leading up to that week, supporters of the socialist press will plan out a week of daily sales, with extra teams—both to regular locations in the area as

well as special teams in the broader region. Readers are urged to send in reports on their plans, as well as other news on the subscription campaign, for upcoming columns.

Next week the chart will show the results of the first full week of campaigning.

Public meetings will boost fund drive

BY DEAN MICHAELS

NEW YORK—At the end of the first full week of the campaign to raise \$110,000 for the *Militant* and *Perspectiva Mundial*, sup-

porters of the two socialist publications have collected and sent in \$9,280—9 percent of the goal—placing the drive almost on target.

One challenge to work on now is to close the almost \$6,000 gap between adopted quotas and the international goal. Local initiatives to raise goals in a number of areas can succeed in getting the campaign on a solid footing internationally.

Meanwhile, in cities around the world supporters are organizing public meetings to aggressively publicize the fund in their local areas and get the campaign into high gear.

In Chicago, fund-raisers for the *Militant* and *Perspectiva Mundial* are sponsoring an October 7 meeting that will feature Hilda Cuzco, a staff writer for both publications. Cuzco will highlight current developments in the class struggle in Ecuador, where mass protests are under way today against the devastating effects on working people of the government's "dollarization" and austerity measures.

Cuzco headed a *Militant* reporting team to Ecuador during the May Day demonstrations there. The team covered the ongoing protests that reached a high point in January, when a popular uprising led by Indian organizations forced the ouster of President Jamil Mahuad. The demonstrations have also opposed the regional scope of Washington's growing military presence in South America, carried out in the name of "the war on drug trafficking."

Chicago fund director Cappy Kidd reports that a number of industrial workers in Chicago who are originally from Ecuador subscribed to the *Militant* and *Perspectiva Mundial* in recent months. Local fund campaigners are beginning to publicize the meeting widely among co-workers and young people. They are explaining that the fund makes possible reporting trips such as the one to Ecuador—as well as helping to finance the weekly production of the working-class press.

Kidd added that supporters of the *Militant* will be joining Palestinian high school students

from the area who have organized buses to attend the September 16 rally in Washington to defend the right of Palestinian refugees to return to their homeland.

As the example in Chicago underscores, early October is a good time to organize fund-raising meetings everywhere.

One attractive feature of such meetings can be presentations by fellow fighters who view the *Militant* and *Perspectiva Mundial* as their publications.

The efforts to start getting these meetings under way now need to be matched by work to collect payments on pledges that have already been made. A number of local areas have yet to send in their initial contributions.

D.C. janitors explain union contract fight

BY JANICE LYNN

WASHINGTON—Custodians at Catholic University continue to press their fight for a union contract with decent wages and affordable health insurance. Some 200 students, faculty, staff, and community activists packed a meeting room on the campus September 13 for a teach-in to learn about this struggle.

"We are hardworking people and we deserve more money. We deserve justice," declared Virginia Willis, one of 10 janitors who attended. Catholic University janitors start at \$6.15 an hour and average about \$8 an hour—well below the wages at every other university in Washington. In addition, Catholic University charges janitors \$249.11 per month for family health insurance, higher than any other campus.

University administrators have waged a campaign of intimidation, including videotaping workers at protests, and banning the representative of the Service Employees International Union from coming onto campus for the teach-in.

Antoinette Harris, another Catholic University janitor, told the *Militant* she was inspired by the telephone workers strike against Verizon. "I watched their fight every day. And after two weeks they won. We're going to win, too!"

Contribute to Militant and Perspectiva Mundial Fund			
	Goal	Paid	%
United States			
Brooklyn	\$3,800	\$950	25%
Houston	\$6,500	\$1,525	23%
San Francisco	\$10,000	\$2,170	22%
Newark	\$3,000	\$605	20%
NY Garment Dist.	\$5,000	\$915	18%
Charlotte	\$2,800	\$400	14%
Seattle	\$9,000	\$770	9%
Birmingham	\$3,200	\$201	6%
Boston	\$4,000	\$220	6%
Miami	\$2,300	\$100	4%
Los Angeles	\$6,000	\$200	3%
Washington	\$3,000	\$100	3%
Chicago	\$7,500	\$230	3%
Atlanta	\$4,600	\$100	2%
Detroit	\$3,750	\$50	1%
Philadelphia	\$2,500	\$25	1%
Cleveland	\$1,600	\$13	1%
Allentown	\$1,200		0%
Chippewa Falls	\$600		0%
Des Moines	\$1,800		0%
Fort Collins	\$1,400		0%
Fresno	\$200		0%
NY Upper Manhattan	\$3,000		0%
Pittsburgh	\$4,000		0%
St. Louis	\$1,800		0%
Twin Cities	\$3,500		0%
Other		\$175	
U.S. Total	\$96,050	\$8,749	9%
Sweden	530	\$20	4%
United Kingdom	\$870	\$30	3%
Canada	\$5,000	\$101	2%
New Zealand			
Auckland	1170	\$30	3%
Christchurch	520		
NZ Total	1690	30	2%
France		\$320	
Iceland		\$30	
Int'l Total	\$104,140	\$9,280	9%
Int'l Goal/Should be	\$110,000	\$11,000	10%

Subscription campaign to win new readers: September 9-November 12			
	Militant Goal	PM Goal	Pamphlet Goal
Canada			
Montreal	15	5	30
Toronto	25	6	35
Vancouver	30	5	40
Canada Total	70	16	105
Iceland	8	1	12
New Zealand			
Auckland	15	1	20
Christchurch	8	1	10
NZ Total	23	2	30
Sweden	12	5	15
United Kingdom			
London	30	10	60
Manchester	18	2	
UK Total	48	12	60
United States			
Allentown	18	3	35
Atlanta	20	8	20
Birmingham	35	2	50
Boston	25	8	50
Brooklyn	60	30	125
Charlotte	15	5	30
Chicago	45	15	50
Chippewa Falls	15	10	20
Cleveland	30	6	50
Des Moines	35	20	50
Detroit	20	5	35
Fort Collins	20	1	20
Fresno	10	6	6
Houston	50	20	75
Los Angeles	40	20	60
Miami	30	15	60
NY Garment Dist.	65	35	110
NY Upper Manhattan	67	25	100
Newark	55	25	85
Philadelphia	25	5	50
Pittsburgh	35	2	50
San Francisco	35	20	75
Seattle	30	10	75
St. Louis	25	9	45
Twin Cities	55	25	110
Washington	30	10	50
Tucson	5	3	8
U.S. Total	895	343	1494
International Total	1056	379	1716
International Goal	1000	350	1500
In the unions			
UMWA	18		18
UNITE	30	20	60
Total	48	20	78

U.S. socialist candidate visits Maori fighters

BY JANET ROTH

WAITARA, New Zealand—Margaret Trowe and campaign supporters were warmly welcomed when they arrived August 28 at the Owae Marae, a traditional meeting place of Maori, the indigenous people in New Zealand.

Trowe, the Socialist Workers candidate for U.S. vice president, and Jacob Perasso, the SWP candidate for U.S. Senate in New York, were visiting New Zealand to meet with working-class militants, Maori rights fighters, and others. They were accompanied by members of the Communist League here.

Hosting the marae meeting were local Maori leaders and elders who are fighting for justice for Steven Wallace, a young Maori who was shot and killed by a cop here on April 30. A recent police report declared the cop had acted lawfully and would not face charges.

The meeting began with formal welcoming speeches in the Maori language. "We join with you in your stand for the underprivileged," was the greeting she received.

Trowe expressed her campaign's full support for the Steven Wallace fight and for the struggle by Maori for land and language rights, saying that working people in the United States can learn and draw inspiration from them.

She linked these struggles to the growing resistance by working people internationally. These struggles provide growing opportunities to build a revolutionary working-class movement that eventually will be capable of overturning capitalist rule and establishing governments of workers and farmers.

Trowe pointed to some of the brutal conditions—speed-up of the production line in meatpacking plants, unsafe conditions in coal mines, attacks on immigrant workers—that have led many workers in the United States to organize through their unions to defend their rights. The conditions breeding this rebelliousness are generated by capitalism itself.

"We need to put an end to the capitalist system, where everything is treated as a commodity—food, land, human relations, whatever," she explained.

The candidate brought greetings on behalf of James Harris, her running mate for president of the United States. Harris was among those attending the August 26 march on Washington against police brutality, and Trowe made a special presentation to her hosts of a T-shirt produced for this demonstration.

Discussion then ranged back and forth. A number of people recounted experiences that added to the political picture Trowe had presented. Some asked her questions about the United States, particularly about the fight against racist discrimination. Jacob Perasso and Michael Tucker, a leader of the Communist League, spoke for the visitors also. In traditional fashion on a marae, a song was sung after each speech.

One of the hosts, Peter Moeahu, explained that speedup of the line at work was not a major issue they faced today—a large meat works had been the major employer in this town of 6,000, but had closed in 1997. "Here they sped up the line so much the plant moved," he said. Now half the working-age population is unemployed, with Maori being a high percentage of the jobless.

Fight against cop violence

Moeahu pointed to the police harassment of young people. He related a recent incident of two young women who were arbitrarily handcuffed and roughed up by cops in a nearby city.

Much of the discussion centered on the current stage of the fight to bring to trial the cop who killed Steven Wallace. Another speaker, Tom Hunt, pointed to the importance of the meeting in linking this fight to others internationally and breaking down isolation.

Hunt explained the strength they had when they stood firm, giving as an example the fact that the killer cop, despite officially being declared innocent, has been unable to return to Waitara to live because a significant part of the community has made it clear it is unacceptable. He said they would regard it as a provocation if the cop tried to come back.

After the meeting, discussion continued over a delicious lunch, with stories swapped



Peter Moeahu (left) and Tamawaru Hunt (right) with Jacob Perasso and Margaret Trowe at Maori meeting place in Waitara, New Zealand. They told U.S. socialists of fight against racism, and cop brutality, and of historic struggle of Maori nationality against colonial domination.

of union experiences and how to take struggles forward. One retired unionist said she was pleased that union people were supporting justice for Steven Wallace.

The newspaper for the region, *The Daily News*, came to the marae at the invitation of the hosts to interview Trowe and Perasso. The journalist asked why they had come to a country on the other side of the world instead of staying in the United States to campaign.

The article in the next day's issue reported: "We are running a very serious campaign," Ms. Trowe replied. "It doesn't recognize any boundaries. We feel like we have won already, in the sense that we meet the kind of folks that these brothers and sisters [those at the marae] represent." Quoting Perasso, the article concluded, "We get the same response wherever we go—the United States, Australia, and here."

Tamawaru Hunt and Tom Hunt then took the visitors on a tour of the area, relating the history of the battles between Maori and

British colonizers in the mid-19th century, and the fight since then to regain the land stolen. "The whole town of Waitara is built on the theft of our land, which has been perpetuated ever since through racism," Tom Hunt explained.

Racist anticrime campaign

One subject discussed was the current campaign being waged by ruling-class politicians and officials, and sensationalized in the bourgeois media, that presents Maori as naturally more violent and more "criminal," and claims they abuse their children more than others in the population.

Those present rejected these assertions. It was noted how statistics on violence were selectively highlighted to justify the "anticrime" campaign and the disproportionate victimization of Maori by the government. One person observed that laws against violence were enforced in a racist way, and that cops are a major source of

violence against the oppressed.

Tom Hunt answered the myth that Maori are naturally violent either from their supposed genetic makeup or cultural upbringing. Prior to colonization Maori did not have standing armies. They tended crops and carried out other tasks as a community at the required times. Warfare between Maori was subordinate to this. The number of wars fought among Maori is fewer than those that successive New Zealand governments have committed troops for.

Some remarked that today violence by working people against each other, youth suicide, and drug abuse were real social questions.

Trowe explained how capitalism itself promotes dog-eat-dog values, as the bosses and their government seek to divide and atomize working people in order to weaken our capacity to struggle. She pointed out how reflections of capitalist alienation lessen as working people join in solidarity with each other against different manifestations of the capitalist system.

"We raise the level of social relations among us through struggle," she said.

The brutality inherent in capitalism cannot be legislated away; a society based on solidarity and human dignity can only be built by making a revolution that overthrows capitalist property relations.

Similarly, the discussion also took up how in human history racism is a relatively recent phenomenon, rooted in the rise of capitalism and the development of chattel slavery, colonialism, and imperialism, and how ending racism was intertwined with overthrowing capitalism.

The socialist candidates addressed a class of 40 at a polytechnic (college) in Waitara the next day. In Auckland, Trowe and Perasso addressed a meeting hosted by the Militant Labor Forum. An interview with the two socialists appeared in the *New Zealand Herald*, the daily paper in Auckland.

Janet Roth is a garment worker in Auckland, New Zealand.

Harris joins workers at S. Carolina Labor Day

BY LAUREN HART

CHARLOTTE, North Carolina—On Labor Day, September 4, Socialist Workers presidential candidate James Harris joined 3,000 workers and their families in a picnic and rally organized by the International Longshoremen's Association (ILA) and other unionists in Charleston, South Carolina.

"I'm real proud to be here today with fighters from the ILA, the IUE [International Union of Electronic Workers], and other fighters from South Carolina," he said in brief remarks to the gathering. The fight by dockworkers to defend their union rights in Charleston "is of national and international significance."

He expressed solidarity with five ILA members who are under indictment for "inciting to riot" when police attacked a labor demonstration last January. "When we fight they say it's a riot," Harris pointed out.

The event drew other workers involved in struggles, including members of the IUE at a battery plant in Sumter, South Carolina. Three of these workers told Harris about their fight for safer conditions and against racist discrimination.

Richmond Truesdale, chairperson of the United Container Movers Association of Charleston, described the efforts of port truck drivers to unionize in face of antilabor laws. "We're doing work we're not paid for. The Constitution says that's slavery," Truesdale said. He asked Harris, "What are you trying to do?" with the election campaign.

"We're talking to working people about what we need to do to make change," the SWP candidate replied. "Real struggles are the motor force of change. We're socialists—we believe we need a workers and farmers government. We need to get politically aware and act independently, not look to the Democrats and Republicans."

Truesdale commented that he ran for the state legislature in the Democratic Party in a previous election. The Democrats "do nothing for us," he said.

"It's worse—they work against us," Har-

ris remarked. "We need a working-class party. And I don't say just a 'third party,'" he added, pointing to the incipient fascist figure of Patrick Buchanan, who is running for president as the Reform Party candidate.

Supporters of the Socialist Workers campaign set up a table outside the rally site. Six people bought *The Working Class and the Transformation of Learning: The Fraud of Education Reform Under Capitalism*, two of them with a subscription to the *Militant*.

One worker who spoke with Harris at the table said, "Your philosophy sounds all right." But when politicians get to Washington "it's a different thing."

"You notice I haven't promised to do anything," Harris replied. It's the fights of working people that change things. "Real politics is made in the streets."

"Thanks Mr. Harris. I'll think about what you've said," the worker replied.

Capitalism ruins environment

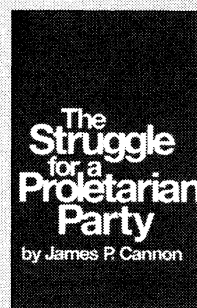
The next day Harris spoke at the University of North Carolina here in Charlotte. The Progressive Student Association sponsored the event. About 25 people attended, the big majority students.

from Pathfinder

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James P. Cannon

In this companion to Trotsky's *In Defense of Marxism*, Cannon defends the centrality of proletarianization within the political and organizational principles of Marxism in a polemic against a petty-bourgeois current in the party. The debate unfolded as Washington prepared to drag U.S. working people into the slaughter of World War II. \$19.95



Available from bookstores, including those listed on page 8.

Hours, speedup spark bakery workers strike

BY JEANNE DENNISON

FORT PAYNE, Alabama—"Dignity, Justice, Respect." "Seven days make one week." "We'll be here until the dough rises."

These are slogans on the picket signs workers are holding in front of the Earthgrains Company bakery here. On August 26, members of the Bakery, Confectionery, Tobacco Workers, and Grain Millers International Union (BCTGM) Local 611 voted overwhelmingly to strike, and immediately set up a picket line that is now being maintained 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

This is the first strike at this bakery ever. Union members on the picket line September 2 said one major issue in the contract strike is forced overtime.

Violet Whitmore and Juanita Guinn, who have each worked at the bakery for 23 years, said they don't usually mind the overtime, but that "people like to have a choice." Whitmore said she has worked as many as 62 days in a row.

About 700 members of Local 611 are on strike here. Don Guthrie, a member of the local negotiating committee, said fewer than 20 workers had crossed the line.

The bakery is on a main road in Fort Payne, and many people driving by honk in solidarity with the strikers. The unionists report they have gotten support from workers at UPS, Bell South, the nearby Norfolk Southern railroad, and Scottsboro Aluminum, where the Steelworkers recently won a contract fight, and that a farmer had dropped off watermelons for them.

A sign at Fort Payne's city limits proclaims this as the "sock capital of the world." There are many large and small unorganized hosiery mills here. As in many parts of Alabama, there are now many Mexican immigrant workers living and working here.

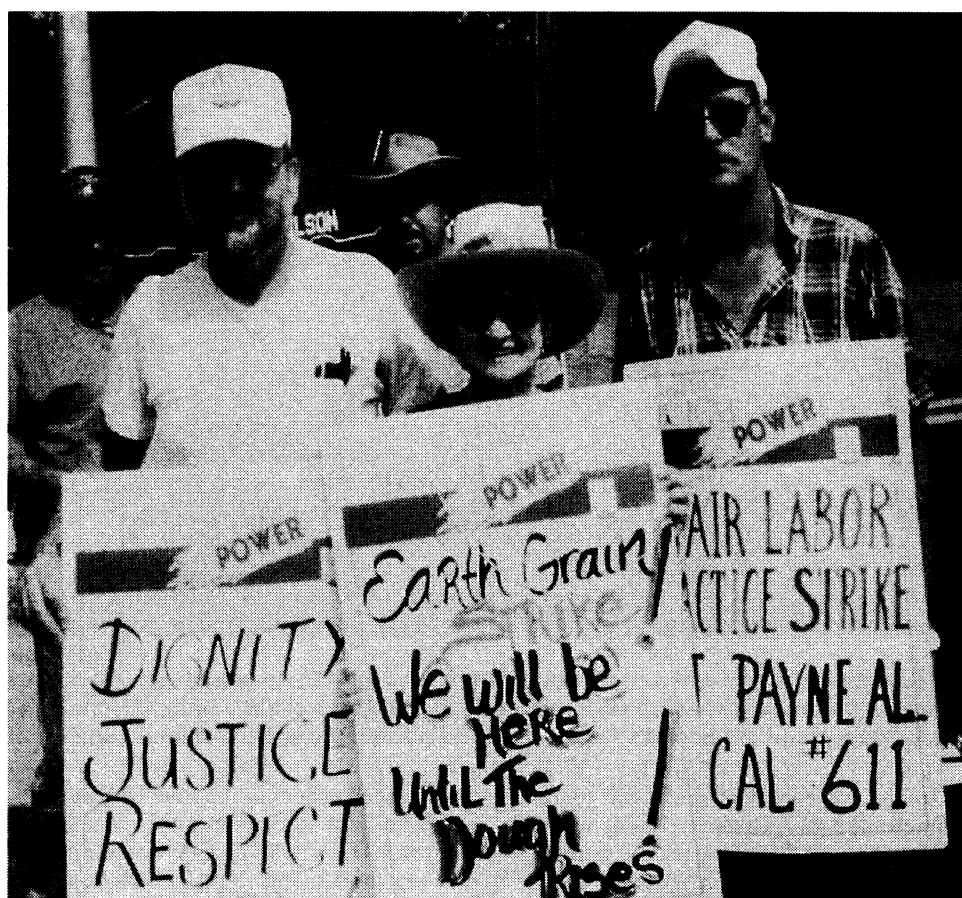
Teamster truck drivers are refusing to cross the picket line. Trucks are pulling in and out, but Donny Whitmore, a 21-year veteran of the bakery, asked, "Do you smell anything like honey buns or croissants? This is a bakery, but you can't smell anything baking. They're driving empty trucks up and down the road."

Whitmore said the company had brought in bosses to try to run some of the lines but had failed. "All the knowledge is out here," he said.

Besides overtime another major issue in the strike is an increase in wages, especially in starting pay.

Juanita Guinn said that although she had been making \$12.64 an hour, new workers were only paid \$9 an hour. It takes three years to get full pay. This leads to a high turnover.

Strikers also talked about the conditions on the job. "The speedup has been outrageous," said Ralph Bender, a maintenance worker with 24 years at the bakery. "A year ago they were making 700 donuts a minute. Now they're making 1,570 a minute. For this they added one machine and only four



Militant/Stephen Bloodworth
Pickets in Fort Payne, Alabama, one of several Earthgrains bakeries on strike in U.S.

workers."

Christine Brown, a worker on the donut line with 22 years of service, said, "It's illegal that the company immediately cut off the health insurance benefits when the strike began, and that Earthgrains has even stopped paying the premiums for retirees' benefits."

Earthgrains, the country's second largest

bread company, has more than 50 plants across the United States with more than 6,000 workers. Union members at more than 20 bakeries are now out, either on contract strike or honoring picket lines set up by strikers. They include plants in Decatur and Forest Park, Georgia; Chattanooga, Nashville, and Memphis, Tennessee; Mobile,

Alabama; and Meridian, Mississippi.

Lary Aultman, business agent for Local 611, said the owners of Earthgrains were surprised at the support strikers have won from workers at other bakeries.

Local 611 is putting out a "Fort Payne Strike Journal" daily. There is also a solidarity newsletter that goes out to workers at all the Earthgrains plants. The "Special Strike Edition" of this newsletter quotes "absolute and total" support from the Teamsters bakery drivers for Northern California, and notes that the bakery workers union organizes Earthgrains bakeries in Sacramento, Stockton, Fresno, and Oakland, California.

❖

BY LEA BOCKMAN

DECATUR, Georgia—"Strike update: 8 plants down" read a union flier on the picket line here where workers are on strike against Earthgrains. Since production workers at the company's Fort Payne, Alabama, plant started the strike August 26, it has spread to bakeries here and seven other plants in different states. "You should go to Forest Park," one picket told a visitor. "They've got the place shut down tight." Forest Park and Decatur are near Atlanta.

"Shorter hours. We want to work our shift, and then go home and rest and be with our families," said James Freeman, a member of BCTGM Local 42, with 30 years at the bakery. Workers currently work up to 16-hours shifts and some workers have gone for 61 days without a day off.

Freeman added, "We think it's unfair for a company like Earthgrains to spend \$650 million to buy up other bakeries, and then offer us a pitiful 30 cents an hour for a three-year contract. We're going to get what we want. You could say we're optimistic."

UK bus drivers protest two-tier pay

BY JULIE CRAWFORD AND PAUL GALLOWAY

MANCHESTER, England—Bus workers at two companies in the northwest of England, First Group Manchester and at Stagecoach Ribble, have been conducting a series of one-day strikes every week for the last two months. The workers belong to the Transport and General Workers' Union (TGWU).

At First Group's Queens Road depot here union members explained that their dispute, which has now been going on for two months, is over pay and working conditions, and in particular against the two-tier wage system that currently exists for drivers.

Since First Group took over bus services in North Manchester in July, the company has introduced what is known as the Separate Operating Unit. While established drivers earn £6.60 per hour (£1=US\$1.41), workers hired under the new conditions start at £5.09 per hour and never reach the top

rate. The 1,750 TGWU members are demanding that wages for new hires increase over five years to reach the standard rate.

"First Group made £151 million profit last year, and we are the ones that made it, and this is what we get for it," said a picket who asked that his name not be published to avoid reprisals by the company.

Several workers pointed out how one of the bosses locked the workers out of the depot on strike days, making it impossible to get to the union office. The company is videotaping pickets in all depots, and also videotaping people absent due to sickness.

The company sent workers a letter a few weeks ago threatening 60 days notice of termination of contract, on one hand, and a new offer of a 4.5 percent wage increase, on the other. The workers voted 96 percent to reject the new offer. A couple of bus strikers explained that it would actually increase the gap between the wages of workers under

the new conditions and those of higher-seniority workers.

Another striker said, "They are taking this country back to the days of Dickens." Pointing to another worker, he said, "My colleague and I have been in every dispute for the last 22 years and they are trying to push us back to what we had before." Noting that they had previously won a 38-hour workweek, he added, "They are trying to push our hours back up."

At Ribble, striking bus workers are demanding a pay raise from £5.23 per hour to £5.50 per hour. One striker explained that when state-run bus lines were privatized several years ago the bosses initially introduced "profit-related pay." Later they took it away and drivers lost around £20 of their weekly income.

"Stagecoach Group works as one group," the same striker explained, "but when it comes to pay and conditions they operate as separate groups." In Manchester, bus drivers for Stagecoach get £6.60 per hour.

Since privatization, bus strikers at Ribble have lost overtime rates and bank holiday (national holiday) rates. One striker commented, "It doesn't matter whether you work 38 hours or 100 hours—our pay is always £5.23 per hour." These premium rates were also eliminated for the First Bus workers in Manchester.

Strikers at Ribble said the bosses forced a reballoon under the guise of a different offer that amounted to the same terms. But 82 percent of the workers voted to continue the strike. "There are also a number of nonunion workers here but they are supporting the strike," a picket reported.

The strikers in Manchester and Preston have been visited by other workers keen to extend solidarity. Mike, a worker from an engineering factory in Manchester, commented on his visit to the picket line, "It's hardly surprising that the bus workers have had to go on strike given how they are being treated."

Workers also report they have received broad support from working people who rely on bus service.

Julie Crawford is a member of the National Union of Rail, Maritime, and Transport Workers. Paul Galloway is a member of the Amalgamated Engineering and Electrical Union.

Foes of death penalty in N. Carolina speak out

BY LAUREN HART

CHARLOTTE, North Carolina—The city council here adopted a resolution August 28 calling for the state of North Carolina to institute a two-year moratorium on executions. About 250 people packed the city council chambers for the meeting where the resolution was debated. The overwhelming majority wore stickers that read, "Moratorium Now." A few carried hand-lettered signs with slogans such as "Count us for a moratorium."

James Ferguson, president of the North

Carolina Academy of Trial Lawyers, headed a list of speakers in favor of the resolution. Over the last 10 years, at least three people have been sentenced to death in North Carolina for crimes they did not commit, Ferguson said. Others were convicted because they could not afford competent lawyers. State law allows the execution of the mentally ill and persons under 18, and more than 60 percent of those on death row are Black, he added.

Other speakers in support of the resolution included several clergy members, a rep-

resentative of the local NAACP chapter, and a Black woman whose daughter had been murdered. "I deserve to see genuine justice, not a conveyor belt" of convictions, she said.

Many speakers stressed that the resolution was not calling for an end to the death penalty, only that it be made "fair." But the large turnout reflected the growing resistance to state-sponsored brutality—both legal executions and at the hands of the cops on the street.

The council then heard a parade of police officers and others who argued that the resolution would weaken the authority of the cops. One uniformed cop declared that executions are necessary to fend off the "criminal element in society that cares nothing for your property." Less than two dozen of those in attendance applauded these speakers.

Following this debate the council voted 8-3 to adopt the resolution. Mayor Patrick McCrory promptly vetoed the decision, asserting that the issue is not within the city government's jurisdiction. In a September 5 vote, the council overrode his veto. Charlotte is the seventh municipal government in North Carolina to call for a moratorium on executions.



In New International no. 11

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Farm workers hold national convention

BY NED WEBSTER

FRESNO, California—The United Farm Workers of America (UFW) held its 15th Constitutional Convention here September 2 and 3. Some 400 delegates and 600 others attended.

The convention began by recognizing some of the ongoing struggles by farm workers in the state. Delegates representing 200 workers on strike for union recognition against four apple growers in Washington State, as well as workers at the E&J Gallo Winery in Modesto and Sonoma, California, who are fighting for a new contract, were introduced. Speakers at the convention referred frequently to these two struggles. Delegates adopted a resolution introduced from the floor calling on each local ranch committee to organize to collect money for the apple strikers.

Pickup in struggles

Lucía Madero and María de la Luz Mena, two young farm workers on strike against Larsons in Pasco, Washington, spoke with the *Militant*. "Four farms are on strike in the area, including Larsons and Bodega," Madero said. "The strike is really powerful. At first we had a few picketing the farms. The other day we had 50 people. Bosses and a few workers are working, but apples are falling on the ground. Many families support and picket."

"We went on strike last December," she explained. "The bosses reduced our pay from 60 cents for each tree pruned to 35 cents. That means we only make about \$25 a day. So we stopped working. The bosses said those who want to work can work and those who don't should go."

"We had never stopped working before. Before that everyone was scared. Not anymore, because there is a limit. The pay is low and we work partial days. We couldn't take any more."

Both Madera and Mena participated in the August 6 march by 3,000 immigrant workers in Mattawa, Washington, to demand legal residence for undocumented workers, better wages, and the right to organize unions. "Many people are fighting and defending their rights in Washington today. It strengthens us to know that others are fighting."

The UFW has grown from 20,000 to 27,000 members over the last six years, and this was evident at the convention. The union has won 20 certification elections and 24 new contracts.

Besides California and Washington, delegates were present from Texas and Florida.

At some farms where there have not been union agreements for years, workers have begun to fight for new contracts. One such example is Gallo. Another is Pict Sweet, a mushroom farm with 300 workers. The union has not had a contract there since United Foods bought the operation in 1986.

Jessica Arciniega, an organizer for the UFW's mushroom workers campaign, explained, "Recently workers decided to push for a contract because of mistreatment. People are fed up. They took away benefits and workers have had no significant wage increases. They have been paid 2 cents more per basket since 1986. We decided to do a boycott. Many rallies have taken place in Oxnard and Los Angeles, which are the markets for these mushrooms."

Nearly 70 percent of mushroom workers on California's Central Coast region are now covered by UFW contracts.

The convention adopted a resolution entitled "Organizing to Grow." This is an effort to expand the union beyond farm workers, a policy that departs from the union's base in the fields. It takes advantage of the fact that many workers who are not currently field workers, but know the UFW through past experience or through family and friends, look to this union when they seek to organize.

Florentino Aguilar is a trimmer at Central Valley Meat Co. in Hanford, California, where 200-250 people work. Aguilar, who has worked there eight years, reported, "The bosses treat us like animals, not human beings. Many people get cut or banged up. People are sent to the company clinic, which sends people back to work. Since I have worked there we have had four work stoppages in the boning room. We've been in contact with the UFW since October 1999."

"Seventy-five per cent of the workers have signed cards to join the UFW," Aguilar said. "In the last four to five years, the line speed went from 200 cows slaughtered, in a shift of 8-10 hours, to 450-600."

Armida Núñez has worked at Mercury Luggage, a plant of 70 in Corcoran, California, for three years. She recounted, "We were on a campaign to organize the UFW. I saw the company was treating people badly. There was a lot of favoritism and speed-up. We decided to organize a union. I called the UFW and they met with us. The company fired a group of eight people who were seeking the union. The company fired us March 22. We had a protest in front of the factory that day."

The convention also adopted a resolution endorsing what it termed the "alliance" be-

Ohio Steelworkers mark one year of lockout

BY JOE HUGHES
AND TONY PRINCE

MANSFIELD, Ohio—"We've got to win. We'll last one more day," Candy Green, a locked-out member of United Steelworkers of America (USWA) Local 169, said, expressing the determination of the 1,500 workers who rallied here September 9.

The rally marked the one-year anniversary of the lockout by Armco Steel, now AK Steel, against 600 workers. The company wanted to impose a contract that would have forced unlimited mandatory overtime on the workers, and it locked them out when it became clear they would not accept this.

Many other workers echoed Green's sentiments. Lucian Wyant, one of a group of Steelworkers from Titan Tire in Des Moines, Iowa, who have been on strike since May 1998, said, "The companies are trying to break the unions. But as long as we stand together no one is going to break us. As long as the AK Steel workers stick together they are going to win. We're too strong and powerful when we stick together."

Lorraine Fairchild, who works in a non-union factory making electrical contacts, was at the rally from 8:00 a.m. serving soda pop. "My husband has been at AK 31 years today," she said. "I've never had to deal with anything like this. I've never worked for a union. This has been a whole new thing for me."

"As far as unlimited mandatory overtime is concerned, it's downright ridiculous," Fairchild said. "I'm sure that [AK Steel vice-president Alan] McCoy doesn't work that. It's unreasonable. And they don't work two hours overtime or four hours overtime. It's a double shift. My husband got one weekend off a month."

A group of about 10 USWA members from Kaiser Aluminum in Newark, Ohio, attended the rally. They anticipate going back to work shortly as part of the settlement of their two-year struggle against that corporation's lockout.

Paula Bingman, one of the unionists at Kaiser, explained that the Newark plant had voted against the proposed settlement, but that they were in the minority. "We were disappointed at first, but we've learned to accept it," she said.

"We're most definitely a stronger union now, and we are going to continue getting stronger. We all have to stick together. We've been to every one of these rallies in Mansfield. They have awesome rallies. Not just the Steelworkers, but every union should have rallies like this."

Also attending the event were members of other unions, including the United Auto Workers, Laborers, Communications Workers, and Union of Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Employees (UNITE).

John Fraley, a young warehouse worker

and member of UNITE from Columbus, Ohio, explained, "I've only been in the union six months. This is the first time I've been to a rally like this. I like it." He added, "We brought up some canned goods that we collected among the workers. It's not much, but we brought up what we could."

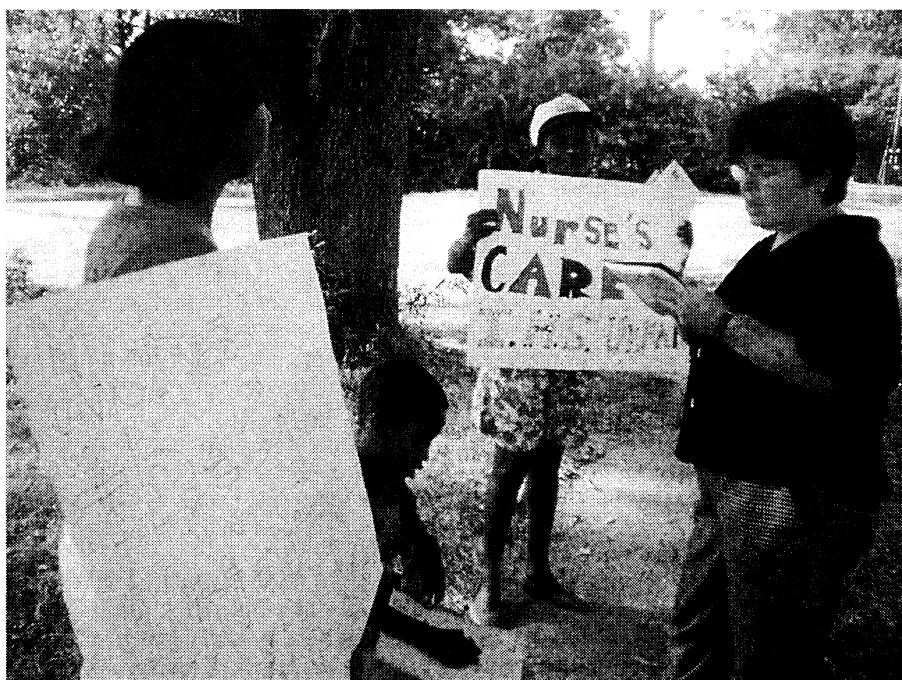
Asked about his workplace, Fraley said, "There are a lot of immigrants in the warehouse, from places like Somalia. A lot of them don't speak English, but I always find an interpreter to make sure they understand. We work great together."

A number of young people took part in the rally. Clark Ainsworth, part of a group of students from Oberlin, Ohio, explained, "The father of one of the students at Oberlin belongs to Local 169, and he came up to the college and told us about the lockout. We decided it was a good cause, and we have about 30 people here. There's definitely a lot of unity and support at the rally. We need to continue to educate other students and spread awareness about things like this."

Speakers at the rally included USWA District 1 director David McCall, Ohio AFL-CIO president William Burga, USWA International secretary-treasurer Leo Gerard, and NAACP vice president Marcia Webb.

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

Socialist Workers candidate backs striking Louisiana nurses



Militant/Jacque Henderson

Nurses picketing August 25 outside Shreveport, Louisiana, nursing home explain their struggle to Lea Sherman, right, Socialist Workers candidate for U.S. Senate from Texas. The nurses are paid less than \$10 an hour and are forced to work frequent 12-hour shifts, often without overtime pay. They have been fighting for a contract since organizing a union a year ago. Sherman, a meat packer from Houston, Texas, was part of campaign teams throughout the state that put the socialist candidates for president and vice president on the Louisiana ballot.

tween the UFW and Bear Creek Production Co., the largest rose grower in Wasco, California, employing 1,400 workers. The resolution stated that the UFW believes that "labor and management [must] work together to meet the challenge of increased global competition" and recognizes "the role of labor in creating economic stability." More than half the rose production in California's Central Valley is under union contract.

Amnesty campaign for immigrants

The call for amnesty for undocumented workers already in the United States was a major theme of the convention. Many of those present had been involved in protest actions voicing this demand.

Several of the reporters to the convention from the different campaigns and social service auxiliaries of the UFW made references to the amnesty campaign. Much of this had a focus of lobbying government officials and Democratic Party politicians.

Many local, state, and congressional politicians from the Democratic Party addressed the convention, including Gov. Gray Davis, and Lt. Gov. Cruz Bustamante, who delivered the main talk during a dinner after the first day of the convention.

Richard Trumka, secretary-treasurer of the AFL-CIO, also addressed the gathering. He focused on campaigning for Democratic presidential candidate Albert Gore.

Representatives from several other farm worker unions spoke. One of these was Baldemar Velázquez, president of the Farm Labor Organizing Committee based in Ohio and Michigan. He described some of the organizing FLOC has undertaken in North Carolina.

The others were Ramón Ramírez, president of Pineros y Campesinos Unidos del Noroeste (Northwest Treeplanters and Farmworkers United) based in Oregon; Aspacio Alcántara from the Centro Independiente de Trabajadores Agrícolas (Independent Farm Workers Center) based among apple workers in New York; and Victor Flores from the Union of Shepherds based in the Bakersfield, California, area. Luis Ureña from the Confederación Nacional Campesina (National Peasant Confederation) in the Dominican Republic also spoke.

Ramírez stated, "The fight for amnesty is a fight for dignity and respect, for the same benefits and treatment, for just wages." Repeating a common slogan by immigrants protesting arrests and deportations by the Immigration and Naturalization Service, he said, "We are here and we're not leaving."

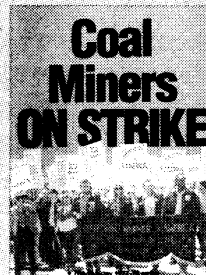
A march for dignity and legal residency, to be held October 14 at 10:00 a.m. at the Federal Building in Fresno, was publicized at the UFW convention.

Deborah Liatos, a member of the United Food and Commercial Workers in San Francisco, contributed to this article.

for further reading...

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Canada nickel miners strike to defend union

Continued from front page
reduce production costs, invest in new mine development, and remain competitive on the world nickel market. This is despite the fact that in 1998 the cost of producing a pound of nickel at Falconbridge was \$1.70, and just prior to the August strike had been reduced to \$1.30 a pound.

The company also says its Sudbury mines have only about seven years of ore reserves left, equivalent to 20 million tons. It has discovered a larger ore mass below its current mines in Sudbury called the Onaping Depth project, which has an estimated 17 million tons of high-grade ore. Falconbridge is proposing to build new mine shafts to this ore to a depth of more than 10,000 feet, which would make it the deepest base metal mine in the world.

Safety is a crucial question in a mine of such depth, given that the temperature rises one degree Celsius for every 900 feet as you dig down as well as the fact that Sudbury's geology is considered to be less stable than other mining areas in the region.

Falconbridge has refused to commit to developing the Onaping Depth project unless the miners agree to its contract offer.

Ernie Taylor, who has worked at Falconbridge for 33 years as an electrician and is the union's health and safety coordinator, explained that the company wants to cut back on full-time union health and safety representatives at its Sudbury operations. It seeks to eliminate his job of coordinating safety among the four mines, mill, smelter, and shop trades.

Taylor said, "There were 200 safety infractions by Falconbridge as recorded by the Ontario Ministry of Labour in the last year. This is in operations that are half the depth of the proposed Onaping Depth project, so we can't allow the company to cut back on safety now."

He noted that more than 80 workers have died in accidents at Falconbridge since 1923. He added that the Falconbridge East mine was permanently closed in 1984 when a ground fall that rated 2.8 on the Richter scale killed four miners.

Support for the striking miners is widespread in the Sudbury area. USWA Local 6500, which represents 3,000 nickel miners at Inco here, is donating \$1,000 a month for the duration of the strike. At the Labor Day picnic, the Wholesale and Retail Workers Union—a division of the USWA—as well as local businesses donated several thousand dollars to pay for the food and re-

freshments.

On August 24 the union organized a family day on the smelter picket line that drew families that for several generations have had relatives working in the mines.

Retired miners and widows aid strike

On August 10 union president Rolly Gauthier spoke to a meeting of the union's retirees and widows and urged them to visit the picket lines to share their stories and experiences from past strikes at Falconbridge. "You, as senior members of the union—you came through struggles to get the union in the workplace," Gauthier said. "The struggles were difficult.... You are retired from the job but you can't be retired from the fight."

During union meetings the retirees staff the picket lines and every Tuesday the widows prepare hot meals at the union hall. They are also on call for emergency picket line duty.

As the Labor Day picnic was winding down, a miner from the Lindsley mine offered to take the visiting steelworkers to the picket lines. Each of the lines has a decorated Christmas tree on prominent display with an "On Strike" sign on it. This is a message to the company about how long the miners are prepared to stay out to defend their union.

At the smelter the visiting unionists from Toronto were greeted by several miners. Janet Thomas, who has worked there as a process operator for three years, said she thought that defending seniority rights was the most important issue in the strike. "Seniority is the cornerstone of any union. There has to be respect for the older guy," she said.

Thomas voiced the calm confidence shared by many union members as she said, "We will continue the fight. We all know where we stand." Asked about the attempt by the company to keep the smelter running with management staff during the strike, Thomas said there wasn't much work getting done judging by the small number of trucks that were crossing the picket line carrying processed ore.

On September 6 the *Toronto Globe and Mail* carried the headline, "Falconbridge strikers vow no surrender." The article re-

ported on the fact that the union's negotiating committee had rejected a new company offer. Union negotiators said the company wants to replace the 300 to 400 workers scheduled to retire from Falconbridge next year with nonunion labor.

To obtain more information about the strike or offer support, contact Mine Mill/CAW Local 598 in Sudbury at: (705) 673-3661.

Rosemary Ray is a member of United Steelworkers of America Local 5338 in Toronto.

Conference

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- 9:30am *The U.S. Cold War against Cuba: Mary-Alice Waters, president, Pathfinder Press*
10:45am *Keynote presentation: Fernando Ramirez de Estenoz, Chief of Cuban Interests Section*
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Cops in Detroit gun down deaf Black man

BY LESTER DOLPHY

DETROIT—Cops here killed a deaf and mute Black man while relatives and neighbors shouted "He's deaf, he can't hear!"

Errol Shaw, Sr., 39, a neighborhood yardman holding a rake while surrounded by several cops, was gunned down in his driveway August 29.

Protesting the latest killing by cops at a September 1 picket outside the 8th precinct, 40 demonstrators carried placards and shouted slogans demanding "Justice for Errol Shaw." Called by the Detroit Coal-

ition Against Police Brutality, the action drew participation from Shaw's community and members of several deaf organizations, including the Detroit Black Deaf Advocate.

Through sign interpreters, several deaf persons recounted to the media the run-ins they and their families have had with the police.

Many of the signs carried by protesters as they marched around the cop station had a sketch of a rake next to a slogan. One read: "Using a rake, shovel, or broom can cause death by police!"

As this reporter walked the line a young Black man said, "If you're a Black man with a wallet or a rake, you can be shot by the cops." He was referring to the New York City cop killing last year of African immigrant Amadou Diallo, who held up a wallet as 41 bullets were fired at him.

Detroit police have the infamous distinction among big-city cops of the highest killings during the 1990s, as reported by local news media from an FBI document.

Lester Dolphy is a meat packer in Detroit.

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U.S. gov't frame-up of Wen Ho Lee collapses

Continued from front page

ers' ongoing campaign of slanders and threats against the workers state in China.

Beijing has reportedly succeeded in developing a sophisticated miniaturized nuclear weapons delivery system similar to Washington's W-88 nuclear warhead, which allows multiple atomic weapons to be loaded onto a single missile. Washington pointed to China's self-defense move as a justification for launching a "spy scare" campaign, claiming some individuals must have passed these U.S. nuclear weapons secrets to China.

In the midst of this witch-hunting campaign, Lee was fired in March 1999 from his job at the Los Alamos National Laboratory in New Mexico, where he had worked for 20 years as a scientist with a specialty in writing computer programs. No espionage charges were ever brought against him, however.

Instead, Lee was arrested on 59 felony counts of mishandling classified information stored on computers at the government lab. Held without bail, he was accused of downloading restricted materials to unsecured computers and tapes. In pursuing this case the U.S. government aimed to further curtail democratic rights and strengthen the arbitrary powers of the executive branch of government.

Lee, in turn, filed a lawsuit against the FBI and the Justice and Energy departments, charging that he was being singled out for prosecution because he is of Chinese origin. Under the plea bargain arrangement Lee agreed to drop this suit.

A broad array of Asian-American organizations rallied around his case. Three major scientific academies—the National Academy of Sciences, the National Academy of Engineering, and the Institute of Medicine—issued an open letter to U.S. attorney general Janet Reno condemning Lee's incarceration.

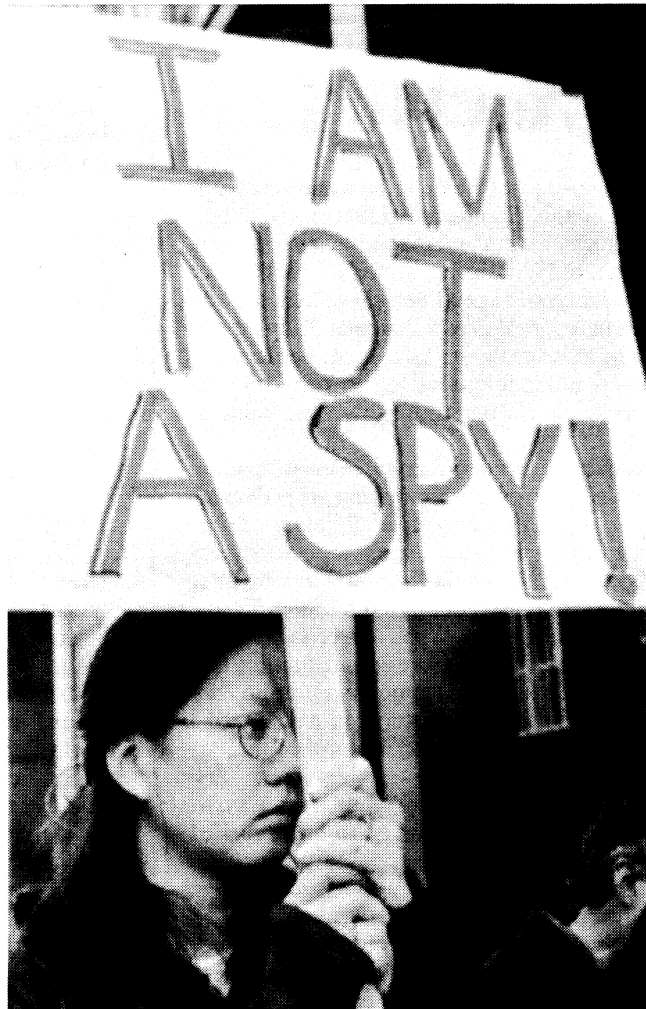
Judge sets bail and home detention

On August 24 Judge James Parker of the U.S. district court in Albuquerque, New Mexico, ordered Lee, who had twice been denied bail, to be released on a \$1 million bond under an extremely strict form of home detention until the opening of his trial, scheduled for November 6.

Under Parker's draconian rules, Lee was to be barred from speaking to anyone except his wife, two children, and lawyers. His wife, Sylvia Lee, was to fax the FBI four hours before she planned to leave the house and would be subjected to FBI searches on entering and leaving their home. In addition, the judge ordered removal of all electronic communication devices except for one telephone line, which would be tapped. Lee would have had to wear an electronic bracelet and be subjected to video surveillance.

On August 31, the day prior to Lee's scheduled release, about 30 FBI agents invaded his home and spent more than 12 hours allegedly searching for the missing computer tapes.

The Clinton administration, however, was determined to keep him behind bars. Hours



Alberta Lee, daughter of Wen Ho Lee, protests his imprisonment. Frame-up sparked widespread outrage from many Asian-American and other organizations.

before Lee was to leave the prison, the Justice Department went over the head of the judge presiding over the case and got two federal appeals court judges from the 10th Circuit in Denver to issue an emergency

fied as secret or confidential by the government until after Lee had downloaded it.

Also last month, the chief government witness, FBI agent Robert Messemmer, admitted that the testimony he had presented

order blocking his release.

From the beginning the government had no case against Lee except for hearsay and innuendo. At the time the 59-count indictment was announced in December, government witnesses charged that Lee had downloaded the "crown jewels" of the nation's weapons program with secrets so highly classified they could "change the global strategic balance." Judge Parker based his initial refusal to grant bail on this testimony. At the time, the judge asserted that there was "clear and convincing evidence" that Lee was a threat to "national security."

By mid-August, however, several Los Alamos officials admitted that 99 percent of the information Lee supposedly copied was already in public literature. Testifying before Parker's court, John Richter, a retired nuclear weapons physicist with the Department of Energy, declared that all this information was available in scientific journals and the Energy Department's unclassified library in Oak Ridge, Tennessee.

In fact, the data downloaded was not even classified as secret or confidential by the government until after Lee had downloaded it.

Also last month, the chief government witness, FBI agent Robert Messemmer, admitted that the testimony he had presented

in December about Lee's actions was false. This testimony was key in denying bail to Lee, the judge acknowledged. Among other phony accusations, Messemmer charged that Lee had used subterfuge to gain access to a colleague's computer to download files, and that he had failed to report contacts with Chinese scientists during a 1986 visit approved by Los Alamos National Laboratories to a conference in Beijing.

Speaking Chinese forbidden

At Lee's first bail hearing shortly after his arrest, it was Messemmer who convinced the judge that Lee had to be isolated from others because "a single utterance" might give away national secrets. Parker agreed and issued an order that prohibited Lee from speaking Chinese with his family.

According to an article in the September 6 *New York Times*, Parker now admits that "Dr. Lee had not only done little to conceal his downloading, and knew full well that there were monitoring systems that would detect what he was doing, but at one point when he was trying to erase some files he called an open help line at the laboratory to seek assistance."

Although its case against Wen Ho Lee blew up in a fiasco, Washington continues its pressures against the Chinese workers state and its probes to curb democratic rights.

"Back to Square One: With Plea Expected in Los Alamos Case, Mystery of Lost Nuclear Secrets Deepens," the front-page headline of a September 12 *New York Times* article declares. "An investigation that began eight years ago as an effort to determine how China obtained highly classified information from American weapons labs," the article states, "appears to be back where it started, with the mystery still unsolved." The implication, of course, is that some culprits need to be found to "solve" the alleged mystery.

Fidel Castro speaks at New York meeting

BY OLGA RODRÍGUEZ

NEW YORK—Cuban president Fidel Castro addressed the United Nations "Millennium Summit" and spoke before some 2,500 people at the Riverside Church here in early September.

The Cuban delegation headed by Castro also included Ricardo Alarcón, president of the Cuban National Assembly, and foreign minister Felipe Pérez Roque.

At the September 6-8 summit, U.S. president William Clinton argued for further imperialist military interventions in other nations under the UN banner, calling for "peacekeepers that can be rapidly deployed" around the world. He pointed to invasions of Iraq, Yugoslavia, East Timor, and Sierra Leone as examples of more to come.

In response, the Cuban leader said in his brief remarks to the summit, "The principle of sovereignty cannot be sacrificed to an exploitative and unjust order in which a hegemonic superpower, relying on its power and strength, seeks to decide everything.

Cuba will never accept that."

He pointed to the legacy of "plunder of most of the Earth by the colonial powers, the rise of imperialism, and the bloody wars for redivision of the world" as the basis for the conditions of oppression and superexploitation that prevail in the semicolonial world today.

Two days later, on September 8, Castro spoke at an "Evening in Solidarity with Cuba" in Riverside Church. More than 2,000 people filled the main section of the church, and a nearby room was set up with a video monitor for an overflow crowd. Hundreds more, unable to get in, listened to the Cuban president from loudspeakers outside the church. Tickets to the event were reserved for those invited by the event's sponsors.

The meeting was sponsored by the New York Welcoming Committee for the Cuban Delegation to the United Nations Millennium Summit, made up of a number of organizations. These included some of the groups that had sponsored a meeting for Castro in Harlem during his 1995 trip to New York and a range of other political organizations active in opposing U.S. policy toward Cuba. Present at the meeting were several delegations and individuals from Cuba solidarity groups as far away as Florida and California.

Speakers included Democratic congresspeople Maxine Waters from California and José Serrano from New York; Rev. James Forbes of Riverside Church; Luis Miranda, president of Casa de las Américas, a Cuban-American organization that supports the revolution; and Lucius Walker of IFCO-Pastors for Peace.

In his four-hour speech, Castro detailed the growing gap between a handful of the planet's wealthiest nations and those in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. He noted that "in over 100 countries, the per capita income is lower now than it was 15 years ago." So-called developing countries "are actually in the process of being underdeveloped."

Calling for cancellation of the foreign debt, through which the imperialist powers squeeze the semicolonial world, he pointed out that the total debt now stands at \$2.4 trillion—four times what it was in 1982, despite the fact that "between 1982 and 1998, Third World countries have paid out more than \$3.4 trillion to service the debt."

Castro highlighted Cuba's record of in-

ternationalist solidarity with struggles for national liberation around the world. He pointed to the thousands of Cuban volunteer combatants who helped defend Angola's independence against invasions by the South African army under apartheid rule.

The Cuban president condemned Washington and other imperialist powers for their many years of backing the apartheid regime while seeking to strangle revolutionary Cuba through 40 years of an economic embargo, including the Helms-Burton law. None of these powers "took on the apartheid government or declared economic war on them: there was no Helms-Burton against the fascist regime of apartheid."

While Washington falsely accuses Cuba of violating human rights, Castro said, Puerto Rican political prisoners remain in U.S. prisons. He condemned the recent execution of Gary Graham by the Texas government and voiced support for the campaign to free Mumia Abu-Jamal, on death row in Pennsylvania. He pointed to the fact that of the more than 3,600 people awaiting execution in the United States today, "there is not one millionaire on death row."

In Cuba, Castro said, in face of the U.S. embargo as well as the economic crisis sparked by the collapse overnight of favorable trade and aid from the former Soviet bloc countries, the Cuban people are waging a fight to maintain the fundamental course of the revolution and its social gains.

Not only has Cuba not closed a single hospital, Castro said, but thousands of Cuban volunteer doctors have gone to countries in Latin America, the Caribbean, and Africa, and Cuba is even helping open medical schools in Gambia and elsewhere. Some 4,000 students from the semicolonial world are currently studying in Cuba, a number projected to increase to 10,000.

While the Cuban president was able to address the meeting in New York, the U.S. State Department denied a visa to National Assembly president Ricardo Alarcón to attend an earlier meeting of the Interparliamentary Union, held at the UN. It also denied him a permit to travel to Washington, where he was invited to meet with members of the Congressional Black Caucus. Alarcón said he had planned to announce that Cuba was reserving spaces for 250 Black youth from the United States to study for free in Cuba's medical schools.

FROM PATHFINDER

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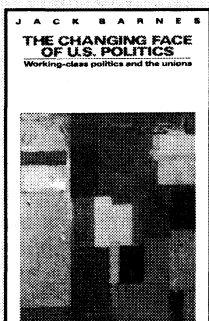
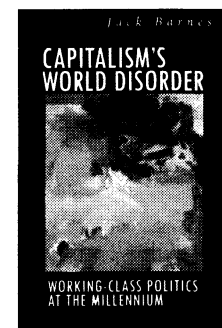
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Why they tried to frame Wen Ho Lee

The Clinton administration's attempt to frame up scientist Wen Ho Lee on espionage-related charges finally blew up in its face, as U.S. officials had to drop their case and Lee walked out of the prison where he was held for nine months in solitary confinement. That is cause for working people to celebrate.

At the same time, the U.S. rulers continue their probes to deepen their anti-China campaign, accompanied by efforts to undermine democratic rights and strengthen the arbitrary powers of the executive branch of the government.

The heart of the issue is Washington's irreconcilable hostility to the workers state in China, which came into being through a mighty socialist revolution by workers and peasants that overturned capitalist property relations, setting an example for working people worldwide.

U.S. officials arrogantly claim that China's acquisition of new military technology could only have come about through stealing U.S. government secrets. They are using this allegation as a pretext to push their witchhunting campaign, and to convince working people here that "we" face a "national security" threat. But as workers and farmers, we have everything in common with the Chinese people, and no common interests with *them*—the billionaire rulers of the United States, who are the number one enemy of humanity. Working people should back China's right as a sovereign nation to develop whatever defenses it needs in face of imperialist pressures and threats.

Of course, the charges against Lee were phony. It turned out that the information Lee downloaded is openly available in scientific journals and public libraries. That didn't stop government prosecutors from accusing Lee of ex-

posing the "crown jewels" of Washington's nuclear weapons program that could "change the global strategic balance." Through such charges and the big-business media hype around them, the U.S. rulers aimed to gut the presumption of innocence and keep Lee behind bars for life.

The government resorted to anti-Asian and anti-immigrant prejudice to try to make its case stick. Lee was essentially charged with downloading information on nuclear weapons he uses as part of his job while being of Chinese descent.

But the grotesque attempt to railroad Lee to jail sparked outrage. Asian-American organizations and other defenders of democratic rights began to raise an outcry of protest. Supporters of the government's campaign never succeeded in whipping up a chauvinist hysteria among public opinion to politically drive through the frame-up.

The failed witchhunt against Wen Ho Lee takes place under a government, the Clinton-Gore administration, that has pushed to lay the basis for developing a missile "defense" system that would give Washington a first-strike nuclear capacity. And China is at the top of the U.S. targets such missiles would be aimed at.

Meanwhile, the harassment of Lee is not over. As part of the plea agreement he will be forced to undergo FBI interrogation under oath on what supposedly happened to the unaccounted tapes. If prosecutors convince the judge that Lee is untruthful in his answers, they will seek to reinstate the original charges along with new charges of perjury and obstruction of justice. Working people should continue to demand that the U.S. government keep its hands off Wen Ho Lee.

Oppose attack on rights in UK

Working people should reject the assault on democratic rights in Britain initiated by a prominent big-business newspaper under the guise of protecting children. Cynically exploiting the emotion surrounding the death of eight-year-old Sarah Payne, the right-wing *News of the World* published the names, photos, and addresses of people formerly convicted of criminal offenses. This is a threat to the right of all to privacy and presumption of innocence. The scapegoating of those who have previously served sentences for sex offenses is an attempt to erode the social solidarity that the working class needs to fight the employers' drive to make us pay for the crisis of their system.

This campaign has emboldened ultraright outfits like the National Democrats, who have been active in promoting the violent street mobilizations targeting alleged former sex offenders in several cities. Although most of the big-business media and leading capitalist politicians have taken their distance from the *News of the World* campaign, it is the capitalist rulers' attacks on the rights of working people that give a green light to reactionary forces to take things a few steps further.

The last Tory and current Labour governments are responsible for the Sex Offenders Act of 1997 and subse-

quent strengthening of its provisions, which provide for a national register of sex offenders in the hands of the cops. This gives the police another weapon to use against working people in the name of protecting children. Current proposals to toughen legal penalties, possibly further mandatory life sentences, indefinite electronic tagging, and long-term supervision of convicted offenders, if approved, would set a precedent for taking such repressive measures against others.

The capitalists' "anti-child abuse" campaign has nothing to do with protecting children. For them, children have no value except as future workers to be exploited for a few decades and then to be tossed on the scrap heap when they reach a certain age. In fact, there is no "children's issue" that is separate from the interests of the working class. It's the billionaire class and their dog-eat-dog system that are the biggest threat to our class, including children—from their assault on fundamental social rights to the violence they unleash through the cops and fascist-minded gangs, and the wars they drag working people into. It will take a powerful working-class movement to take on the profit system and lead a revolutionary transformation of society to one under workers and farmers rule, where human solidarity can prevail.

Austin, Minnesota, paper interviews Trowe

The following article appeared in the September 7 issue of the *Austin, Minnesota, Post-Bulletin*, headlined, "Socialist VP candidate calls Austin home."

BY JAIME LARSON-McLOONE

The Socialist Workers Party candidate for vice president of the United States has called Austin her home for more than a year, but she's seen little of the city in the past three months.

Margaret Trowe moved to Austin to take a job at Quality Pork Processors Inc. in June 1999 and to help promote her party in Minnesota. Now she's campaigning with Socialist Workers Party presidential candidate James Harris throughout the country.

"We kind of got it rolling, and I got on the road to some of the bigger towns," Trowe said in Los Angeles. She said she's visited 17 states and made a short trip to New Zealand since she started campaigning.

Trowe, 52, said she campaigned in Austin about six weeks ago outside QPP, where she worked for about a year. She left her job in June to focus on the campaign.

Trowe said she's promoting the notion of a country run by and for workers and farmers. Capitalists have basked in the nation's recent prosperity at the expense of those groups, she said.

Because of that, Trowe said, her party is gaining supporters.

"It's the capitalists themselves who are producing what

will be a revolutionary movement," she said.

Trowe said she and Harris are on the ballot in 14 states, including Minnesota, and the District of Columbia. She said she has received support from former co-workers at QPP and hopes to become better known in Austin.

Austin Mayor Bonnie Rietz said Monday she wasn't aware that Austin was the home of a vice presidential candidate.

"It must be quite fascinating to be on a national ticket and running for a national office," Rietz said. "It'd be fun to just meet her and talk to her and see how things are going for her."

State Sen. Pat Piper, DFL [Democratic Farmer-Labor Party]-Austin, said she, too, was unaware of Trowe's campaign, but she commended Trowe for her promoting her beliefs.

"I always admire anybody who takes the leap into saying, 'I want to run for a public office,'" Piper said. "It's difficult enough, but when you're running for a party that's not well known, it's very difficult. But it's good that people do get involved."

Before moving to Austin, Trowe worked for two years at a meat-packing plant in Marshalltown, Iowa.

Trowe said she got involved in socialist issues as a teenager in the 1960s.

"Like many teen-agers, I didn't want to become part of the system that divided working people," she said. "I didn't want to be a part of continuing racism or oppression."

Meat packers rebut boss claims

Continued from front page

met with them about the speed of the line. The seven-hour strike occurred in response to the company speeding up the rate of production from 450 cattle in 10 hours to 700 cattle in less than eight hours, as well as company practices such as forcing people to work while injured.

Both workers testified they had attended most of the meetings of the organizing committee, which meets several times a week at the union hall.

Olvera said there had been no discussions in those meetings about chanting "Sí se puede." Farley testified that "decisions were made collectively" and that workers on the committee had not been given orders or instructions by union officials. "Sometimes there's not even a union officer around when we're meeting," he continued.

False charge of paid votes

Dakota Premium also charges that union "agents" offered to pay workers \$10,000 each to vote for the union. In earlier testimony, a pro-company worker asserted that her brother-in-law, a kill floor worker at the plant, had told family members that immigrant workers could get \$10,000 and a two-year work permit by voting for the union.

On September 4, Obdulia Flores, the worker's wife, and Mercedes de la Cruz, his sister-in-law, testified to refute that charge. According to the two women, there had been a family picnic and there had been a discussion and disagreement about a car—but no discussion about the union organizing drive.

Toward the end of Flores's testimony, company lawyers asked her why her attorney had sent a letter to the company. She explained that before the election her son, a former worker in the plant, was insulted and walked out of the plant. "Company managers thought he was passing out union material. They instructed the guards to escort him off the job site, as they yelled and insulted him." He had been passing out wedding invitations.

When asked why her son no longer works in the plant, Flores answered, "The company lowered his wages and expected him to do the same job in less time. He didn't want to work like that for a lower salary."

Lisa Jordan, a professor at the University of Minnesota, testified that she had been present at the first meeting of the union organizing committee. It was at this meeting that the union lawyer explained to the largely immigrant workforce that they need not fear reprisals from the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) as a result of the drive for a union. He pointed to the recent victory by seven Mexican-born workers who had been part of a successful union organizing effort at Holiday Inn Express in Minneapolis. The INS had detained these workers but, under public pressure, was compelled to release them and to assert its neutrality while an organizing fight was in place. The victimized Holiday Inn Express workers ended up winning a two-year work permit.

At the conclusion of the testimony the hearing officer for the NLRB agreed to a motion by company lawyers to continue the proceedings after September 21, in order to get the testimony of a worker in the boning department who is on vacation in Mexico. The NLRB is supposed to issue a ruling on the challenge by the company 14 days after the conclusion of the hearing.

Lawyers for the company have made repeated motions to obtain the membership list of the union in-plant leadership committee that has arisen in the struggle there. To date the judge has refused these motions. The judge has also refused a motion to deny the right of Local 789 president William Pearson to wear a T-shirt saying "Sí se puede."

Company continues harassment

While the hearings have been taking place, the bosses have continued their pressure on workers in the plant. The company, for example, decertified Samuel Farley from his position on the boning line after making the operation extremely difficult for one person to do. They currently have him working on the Wizard knife away from the center of the boning area. They watch him especially closely and carry out checks on his work that they have not carried out on other workers in that position.

The company continues to pressure workers who have been injured to not report their injuries and to continue working. According to members of the leadership committee in the plant, workers in the kill department at their recent union meeting discussed the fact that three workers have been injured and never reported their injuries.

One worker in the cooler, who tore muscles in his shoulder and arm on one side of his body, continues to work using his shoulder and arm on the other side. The job of workers in the cooler involves pushing the carcasses of several cattle at the same time on overhead rails to positions in the cooler to be refrigerated overnight, in order to be ready for the boning operations the following day.

Correction

The photograph of the farmer participating in the milk dump protest on page 3 of the September 18 *Militant* should have been identified as Xavier Avila.

'Australia Firstism' is trap for working people

Reprinted below are major excerpts from a statement issued by the Communist League and the Young Socialists in Australia.

The swirl of protests against the World Economic Forum (WEF) in Melbourne beginning September 11, like those in Seattle against the World Trade Organization (WTO) last year, target "globalization," "world trade tyranny," "the multinationals," and "Third World sweatshops." Despite anticapitalist sentiments by a range of protesters, the economic-nationalist thrust of these protests not only deflects political fire away from the capitalist rulers of Australia but also pushes the deadly trap of an alliance with them.

Globalization is not new. For the past three centuries or more, the capitalist system has been expanding to every corner of the globe, dragging humanity into the advancing world market and increasing the numbers of workers and farmers exploited by capital.

Globalization creates not just the economic misery of an exploitative class society, but also an expanding international working class, the fighters who will dig capitalism's grave.

Today there is growing confidence and willingness to resist among workers, farmers and youth around the world. Australia is no exception. From paper workers and hotel workers to strikers at Joy Mining Machinery and RNJ Sicame, working people are standing up against the relentless assaults of the bosses on our dignity, our health and safety, our unions. Protests are growing: against the government's antiunion legislation and gutting of safety on the job, against divisive attacks on refugee and immigrant rights, for Aboriginal rights, and by dairy farmers against milk deregulation.

Chief enemy is at home

Focusing protests on "globalization," "multinationals" and other supranational targets steers people in the direction of supporting the capitalist exploiters and their system in each country. Capitalist corporations and banks use the monetary and military power of nation-states to protect their interests. The main enemy of working people in this country is the government based in Canberra, and the capitalist ruling families it serves.

The anti-WEF protests are being channeled towards protectionism. This nationalist framework is backed by the Democrats, Greens, middle-class leftist groups, union officials, and others. It is no coincidence that the "Australia First" thrust of the protests is also backed by One Nation ultrarightists.

The renewed campaign of the officialdom of some unions for "fair" trade, not "free" trade to supposedly defend "Australian" jobs is reactionary. It is a nationalist campaign, of a piece with efforts by the boss class to get us to "Buy Australian-made." Far from defending jobs in this country, this pits workers and small farmers here against fellow toilers from other countries whose low wages mean superexploitation. What is needed is an internationalist perspective, drawing on the capacities of working people of all nationalities to struggle against the common enemy.

Australia Firstism chains working people to our exploiters: the Australian industrialists and bankers who grow fabulously wealthy off the exploitation and superexploitation of workers and farmers here, and who join in plundering the Third World's human and natural resources.

The campaigns against sweatshops and child labor in other countries, far from advancing solidarity with fellow workers superexploited in these conditions, at best treat them as helpless victims of the system, and at worst as competitors, against whom we are supposed to align with "our" exploiters.

Boycotts or union bans against "sweatshop-produced goods" are the thin end of the wedge for this nationalist protectionism. These campaigns serve only to protect the profits of some bosses, while ignoring sweatshops and superexploitation of layers of workers in Australia, such as outworkers.

Their government, not ours

Canberra's military interventions in the Asia-Pacific region are part of the war drive, alongside its imperialist allies, especially the United States, to try to police an unstable

world for capitalist exploitation. The immediate targets are the "rogue" states that refuse to bow to imperialism's dictates. Ultimately, the war drive targets places where there have been revolutions by workers and peasants to overturn capitalism like Cuba, north Korea, China, Vietnam, Eastern Europe, and Russia.

The economic nationalism of the protests from Seattle to Melbourne are grist to the mill for this renewed war drive by imperialism. This war drive abroad is connected to the rulers' war at home against working people.

The WEF, the WTO, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank are the creations of the imperialist powers, especially Washington, to serve their interests. Communists call for the abolition of these multinational bodies, in opposing all imperialist economic and military alliances. But at the same time, we act on the understanding that the capitalist system and nation-states of the wealthy and powerful ruling families, not the supposedly supranational WTO bureaucracy or the WEF meetings, are the chief enemy of working people and of all humanity.

Most of those involved in protesting the WEF however take a completely different tack. Many claim that the WEF and WTO violate "our" national sovereignty. But the opposite is true. It is the imperialist powers from the United States down that largely dictate policy to the WTO. It is Australia's military and political interventions that have trampled on the sovereignty of countries from East Timor and Bougainville to the Solomons and Fiji. The labor movement



Coal miners and other workers march in Sydney June 16 to protest decision by Australian government commission that paved way for employers to impose 10- and 12-hour shifts in mines. The number one enemy of working people is the capitalist rulers at home.

Militant/Doug Cooper

needs to expose and oppose Canberra's imperial designs and militarization drive, instead of promoting trade and other sanctions and union bans, which only fuel economic nationalism.

The solidarity amongst vanguard fighters with the metalworkers at Joy Mining Machinery needs to be extended to every other proletarian battle here and on a world scale. This is the way to begin to answer the relentless attacks by the employers and their governments as the crisis of their profit sys-

tem deepens. As Cuban president Fidel Castro explains, globalized solidarity is the heart of working-class internationalism.

Gigantic class battles will result in the coming to power of workers and farmers governments here and in other capitalist countries, in the spirit of the Cuban and Russian revolutions, which can forestall the march of imperialism to fascism and war and put humanity on the road to build a worldwide classless society without exploitation, oppression or war.

Volunteers take goal for Pathfinder reprint campaign

BY PEGGY BRUNDY

SAN FRANCISCO—At the Active Workers Conference held in Ohio in late July, Socialist Workers Party supporters working in the Pathfinder Reprint Project set themselves the goal of getting 30 Pathfinder books and pamphlets back in print by Jan. 1, 2001, the 42nd anniversary of the Cuban Revolution.

We're off to an excellent start. During August, the first month of the drive, seven CDs were sent to Pathfinder Press, each with electronic files to produce a book or bulletin.

The seven titles were *The Balkan Wars (1912-13)* by Leon Trotsky; *Cuba's International Foreign Policy, 1975-80* by Fidel Castro; *Labor's Giant Step* by Art Preis; *W.E.B. DuBois Speaks, vol. 2: Trade Unions in the Epoch of Imperialist Decay* by Leon Trotsky; *Thomas Sankara Speaks* with an improved cover; and the Education for Socialists Bulletin, "James P. Cannon, Internationalist."

Pathfinder Press is a publishing house whose books and pamphlets make the line of march of the working class, the continuity of the communist movement, and a Marxist explanation of today's world accessible to workers and farmers.

The work of the Reprint Project is to digitize—computerize—the titles so the printing process can be converted from old-style film and printing plates to new-style computer technology. As we digitize each book we update its typographical appearance and make it more readable. The new technology also makes possible rapid printing of short runs to respond to demand in the class struggle. More than 150 volunteers in nine countries contribute time and skills to the digitizing effort.

The Balkan Wars is an example of the international teamwork that goes into producing each title. This book is more than 600 pages long. We started scanning it in April 1998. More than 60 volunteers worked on it from their workstations in five countries. In the end, we submitted the formatted text to Pathfinder's editorial staff and received back only 11 corrections.

Producing 30 titles by January 1 will require a substantial increase in the rate of CD production for the Reprint Project volunteers. According to production co-coordi-

nator Tom Tomasko, from August 1999 to August 2000 the Reprint Project produced an average of 4.25 CDs a month. To produce 30 by January 1, that rate will have to increase to six per month.

Each production team is gearing up to meet the challenge. Formatting team organizer Jerry Gardner reports that the months of learning, training, and reorganization are now bearing fruit in that team. After a year of producing four or five titles a month, in August the team submitted eight formatted titles to Pathfinder for editorial check.

According to Gardner, they have seven "in the bag" for September and possibly two more. This leap in production was made possible by the fact that in January 2000 around 10 volunteers responded to an appeal for more formatters and joined that team. These "new" formatters have learned the necessary skills and become productive members of the team.

The same process is currently taking place in the index concordance team. At the Active Workers Conference, strengthening this team was presented as one of the central challenges facing the Reprint Project. Socialist Workers Party supporters responded, and in August the number of volunteers working on index concordances rose from around 25 to 35! The team finished four substantial indexes last month. Roughly two-thirds of the books, pamphlets, and Education for Socialists Bulletins that are out of print require index concordance work.

The production pace of these two final-

stages teams is currently setting the pace for the project as a whole. But production was up significantly in August in all areas.

According to proofreading team organizer Holly Harkness, the final reads team is aiming to complete seven titles this month. Since the beginning of the project, final reads has averaged about five titles completed a month. In April the proofreading team launched a special effort to train final readers. First reads produced a total of 15 titles in July and August.

After a couple of months of reduced production because of training, graphics team organizer Bobbi Sacks reports that they turned in five new graphics files in August and have the potential of turning in even more new files in September.

At the Active Workers Conference, Reprint Project volunteers also adopted the ambitious new financial goal that all volunteers have a monthly pledge to the project. The project incurs expenses for graphics production and the books it uses in the process and is totally self-supporting through volunteer contributions. At the time of the conference, 79 out of about 200 volunteers had pledged. That number has risen to 90.

In coming weeks we will report on our progress toward both goals. If you would like to take part in this effort to keep Pathfinder's books in print, contact Ruth Cheney at RuthChen@flash.net.

Peggy Brundy is a member of the Reprint Project Steering Committee.

Trade Unions in the Epoch of Imperialist Decay

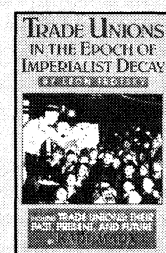
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Available from bookstores, including those listed on page 8



Fuel prices spark protests in Britain

BY PAT SHAW

LONDON—Farmers, truck drivers, and others are organizing blockades of the main oil refineries across the United Kingdom to demand a cut in tax-driven skyrocketing fuel prices. As gas stations around the country closed down, the government invoked emergency powers against the protests, using police to escort oil trucks from refineries.

The price of red diesel, used by farmers for tractors, has risen from 15 pence a liter in May to 24 pence a liter today (1 gallon=3.8 liters. 1 pence=1.4 cents). And the price of gasoline (petrol) has risen to the equivalent of about US\$4.35 a gallon, hitting workers and small businesses especially hard. World oil prices remain at a 10-year high.

The government has increased taxes on fuel 6 percent above the rate of inflation. Today, almost 80 percent of the price of gasoline for motorists in the United Kingdom is an onerous consumption tax.

The blockades come in the midst of a crisis in agriculture in this country that has sharpened over the past few years. Prices for fuel, fertilizer, animal feed, and other costs have escalated, while the prices many farmers receive for their produce have declined steeply. This squeeze has hit working farmers particularly hard.

"Fuel prices are like the final nail in the coffin for farmers," said Brynie Williams, a farmer from Cilcain, in north Wales, who took part in the blockade of the Shell oil refinery at Stanlow, Ellesmere Port.

Blockades have been set up at oil refineries in South Wales, Bristol, Shropshire, Jarrow, on the Humber estuary, and elsewhere. There have been actions at an oil distribution center in Manchester. Farmers from Scotland and England have joined forces to block the main road between Newcastle and Edinburgh.

A variety of class forces have taken part, including farmers, truck drivers, taxi drivers, and some road company bosses.

Inspired by French protests

The actions follow blockades in France and similar actions in other European countries affected by high fuel prices. Fishermen in Italy occupied wharves and warned they would blockade ports if fuel taxes were not reduced. In Germany, truck drivers blockaded roads going into the town of Hildersheim.

"We looked at the French and were heartened by the fact that their protests are having an effect. We have to make sure ours do too," said Paul Ashley, from Farmers for Action in the UK, referring to the fact that Paris backed down and agreed to lower fuel taxes.

Some in the actions here distanced themselves from the French protests. Clive Mullen, a road haulage boss in Essex who took part in a picket at the Coryton refinery, said, "We don't want to see a confrontation—we're not French. We're British, but we want our prime minister to listen to us."

The main refinery for the southeast of England, Coryton in Essex, was picketed by about 15 people, including farmers and bosses from road haulage companies. Like many of the protests this action had a nationalist tinge. Signs with Union Jacks read, "UK diesel at Euro prices." Drivers who carry fuel for British Petroleum at the refinery refused to take trucks out of the refinery.

Exploited family farmers were among the pickets at the Askew Farm Lane fuel distribution center in Essex, where pickets talked to drivers leaving the depot and convinced them to turn their trucks back.

Blair invokes emergency powers

By September 12 most gas stations across Britain had closed from lack of gas. The same day Prime Minister Anthony Blair invoked emergency power to compel oil companies to supply fuel from blockaded refineries. Within hours, cops began escorting oil trucks from refineries at Essex, Hamble, Manchester, and Grangemouth.

At the Avonmouth refinery drivers defied

the emergency decree, refusing to take out trucks. There and elsewhere pickets have forged links with oil company drivers and won support for their fight. In a phone interview Hopkin Smith, a small farmer from South Wales, described support from drivers inside the Texaco oil terminal in Cardiff. Drivers had told him that they had been threatened with dismissal for refusing to move the oil.

Pickets had already reported a growing police presence before Blair's announcement. At Stanlow refinery in Ellesmere Port the cops used cameras to videotape the cars of those who came to take part in the action. When Shell refinery bosses threatened to sack 60 fuel delivery drivers if they did not cross the picket line, farmers prepared to block the refinery with 16 tons of hay bales.

Blair's government has refused any cut in fuel taxes. Chancellor Gordon Brown tried to pit the protesters against other work-

ing people by claiming the government could cut fuel taxes only at the expense of cutting government spending on health care and education.

Brown attempted to divert attention from the government's responsibility for fuel taxation by insisting that the solution to the high prices lay with an increase in oil production—blaming governments belonging to the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries.

The opposition Conservative Party transport secretary, Archibald Norman, criticized the government and courted the protesters. He called on the government to "think again about its strategy of taxing the motorist and exploiting the oil price increase as a source of revenue."

The main bosses' organization in Britain, the Confederation of British Industry, backed demands for businesses to be compensated for the rise in fuel taxes. In an editorial entitled "Non" to civil disobedience,

the right-wing *Daily Telegraph* also called for a fuel tax cut. Reflecting the hostility to the blockades among capitalists here, the paper's editors added, "Every child in France is brought up at school to admire the heroes of the [French] Revolution. It is a national tradition in France that civil disobedience is the way to get things done.... The sad thing is that in Britain where the rule of law has traditionally commanded much more respect, the French way of doing things is increasingly catching on."

The Road Haulage Association and the Freight Transport Association, representing the interests of capitalists in the road transportation business, have called for a cut in diesel taxes for their businesses. They have expressed opposition to the blockades.

Pat Shaw is a member of the Transport and General Workers' Union in London. Caroline Bellamy in London contributed to this article.

France: truckers, farmers win gas price cut

BY NAT LONDON

GRANDPUITS, France—"It was like the straw that broke the camel's back," said Gilles Huguet. "I use 20,000 liters of fuel a year—about 100 liters for each hectare I farm. But fuel prices for farmers have doubled over the last 18 months."

As he spoke to the *Militant*, the giant Elf refinery here in Grandpuits, 60 miles south of Paris, lay silent, its gates blocked by a seemingly endless line of vehicles. There were tractor trailers and heavy equipment transporters loaded with construction bulldozers, small trucks and cars, a dozen ambulances, and heavy farm tractors. One hundred people, mostly local farmers, were there to ensure the refinery stayed shut.

All were protesting the recent hikes in fuel prices. Rising gas prices, aggravated by the sharp drop in the euro, have placed a heavy financial burden on family farmers and small businesses. They were demanding a reduction of fuel taxes and a limit on future price hikes. Over the past year, gasoline prices have risen about 30 percent to about US\$3.80 a gallon, of which three-quarters is tax.

The wave of protests started with fishermen in August. At one point fishing trawlers had blocked every French port on the Mediterranean, Atlantic, and Channel coasts. Following an August 31 agreement, the fishermen reopened the ports. Truckers and farmers started blocking the refineries four days later.

The protests ended September 10 when the government agreed to reduce gasoline and diesel fuel taxes by 15 percent in the form of a tax rebate. This victory spurred on protests against fuel prices in several other European countries.

During the wave of protests, blockades closed 100 oil refineries and many fuel storage depots throughout France. River and canal traffic was blocked by barges.

On September 5 ambulance drivers joined the blockades around the refineries. The next day drivers of private buses demonstrated. The following day 4,000 taxi drivers, mostly owner-operators, protested in the streets of Paris, with similar demonstrations throughout the country. After that, hundreds of construction crane operators drove their huge rigs through the French capital at a snail's pace.

In Normandy, farmers sent roving pickets to find gas tank trucks still on the road. Farmers also tried to block the Channel tunnel linking France and Britain. The airport at Nantes was blocked as well. Many regions of the country were left totally without gas.

"I'm having trouble staying afloat," said Gilles Huguet, a farmer in his mid-30s. "With 200 hectares, I'm considered a 'big grain farmer' but I work my farm alone. My wife has an outside job to help keep the farm going. My father worked this farm with two hired workers."

Huguet also pointed to the long-term drop in wheat prices, which went from 130 francs



Police try to stop farmers blockading entrance to Channel Tunnel outside Calais, France, September 7. Mass protests forced French government to reduce fuel prices.

per 100 kilos a decade ago to 50 francs today (1 kilogram = 2.2 pounds; 1 franc = 13 cents).

Initially the truckers' action was supported by large fleet owners affiliated to the organization TLF, which along with a second group, the FNTR, is part of the employers association MEDEF. A third trucking group, the UNOSTRA, is not. The FNTR and UNOSTRA include both owner-operators and small truck companies with seven to 12 trucks each.

Officials of the transport workers unions of the main trade union federations, including the CGT and the CFDT—which support the Communist and Socialist parties respectively, and are both part of the governing coalition—denounced the truckers' protests as a "bosses' strike."

On the third day of protests, the fleet owners of the TLF signed an agreement in which the government agreed to reduce fuel taxes for trucks in exchange for ending its blockades. Meanwhile, others continued the blockades as bus, taxi, and ambulance drivers joined in.

SP, CP, Greens, LCR oppose truckers

Prime Minister Lionel Jospin, a leader of the Socialist Party, announced that the agreement with the fleet operators ended all negotiations with protesters. He was seconded by transport minister Jean-Claude Gayssot, a member of the French Communist Party. The government also hinted it might eventually use the police and the military to break the protests.

Ecology Minister Dominique Voynet, a member of the Green Party, part of the "Plu-

ral Left" governing coalition, denounced the agreement for making "unacceptable" concessions. Reducing the tax on diesel fuel would encourage pollution and "global warming," she argued.

Alain Krivine, a deputy in the European Parliament for the Revolutionary Communist League (LCR), denounced "the concessions made by the government" as "a new gift to backward bosses."

On the other hand, Jean-Marie Le Pen, head of the fascist National Front, demagogically called on the government to lift the embargo against Iraq as a way of having cheaper oil. Bruno Megret, the head of the other major fascist organization in France, called the truckers' actions "justified."

The blockade of refineries and the truckers' refusal to accept the initial agreement between the government and the fleet owners received widespread support. A nationwide public opinion poll showed 88 percent supporting the protests.

On September 8, the FNTR and UNOSTRA signed the same agreement as the fleet operators and called for lifting the blockade of the refineries.

Recognizing that they had won a victory over the government, the remaining protesters lifted the blockades two days later. Meanwhile, truckers, farmers, and fishermen carried out or threatened similar protests in the United Kingdom, Belgium, Italy, Greece, and other European countries hit by high fuel prices.

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