

THE MILITANT

INSIDE
SWP Convention turns party
outward toward new opportunities
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A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

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Peasants in Venezuela press fight for land

BY OLYMPIA NEWTON
AND ARGIRIS MALAPANIS

SAN CARLOS, Venezuela—The fight by peasants in Venezuela for land and the means to farm it was the central discussion at a conference of 300 people held here July 21.

The many peasants who participated alongside agricultural professionals were members of farming cooperatives awaiting title to land promised by the government. A number have occupied idle lands over the past year and turned them to productive use. Through the meeting proceedings, and in discussions with *Militant* reporters during and after the event, they spoke of their struggles and of the sharpening class confrontations in the countryside.

Held at the National Institute for Cooperative Education, the meeting was convened to discuss the implementation of Law on Land and Agriculture Development. Signed by the government in November of last year, this is one of the most contentious measures taken by the regime of Hugo Chávez.

Among other provisions, the new legislation allows the state to confiscate some idle private farms of more than 12,000 acres, and distribute the land to the peasants. It also lays out procedures for peasants and indigenous peoples to place claims for stolen land.

The law placed responsibility for land redistribution under a new department, the National Institute of Land (INT).

While peasants have attempted to use the

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Palestinians respond to assassinations by Israeli military

BY JACK WILLEY

In the face of political assassinations by the Israeli armed forces, and a six-week military occupation with round-the-clock curfews, Palestinians continue to fight for their liberation. A July 22 Israeli bombing in Gaza City killing 15 people, including nine children, provoked a series of actions by Palestinian liberation fighters. Tens of thousands poured into the streets the following day in a militant funeral procession through Gaza.

On July 31, a bomb planted at Hebrew University in Jerusalem killed seven students and wounded 60. That evening several thousand Palestinians marched through the streets of Gaza to celebrate the bombing, and to oppose the spreading occupation of the West Bank.

Five separate attacks against the Israeli occupiers were reported August 4. A suicide bomber targeted a bus used by Israeli troops, killing 10 and injuring an additional 40 people, half of them soldiers.

In the West Bank town of Nablus, where the Israeli government has launched a large military incursion, three Israeli soldiers were injured when a booby trap exploded nearby.

Three Israeli settlers were wounded when

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Socialists campaign against parties of war, depression

Candidates advance program to defend working people

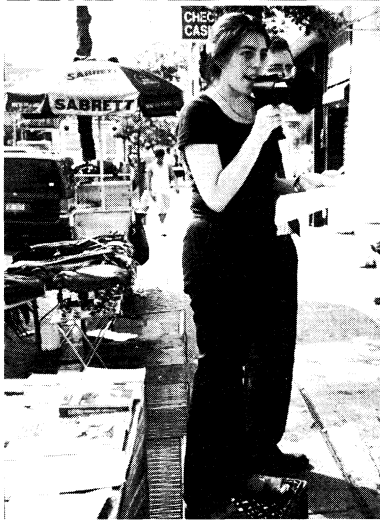
From New York to California and from Florida to Washington State, the Socialist Workers election campaigns are presenting a fighting, independent working-class alternative to the twin parties of big business: the Democrats and Republicans. Through them, workers, young people, and working farmers across the United States are speaking out against the social consequences of the imperialist war drive, slumping economy, and assaults by the bosses.

EDITORIAL

Young socialists who support the campaigns are getting out on the streets, on college campuses, and elsewhere to meet other young people who are looking for a revolutionary alternative to the bipartisan offensive at home and abroad: youth who seek to build solidarity and common ties of struggle with anyone, anywhere, who is standing up and fighting in the interests of working people against exploitation and oppression.

Socialist campaigners are meeting working people who are involved in the extending and deepening lines of proletarian resistance against the U.S. rulers' assault—an offensive that's accelerating as workers and farmers are forced to bear the brunt of the

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Militant/Above: Sarah Katz; Left: Bill Estrada

From New York to California and from Washington State to Florida, Socialist Workers candidates are presenting a working-class alternative to the Democrats and Republicans, the twin parties of big business. Above: Martin Koppel, candidate for governor of New York, in Brooklyn, soapboxing to win support. Left: Romina Green, leader of young socialists who are campaigning for Koppel and Arrin Hawkins, the candidate for Lt. Governor. See articles on page 5 for more information.

Bosses and government knew about safety problems at flooded Quecreek mine

BY TONY LANE

SOMERSET, Pennsylvania—After nine coal miners were rescued July 28 from the flooded Quecreek mine by a round-the-clock operation by fellow workers, information has begun to come to light about the extent of what government and company officials knew before the accident.

The crew had become trapped 78 hours earlier when some 50 million to 60 million gallons of water rushed into the mine. The

flood occurred as the crew was cutting coal with a continuous mining machine and water poured in from the adjacent abandoned Saxman mine. Newspaper accounts of their ordeal report that their effort to flee the wall of water was blocked by the water level reaching the roof of the mine in advance of their escape. A second nine-man crew was warned with enough time to make their way out of the mine through the floodwaters. All of the underground portions of the mine

were flooded out into the pit where the mine entrances are located. One area of the pit was flooded 18 feet high.

The lack of oxygen in the air threatened the lives of the miners before rescuers were able to drill a hole down to where they were trapped and start pumping in fresh air. The rising water continued to endanger the miners even in the high area they retreated to.

The *Pittsburgh Tribune Review* reported that miners at Saxman and other area mines were advised to never “mine up”—excavating coal by following a seam up in elevation—because of the danger of piercing an old mine holding back water that would drown workers. The Quecreek mine was 100 feet below the flooded Saxman mine and

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Bush threatens dockworkers over strike



Hundreds of dockworkers rallied for a contract in San Francisco July 24. The Bush administration is threatening to invoke the antiunion Taft-Hartley law to prevent workers from shutting down West Coast ports. See articles pages 12, 15.

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Palestinians respond to assassinations

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the bus in which they were traveling was fired upon on the outskirts of the Jewish settlement of Avnei Khefets, near the West Bank city of Tulkarm.

Armed Palestinians detonated a bomb alongside a road north of Ramallah as two cars passed, then opened fire on the vehicles, wounding three Israelis. In another incident, a security guard for an Israeli telephone company was killed by the Damascus Gate entrance to Jerusalem's Old City.

The recent wave of actions comes as Tel Aviv expands its war against the Palestinian people, with the backing of Washington. Following the Hebrew University bombing, President George Bush reiterated his support for Israeli military action, saying, "I'm just as angry as Israel right now."

Hundreds of Israeli troops backed by as many as 150 armored vehicles stormed into Nablus August 2, tightening the noose around a city already under occupation and curfew. At least three Palestinians were killed and five were injured when tanks, armored personnel carriers, and bulldozers punched into the city in the dead of night. The incursion was the largest military operation mounted by Israeli forces since launching a campaign to reoccupy the West Bank 44 days earlier.

For four days leading up to the assault thousands of residents defied the occupiers' curfew, attempting to resume their normal lives after weeks of confinement to their homes. *New York Times* reporter Joel Greenberg commented that this was "nothing less than the defiant reclaiming of the streets."

"This is a challenge to the occupation forces," said Zafer Badran, 23, a merchant who opened his stall in spite of the Israeli military presence. "We're not afraid of them. We want to eat."

On August 5, Tel Aviv announced a travel ban through the northern West Bank. "Nobody enters, and nobody leaves," Defense Minister Benjamin Ben-Eliezer exclaimed. In response, U.S. state department spokesman Philip Reeker issued the mildest of reprimands, saying that Israel "has to consider the consequences of any action it takes."

"We've always said that Israel has a right

to defend itself," Reeker added.

Israeli forces have imposed curfews in seven of the eight major cities in the West Bank, combined with an expanding web of roadblocks and checkpoints, bringing trade to a halt, and choking off food supplies and access to medical care to Palestinians in the cities and in the hundreds of villages that have been cut off from the outside world.

Soaring malnutrition among Palestinian children under age five has reached emergency levels and ranks among the highest in the world, according to the U.S. Agency for International Development. Some 22.5 percent of Palestinian children suffer from acute or chronic malnutrition. More than half of all Palestinians living in the occupied territories have been forced to decrease food intake in recent weeks.

A policy of assassinations

The security cabinet for Prime Minister Ariel Sharon moved July 31 to deport to the Gaza Strip family members of anyone the Israeli regime labels "terrorist." The cabinet also formalized a policy of destroying the homes of alleged suicide bombers and others the authorities claim have attacked Israel.

Since then, armed forces have blown up or bulldozed 11 homes, in some cases tearing down or damaging surrounding dwellings. On August 6 the Israeli Supreme Court threw out a petition by 43 families who had asked that they be given notice before their houses were destroyed so that they could appeal the decision. The Supreme Court president, Aharon Barak, ruled that Israel is at war and destroying homes is "part of the overall war activity."

Tel Aviv continues its policy of political assassination of Palestinian leaders. The July 22 attack in Gaza targeted Hamas leader Salah Shehadeh. The 2,000-pound "smart bomb" killed Shehadeh and 14 others in a crowded house, including nine children.

Helicopter gunships and soldiers killed two Palestinians in Jenin August 6. Israeli officials accused one of involvement in suicide bombings.

On the same night in Jaba'a, a village near Jenin, troops in helicopters and jeeps launched a volley of machine gun fire against

Delta Dental strikers rally in San Francisco



Militant/Bernie Senter

Two hundred workers on strike at Delta Dental rallied in front of the company's offices August 5. Some 1,100 members of Teamsters Local 856 have been on strike against the insurance company since mid-July over company demands that workers pay more for their own dental and medical insurance. One striker, May Woo, told the *Militant*, "If we let them do it this time we will get nothing in the future." Tania Chelson pointed out that Delta Dental wants new workers to accept reduced pay and benefits. "We're not fighting just for us, but for them too," she said.

Ali Ajouri, 23, a local leader of AlAqsa Martyrs Brigade in the Askar refugee camp near Nablus. After a three-hour gunfight, the Israeli forces shot him dead, leaving his corpse so mangled it was barely recognizable, according to witnesses who found his and other Palestinian's dead bodies.

Ajouri's sister has been detained—an action requiring no formal charges—and has

been ordered exiled to the Gaza Strip. "Her only crime is that she has a brother," said Hava Keller of the Women's Organization for Female Political Prisoners. "They jailed her without charging her with anything."

Tel Aviv's incursions and killings take place in the context of preparations by Washington, its major backer, for a massive ground and air assault on Iraq.

Wife of Cuban held in U.S. prison denied visit, deported

BY ARGIRIS MALAPANIS

MIAMI—Immigration and Naturalization Service and FBI agents detained Adriana Pérez upon her entry to the United States at the Houston international airport July 25.

Pérez had arrived from Cuba that day with a visa granted by the U.S. Interests Section in Havana to visit her husband, Gerardo Hernández, who is imprisoned at the federal penitentiary in Lompoc, California.

After holding Pérez for 11 hours and interrogating her, the INS revoked her visa and forced her to return to Cuba. In the process, federal agents separated Pérez from the Cuban consular official who accompanied her, holding her incommunicado. Despite having all travel documents in order, the young Cuban woman, who has not seen her husband in four years, was summarily deported.

Gerardo Hernández is serving a double life sentence after being convicted by a federal court in Miami in June 2001 on frame-up conspiracy charges concocted by the FBI.

The revolutionary inmate is one of five Cuban patriots serving long sentences on similar charges. These included conspiracy to act as an unregistered agent of a foreign power and to commit espionage for the government of Cuba.

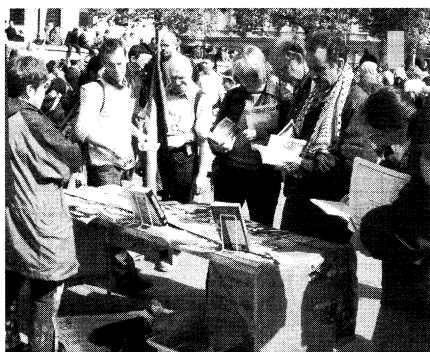
Cuban TV held a July 29 roundtable to inform the Cuban people of the events in Houston and to denounce the deportation of Pérez. Panelists pointed out the cruelty of Washington's action. U.S. authorities had granted Pérez the visa in April and had until July 24 to revoke it, they reported, which they did not do. Instead they turned her back after she landed in Houston.

Earlier this year, U.S. authorities also revoked a visa they had issued for Olga Salanueva, the wife of René González, another of the five Cuban revolutionaries. This action stopped Salanueva and her daughter from visiting her husband, who is imprisoned in Bradford, Pennsylvania. Washington had deported Salanueva to Cuba during the 2001 trial of her husband.

THE MILITANT

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The 'Militant' tells the truth about struggles by working people, from the Palestinian liberation struggle to garment workers fighting for a union in southern Florida. The socialist press also runs excerpts from Pathfinder books presenting the true history, experiences, and lessons of over 150 years of modern working-class resistance.



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Monopolies profit off crash in coffee price

BY MAURICE WILLIAMS

Corporate monopolies in the coffee industry are racking up record profits by driving down prices paid to growers in Latin America and elsewhere. The price for coffee beans on the world capitalist market stands at its lowest level in a century.

The steep plunge in coffee prices has led to the layoffs of some 600,000 farm workers in Central America and Mexico over the past two years. Tenant farmers and peasants in the region, already devastated by drought and famine, are waging a fierce struggle to stay on the land.

News reports estimate that some 125 million people in the world's coffee growing regions, from Central America to Africa, have been directly affected by this aspect of the world capitalist economic crisis. In Burundi and Uganda, which derive 70 percent of their export earnings from sales of coffee beans, the severe price drop has devastated the countryside.

The crisis has a differential effect. "Wealthy hacienda owners face selling their private helicopters," reported London's *Financial Times*, while tenant farmers, "many of them indigenous Indians, survive poor harvests by hiring themselves out to pick coffee between November and March."

Some workers have struck deals with growers to be paid for two weeks for every three they work, in the hope that the boss will make up the difference later. The big business daily reported that despite the decimation of many farms, "big coffee growers could still be the winners as former farms have become expensive real estate for housing the region's population."

In taking advantage of their monopoly position to drive down the price of coffee beans, the big corporations are wiping out entire villages in Central America. A massive migration of workers and peasants from the region is bringing with it a tragic toll. For example, 14 jobless coffee pickers from Veracruz, Mexico, died in Arizona's Sonora desert last year while crossing into the United States.

The collapse in employment on coffee plantations comes on top of famine conditions in some parts of Central America, the result of an ongoing drought. Relief agencies estimate that more than 1.5 million peasants in the region lack food. Hundreds of children in Honduras have become so malnourished that they have to be hospitalized and can no longer attend school.

Those workers in Central America who still have jobs earn less than \$2 a day. "We've had no work since February and are here begging for our lives," said Antonio Luna, a worker in La Dalia, Nicaragua. He is among 3,000 unemployed coffee pickers whose families are huddled under plastic tarpaulins pitched along the roadside.

A boon for imperialist investors

Coffee was brought to Central America in the latter half of the 18th century, and German merchants began exporting the crop in the 1830s. By 1890 it had become the chief source of foreign exchange earnings of countries in the region. The economies of Guatemala, El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Costa Rica were built around this one crop. The coffee growers expanded into banking and manufacturing and built roads and ports to facilitate exports. First British, then German, and finally U.S. imperialist investors fostered a native coffee bourgeoisie.

Landless indigenous Indians and mixed-race laborers provided a source of cheap labor for the coffee bosses, housed in squalid camps in which the wealthy farm owners exercised the power of life and death, while a handful of oligarchial families wielded political and economic dominion over millions of toilers.

As Washington began its rise as an imperialist power at the turn of the century it began to dominate the region. Leading up to World War I the United States accounted for 55 percent of all imports into Central America and was the destination for nearly 40 percent of all the region's exports. By 1920 the U.S. empire accounted for 70 percent of imports into Central America and 80 percent of all exports from the area, pushing its imperial rivals in Germany and Britain further out of the region.

Large, mostly U.S.-based corporations control the processing and the distribution of coffee, keeping semicolonial countries confined to their role as dependent providers of coffee beans. They encouraged a coffee-

production boom over the past decade. New plantations coming on line, including in Vietnam, which in the last five years has emerged as a major producer and rival to Brazil, have flooded the market with coffee beans.

Four companies—U.S.-based Proctor & Gamble, Kraft Foods, and Sara Lee, and Swiss-based Nestlé—control 40 percent of the world's coffee market. Their dominance has enabled them to increase the squeeze on coffee growers. The rise in production has resulted in a coffee glut of close to 2 billion pounds—a surplus that cannot be sold at a profit in the monopoly-controlled market.

At the end of the 1980s, semicolonial countries exporting coffee received \$10 billion of the \$30 billion worth of retail sales worldwide. Annual sales have nearly doubled since then, but those countries' take has dropped to less than \$6 billion as the large corporations depress prices by pitting them against each other.

"The collapse of coffee prices has been a boon for the big companies that process the beans and sell the final product," the *Wall Street Journal* noted. While prices paid to coffee farmers have tumbled more than 80 percent, average retail prices for ground roast coffee in U.S. cities have dropped only 27 percent, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. The profits of the coffee barons have soared as the gap between prices received for processed coffee on the one hand, and raw coffee beans on the international wholesale market on the other,



In response to drought and famine, jobless coffee pickers and peasant families have organized protests demanding government aid. Above, coffee workers block road in Dalia, Nicaragua. The banner reads: "Government: We demand protection against hunger."

widened to \$2.54 in May. Five years ago the difference was \$1.50.

A record year in coffee profits

According to the *Wall Street Journal*, Proctor & Gamble's coffee business, with \$1 billion in annual sales, had a "record year in 2001." Nestlé also reported record sales figures.

A spokesman for Sara Lee said that in the same year the company had its best financial results in five years, with its coffee

and tea division posting sales of \$2.9 billion and income of \$495 million.

Meanwhile, as corporate profits rise, coffee growers in Latin America are rapidly sinking. Production costs of 80 cents a pound far exceed the 55 cents a pound received in sales—an 80 percent drop from the brief peak of \$3.15 received by growers in May 1997. Thousands of farmers have gone bankrupt as a result. "Many growers have left the beans to rot," reported Andrew

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Meatpacking bosses disregard public health

BY DON REED

OMAHA, Nebraska—Four weeks after the federal government first learned that contaminated meat was being produced at ConAgra Beef's Greeley, Colorado, slaughterhouse, 19 million pounds of beef was recalled. Prior to this move, at least 19 people in six states became ill from the bad meat.

The recall, the second largest in U.S. history, highlights the callous disregard for public health and safety by both the government and meatpacking bosses. The meat was contaminated with *E. coli*, a pathogen that can cause nausea, severe bloody diarrhea, and sometimes death, especially in children, the elderly, and those with compromised immune systems.

The massive recall covered meat produced from April 12 to July 11 at the ConAgra plant. U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) inspectors found *E. coli* contamination at a hamburger plant supplied by ConAgra June 19. They sat on this information for 10 days while ConAgra continued to churn out the potentially deadly meat. Some 354,000 pounds of meat were recalled June 30. On July 19 the recall was expanded to cover nearly 19 million pounds of beef. By that time, most of the recalled meat had already been eaten. The contaminated meat is dangerous if not fully cooked to 160 degrees.

Five months before the recall, the owner of a Montana meatpacking plant alerted the USDA that he had received contaminated meat from the ConAgra plant in Greeley. The reaction from the government agency was silence, according to John Munsell, owner of Montana Quality Foods & Processing Co.

"They will do everything they can to prevent a confrontation with a big packer," Munsell told the Lincoln, Nebraska, *Journal Star*. "There is no one in USDA, with the exception of the field personnel, no one in the bureaucracy that has the intestinal fortitude to confront the big packers."

After a recall of 25 million pounds of beef in 1997, the nation's largest at the time, meat industry owners vigorously opposed legislation to increase the number of inspectors and tighten safety standards in meatpacking plants. The proposed legislation went down to defeat.

Six years ago, the federal government introduced a new regulatory system for meat inspection and safety. The new system, called Hazard Analysis Critical Control Points, supposedly introduced a scientific approach in place of what was derisively called the "old sniff and poke" method of inspection. The true impact of the new system was to place the hands-on inspection in the direct control of the meat companies and to remove most government inspectors from the production floor. Contamination rates for salmonella and

E. coli both increased from 2000 to 2001.

A draft report by the General Accounting Office, the investigative arm of the U.S. Congress, said that months often pass between when a plant fails contamination tests and when the USDA steps in to investigate the problem. It also said that penalties are often too light to force compliance. For ex-

ample, when Sara Lee pleaded guilty to selling tainted meat that appears to have caused the deaths of 15 people in 1998, it received a slap on the wrist. The giant food company reached a settlement with federal prosecutors to pay only \$4.4 million in penalties. Sales revenue for the company totaled \$17.7 billion.

Who are the Cuban revolutionaries framed and jailed by Washington?

Five Cuban revolutionaries are currently serving prison terms of between 15 years and a double life sentence after being framed up and convicted in June 2001 in a U.S. federal court.

The five revolutionaries were in the United States on an internationalist mission to defend the sovereignty of their country and the Cuban Revolution. They were gathering information on the activities of counterrevolutionary groups in Florida that have a history of launching violent attacks on Cuba from U.S. soil. The groups have been able to operate with impunity from Florida, often with the assistance of, training by, and funding from the U.S. government.

Unable to prove any illegal acts by the five, the federal government pushed through convictions on a series of conspiracy charges, including conspiracy to act as an unregistered agent of a foreign power, to commit espionage, and to commit murder. The five are René González, Gerardo Hernández, Ramón Labañino, Antonio Guerrero, and Fernando González.

An international campaign is being waged by various organizations to explain the truth about the cases of the five and to demand they be released from prison. Extensive information on this fight can be found at themilitant.com.

For the next four weeks the *Militant* will run short biographical material on each of the five. We are starting with Gerardo Hernández who is serving two consecutive life terms plus 80 months in jail on the trumped-up conspiracy charges, including conspiracy to commit murder.

Gerardo Hernández was born into a working-class family, in the city of Havana on June 4, 1965. In high school he became a leader of the high school students association, and in the 11th grade he joined the Union of Young Communists. In 1989 he graduated with a degree in International Political Relations from the Superior Institute of International Relations "Raúl

Roa García" of the Ministry of the Exterior.

Soon after his graduation, together with thousands of Cuban volunteers, Hernández joined the internationalist mission to Angola in which Cuban military forces played a decisive role in defeating an invasion of newly independent Angola by the South African army of the apartheid regime. He was stationed in Cabinda, an area of strategic importance because of oil wells located there, and headed a scouting platoon in a tank brigade.

In Angola, Hernández distinguished himself in 54 combat missions. After completing his tour in 1990 he was awarded medals of honor for his courageous role in combat. Three years later he was admitted into the ranks of the Cuban Communist Party after being nominated by his co-workers.

In the mid-1990s Hernández and the other four Cuban revolutionaries undertook an internationalist mission in the United States. In 1997, in his absence, he was elected as an honorary delegate to the 14th World Festival of Youth and Students, organized by the World Federation of Democratic Youth and celebrated in Havana that year.

Urbano Bouza, a Cuban combatant who fought under Hernández's command in Angola, said Hernández was politically, humanely, and psychologically prepared for the dangerous mission in the United States. "A scout must be observant, show level-headedness in the face of danger, and be discreet and courageous. I can appreciate all these qualities in Hernández," said Bouza.

Bouza described how he was initially surprised when the news about the frame-up trial first appeared in the press. But once he realized that "it was the same Hernández, just a little more bold, I felt so proud, and I began to excitedly tell people: that was my chief in Cabinda!"

Hernández is a cartoonist who has been published in the national press and presented in diverse galleries. An edited book of his work is being prepared.

Company, gov't were warned about mine

Continued from front page

the escape routes for the trapped miners were even lower.

The Quecreek mine was operated by Black Wolf Coal for PBS Coals, which is the state's largest strip mine operator. The Quecreek mine is nonunion as are all underground mines in Somerset and neighboring Cambria County.

State, federal investigations launched

Both state and federal safety agencies are now mounting investigations into the flooding. The state government is also appointing a separate commission to investigate the disaster.

A document from the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) shows that both state safety and company officials knew in 1999 that "unmapped mine voids were encountered near the southern permit boundary." The issue arose at a permit hearing where the company was granted permission to expand its mining operation from an area of 272 acres to 3,666 acres.

This information contradicts claims by company spokespeople, state officials, and the news media, all of whom blame bad mine maps.

John Weir, a spokesman for PBS Coals, said that years ago the mine was not properly mapped. "Back then they didn't keep computerized maps and surveys that are done today," he said. "A lot of it was just penciled on the back of a lunch bag." DEP secretary David Hess said that the mine maps "apparently were wrong." President of the Pennsylvania Coal Association George Ellis concurred, saying, "Obviously the maps were wrong."

Problems with water in the abandoned Saxman mine were well known. Retired miner Mike Zanoni explained that this was one of the reasons why the mine had stopped

operating. Another retired Saxman miner, Joe Jasienski, said, "Everyone knew that mine was flooded. Heck, we used it as our drinking water. And it was higher up than where the nine miners were. A lot higher."

Jeffrey Bender, a local resident, said, "What's frustrating for us is that we warned DEP and they seemed to be on the side of the mine, not us. But we knew, we knew." Bender filed one of 41 complaints against the proposed mine in 1999. In a letter sent to the DEP at the time, he said, "Obviously the firm preparing to mine hasn't researched the area very well at all."

Hydrology reports in the 1999 state permit showed wells sunk near the proposed mine were flooded with water 50 to 95 feet above the Quecreek mine. Eleven test holes were drilled before mining but none closer than 800 feet from the old Saxman works. The section of Quecreek that flooded was closest to and heading directly toward the old Saxman mine. The company claims there was a 300 foot pillar of coal separating the new mine from the old workings.

A former DEP attorney, Robert Ging, stated, "A little bit of prudence could have avoided this incident. It's just unbelievable. If you want to protect the mine workers, you verify where the coal pillar is."

Considering the unreliability of the old maps, Ging blames the DEP for issuing the permit without ordering more tests near the Saxman mine. "It's sloppy work by the DEP and it's sloppy work by the engineers," he said.

Joe Main, health and safety administrator for the UMWA, pointed out, "Sometimes following the law isn't good enough. We're calling on all deep mine operators out there to heed this advice. Any prudent operator should be backing up their boundaries and testing for water in abandoned mines."

There have been four other flooding incidents since June 1999 in southwestern



One of the nine coal miners rescued by other working people after being trapped for 78 hours in the flooded Quecreek mine near Somerset, Pennsylvania. Rescuers worked around the clock drilling air and rescue shafts, and pumping out water from the mine to save the lives of everyone underground.

Pennsylvania, although none on the scale of Quecreek. They occurred at RoxCoal's Longview mine, RAG's Cumberland mine in Greene County, Consol Energy's Mine No. 84 in Washington County, and Dunmire Resources' Barbara mine in Somerset County.

Two state lawmakers have called for a grand jury investigation into the actions of the DEP and the coal operator, making the request of state attorney general and Republican gubernatorial candidate Michael Fisher. The call pointed to the compliance record of PBS Coals, which has been cited for at least 90 federal mine safety violations in the last two years, a third of which were classified as

"serious and substantial." Their letter also noted that PBS or its subsidiaries have been involved with two other mines—Diamond T mine and RoxCoal's Longview mine—that flooded within the last five years. They said that the department "should have been more diligent" and "given the record of the mining company and its parent," it should have "exercised more caution in allowing these mining activities to proceed."

Triple the accident rate

PBS Coals has disputed reports on its safety violations. Safety officer John Matsko said his company has "a superb safety record.... Our violation rate is one of the lowest in the nation." In addition to the violations, MSHA records show that the accident rate at PBS Coals Mine No. 1 for the first three months of this year was almost triple the rate for similar mines across the country. The company's Shade Creek processing plant accounted for a third of the violations. In December 2000, coal truck driver Gary Kerley was crushed and killed at the plant. MSHA blamed the accident in part on PBS's failure to properly train Kerley and another truck driver.

The Quecreek mine had 26 violations since March 2001, nine of which were listed as "serious and substantial." In October 2001 a 40-foot by 30-foot section of the roof fell, burying a roof bolting machine.

While many big-business commentators talked about this incident in the context of small mines and companies with limited resources, the facts tell a different story of a substantial mining operation and a complex corporate structure. The owner of Quecreek, PBS Coals, cuts 2.5 million tons of coal a year. PBS Coals is a division of Mincorp Inc., which also operates Quecreek Mining and an underground mine division, RoxCoal.

Interlocking companies

Mincorp director Tim Phillips said they have no connection with the operator of the mine, Black Wolf Coal. PBS officials describe Black Wolf as a contract miner, but the firm lists some of the same officers as Quecreek.

Ed Yankovich, president of UMWA District 2, said forming interlocking companies in the mining industry is not unusual. He said that companies are structured that way to prevent smaller mines from unionizing and to keep subsidiaries at an arm's length from the parent company to avoid pension and environmental liabilities. "That's common even in union mines," Yankovich said. The use of contractors and contract labor has expanded in the past decade and the safety record of contractors has been worse than the industry as a whole.

Government cuts mine safety budget

The disaster occurs in the context of government budget cuts to mine safety, a rise in the number of fatal accidents, and questions about the functioning of MSHA in the wake of the mine explosion in Brookwood.

Continued on Page 12

Socialist blasts 'deadly drive for profits' by mine bosses

Tony Lane, Socialist Workers candidate for governor of Pennsylvania, released the following statement July 28, 2002. Lane is an underground coal miner and a member of United Mine Workers of America Local 1248 in southwestern Pennsylvania. He visited the town of Quecreek, Pennsylvania, while nine coal miners were trapped for three days in a flooded underground shaft, and spoke with working people in the area.

Nine coal miners were found alive today in Quecreek, Pennsylvania, after a round-the-clock rescue operation by fellow workers. Working people in the area and across the country met their survival with a wave of relief and celebration. Millions of working people saw ourselves bound up in the fate of these miners. We know firsthand the conditions the bosses have imposed in factories, mines, and mills across the country and that we could be next. According to government statistics, some 6,000 workers are killed and 2.5 million are injured on the job year after year in the United States.

Company and government officials all treat the Quecreek mining disaster as if today's coal bosses are not responsible for what happened. One local paper wrote the "disaster that trapped nine miners had a simple cause: bad maps." A representative for PBS Coals, the owner of the Quecreek mine, put the blame onto past mine operators by claiming they didn't keep the kind of computerized maps and surveys that are the norm today. "A lot of it was just penciled on the back of a lunch bag," he said. Nonunion PBS Coals is the largest strip mine operator in the state, producing 2.5 million tons a year.

The disaster is part of the antiunion drive by the coal bosses that myself and thousands of coal miners know well. It includes the erosion of safety, speedup, and lengthening of the workday and workweek. A retired union miner told me that the bosses at the Quecreek mine were not ignorant of the dangers. Another miner said mine accidents "don't just happen. Someone had to have seen something." During my visit I learned that in the days leading up to the flooding,

water had been leaking into the Quecreek mine from the roof, walls, and floor.

The accident was a direct result of capitalism's unrelenting and deadly drive for profits. It is part and parcel of the ruling-class assault on wages, pensions, health care, and safety. More incidents like Quecreek and the explosion at the Jim Walters Number Five mine in Brookwood, Alabama, last September that killed 13 miners, are what the bosses have in store for working people as they try to shift the burden of the capitalist economic crisis onto our backs.

Coal miners, like my co-workers at the Maple Creek mine, are part of the resistance of working people. Struggles by miners, both union and nonunion, for better safety conditions, to demand black lung benefits, and to retain some measure of control over working conditions have taken place across the country. It is only through decades of often bloody battles that coal miners have forced the bosses and the government to take steps to improve conditions in the nation's coal mines. Working people in the Somerset area have a long history of union struggle, including fights in the late 1970s to organize the mines.

In its statements and actions since July 24, PBS Coals has hidden behind the state government as it tries to cover up its responsibility. Gov. Mark Schweiker and the head of the state Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) did not descend on Somerset to defend the interests of working people. They represent the interests of big business. It is state officials who are responsible for mine safety inspections that have given the industry bosses a clean bill of health. A DEP spokesperson said that the coal bosses "have done a good job complying with these [safety] regulations." Federal Mine Safety and Health Administration head David Lauriski reinforced that mistaken notion by saying that the industry has greatly improved its safety record.

State officials and politicians have flippanantly said that "coal miners are a special breed," and Governor Schweiker talks about how miners' families "know there are some unsafe dimensions to the world of mining"—as if we should accept these dangers

as a "normal" part of life in coal mining regions. But miners want and deserve to work in the safest working conditions possible.

What is the real safety record of the coal bosses? In the year since they opened the Quecreek mine there has been a bad roof fall that buried a roof-bolting machine. Two miners have died in fatal accidents in the Somerset area over the past three years, including a miner from Quecreek village who died in a roof fall at a nearby mine. The bosses say they are mining more coal today with fewer injuries. But this covers up the fact that the percentage of miners who are likely to be injured or killed on the job has not decreased in the last 20 years. And the number of miners killed on the job has been on the rise for the last four years.

The long-term capitalist economic decline and growing signs of a coming depression mean more such disasters and attacks will be inflicted on working people. The only response the superwealthy rulers have to the crisis of their system is more attacks on workers and farmers at home and wars abroad, such as that now being prepared against the people of Iraq. As Washington presses towards a massive military invasion, it will simultaneously seek to clamp down on the space working people have to fight back against the conditions we face here. The bosses and their government will ask "all Americans" to "unite" and accept restrictions on workers' rights, concessions on the job, and austerity measures in order to prosecute a war against the "axis of evil" countries. But working people have nothing in common with the boss class, whose system of exploitation produces new Quecreeks and Brookwoods disasters.

The Socialist Workers campaign in Pennsylvania and other states across the country will work with other union fighters to educate and get out the truth about the Quecreek events and the struggles of coal miners and other working people, both at home and abroad, against the assaults by the bosses and their government. We will continue to point to the necessity and possibility of workers and farmers to fight to replace the government of the ruling rich with one of our own.

Workers back socialist ballot drive in D.C.

BY JANICE LYNN

WASHINGTON—The Socialist Workers campaign of Sam Manuel for mayor of this city has been winning support from working people throughout the area. Campaign supporters have signed up 1,680 people to help place the socialist candidate on the ballot, and they plan to go well over the 3,000 signatures required to secure a place on the November ballot.

The Socialist Workers petitioning campaign takes place in the midst of a citywide scandal. The Board of Elections unanimously voted July 26 to deny the incumbent, Mayor Anthony Williams, a spot on the September 10 Democratic primary ballot due to irregularities with the 10,102 signatures submitted by his campaign workers, who were paid \$1 a name.

British prime minister Anthony Blair, United Nations secretary-general Kofi Annan, Martha Stewart, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, and television star Kelsy Grammar were among the names found on petitions, as well as page after page filled out in the same handwriting. In addition, pages of signatures were discounted on the basis that a number of those circulating petitions were not registered to vote. This is despite a Supreme Court ruling that has struck down laws requiring petition circulators to be registered voters.

Several of Williams's campaign workers related the difficulties they found in getting signatures on petitions for Williams in working-class areas. "People would say, 'Mayor Williams, I don't want him in there another four years,'" recalled one of his campaign workers.

Williams plans to run a write-in campaign for the primary and has filed an appeal of the election board's ruling. There is no Republican Party candidate for mayor, nor any other prominent Democratic Party candidate.

"What really lies behind the scandal is not the ineptness of the Williams campaign, but rather the deep social crisis facing working people in this city," Manuel stated. "This is a city that has one of the highest infant mortality rates in the nation, comparable to many cities in colonial countries. The AIDS case rate in the capital of the most powerful imperialist country on earth at the end of 2000 was 153 per 100,000 people, 10 times the national rate of 14.4 per 100,000. Some 22,349 city residents are known to be living with AIDS or are HIV positive. For African-American men in Washington the high rates of death from AIDS and from prostate cancer are an indicator of the deplorable state of health care in this city," Manuel reported.

"The Socialist Workers campaign opposes the antidemocratic election laws that are actually aimed at keeping working-class candidates off the ballot," the socialist candidate explained. "In neighboring Maryland, for instance, statewide candidates from non-major parties are required to collect 27,117 signatures to get on the ballot. Unlike my Democratic Party opponent, my campaign supporters are not paid for their signatures, but are all volunteers," Manuel said.

Manuel is a garment worker and member of the Union of Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Employees (UNITE). He is explaining to working people and youth that the economic and social crisis they face is a result of the dog-eat-dog system of capitalism. "Workers and farmers are capable of taking power through revolutionary struggle," Manuel said in an interview, "and forming a government of workers and farmers that will join in the worldwide fight for socialism."

Central to Manuel's campaign is opposition to Washington's war drive. Many people who have stopped to sign his petition have said they are against the U.S. war moves against Iraq. "We have no business being over there," exclaimed George Young, as he signed a petition.

Manuel traveled to Springfield, Virginia, August 3 to meet workers on strike against Dominion Virginia/North Carolina Power. Some 3,700 members of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers had walked out the day before. Campaign supporters were warmly greeted by the strikers.

Dave Osborne, a 16-year underground cable installer, singled out the campaign's stance against farm foreclosures. "My family lost our farm to the banks," he explained. Manuel kicked off his campaign in mid-July by attending a press conference in Washington of 30 farmers who are Black who are fighting against the racist discrimination they face in obtaining federal loans. Manuel pledged his campaign's support to their fight to keep their land.

Many people who have signed the petition have readily agreed with the campaign demands for federally funded cradle-to-grave health care coverage, workers compensation, pensions, and dependents benefits.

The socialist campaign puts forth the need for jobs for all at union-scale wages by reducing the workweek to 30 hours work at 40 hours pay. Campaign supporters explain that a public works program is needed to build and repair schools, hospitals, roads, bridges, and affordable housing.

"I don't hear the mayor talk about affordable housing," commented Margaret Hanson, as she signed a petition in the northeast section of the city. "It's ridiculous," she added. "Working people have to work two and three jobs and with four or five children can only afford to live in a one- or two-bedroom apartment."



Militant

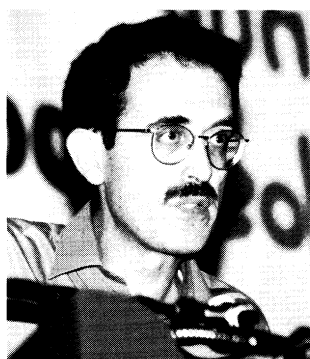
Petitioning to place SWP mayoral candidate Sam Manuel on ballot in Washington, D.C.

At the same shopping center, Maudie Haynesworth said the city government "only has money for things to help the wealthy, not for things like schools or fixing the roads." She was happy to sign the petition

for a working-class candidate.

To campaign with the young socialists and others, contact the DC Socialist Workers 2002 Campaign at (202) 387-1590 or at dc-swp@starpower.net.

Campaign with Young Socialists for Koppel & Hawkins For Governor and Lt. Governor of New York



Martin Koppel



Arrin Hawkins

Young people are campaigning across the state of New York for the Socialist Workers slate — headed by Martin Koppel and Arrin Hawkins. The socialist campaign offers the only fighting alternative to the twin parties of imperialist war and economic depression — the Democrats and Republicans. It is the only voice for workers, farmers, and young people who are standing up to the brutal effects of the deepening global crisis of the capitalist system.

The Socialist Workers campaign is part of building a movement of young workers and students who will be in the front ranks of a revolutionary struggle for a workers and farmers government to take power out of the hands of the ruling capitalist families. We join with the unbreakable fight of the Palestinian people for their land and against Israeli government brutality; with mobilizations of working people across Latin America against the imperialist-imposed social catastrophe; and with the people of Cuba, Iran, Iraq, and north Korea standing up to the economic and military threats of Washington.

The Socialist Workers candidates explain that capitalism has nothing to offer working people and youth — either at home or abroad. No matter who is elected next fall — whether Governor Pataki's Republican Party or the

Democrats — those parties will organize the next round of assaults on behalf of the bosses. The Socialist Workers campaign offers a revolutionary program to unite working people around the world in a common struggle that can take on and defeat our common enemy — the superwealthy U.S. ruling class.

If you like this perspective, we invite you to campaign with young socialists for Koppel and Hawkins — on street corners to meet other young people and workers, on college campuses, and with our campaign newspapers, the *Militant* and *Perspectiva Mundial*. We bring our campaign to workers at factory gates and on the job, to strikers such as the bus drivers in Queens, and to protests for immigrant rights, against police brutality, and in opposition to the government and employer attacks on workers' rights.

We join the Socialist Workers Campaign in demanding:

- ◆No to Washington's imperialist war drive!
- ◆Jobs for all. Shorten the workweek with no cut in pay! Raise the minimum wage!
- ◆Stop INS raids and deportations! End Social Security "no match" letters!
- ◆Fight cop brutality! Abolish the death penalty!
- ◆Defend workers' rights! No secret detentions or trials!
- ◆Defend women's access to abortion!
- ◆Debt relief for working farmers! Stop foreclosures!
- ◆Defend affirmative action, including in employment, housing, and education!
- ◆Cancel the Third World Debt!
- ◆Stop Washington's economic war on Cuba! Normalize relations now!

Name: _____ Phone: _____ Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____ E-mail: _____

____ I want to campaign with the Young Socialists for Koppel and Hawkins ____ Send me more information ____ Enclosed is a check for \$10 for a 12-week subscription to the *Militant* newspaper ____ Enclosed is a check for \$6 for a 4-month subscription to *Perspectiva Mundial* (Write subscription checks to the *Militant*) Enclosed is a donation for \$250 ____ \$100 ____ \$50 ____ \$25 ____ other \$ ____ (Please write checks to: Socialist Workers 2002 NY Campaign). Contact us at one of the following three locations:

BROOKLYN: 372A 53rd St. (at 4th Ave.); Tel:(718) 567-8014. Mailing address: PMB 106, 4814 4th Ave., Brooklyn, NY 11220.
E-mail: swpbrooklyn@earthlink.net

GARMENT DISTRICT: 545 8th Ave., 14th Floor (at 38th St.), New York; Tel:(212) 695-7358. Mailing address: P.O. Box 30, New York, NY 10018.
E-mail: swpnycd@attglobal.net

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Leaflet produced by young socialists in New York who are campaigning in support of the Socialist Workers candidates

August 19, 2002 The Militant

Workers organize resistance to mass firings in Argentina

BY MARTÍN KOPPEL
AND ROMINA GREEN

FLORIDA, Buenos Aires Province, Argentina—The bosses' assault on workers at the Pepsico Snacks factory here is typical of how the employers in Argentina are brutally shifting the burden of the economic collapse onto the backs of working people. In industry after industry, companies are carrying out mass layoffs, shutting down plants, and trying to intimidate workers from defending their livelihood. Pepsico Snacks is owned by the U.S. giant Pepsi-Cola.

Workers at Pepsico's potato chip factory, who had already been bringing solidarity to embattled workers at many other plants, have been involved in a fight since the beginning of the year. On January 11 the Pepsico bosses fired 52 temporary workers in this plant of 400. Just a week earlier the newly appointed government of President Eduardo Duhalde had devalued the peso, a measure that further shook a battered economy.

In a July 21 interview, three workers described how their struggle has unfolded. One of the workers, Katy, explained that conditions at the plant had become increasingly brutal, "Pepsico instituted the 'American shift' in some departments," she said. "We work 12-hour days—four-day shifts one week, then three night shifts the next week. But on top of that, they've forced us to work a lot of double shifts several times a week. We have to stand the entire day, so many people have problems with their backs and their legs."

Maria de los Angeles, one of the fired workers, said, "Temporary workers aren't in the union. We are hired for six-month contracts. On January 11, just before the end of the day shift, the company told several temporary co-workers that we were fired. During the afternoon shift they announced more firings and ordered people to go home early. When they refused to leave the plant, the company called the security guards to force them out. Those of us on the incoming shift were met by security guards who had lists of fired workers and told us we couldn't come in."

The workers' factory delegates immediately called meetings for workers on all the shifts, and the unionists voted to oppose the mass firings. The factory delegates make up the internal commission, an elected factory committee that exists in many workplaces in Argentina parallel to the regular union structure.

The fired workers set up a protest tent in front of the plant gate, and they were joined by some of the "permanent" workers as well as working people from the neighborhood. Since then they have organized road blockades, marches, and other actions. They have reached out for support from other workers, joining rallies by unionists and unemployed workers, such as a march of 15,000 demanding the arrest of cops who on June 26 fired on an unemployed demonstration and killed two young workers. They have visited the occupied Brukman garment plant in downtown Buenos Aires and sent delegations to the southwestern city of Neuquén to back the workers at the Zanón ceramic tile factory, which is also occupied.

Maria de los Angeles said she and other workers have gone before meetings of the local "popular assembly" in the nearby working-class suburb of San Martín, and have enlisted their support. The popular assemblies are neighborhood organizations that have appeared throughout Buenos Aires since the beginning of the year, in which local residents gather to discuss social and political problems they face and how to deal with them.

"Pepsico has practically militarized the factory," said Leo, 27, a worker who is one of the six members of the internal commission. Cops and security guards toting Itaka rifles have been deployed inside and outside the plant, he said. Security guards snoop on workers' conversations in the lunchroom. The company films workers on the job, while cops have tailed unionists' cars, seeking to create an atmosphere of terror and to divide the permanent and temporary workers. Many workers in the plant would like to express their support for the fight but are afraid they will lose their jobs if they do so.



Militant/Martin Koppel

Workers at Brukman garment plant in Buenos Aires, Argentina, under occupation by workforce. Union members at Pepsico are also fighting worsening conditions on the job.

While battling the company, the workers, who are members of the food workers union, have been hampered by the stance of the top officialdom, headed by Rodolfo Daer, who is also the general secretary of the General Labor Confederation (CGT), Argentina's main union federation. The officialdom has urged the fired workers to accept the company's severance pay offer and has refused to organize a fight. The CGT leadership supports the ruling Peronist party of Duhalde.

Under pressure from the top officials, three of the internal commission members have decided to go along with this collaborationist position, while the other three have continued to urge workers to mobilize and decide themselves how to fight. Two of these delegates were illegally suspended in February, and are fighting to get reinstated.

Some of the permanent workers who have joined this fight have also been fired. Katy, who is one of them, said, "They claimed they were firing me for poor performance but

then offered me severance pay. I've refused to accept the money because we're fighting to get our jobs back."

After Katy's firing on July 15, the unionists immediately called workers from other plants to attend a protest rally. The meeting drew workers from the Brukman and Zanón plants; from the Panificación Cinco bakery, which workers took over in response to a threatened plant shutdown and are operating as a cooperative; and a visiting delegation of coal miners from Río Turbio in southern Argentina, where workers are resisting layoff plans. Several hundred people marched July 23 to demand the reinstatement of the fired workers.

"The plant occupations at Brukman and Zanón are examples for workers in Argentina, but they are still an exception," Leo noted. Workers at many other plants confront the threat of layoffs and the brutal conditions faced by those at Pepsico. Some are waging defensive fights, while others are discussing what to do.

Currencies plunge sharply in Brazil, Uruguay

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

Currencies in Brazil and Uruguay fell sharply in late July, forcing the government in Montevideo to shut banks across the country and Washington to reverse its stand and offer massive short term loans to temporarily avert a widening crisis.

Unable to prevent a free-fall in the currency, the Uruguayan government announced the closure of its banking system July 30 for the first time in 20 years. The order was extended for at least the next four days. In July alone, the central bank's international reserves fell more than 55 percent from \$3 billion in December to \$622 million as of July 31. In part this was due to a massive withdrawal of funds by upper and middle class depositors from Argentina.

In response, Moody's Investors Service cut its sovereign rating on Uruguay two notches deeper into junk bond status, while Fitch also lowered its rating, saying Uruguay's reserves were at "precarious" levels.

"We're becoming another Argentina," stated Maurice López, 45, a Montevideo store clerk, referring to the long-term freeze on withdrawing bank deposits put in place in that country. "I can't believe it has come to this."

Meanwhile, thousands of workers staged a four-hour strike in Uruguay August 1 against the devastating effects of the capitalist economic crisis on workers and peasants.

At the end of June the Uruguayan government announced it was ending its currency-band system and would now allow its currency, the peso, to float to market levels. Since that time the peso's value has fallen by more than 20 percent against the dollar. The country's economy declined 10 percent in the first quarter of 2002.

In face of this crisis, and a financial free-fall in Brazil, U.S. treasury secretary Paul O'Neill angered many across the continent when he said new loans would only be available when countries assured Washington that the funds wouldn't "just go out of the country to Swiss bank accounts."

In Brazil, South America's largest economy, the nation's currency, the real, went into a tailspin, declining in value

against the dollar by 19 percent in July, reaching its lowest point since going into circulation as the national currency in 1994. The real has lost 34 percent of its value since January, despite attempts by the Central Bank to shore it up by pumping \$1.5 billion into the foreign exchange market.

The imperialists are worried over what will happen in national elections scheduled for October in Brazil, as the presidential candidate of the Workers Party, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, is leading in the polls. Although the party's candidates have assured Washington they will honor the country's debt payments, the U.S. rulers fear rising expectations by working people and political instability if the Workers Party wins the poll.

The plunging real has driven up the costs of servicing Brazil's massive \$250 billion debt, which in turn has increased fears by capitalist investors of a default like occurred

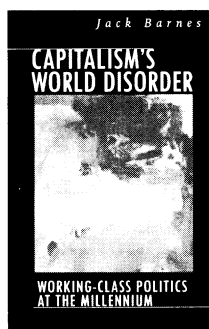
in Argentina in December. "With international banks severely restricting credit lines," reported the *Financial Times*, "Brazilian companies have been forced to buy dollars on the spot market to pay off their foreign debt." Brazil's national debt has ballooned to nearly 80 percent of the country's gross domestic product.

As the financial crisis deepened, U.S. treasury secretary O'Neill switched positions, announcing August 1 that he now backed offering new loans to Uruguay and Brazil, but not to Argentina. That country, which is in the midst of the deepest economic crisis in South America has seen its gross domestic product plunge 16.3 percent in the first quarter of 2002, from a year earlier. The economy in Argentina has contracted for the past 14 quarters, with official unemployment at 25 percent and underemployment driving the figure up even higher.

from Pathfinder

Capitalism's World Disorder: Working-Class Politics at the Millennium

BY JACK
BARNES



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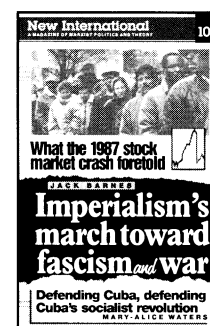
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Peasants in Venezuela press fight for land

Continued from front page

law to press their fight for land, the landlord and bourgeois forces opposed to Chávez condemn it and call for its "reform." Victor Cedeño, a leader of COPEI—a conservative party that alternated in the government with the social-democratic Democratic Action party until Chávez's ascendancy to power in 1998—complained in July that the law includes "unconstitutional provisions to arbitrarily intervene into private property."

In the wake of the U.S.-backed opposition coup in mid-April, which was defeated by mobilizations of working people, government officials have shown signs of backpedaling on the law. Late last year Chávez called on peasants to put a stop to land takeovers.

Meanwhile, governors, mayors, and other government officials who are part of the reactionary opposition—including the governor of the northeastern state of Cojedes—have used the police and private goon squads to push back attempts by peasants and their supporters to implement the new law. On July 12 Eduardo Lapi, the governor of Yaracuy state, ordered police to fire on dozens of peasant families who had tried to move onto land turned over to them by INT. Many peasants were seriously wounded.

Conference discusses land reform

The featured speaker at the July 21 meeting was Adina Mercedes Bastidas, a university professor of agricultural economy. Bastidas served as vice president under Chávez until her dismissal as part of a cabinet shakeup following the failed coup. Denouncing opposition attempts to water down the law, Bastidas said that its full implementation is necessary to reach a "mixed economy" in Venezuela, that is, maintaining the capitalist market system with more intervention by the state to achieve "social justice." She encouraged peasants and others in the audience to keep up their struggle to enforce its provisions.

In the discussion, William Bitelio Delgado, one of the meeting's organizers, reported that the ownership of more than half the nearly 5 million acres of arable land in Cojedes is in legal dispute. About 15 capitalist families claim ownership, he said, in opposition to demands that the land be nationalized and distributed to landless farming families.

"So far, INT has declared nationalized only 400,000 acres and has certified private ownership of large farms for about a similar area," he said.

Corn, sugar cane, rice, yucca and a variety of other vegetable crops, along with livestock, thrive in the fields that surround this city. While some of the land is cultivated by peasants, most—a good part of it idle—is owned by capitalist farmers, agricultural corporations, and other big landowners.

'We only had shovels and machetes'

Participants in the meeting were in the thick of a number of struggles for land rights.

"The thugs of the *Compañía Inglesa* [English Company] started shooting at us," said Angel Sarmiento, 52, in an interview following the meeting. A landless peasant who survives through contract field work and construction jobs, Sarmiento had joined a land occupation by 400 families in *La Palomita*, some five miles south of San Carlos, in early 2001.

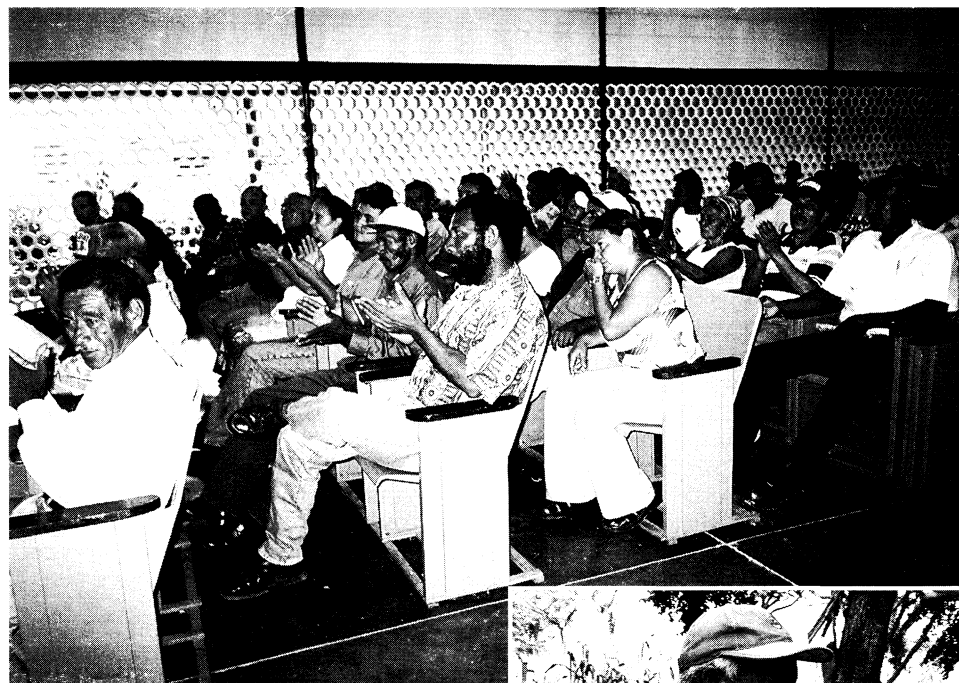
"We took the land peacefully," he said. "We only had shovels and machetes to defend ourselves. They killed several peasants and left many wounded."

Sarmiento explained that the land formed half the 12,000-acre property of the company, which used it to graze more than 40,000 cattle. One of the largest landholders in Venezuela, *Compañía Inglesa* is run by British capitalists, he said.

The federal government heeded calls by the peasants for protection after the killings threatened to become a national scandal, he said. National Guard troops were sent to the area and stayed for a few weeks until things calmed down. The peasants moved the cattle off the area they occupied, formed cooperatives, and began cultivating the land.

"None of them have been tried, however," he said, referring to the police involved in the shooting.

Land titles in this area are now hotly disputed under the 2001 agricultural law. Members of the Yauques, a family of indigenous



Above: peasants and families at July 21 conference in San Carlos, Venezuela, on implementation of agrarian reform law. Right: Angel Sarmiento at land occupation in La Palomita described peasants' struggle for the right to farm, and their response to murderous attacks by thugs hired by landowners.



people, have produced documents showing a legal claim to some 153,000 acres—including the *Compañía Inglesa* farm—granted to their tribe in the 19th century. Big landowners forcibly seized the land over the last half century, say the Yauques. Joining forces with peasant organizations, the Yauques have filed legal papers turning the land over to the state for distribution to landless peasants.

José Melisio Salmiento, 54, who has farmed for four decades, was one of a number of peasants at the July meeting who have been promised land in the area by INT officials. "I have 50 acres of land that doesn't produce anything," he said. "I have been fighting for land in the Charcote zone. That land belongs to the 'English.'"

"Three years ago we tried to take it over but they threw us out with guns," he said. "The National Guard intervened to defend us. [The Yauques] gave us these lands. We have the certificates, but the goons took them back and put fences around. There are thousands of acres."

"We have now been waiting six years for these lands but the landowners don't want to turn them over," Salmiento said. "Now that we have the support of the government and the new law favors us, we expect to get the titles."

At the end of the July 21 conference, most peasants lined up to sign up for cheap credit, supposedly guaranteed by the government under the new law.

"We can't do anything, though, until we get the title," said Maximo Flores, who heads up a group of five families that have formed

a cooperative called *Los Inocentes*.

After the conference, Sarmiento hosted *Militant* reporters on a trip to La Palomita. On the way, he made sure we stopped and took photos of thousands of acres of prime land that is left idle, noting that it belonged to a Venezuelan capitalist.

"Many peasants here are eyeing this land," commented Lijia Flores, another conference participant. "Why it should be sitting idle while he makes millions and we here have a hard time surviving?"

Land titles are crucial

At Palomita, it became apparent that the situation is not easy even for those peasants who have occupied land and begun to farm. "We've been here for a year and a half," said Pedro Roja, who had joined in the takeover of the land from *Compañía Inglesa*. "We use our hands, and some oxen. We don't have tractors or other equipment. Without title to the land, there is no credit from the banks and we can't claim insurance in the case of disaster. When rainstorms destroyed my melons and yucca earlier this year, I couldn't ask the government for compensation."

In an interview a few days before the

meeting in San Carlos, Braulio Alvarez, the general secretary of the Ezequiel Zamora National Agricultural Coalition, one of the main peasant organizations in the country, helped put these struggles in a nationwide context.

Militant reporters spoke to Alvarez, who has been appointed to INT's national board, at the INT headquarters in Caracas, the Venezuelan capital. He explained that about 1,000 big landowners control 85 percent of land currently under cultivation—a total of around 75 million acres. Some 350,000 hard-pressed peasant families, who own between 3 and 50 acres each, produce some 70 percent of vegetables and other major crops, he said.

The government has now declared the nationalization of another 75 million acres of idle cultivable lands and promised to distribute them to peasants, Alvarez said, adding that "there are more than 2,500 peasant groups demanding land today."

"The land and its use has been nothing but a commodity," he said, "not a social activity to produce enough food for the nation." Nearly 85 percent of all foodstuffs are imported from Canada, the United States, and elsewhere.

The stance of the Chávez government following the failed coup has raised questions about its direction even among supporters like Alvarez. The peasant leader and INT official said he does not know whether Chávez will govern in the interests of the majority—the peasants, fishermen, and other working people—or will continue to appease the opposition and the privileged minority of capitalists and landlords it speaks for.

Others are concentrating on advancing the battles at hand. As José Luis Jiménez, one of the peasants who are part of the land takeover at Palomita, put it, "We showed it can be done in the face of violence by the powerful landowners and the police. At some point, we may have to help others in the area to do the same if the titles and credits promised don't come through."

While the government still enjoys widespread support in the countryside, some fighters are looking to chart a course independent of reliance on Chávez or other figures in capitalist politics.

"They call it a Bolivarian revolution, but it's not a revolution at all," said Miguel González, a peasant who took part in the July 21 conference at San Carlos, quoting the description used by Chávez and his followers. "We need to make a revolution. The crisis we face is part of an international crisis. There is no major difference between Chávez and his predecessors in the government, except that Chávez has more radical discourse."

"Our biggest challenge is organization," said González. "There is no force yet that defends the interests of the workers and farmers."

Carlos Cornejo contributed to this article.

Venezuela resumes oil shipments to Cuba

BY ARGIRIS MALAPANIS

CARACAS, Venezuela—Ali Rodríguez, president of Petroleos de Venezuela (PDVSA), the country's state oil company, announced July 23 that the oil giant will resume shipments to Cuba of 53,000 barrels of crude oil per day at preferential terms on August 1.

PDVSA suspended these shipments during the April 11 military coup against Venezuelan president Hugo Chávez. After the coup failed and Chávez returned to Miraflores—the presidential palace—April 13, his government took no action to immediately reverse the halt of shipments to Cuba. Chávez backed off from a pre-coup announcement that he would replace the state oil company's leadership with executives loyal to him, leaving the management team headed by Ali Rodríguez intact.

The suspension was a blow to Cuba, since Venezuelan crude accounted for one third of the country's energy supply. Havana reportedly was forced to impose measures to reduce energy consumption and had to seek more expensive oil elsewhere.

During Chávez's brief ouster, PDVSA officials vowed not to deliver more oil to Cuba, claiming Venezuela was giving it away. Venezuela's oil minister has defended

the resumption of the shipments. He insisted on August 4 that the agreement his government reached earlier with Cuban president Fidel Castro is similar to those Venezuela has with other Caribbean nations.

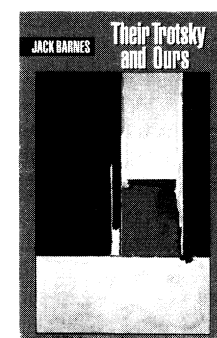
Under the deal, 80 percent of Venezuela's oil shipments to Cuba are reportedly to be paid for at world market prices within 90 days of delivery. The remaining 20 percent is sold by Caracas on preferential terms: payable within 15 years, with a two-year grace period and an interest rate of 2 percent.

In exchange, Havana has offered free medical care in Cuba for hundreds of Venezuelans who can't afford it in their country. "Every week, a planeload of people badly in need of treatment leaves for Havana," said Antonio Aguillón, in an interview here July 22. His wife who had traveled to Havana that day for an operation, as part of this program, had just called him to say the plane ride went fine. Cuba continued this program without interruption in the three months since the April coup, Aguillón said. Dozens of other working people interviewed in Venezuela made similar points.

Many also praised the hundreds of Cuban doctors who are in Venezuela as part of the assistance program from Cuba. These volunteer doctors "go to many remote ar-

reas that most Venezuelan physicians refuse to set foot on," said Tomás Blanca, a fisherman in Cumaná, the capital of the state of Sucre, at Venezuela's northwestern coast, in a July 19 interview there. "Venezuelan doctors practice medicine for profits. Cubans do it for humanity."

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SWP Convention turns party outward

BY PATRICK O'NEILL
AND GREG McCARTAN

NEW YORK—Coming out of the 41st convention of the Socialist Workers Party held in Oberlin, Ohio, July 25-27, hundreds of socialist workers and young socialists began more effectively getting out on the streets, to picket lines, plant gates, and college campuses to meet and reach out to working people and youth.

By the time the convention was over, all those attending the gathering had been able to size up what the communist movement had accomplished over the last few years, see the political strengthening of the movement both in the United States and internationally, and turn to more fully meet the wealth of opportunities to broaden the reach and influence of the communist movement within the working class today.

Young socialists took the lead in kicking off the post-convention work. Within days, they and other supporters of socialist candidates in the 2002 elections produced a flyer for Young Socialists for Koppel and Hawkins, the party candidates for governor and lieutenant governor of New York (see coverage on page 5). They began speaking from soapboxes on street corners here and carrying out campaign activities in other places across the United States. The young socialists and party candidates aim to win other young people to campaign together with them as partisans of the revolutionary working-class alternative in the elections. Through this kind of outreach, revolutionary-minded youth will be won to the communist movement over the coming months.

Socialist workers employed in textile mills, coal mines, meatpacking plants, and garment shops drew together their experiences during the final weeks of the subscription drive for the *Militant* and *Perspectiva Mundial* in July. In light of the convention discussion they came out with renewed confidence and conviction in the opportunities to talk socialism on the job and deepen their political work within the industrial working class—inside the factories and mines, at plant gates, and within initial elements of proletarian social formations that arise to fight against the offensive by the superwealthy ruling class.

And branches and organizing committees of the party are pursuing lines of resistance by working people they can join—from the Western coalfields to following the trail of New York City's construction union rats. They are looking to establish new organizing committees to widen the geographic spread of the movement and be a part of more centers of struggle.

West Coast longshore dispute

Branches of the party and young socialist campaigners plan to sell more than 200 copies of the *Militant* and *Perspectiva Mundial* this week to longshore workers and others backing the fight shaping up on the West Coast docks. The employers, who are driving to force through concessions on the workers, are backed by the U.S. government, which has threatened to invoke the antiunion Taft-Hartley law in order to block the longshoremen from striking. As they sell the *Militant*, the socialists will introduce workers to pamphlets such as *The Working Class and the Transformation of Learning* and other titles published by Pathfinder Press.

The day after the convention more than 100 supporters of the party held a series of workshops on the next steps in organizing the production line of Pathfinder books and a nationwide Pathfinder sales force and distribution center in Atlanta. A report on this meeting and the workshops will be run in next week's *Militant*.

Nearly 400 people attended the convention and participated in the classes, social events, and panel discussions. The gathering was enriched by members of the Young Socialists and Communist Leagues in Australia, Canada, Iceland, New Zealand, Sweden, and the United Kingdom, whose representatives contributed to the discussion on the convention floor, and in the classes and panels.

The entire movement is planning to head to either New York August 24-25, or Atlanta August 31-September 2, for two Red

Weekends of voluntary labor. In New York they will make further progress in transforming the editorial offices of Pathfinder and the area housing its printing presses, and the offices of the *Militant* and *Perspectiva Mundial*. They will load up trucks with the entire Pathfinder stock, which will be driven to Atlanta by supporters in time for the Labor Day weekend voluntary work crews to set up the distribution center of the publishing house.

The world that the capitalists have in store for working people was brought home by daily reports to the convention from a team of two socialist coal miners, Tony Lane and Jason Alessio, who left Oberlin and traveled to Somerset, Pennsylvania, in

struggles that will bring profound changes," and the necessity for the party to change "the understanding, and—above all—the timeliness with which we act today from our starting point within, and as part of, a militant vanguard of working people."

The party charted a course to "transform our movement together," Barnes said. "We will find ourselves in small towns as well as big cities.... Political openings and responsibilities will determine organizational forms."

This framework and political course was simply assumed by participants in the convention and surrounding meetings. It provided the basis for the quick steps out of the gathering into the openings among young

fore such eruptions is what is important, Jack Barnes said in a political report to the convention. "During economic and political upheavals a mass revolutionary party can be forged—but only if it has understood, organized, and acted beforehand." Rather than fear the violent events that are being prepared by capitalist development, worker-bolsheviks organize to meet them and make the most of the opportunities they entail.

U.S. power is a 'snapshot'

The "snapshot" of U.S. military power and economic weight that is taken as gospel by forces outside the communist movement hides the fact that Washington moves not from strength, but from weakness, said Barnes.

Today, Washington is being forced to use its military power to reinforce its domination of semicolonial countries and the system of imperialist relations, and as a warning to its imperialist rivals, as it feels the fore-shocks of the greatest economic crisis since the 1930s.

Barnes proposed that party branches organize a winter school to study *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*, written by V.I. Lenin, the central leader of the Bolshevik Party and the Russian Revolution, and related material. "Lenin wrote that imperialism would be a system in crisis, and would develop through both monopoly and the violence of competition," he said.

The Russian revolutionary leader explained that "the essence of imperialism" is the division of the world "into a handful of usurer states and a vast majority of debtor states"—a trend that has accelerated in the decades since the pamphlet's publication in 1917. In the chapter entitled, "Parasitism and Decay of Capitalism," he quoted a bourgeois economist, who stated, "The creditor is more firmly attached to the debtor than the seller is to the buyer."

The huge outstanding loans on the books of major banks, coupled with massive holdings in derivatives, lie at the heart of the financial threat to the banking system.

One indication of this trend is the slump in the share price of J.P. Morgan Chase, one of the largest and most prestigious of the U.S. banks. It has fallen in large part because of reports that its credit rating is about to be downgraded. This central institution of U.S. finance capital is effectively bankrupt, Barnes noted, and others are threatened by the bursting of a debt-driven "gigantic bubble in financial instruments."

Although the business cycle will continue—along with big fluctuations, including "hopeful" upward swings in the stock market—the world capitalist economy has entered into a long winter, in which a "hard rain" will continuously fall. As has happened with the economic stagnation in Japan, there is no internal mechanism that can bring capitalism out of its malaise. Even imperialist wars against semicolonial powers, such as that being prepared against Iraq, will not solve the capitalists' crisis.

Revolutionary political education

What is opening up for the communist movement with these events is a period of revolutionary political education of the working class, in which the distribution and study of revolutionary books and pamphlets produced by Pathfinder, along with socialist newspapers and magazines, will play a decisive role.

The political logic of the effects of the onset of a devastating collapse in industrial production is to shut off the lines of resistance within the working class. While temporary setbacks are to be expected, history has shown that the rulers cannot turn back the struggles of working people in a period of growing crises without taking them on and defeating them, Barnes said.

Imperialist war and economic depression will not immediately engender a revolutionary struggle for power by working people in the United States, Barnes noted. The U.S. working class has no historic experience of a pre-revolutionary situation, a nationwide workers party or general strike, or a political tyranny. It must go through such experiences over the coming years before it can mount revolutionary struggles that challenge



Militant/Top and bottom left, Dave Wulp; Bottom right, Eric Simpson
Participants in the convention recognized the accomplishments of the communist movement over the last several years. They turned out more confidently to the multitude of opportunities to extend among working people and youth the knowledge, collaboration, confidence, and trust in the party. Clockwise from top: convention delegates vote; discussing a Pathfinder title at the large display of books available at the convention; Tom Leonard (on right) leads class on "Declining health care under capitalism."

response to the flood that trapped nine workers underground. Lane, the party's candidate for governor of Pennsylvania, issued a campaign statement condemning the mine bosses for their contempt for workers' safety. Alessio reported on the flood and the rescue at a rally following the conclusion of the convention.

Victory of third campaign for the turn

The convention definitively registered the victory of the effort launched at a July 1998 Active Workers Conference in Pittsburgh to transform the work of the party branches and fractions, known as the third campaign for the turn to the industrial trade unions. This campaign focused on increasing the number of party members in meatpacking jobs organized by the United Food and Commercial Workers union (UFCW), garment and textile jobs organized by the Union of Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Employees (UNITE), as well as rebuilding a national union fraction of coal miners organized by the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA).

Five months later at a conference jointly sponsored by the YS and SWP in Los Angeles, SWP national secretary Jack Barnes presented a talk, "A Sea Change in Working-Class Politics," which is now published in *Capitalism's World Disorder*. Barnes noted that since at least 1997 "a new pattern is being woven in struggle as working people emerge from a period of retreat, resisting the consequences of the rulers' final blow-off boom, of 'globalization'—their grandiloquent term that displays imperial arrogance while it masks brutal assaults on human dignity the world over."

He noted that "we are at the beginning of

people and the working-class movement today, acting on the knowledge that the world economy has entered into depression conditions, and that the U.S. rulers will unleash new wars in a desperate attempt to hold together the system of imperialist domination.

The SWP and Young Socialists are politically prepared for the period of accelerating imperialist assaults on working people around the world, for the implosion of paper values in equity markets, and economic stagnation in the major imperialist centers. They have been discussing the underpinnings of this crisis with working people and youth for some years, and are gaining a wider hearing from workers, farmers, and youth seeking answers to the onset of a world depression, military assaults, and interimperialist conflict that mark the world today.

Communists have presented a scientific explanation of these trends in the world economy and their political implications in *Capitalism's World Disorder*, and articles published in *New Internationalist* magazine, including "Imperialism's March Toward Fascism and War"; "What the 1987 Stock Market Crash Foretold"; "Opening Guns of World War III: Washington's Assault on Iraq"; and "U.S. Imperialism has Lost the Cold War."

Although spokespeople for the imperialist ruling classes in the United States, Europe, and Japan would not acknowledge today that they will use trade and currency assaults and capital controls to defend their national economies, they will be driven to do so as conditions worsen, helping to trigger a collapse in industrial production and a world depression, as happened in the 1930s.

What the communist movement does be-

new opportunities

the ruling rich in a contest for power.

In the years ahead the working class has strengths to draw on that it did not have in the 1930s, the last time the workers movement confronted a deep crisis, Barnes noted. This includes the strength, character, and potential of women in the revolutionary proletarian movement, both in its cadre and its leadership. The weight of workers who are Black is completely different today. Another is the size and character of immigration into the United States, and the links to workers around the world this influence has given the working class, Barnes said. In addition, the great obstacle of Stalinism—a factor that played a decisive role in the defeats of revolutionary struggles in the 1930s—will not block the road as before.

Working-class solidarity

“Workers who are resisting become immediately open to forming an alliance with those opposed to the wars and assaults by the bosses,” Barnes said. The period ahead will not be one of relative prosperity in the United States as was the case during the Vietnam War, giving the U.S. rulers the ability to provide both “guns” and “butter.” Instead, Washington will carry out its assaults abroad while having to take on the social conquests of the working class at home, opening a completely different dynamic and range of possibilities than existed in the 1960s or early 1970s for revolutionary struggle.

“The most important thing in this situation is the resistance to imperialist brutality worldwide,” Barnes emphasized. He pointed to the Palestinian people, who through their refusal to kneel before the vaunted military prowess of the Israeli state have deepened its crisis. In Palestine, where Israeli soldiers have to deal with “multigenerational resistance,” watching their backs against not just children but grandparents, “we see not horror but glory,” he said.

Among other “magnificent examples of the absence of fear” are the revolutionary vigilance of the government and working people of Cuba against Washington’s four-decade-long hostility.

James Harris, a garment worker from Atlanta, said in the discussion that the shocks in the capitalist economy has “changed the way a layer of workers think about their future and how they fit into the working class.”

Delegate Francisco Sánchez from Chicago said that he is employed in a plant where the party is known by some workers. He has been welcomed into the plant by one worker “who treats me like he’s known me for years. He sees me as someone with the same politics,” he said.

Welcomes winter school

Susan Rose from Birmingham responded enthusiastically, like other delegates, to the proposal for the winter school and another chance for collective study over a number of weeks. Referring to the twice-weekly summer school on communist continuity and party history completed just before the convention, Rose said party members in Birmingham at first thought “how can we do it?” given their other activity. But now, “I think, ‘how can we not do it?’” She described an upturn in interest in Pathfinder books on the job, and said she often brings a stack of them into the break room for co-workers to look over.

Nan Bailey from Los Angeles told of a person attending the Militant Labor Forum series in Los Angeles who said that he “wants to believe you about the weakness of imperialism. I even feel it, but I need you to provide the ammunition so I can explain it.”

Party leader Mary-Alice Waters explained that Washington’s next war against the people of Iraq has nothing to do with the September 11 events, but is a continuation of its 1990 military assault and the opening guns of World War III. Far from September 11 changing anything in the world, the U.S. ruling class simply took advantage of the attacks to accelerate their assaults on working people. The invasion being planned by the U.S. government to topple the government of Iraq is unfinished business from the 1990–91 war, she said,

which has been rankling with them for a decade. Now the U.S. rulers aim to send their military back to finish the job.

Argiris Malapanis from Miami, who had just returned from a *Militant* reporting trip to Venezuela, said that a “serious depression is already under way in Argentina, Venezuela and other parts of Latin America.” He also described to the convention the wide-ranging political discussion the international reporting team was able to engage in with young people seeking ways to fight imperialism, and the actions of workers and peasants who are standing up and fighting the impact of the capitalist economic crisis.

Martin Koppel, the Socialist Workers candidate for governor of New York State and editor of *Perspectiva Mundial*, spoke about the just-concluded trip to Paraguay and Argentina by himself and Romina Green of the Young Socialists.

“In these two countries, both gripped by capitalist crisis and working peoples’ resistance, we introduced ourselves as communists from the United States, set up literature tables on campus, spoke at a forum, and made the most of the opportunities for political discussion,” Koppel said. He, Green, and Malapanis each said they had underestimated the thirst for revolutionary literature among working people and youth they had met, and needed more Pathfinder books that they had brought with them.

Anne Lane, of the Communist League in New Zealand, said that a team of Young Socialists will be going to Kanaky (New Caledonia) on the invitation of Palika, an organization that is fighting French colonial domination of that South Pacific country. The YS reached out to Palika, as well as other organizations in the Pacific to participate in the 2001 World Festival of Youth and Students in Algiers, Algeria. They subsequently met up in Algiers and exchanged experiences of their struggles fighting against imperialism.

The reports from teams to Latin America reinforced the international character of the communist movement in reaching out to meet and collaborate with layers of revolutionary minded youth and workers, along the road to rebuilding a world communist movement.

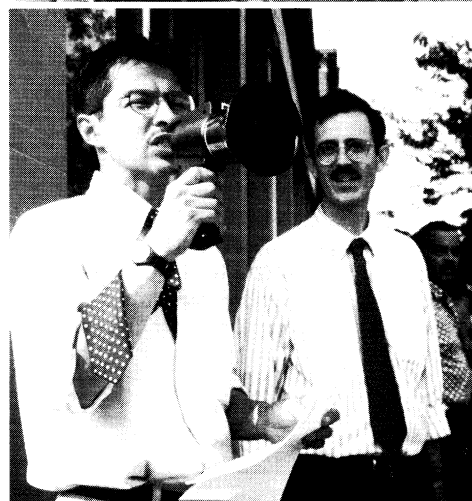
New openings internationally

SWP leader Jack Willey, pointing to the experiences of the teams to Latin America, said the communist movement has not faced similar openings for several decades, at least since the revolutions in Grenada and Nicaragua in the early 1980s. He had just returned from a meeting of the World Federation of Democratic Youth in Budapest, Hungary, which discussed the venue of the next world youth festival. Willey’s report was titled, “Revolutionary youth and communist nuclei.”

Willey noted the trips to Latin America came out of a decade of work in the World Federation of Democratic Youth and the youth festival movement. YS members from a number of countries first met and collaborated with anti-imperialist fighters from Paraguay, Haiti, Western Sahara, and elsewhere at the anti-imperialist youth festival in Havana in August 1997, at meetings of the Organization of Latin American and Caribbean Students, and at last year’s festival in Algeria.

Willey had joined a team of socialists from the United States and Canada that had participated in a May conference in Haiti on the invitation of Young Socialists members in that country. “As part of the discussions, we sold a wide range of books, from Karl Marx and Frederick Engels titles to *Capitalism’s World Disorder* by Jack Barnes,” he said. “The experience helped justify the commitment of the movement’s time and financial resources to publish books by revolutionary leaders, and the extraordinary effort to translate them into French, Spanish, and other languages that make them more accessible to the fighters we meet.”

Pierre, one of two representatives from the Haiti Young Socialists attending the convention, brought greetings to the participants. “Since the youth festival in Algeria,” he said, “the Young Socialists mem-



Militant/Top, Clay Dennison; middle, Romina Green
Communist workers and young socialists hit the streets in the days following the convention, winning support for the Socialist Workers campaigns. Above, literature table at University of Alabama. Left, Bill Estrada, Socialist Workers candidate for Congress in New York, soapboxes in Upper Manhattan.

bers have read many books.” Thanks are due to those publishing Pathfinder titles, he said, which have allowed “those who are discouraged to regroup their forces and to fight.”

The Central Committee of the Communist Party of Cuba and the Revolutionary Socialist Nucleus in Paraguay sent greetings to the convention.

Leaders of the Communist Leagues spoke on panels or in convention sessions about the strengthening of their work along the same lines as discussed at the convention. Kevin Jónsson, a leader of the Communist League in Iceland, founded at a convention on June 30, explained the steps the organization is taking to integrate itself into sections of the industrial working class, as well as to knit ties with farmers.

Broadening reach of worker-bolsheviks

In his report, “Communist branches, fractions, and recruiting vanguard workers,” Joel Britton drew on the party’s recent progress in building political trade union fractions, and local units based in working-class districts. “We have reaffirmed that we are building a party of worker-bolsheviks, described in *The Changing Face of U.S. Politics*,” he said.

The work of the party’s industrial trade union fractions was discussed at meetings the day before the convention, as well as a meeting of the national fraction steering committees the day following the convention (see page 10).

Britton stressed the importance of organizing regular political work at plant gates and mine portals, reaching out to meet workers and discuss politics with them. The weekly teams sell the *Militant*, *Perspectiva Mundial*, and Pathfinder literature, and

bring the party’s elections campaigns and information on political events they seek to get workers involved in. Socialist workers inside the workplaces are more and more finding that by joining the team outside they not only help increase sales, but become better known as political people by a wider layer of workers in the plant.

At the conclusion of the convention Barnes discussed the next steps in building and recruiting to the communist movement. “We need to take a richer look at recruitment to the party” and the crucial role of the Young Socialists, he said. “Young people need a bridge to party membership. We will also recruit older people, but not if there are not youth around. To the older worker, youth represent life after eight or more hours of death in the factories. Recruitment can’t be done without this dual approach.”

“We welcome young people who take their time about their decision whether to be a Bolshevik for the rest of their life,” Barnes said. As they do so the party and Young Socialists will find ways to work together in revolutionary activity, organize classes and schools, and deepen their common class-struggle experience.

A rally at the conclusion of the convention included representatives of the Communist Leagues in Sweden and the United Kingdom; two party supporters leading the Pathfinder Distribution Center and the party supporters’ financial efforts; party candidates for public office Arrin Hawkins, Martin Koppel, and Sam Manuel; national campaign director Greg McCartan on campaign perspectives and the party’s battle for workers’ rights in elections; and YS leader Jason Alessio on the work of the party in the coal fields.

Jack Barnes introduced the members of the National Committee. Rally participants joined in launching a Pathfinder Fund, which will run to November 15. Some \$55,000 was pledged toward the overall goal.

[Further coverage on the convention and how the communist movement is reaching out to working people and youth will be featured in next week’s *Militant*.]

Socialist Workers Party National Committee Elected July 27, 2002

Regular members

Nan Bailey	Argiris Malapanis
Jack Barnes	Greg McCartan
Joel Britton	Francisco Picado
Steve Clark	Dave Prince
Naomi Craine	Dennis Richter
Betsy Farley	Norton Sandler
Frank Forrestal	Ma’mud Shirvani
James Harris	Brian Taylor
Martin Koppel	Mary-Alice Waters
Ernie Mailhot	Jack Willey
Paul Mailhot	

Alternate members

1. Samuel Farley	8. Diana Newberry
2. Alyson Kennedy	9. Paul Pederson
3. Doug Nelson	10. Olympia Newton
4. Patrick O’Neill	11. David Rosenfeld
5. Róger Calero	12. Romina Green
6. Angel Lariscy	13. Jason Alessio
7. Lisa Potash	

Socialists step up sales, political work on the job, in unions

BY JEREMY ROSE
AND LIZBETH ROBINO

OBERLIN, Ohio—"We are heading into a period of sharpening economic crisis and new wars by U.S. imperialism," said Betsy Farley in a report to a meeting of socialist workers here. Farley is a member of the United Mine Workers of America from northeast Pennsylvania's anthracite coalfields.

Participants in the meeting focused their discussion on how to better organize and deepen their political work on the job and broadly among working people. There are many opportunities today to gain a hearing for working-class explanation of the world and a revolutionary perspective, speakers pointed out.

Participating in the meeting were socialist workers who are members of or work in industries that could be organized by three industrial unions: the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA), Union of Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Employees (UNITE), and United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW). The meeting took place here July 24, the day before the opening of the Socialist Workers Party convention. The socialist workers met together in a joint session, then separately in their respective fractions for further discussion.

Brian Taylor, a member of the UMWA from Birmingham, Alabama, pointed to the political space open for socialist workers on the job and within the struggles of working people today. But, he said, there has been "a gap between the opportunities we face and how we have been organizing to take advantage of them."

Maggie Trowe, a garment worker and UNITE member from New York City, added, "We have to use the political space open to us today. Otherwise it will not be there when war or other crises hit." Socialist garment workers in New York helped set the pace along these lines in winning new readers during the spring subscription drive for the *Militant* and *Perspectiva Mundial*.

"There is plenty of action in the three industries where we have chosen to establish fractions," Farley said, "from union-organizing drives in meatpacking, to contract fights by the United Mine Workers, to struggles around issues like black lung benefits, health and safety on the job, and fights by immigrant workers for the right to obtain drivers licenses. We are part of this resistance."

"But that alone is meaningless unless we can politicize the work of our fractions," she said. "We need to focus on how we can build the party and its influence among workers today, including the recruitment of those individual workers who can be won to the communist movement. More people know we are communists than we think. If we are not discussing politics on the job they will get the idea that our party isn't serious."

Communist work at factory gates

A key component in advancing this course is for every party branch and organizing committee to carry out weekly political work at plant gates and mine portals where communist workers are employed. As well as joining those sales, fraction members get out to a factory gate in another industry each week.

By selling the *Militant* and *Perspectiva Mundial*, revolutionary books and pamphlets from Pathfinder Press, handing out election campaign flyers, and other activities, socialist workers maximize the opportunity to meet and discuss politics with co-workers. Several participants emphasized that, while each situation is different, in general the bolder the teams are the more they get out of these efforts.

Samuel Farley, who for two years has been part of a battle for union recognition at Dakota Premium Foods in St. Paul, Minnesota, reported that when he joined the team selling socialist literature at his plant gate, "we sold three subscriptions to co-workers. This shows the respect that has been won by the party," he said.

In Omaha, Nebraska, 25 meat packers

bought subscriptions to the *Militant* and *Perspectiva Mundial* during the recent subscription campaign. Many of the new readers were part of a successful fight to organize a union at ConAgra Northern States Beef. "When co-workers see you staffing a literature table near the plant it adds to the discussion at work," explained Lizbeth Robino, an Omaha meat packer. Several new readers have helped promote the socialist publications among their co-workers.

A Young Socialists member from Chicago described how participating in literature table teams in a workers district where the Chicago branch has decided to focus its efforts has complemented her work at a UNITE-organized sewing factory. Several co-workers asked her what she was doing after they drove by the literature table, opening up political discussions on the job. In mid-June, the company at this plant had the union's business agent arrested in the cafeteria, provoking a discussion among workers about how to respond to this attack on the union. The union shop steward circulated a grievance against the arrest that most workers signed.

Interest among coal miners

Tony Lane, a coal miner from western Pennsylvania, discussed his experiences joining a sales team near the mine portal where he works. Lane, who is the SWP candidate for governor of Pennsylvania, described how the election campaign has reinforced the fraction's political work. He also emphasized the importance of setting up house meetings with co-workers and others we meet, especially since miners tend to live many miles and in different directions from the mines where they work.

Jeremy Rose, a coal miner from southwestern Pennsylvania, described a recent *Militant* sales team to the southern West Virginia coalfields that sold three subscriptions at mine portals and a number of single copies of the paper. The particular issue of the *Militant* that week had no coverage of fights in the coalfields, and focused on Washington's push toward war against Iraq. At a mine portal, he reported, one miner told another that the *Militant* was the only paper that supported their 1993 strike. The second miner bought it, commenting, "I'm not a communist or Islamic, but I want to know what you guys have to say."

Following the fraction meetings, when the



Militant/Left: Eric Simpson. Top right: Clay Dennison. Right: Mark Severs
Clockwise from left: Miami garment workers demand recognition of UNITE union at Point Blank Body Armor in south Florida; selling the *Militant* at mine portal in Alabama; worker on strike against Washington Beef in Toppenish, Washington; miner applauds as rescue workers bring up trapped miners at Quecreek mine in Pennsylvania.

socialist workers learned of the nine miners who were trapped in the flooded Quecreek mine in Somerset, Pennsylvania, Tony Lane and Jason Alessio, a Young Socialist and underground coal miner from Colorado, traveled to the mine site. They joined family, co-workers, and local residents in awaiting the rescue of the miners and gathered facts on the situation.

'Routinism does not serve us'

Socialist workers who are meat packers also discussed ways to build the party today in the packinghouses, an industry marked by increasing efforts by a layer of vanguard workers to advance fights for union recognition and improved working conditions. They approached this from the perspective that the spring subscription drive for the *Militant* and *Perspectiva Mundial* is not over, but rather the work to transform the way they function has just begun. Joel Britton, a longtime leader of the SWP, said that "revolutionizing our functioning is affirming that we believe in ourselves and our party. Routinism does not serve us."

Promoting the socialist workers election campaign can be an effective way to win co-workers to a communist perspective. Kari Sachs, a meat packer and the SWP candidate for lieutenant governor in Minnesota, reported on success on the job in using the campaign to explain the program of the SWP. "Two co-workers are really pushing us to do daily political work because of their

interest in our ideas. They are enthusiastic that we are running for office, and one wants to help us campaign," she said.

Connie Allen, a textile worker at Pillowtex in Kannapolis, North Carolina, reported on widespread layoffs by textile companies across the south, including 600 at the four-plant complex where she works. After a 25-year struggle, workers at the plants won union recognition in 1999. As they shed workers, the bosses attempt to increase the load on those remaining, while still meeting production goals. For many this has meant working through their breaks. "Workers most directly affected by this attempt to intensify production have protested these attacks on wages," Allen said.

This experience by the workers led to a discussion about the union. North Carolina is a "right-to-work-for-less" state and membership in the union is not compulsory, Allen explained. "We are part of this discussion about the importance of the union and how to strengthen it, as we resist the company's offensive. We are part of the stepped-up effort to get co-workers to join the union," she said.

Allen reported that sales of the *Militant*, *Perspectiva Mundial*, and books and pamphlets by Pathfinder Press outside the plant gate where she works has broadened the number of workers she can talk to inside the mill.

Sam Manuel in Washington, D.C., contributed to this article.

Young socialists discuss impact of convention

BY PATRICK O'NEILL

"I don't like capitalism," said Jabron Miller. "As a young Black man growing up in Philadelphia, it has made my life a living hell."

Miller, who studies at the University of Pittsburgh, spoke to the *Militant* on July 27 during the Socialist Workers Party convention in Ohio. He was one of 25 people attending their first national gathering of the communist movement. Hailing from Australia, Canada, Iceland, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and the United States, they included several members and contacts of the Young Socialists.

The 20-year-old student is now looking for ways to take up the political sword against capitalist injustice. "I'm in the process of deciding whether or not I want to be a communist," he said. "This is the only group I've seen so far that is engaging in struggle."

Bill, a 24-year-old meat packer from West Africa, has also rejected the capitalist system and its propaganda. "Because of capitalism there are a lot of problems in Africa, a lot of problems in my country," he said.

The young worker, who was invited to the convention by SWP members he works alongside at a Minneapolis packing plant, has read books by Patrice Lumumba and other revolutionary leaders in Africa, along with a number of Pathfinder titles. "The more informed you are, the more confident you are to act," he said.

Emily Paul, 19, who joined the YS in Los Angeles four months ago, also spoke to *Militant* reporters. A student at California State University (CSU), she was impressed by the conduct of the convention and how members of the SWP "function in a way that gives everyone a chance to voice their opinion. It was cool seeing people from around the world trying to do the same thing—really supporting what we're saying: 'workers of the world, unite,'" she said.

Stephanie Taylor, 21, a college student in Brownsville, Texas, and a YS member for six months, commented that "we will see more interest in our movement as the crisis deepens." She stepped up her own political reading and activity with the accelerated war drive and attacks on workers' rights by Washington that followed the September 11 events. "After that, politics was really unavoidable," she said.

Need to recruit to YS

For Alasdair MacDonald, 21, a YS member in Sydney, Australia, the convention discussions provided confirmation of "the need to recruit to the YS." The growth of the youth organization will make the communist movement more attractive to older workers, too, he said. "They see the lifeblood of humanity at work."

Like MacDonald and several others, Seamus Sheridan from London commented that the intensive reading and discussion

involved in the Socialist Summer School provided invaluable preparation for the convention. Referring to one of the titles studied in the six-week, 13-class school, he said, "Reading *Their Trotsky and Ours* was great. I had read it before, but this time it made more sense, once you go through discussion with others."

For Robert Meyer, 23, the classes drove home the historic continuity of the communist movement with revolutionary struggles of the past. A member of the YS in Omaha, Nebraska, Meyer works as a nurse aid in a hospital for the long-term care of critically ill patients, and sees at close quarters the "messed-up health system. You have to pay to stay alive," he said.

"My expectations of the convention were to broaden and deepen my understanding of imperialism and the current world disorder," wrote Jon Tirsén from Stockholm, Sweden, in a July 31 note to the *Militant*. "Instead, I received something more important. At the SWP convention I learned that there is a solution to the built-in faults and injustices of our current social system. The working class must overthrow its oppressors and rebuild society according to more rational and human principles."

"I learned that this revolution is not just possible and desired. It is inevitable and required."

Maurice Williams contributed to this article.

Senate hearings prepare war against Iraq

BY MAURICE WILLIAMS

Hearings conducted by the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee July 31—August 1 have affirmed the bipartisan support for Washington's plans to militarily topple the government of Iraq. The only disputes have arisen over how U.S. imperialism could most effectively carry out that objective.

Speaking to the press at the end of July, U.S. secretary of defense Donald Rumsfeld dismissed proposals to rely on a tightening of the economic blockade or a bombing assault as ways of overthrowing the government of Saddam Hussein; only a massive invasion by Washington, he said, could achieve the U.S. rulers' aims.

"They have chemical weapons, they have biological weapons. They have an enormous appetite for nuclear weapons," he stated.

"The idea that it's easy to simply go do what you suggested ought to be done from the air...is a misunderstanding of the situation," Rumsfeld told a reporter. "The Iraqis have a great deal of what they do deeply buried."

When a reporter asked, "Where is the Pentagon and the U.S. military today in terms of planning for any possible military operation in Iraq?" the defense secretary sidestepped the question, citing "a host of different contingencies and possibilities... [that] have always been on-the-shelf plans—

sometimes they're called war plans."

Others who testified at the Senate hearings included former senior military officers and "experts" on Iraq. They said that tens of thousands of troops and an armada of warplanes, ships, and armored vehicles would be needed for an invasion.

Democratic Sen. Joseph Biden, head of the committee, co-authored an opinion column that appeared in the July 31 *New York Times* with Sen. Richard Lugar, the committee's ranking Republican member. "President Bush has made clear his determination to remove Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein from power—a goal many of us in Congress share," they wrote.

Before the hearings began Biden said that he wanted "to begin a dialogue" on how to overthrow the Iraqi government and have "a serious and open discussion about what is at stake."

'Great sacrifices from American people'

"This is not an action that can be sprung on the American people," said Lugar in his opening statement at the hearings. "We must estimate soberly the human and economic cost of war plans and postwar plans."

He added that public debate is essential to win "strong public support" for military "actions that will require great sacrifices from the American people."

Laying out what those "sacrifices" might be—and preparing the American people for a future of guns without butter—Congressman James Spratt, the senior Democrat on the House Budget Committee and a member of the Armed Services Committee, remarked two days before the hearings that "since there is no surplus in the budget from which the cost [of war] could be paid, there will be trade-offs, making initiatives like Medicare drug coverage harder to do, and almost certainly there will be deeper deficits and more debt."

While waging war is not "beyond our means," he said, "We can't have it all."

Region in turmoil

King Abdullah of Jordan traveled to the United States for a brief visit with Bush that coincided with the Senate hearings. His comments echoed those of other Arab government officials who have expressed some public queasiness about the political instability a new imperialist war would provoke in the region.

The prospect of war is "moving to the horizon much closer than we believed," Abdullah told the press upon his arrival in Washington. "Our concern," he said, is "that a miscalculation in Iraq would throw the whole area into turmoil."

European imperialist powers have so far

gone along with Washington's war plans, while trying to assert some influence by encouraging the U.S. government to seek United Nations authorization for renewed military action.

"Any attack would only be justified if a mandate was approved by the UN Security Council," said President Jacques Chirac of France July 30 after meeting with German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder. "That is the position of Germany and France."

According to the *International Herald Tribune*, U.S. government officials have stated that UN decisions are unnecessary, owing to Baghdad's alleged "defiance of past UN mandates"—including the expulsion of so-called weapons monitors.

The administration of William Clinton used Baghdad's restriction of the snooping activities of UN "weapon inspectors" as a pretext for launching a bombing campaign in December 1998 that destroyed schools, hospitals, grain depots, residential buildings, and military sites.

In January the following year U.S. government officials were forced to admit that the inspection teams were U.S. spies who carried surveillance equipment that allowed them to snoop on radio, cell phone, and walkie-talkie communications by Iraq's security force.

Meanwhile, Washington has been laying the groundwork on several fronts for a military assault. In addition to building up its forces and striking power in the region, the U.S. government has built up its Strategic Petroleum Reserve by more than 100 million barrels.

The purchases of oil account for more than half the growth in demand for oil this year.

The reserve could be used to sell 4.2 million barrels of oil a day to compensate for the 1 million barrels of Iraqi oil that would reportedly stop flowing because of U.S. military attacks.

New U.S. economic data sends stocks falling

BY JACK WILLEY

The Commerce Department announced July 31 that economic growth declined sharply in the second quarter of 2002, and that last year's recession was both longer and deeper than earlier stated. The news sent the roller-coaster stock markets shooting down again, wiping out most gains from a temporary rally in late July.

The bleak economic news—also echoed in Europe—comes amid bankruptcies of telecommunications and energy trading companies, and a spreading collapse of economies in Latin America. Unlike the stock market crash in 1987, the bursting of the 1990s bubble in equity markets is threatening the biggest U.S. banks. Financial institutions such as J.P. Morgan Chase and Citicorp have massive holdings of derivatives and loans that are "at risk" as these trends continue.

The U.S. economy expanded at an annual rate of 1.1 percent in the second quarter, and consumer spending grew by just 1.9 percent, both considerable declines from the previous two quarters. Businesses reduced spending for the seventh consecutive quarter, breaking the record for the longest such streak since the Commerce Department began keeping records in 1947. Unemployment remained stagnant in June with the official jobless rate at 5.9 percent.

Commercial construction slumped 14 percent in the second quarter and state and local government spending shrank by 1.1 percent. Much-touted auto sales, which jumped in July, were spurred after General Motors, Ford, and DaimlerChrysler AG announced interest-free financing and rebates similar to those offered last fall. Such offers dig deep into the profit rates of the auto giants.

After originally reporting that the economy shrank only in the third quarter of 2001, the Commerce Department revised its figures to show a decline throughout the first three quarters of last year.

Bourgeois commentators are now openly talking about a "double dip recession"—that the economy may be on the cusp of a second downturn in the business cycle in two years.

Stock market's long decline

Since its peak in early 2000, the Dow Jones Industrial Average is off 30 percent and the Nasdaq has crashed 75 percent in the same period. Some \$7.7 trillion in paper values has been wiped out since the markets peaked in March 2000.

The banks face a near-record pace of debt default by U.S. companies and \$155 billion of debt has fallen from investment-grade ratings to junk ratings so far this year. In Latin America, Brazil's economy is teetering on the brink of collapse under the weight of \$250 billion in foreign debt, largely owed to U.S. banks. The economies of Argentina,

Paraguay, and Uruguay are already in the midst of a free-fall. Hundreds of billions of dollars of uncollectible loans made by the major banking institutions are now threatening a banking crisis.

Two large banking institutions in the United States that have given loans to the energy and telecommunications industries are being battered by the financial crises in those industries. The stock of Citigroup, the third largest corporate lender in the United States, fell 16 percent July 23, shaving \$26 billion off its market value in one day and leaving it down nearly 50 percent for the year. J.P. Morgan Chase's stock is down 31 percent for the year.

Three of the largest telecommunications companies—Adelphia Communications, Global Crossing, and WorldCom—have filed for bankruptcy, in effect defaulting on their debt payments. Another major player, Qwest Communications International, recently reported that it had exaggerated revenue and understated costs over the last three years. The industry faces overcapacity. Of the long haul fiber optic lines built by these companies in the United States, some 95 percent remain unused. Overseas, companies such as Deutsche Telekom and France Telecom, overloaded with debt, are spiraling toward disaster.

Some \$1 trillion in local phone company market value is "at risk" worldwide, according to *USA Today*. Big-business economists are suggesting that more telecommunications companies will be forced into bankruptcy to rid themselves of debt and stay competitive.

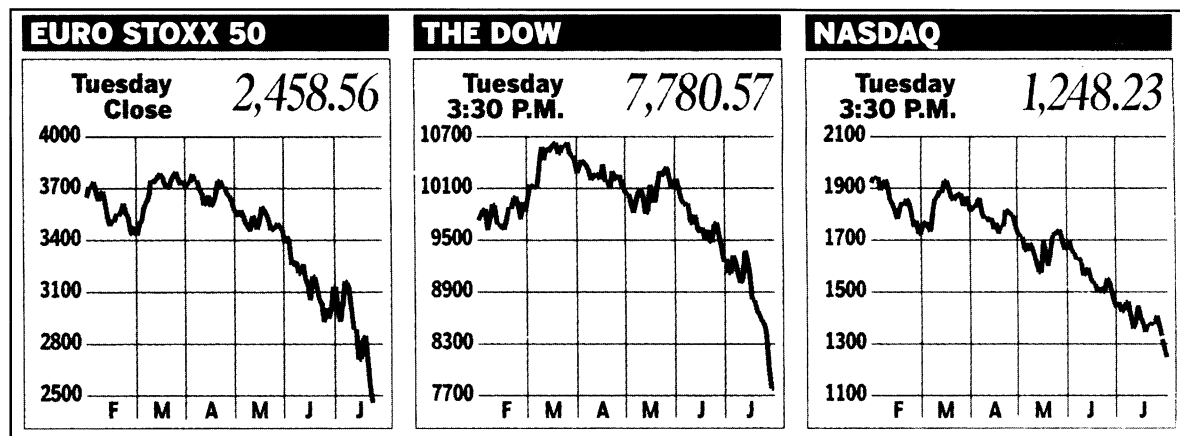
"The end game is that all the long-distance carriers go bankrupt," said Susan Kalla, analyst at Friedman Billings Ramsey. "If the name of the game is to wipe out debt...it's likely they'll all take advantage of that."

The chairman of the Federal Communications Commission, Michael Powell, blamed the collapse of telecommunications companies on "a near-hysterical belief that the opportunities for growth were limitless. Very few did not get swept up in the hot air."

Stock shares in energy traders have plummeted after rising to heights well beyond the value of the companies themselves. Dynegy and Mirant have posted second-quarter losses in the hundreds of millions of dollars. Since the bankruptcy of Enron in December—the second-largest in history—Dynegy's stock has plunged more than 95 percent and Mirant's by 75 percent.

Bankruptcies are spreading in the airline industry, which received a \$10 billion government bailout last September. Carriers fly with only 80 percent to 85 percent of the passengers they did a year ago. Midway Airlines, in bankruptcy protection for a year, ceased operations in July. Sun Country was grounded and forced into bankruptcy when

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Record of the fall in European and U.S. stock exchanges since February 2002.

MILITANT LABOR FORUMS

CALIFORNIA

Los Angeles

Eyewitness Report on Pennsylvania Mine Disaster: Behind the Government/Coal Company Coverup. Speaker: Jason Alessio, Socialist Workers Party, member, United Mine Workers Local 1984 in Colorado, recently returned from visit to Somerset, Pennsylvania, site of mine flood and rescue of nine miners. Sat., Aug. 17, 7:00 p.m. reception, 7:30 p.m. program. 4229 S. Central Avenue. Tel: (323) 233-9372.

San Francisco

Eyewitness Report on Pennsylvania Mine Disaster: Behind the Government/Coal Company Coverup. Speaker: Jason Alessio, Socialist Workers Party, member, United Mine Workers Local 1984 in Colorado, recently returned from visit to Somerset, Pennsylvania, site of mine flood and rescue of nine miners. Sun., Aug. 18, 1:00 p.m. reception, 2:00 p.m. program. 3926 Mission St. Donation: \$7. Tel: (415) 584-2135.

IOWA

Des Moines

Storm Lake Investigation: Rulers Assault Women's Rights and Right to Privacy. Fri., Aug. 16, 7:30 p.m. 3720 6th Avenue. Tel: (515) 288-2970.

MICHIGAN

Detroit

The Economic Crisis in South America and Working-Class Resistance. Fri., Aug. 16, 7:30 p.m. 4208 W. Vernor. Tel: (313) 554-0504.

NEW JERSEY

Newark

Defend the Cuban Revolution. Speaker: Mike

Taber, Socialist Workers Party. Fri., Aug. 9, 7:30 p.m. 168 Bloomfield Ave., 2nd Floor. Donation: \$5. Tel: (973) 481-0077.

NEW YORK

Brooklyn

Capitalism's March toward War and Economic Depression: Hear the Socialist Candidates Present a Working-Class Alternative. Speakers: Socialist Workers candidates Martin Koppel, for governor of New York; Arrin Hawkins, for Lt. gov.; Paul Pederson, for U.S. Congress. 12th C.D. Fri., Aug. 9, 7:30 p.m. Dinner at 6:30 p.m. 372A 53rd St. (at 4th Ave.) Donation: \$5 program, \$6 dinner. Tel: (718) 567-8014.

Garment District

The Mine Flood in Pennsylvania: Labor's Fight for Safety. Speaker: Patrick O'Neill, *Militant* correspondent. Fri., Aug. 9, 7:30 p.m. Dinner at 6:30 p.m.

Eyewitness Report: the Crisis in Latin America. Speakers: Martin Koppel, Socialist Workers candidate for governor of New York, and Romina Green, Young Socialists, participants in Socialist Workers Party and Young Socialists team to Paraguay and Argentina. Fri., Aug. 16, 7:30 p.m. Dinner at 6:30 p.m. Both events at 545 8th Avenue, 14th Floor. Donation: \$5 dinner, \$4 program. Tel: (212) 693-7358.

Upper Manhattan

Capitalism's March toward War and Economic Depression: Hear the Socialist Candidates Present a Working-Class Alternative. Speakers: Socialist Workers candidates Bill Estrada, union meat packer, for U.S. Congress. 15th C.D.; Margaret Trowe, union garment worker, for U.S. Congress. 14th C.D. Fri., Aug. 9, 7:30 p.m. Dinner at 6:30 p.m. 599 W. 187th Street, 2nd Floor. Donation: \$5 dinner, \$5 program. Tel: (212) 740-4611.

Washington's use of 'dirty bombs'

Fifty-seven years ago, on August 6 and August 9, 1945, U.S. imperialism dropped atomic bombs on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. This horrendous crime remains the only time nuclear weapons have been used against humanity.

The bombs were the "dirtiest" nuclear weapons imaginable. They killed over 220,000 people instantly and left entire generations condemned to slowly die from long-term illnesses. It is an atrocity the U.S. rulers not only never apologized for, but defend to this day.

For decades U.S. government officials and other apologists for imperialism have justified Washington's decision to drop the bombs as necessary to save "American lives" and end the war. Of course this is always the justification of an empire, and will continue to be the banner under which the U.S. rulers inflict brutalities on humanity.

But this rationalization covers up the real truth. Washington made the cold-blooded decision to incinerate the civilian populations in these two Japanese cities to send a message to its imperialist rivals and working people around the world. Their message was loud and clear: we not only have the bomb but are more than willing to use it to advance our imperial prerogatives.

The same bipartisan gang in Washington is also responsible for the succession of atrocities carried out against the peoples of Korea, Vietnam, Iraq, and more recently in

Afghanistan.

These facts are important to remember today as Washington claims the moral right to organize "preemptive" strikes against other nations to prevent them from developing long-range delivery systems and weapons of mass destruction. Despite announcements it will cut the number of active nuclear warheads in its arsenal, the U.S. rulers still have enough of the weapons to make the rubble bounce many times over. By pressing to develop and deploy an antimissile system, Washington not only seeks to "defend" U.S. territory, but also to use nuclear blackmail with impunity against any country in the world.

The fight to prevent the U.S. government from again raining down nuclear weapons on working people is a battle to overthrow the war makers. As capitalism sinks deeper into crisis and the financial implosion of the economic bubble continues, the threat of a world depression looms on the horizon.

The last temporary stabilization of capitalism coming out of a similar crisis was possible only through a devastating depression and inter-imperialist world war, capped by the bombings in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The only road for working people out of such a future is to mount a revolutionary struggle to take power out of the hands of the superwealthy few and put in place a workers and farmers government.

The socialist alternative in 2002

Continued from front page

spreading world economic crisis. These include garment workers in Florida mobilizing to win union representation; farmers in the South fighting racist discrimination by the department of agriculture; coal miners resisting the bosses' productivity drive and disregard for safety; longshore workers on the West Coast standing up to anti-union moves and federal strikebreaking threats; and workers organizing protests to oppose INS raids and deportations and restrictions on immigrants' ability to receive drivers' licenses.

Socialist Workers candidates point to the enormous social, economic, and political power of working people and the possibility and necessity of fighting for workers power: a government of workers and farmers that can begin to transform society in the interests of the vast majority.

As they speak out at "soapboxing" street meetings, extend solidarity to workers on strike picket lines, and join other fronts of the resistance, the socialist campaigners explain that the U.S. rulers' probes against workers' rights, the imperialist drive toward war, and the employers' drive against workers' wages and conditions on the job are all part of the deadly response of the superwealthy rulers to the crisis and weakness of their system of domination. Successive Democratic and Republican party administrations—on the federal, state, and local level—have organized each round of assaults on workers and farmers, and are preparing the attacks to come.

Well before September 11, 2001, the seeds were sown under the eight-year administration of William Clinton for the growing federalization of policing, the building

up of a Northern Command to use the U.S. military at home, and the jailing of citizens without charges along with secret jailings and trials of those without "proper" papers.

The U.S. rulers are not only using their military might as they march humanity toward catastrophe. The Clinton administration accelerated the use of trade conflicts as a lever for the U.S. rulers against their imperialist rivals and semicolonial countries. The bipartisan imposition of steep steel tariffs by the Bush White House was an economic act of war along these lines. Washington will also use currency conflicts as part of its growing aggressiveness.

Socialist Workers campaigners explain that these motive forces within the imperialist economy are converging toward a debt implosion and economic depression, and put forward a program for working people to defend themselves in face of this.

Their campaign points to the need for labor to chart an independent working-class course, to break from the two-party shell game, and challenge the bosses in the political arena. The socialist campaign offers working people and youth involved in fights an arena in which to take a stand that advances the interests of all working people.

The *Militant* will provide regular coverage of these campaigns, keep readers informed of the activities of young socialists, and run statements by candidates like those in this issue. We encourage everyone who supports these perspectives to campaign together with other revolutionary-minded working people and youth as an effective means of building a fighting vanguard capable of leading the future mass battles of workers and farmers to victory.

Back West Coast dockworkers

The *Militant* is turning over space on our editorial page to this July 18 statement on the longshore workers' fight by the Socialist Workers 2002 campaign in California. The California ticket is headed by Nan Bailey for governor, William Kalman for lieutenant governor, and Olympia Newton for secretary of state.

Some 10,000 dockworkers at twenty-nine West Coast deep water ports, represented by the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) are waging an important battle against the shipping companies and the Pacific Maritime Association. The outcome of this fight will have an impact on other labor struggles as well.

The ILWU contract expired July 1, as did the agreement covering Service Employees International Union (SEIU) Local 790 port workers. Also, port truck drivers, the lowest paid workers on the waterfront, are seeking to affiliate with the Teamsters to improve their pay and conditions. The shipping bosses are out to "increase productivity," which means using the latest technology to make longshore workers work harder and faster.

The bosses have also refused to maintain health and pension benefits at their current levels, and want union members and retirees to begin contributing toward their medical expenses. By increasing labor productivity and cutting back on "expenses" like medical care, the U.S. shipping bosses hope to better compete against their European counterparts.

The big business press is portraying the longshoremen as greedy and overpaid. But these higher wages and better working conditions were won in struggle and help all working people to be on a stronger footing to fight back. These gains should be supported by all working people.

The drive of the shipping companies against the dock

unionists is being aided by the U.S. government's plans to fight "terrorism" on the waterfront. Both Democrats and Republicans in Congress are working on a "Maritime Security Bill" that would prevent anyone convicted of certain crimes—including sedition—from working certain seaport jobs; establish special port "security" committees; require dockworkers, truck drivers and other workers to wear special ID cards; force all seafarers to be "re-credentialed" and carry an electronic card from ship to ship; and increase the presence of the Coast Guard and police on the waterfront.

The Socialist Workers campaign calls on working people to support the fight of ILWU members, the SEIU members, and port truckers against the shippers and the Pacific Maritime Association. The entire labor movement should oppose the use of the "war on terrorism" to launch further attacks against workers rights.

We urge all working people to also join us in the fight to replace the capitalist government that defends the interests of the shipping bosses with a workers and farmers government. Such a government would defend all exploited producers from the ravages of the capitalist wages system and join in the worldwide fight for socialism—a society based on human needs and solidarity.

As we go to press...

The Labor Department announced that the Bush administration has convened a special task force with officials from the Commerce, Labor, Transportation, and Homeland Security departments to explore federal intervention against the longshore workers, including declaring a national economic emergency to prevent a strike for 90 days.

Stocks slump with new economic data

Continued from Page 11

its creditors demanded to be paid in January. The company emerged in a shrunken form after investors in April purchased some of its assets. Vanguard Airlines, twice rejected by the government for federal loan guarantees from the industry bailout, shuttered its doors July 30.

In July the U.S. Senate postponed a vote on legislation that would force individuals to pay back credit card companies and others instead of wiping out debt by filing for bankruptcy. As consumer debt has reached record highs, banking and credit card companies have pressed for laws that crack down on middle class and working people. In order to win support from enough Democrats to pass the legislation, Republican leaders agreed to an amendment that would bar antiabortion rightists from using bankruptcy to get out of paying fines imposed for blockading facilities that provide abortion. Several Republicans withdrew their support over the amendment and demanded it be removed before they vote in favor of the bill.

Stephen Roach, a top official at Morgan Stanley, noted there is little the federal government can do to generate an economic upturn. In an interview with the *International Herald Tribune*, he said that a double-dip recession "is not the end of the world. Given the excesses that we built up during the bubble, sadly we probably need a double dip to begin the painful process of purging those excesses."

"I don't think policy can do much to avoid that," he said of the U.S. government. "The Federal Reserve cut interest rates by 4.75 percentage points, and it hasn't made much of a difference."

Quecreek mine

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than the industry as a whole.

The disaster occurs in the context of government budget cuts to mine safety, a rise in the number of fatal accidents, and questions about the functioning of MSHA in the wake of the mine explosion in Brookwood, Alabama, in September 2001, which took the lives of 13 workers. Last year 42 mine workers were killed on the job, as the fatality rate climbed for the third straight year. So far this year, 17 miners have been killed.

MSHA's 2003 budget calls for a \$4.7 million cut in its coal enforcement program along with a reduction of 65 full-time employees. "We thought you need to look at other tools beyond just enforcement," MSHA director David Lauriski said.

Both state and federal safety officials have taken the occasion of the recent flood to praise the safety levels of the mining industry. DEP spokesman Lasher said, "The technology is improving and we're continuing to enforce safety regulations. The industry has done a good job complying with those regulations."

However, more coal is being mined with fewer fatal accidents today as a result of a major increase in productivity. Over the last 20 years, the percentage of miners injured or killed on the job has remained unchanged, while the number of miners has decreased from 149,000 in 1990 to 77,000 today.

Tony Lane is a member of UMWA Local 1248 at the Maple Creek mine in southwestern Pennsylvania.

Monopolies profit

Continued from Page 3

Bounds for the *Financial Times*, and "farmers are heading for the cities."

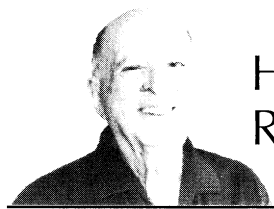
Growers have tried switching crops only to find themselves "on the verge of bankruptcy after trying to compete against U.S. farmers receiving generous subsidies from Washington," the *Wall Street Journal* reported. The head of the United Nations Development Program has estimated that these subsidies cost semicolonial countries about \$50 billion a year in lost agricultural exports.

Some farmers have begun organizing protests to defend their livelihoods. On June 25, more than 1,000 people in Nicaragua blocked the Interamerican highway, reported the *Financial Times*, "in the first of what promises to be a series of actions to press for state aid."

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Probably bill them for costs—At a news conference, five of the nine previously trapped Pennsylvania coal miners expressed



Harry Ring

thanks for the outpouring of public support. They also noted that the company had not bothered to contact them since their rescue. "I haven't heard from them," said miner Blaine Mayhugh. "Haven't

gotten a phone call or a visit from them." The company declined comment.

Sea change—The *San Francisco Chronicle* column "Two Cents" queried readers, "Is American capitalism broken beyond repair?" Of the seven published responses a majority took a dim view of the state of the system. Our favorite: "American capitalism isn't broken... But if enough Americans get mad enough, maybe we can break it ourselves."

Tough situation—"For CEOs it's a lot lonelier at the top—The pay and perks still are lavish, but many executives bristle at the pub-

lic scorn."—News headline

The stick-it-to-them society—"U.S. regulators more than double the top price at which generators can sell electricity in the state."—*Los Angeles Times*.

Chew on this one—Vermont's top court knocked out a state Medicaid policy that provided only full sets of false teeth. If you had some remaining good teeth, they had to be pulled out to get the full set of dentures.

Tuned out?—We're late in reporting it, but we try to keep up with the news. Like: "Market slide continues despite Bush speech"—July

16 headline.

Royal enforcer—The Queen of England, owner of the spiffy Ascot horse-race track, had three BBCTV crew members thrown out. Allegedly one was wearing a T-shirt and the other two lacked neckties. Men are "encouraged" to wear jackets at Ascot and there's a dress code for women.

Like at Ascot?—Sir Roderick Floud, a top UK education official, said winning a college degree should include "employability." Graduates, particularly from working-class and "ethnic" backgrounds should be "oven ready" for potential employers. This ap-

parently means being well-dressed.

No divine guidance?—The Church of England may have to sell off valuable treasures and perhaps restructure itself financially. Its recent stock market losses total some \$1.6 billion, nearly 20 percent of its estimated total assets.

March of civilization—The government of the United Kingdom is moving to scrap the "double jeopardy" rule enacted 800 years ago. The new rule would permit those cleared on murder, rape, or armed robbery charges to be retried for the same crimes.

Case exposes prison goon squad in New Zealand

BY AGNES SULLIVAN

CHRISTCHURCH, New Zealand—Revelations about an officially-sanctioned paramilitary goon squad that terrorized prisoners at the Paparua jail complex outside Christchurch have outraged working people. The exposure of the outfit's violent acts have led to numerous calls for investigations and

AS I SEE IT

reforms, from conservative and liberal forces alike.

The brutal activities of the outfit were forced to public attention by prisoners, especially after the death of a fellow inmate at the hands of the squad. Prison officials have since moved to close down the squad. Working people and youth should join in condemning the goon squad's actions, and welcome the resistance demonstrated by workers who are behind prison walls as reinforcing the fight to overthrow the brutal system of capitalist exploitation and oppression.

The goon squad, which was set up in 1999, was a specially trained Emergency Response Unit (ERU) made up of prison officers. With knowledge of prison authorities, the thugs conducted nighttime sweeps through the complex of three prisons to intimidate prisoners. At times they included off-duty police officers, military police, other military personnel, and officers of the Department of Customs. The ERU conducted its sweeps in all three prisons, including the women's unit.

Abuses revealed

Many of the details of the squad's activities came to light in May this year through the Employment Court. Nigel French, a former member of the goon squad, filed suit in the court against the Corrections Department. French is demanding compensation from the department, saying he suffers clinical depression and "post-traumatic stress disorder." French says his condition began after he and four other guards overpowered prisoner David Haimona in 1999.

According to French, Haimona had barricaded himself in his cell and was attempting to set it alight. As the goon squad forced an entry, French claimed, Haimona tried to strangle him. The *New Zealand Herald* reported that Haimona "died of an apparent heart attack in November 1999 as a result of being overpowered by five guards and put in a restraint hold." The coroner has yet to report his findings.

The prisoners' outraged response to Haimona's death was described by Timothy Gladstone, a former prison officer at the court hearing. He said that French was branded a "murderer" and that the reaction from prisoners got so bad that Gladstone refused, on "safety grounds," to go into the east and central wings with French to round up inmates for drug testing. Prisoners would join in shouting out "murderer" each time French appeared.

During their reign of terror, ERU thugs would conduct sweeps to test "inmate compliance." Dressed in full riot gear, they would advance through the high security east wing of the main prison, deliberately waking prisoners by stomping their feet in unison, and repeatedly rattling cell doors to try to provoke a reaction.

The outfit used riot shields to force prisoners onto their bunks. They would also shine a red laser light from a nearby roof-

top into prison cells to make prisoners think police armed offenders' squad (AOS) rifles were trained on them. If a prisoner reacted to the cumulative psychological onslaught, the goon squad would then burst into their cell, using a hydraulic door opener if needed.

Prisoners lodged legal protests with the Ombudsman's Office, a state agency charged with fielding complaints against government departments. An inquiry from the Howard League for Penal Reform was met by an assurance from the prison warden about the goon squad's "high professionalism."

As the revelations continued the position of the goon squad became less and less tenable. It was disbanded by prison officials in June 2000. An in-house inquiry recommended that the ERU head, deputy, and second deputy all be dismissed. All three continue to be employed by the Corrections Department, however.

The head thug, Anthony Bird, had spent 10 years in the police, including the AOS. Bird told the *Press* in a May 14 interview that Haimona's death was "a fact of life in the prison, especially in the line of work the ERU was trained for." Paparua prison site manager Rushton admitted in the Employment Court that he was kept fully briefed on goon squad actions.

Matthew Robson, the Labour-led government Minister of Corrections, has refused to respond to the revelations and the Employment Court judge has reserved his decision.

Father James Considine, a prison chaplain, expressed disbelief that goon squad practices could be tolerated and practiced in "our state-run prisons." Calls for an inquiry came from the Howard League for Penal Reform, the rightist-leaning New Zealand First party, and the Christchurch *Press*.

The paper editorialized May 25, "Had this taken place in an African dictatorship, not an eye would blink. But New Zealand was the setting—a nation that has always put a priority on the State being able to deploy only disciplined and sanctioned force. The Goon Squad violated those traditions."

'Disciplined and sanctioned force'

But prisons, goon squads, and the everyday brutalities against workers behind bars are very much part of the "disciplined and sanctioned force" that the capitalist state metes out—on a daily basis and in a variety of ways—to working people.

— LETTERS —

Easier to read

I received my copy of the *Militant* today. Stunning!!! I typically read the paper on-line in part because I find it easier to read on-line as opposed to newsprint. The changes made in printing the *Militant* may have been based primarily on economics and efficiency, which are important for the newspaper, but they also make for much easier reading.

Amanda Ulman
by e-mail

Same working-class news

The new look of the paper is okay, but the main thing is the quality of news and editorials is still the same honest, working-class news as it has been since the *Militant* began.

I didn't know much about Paraguay, let alone the news about the previous 35-year dictatorship and the political space that has

opened up since then, until I read the article in the July 29 issue of the *Militant*. I guess workers in Paraguay knew as little about us as I had about them, because they couldn't believe there were revolutionaries inside the United States.

Enclosed is a contribution to keep making these reporting teams possible.

Amy Lowenstein
Yardley, Pennsylvania

Workers strike for a contract at Dominion Virginia Power



Militant/Lea Sherman

Some 3,700 members of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 50 at Dominion Virginia Power Company went on strike August 3 after contract negotiations broke down over a company proposal to cut retirement benefits and increase health-care premiums for retirees. Company officials said that the proposed contract would bring union members benefits in line with the 13,000 other nonunion employees at Dominion.

opened up since then, until I read the article in the July 29 issue of the *Militant*.

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Enclosed is a contribution to keep making these reporting teams possible.

Amy Lowenstein
Yardley, Pennsylvania

'Militant' is indispensable

Here's a small contribution to help with the costs of the reporting trips to Latin America. As usual, the *Militant* is indispensable for thinking workers who are trying to understand the events unfolding in the world.

I've just finished reading the first article from the team in Paraguay. It was excellent. Keep up the good work.

Mike Galati
New York, New York

The *Militant* is encouraging its supporters to contribute to its Travel Fund to help finance teams to Argentina and Paraguay; Cuba; and Venezuela over the past month.

Coverage, such as that in this week's issue, as well as ongoing articles about the situation in Latin America, would not be possible without your generous contributions.

To make a contribution, send a check or money order to The Militant, 410 West St., New York, NY 10014. Note "Travel Fund" on the check.

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

Please keep your letters brief. Where necessary they will be abridged. Please indicate if you prefer that your initials be used rather than your full name.

Why defenders of capitalism attack materialism

Printed below is an excerpt from *The Origins of Materialism: The evolution of a scientific view of the world* by George Novack, one of Pathfinder's Books of the Month for August. The piece quoted is from the foreword to the book by Novack. Copyright © 1965 by Pathfinder Press, reprinted by permission. Subheadings are by the *Militant*.

BY GEORGE NOVACK

Why has the history of materialism been so neglected and distorted? The materialist

BOOKS OF THE MONTH

philosophy was born in opposition to the archaic religious outlook of an agricultural aristocracy by the new forces of a commercial slave society. It has had to contend for "living space" against conservative master classes ever since.

In Greece, not only materialism but the mere exercise of methodical reasoning, directed as it had to be against old religious ideas and sanctified customs and institutions, was dangerous. Many Greek philosophers suffered persecution, were expelled from their communities, and even put to

death for their teachings. In the Athens of Pericles, Anaxagoras was condemned for irreligion and forced to flee for having said that the sun was a "glowing mass of stone" and the moon was of earthly nature. Didn't the priesthood teach that the sun and the moon were divine beings and wasn't religion one of the means for holding the masses in check?

It was even more perilous to profess materialist ideas in the Middle Ages under penalty of being condemned for heresy like Roger Bacon, excommunicated from the Church or killed. Such was the fate inflicted on Giordano Bruno as late as the 17th century.

Materialist-minded thinkers were hounded and their ideas anathematized throughout the bourgeois epoch. Hundreds of cases could be cited from the expulsion of Descartes from France through Spinoza's excommunication from the Jewish community of Amsterdam to the attacks upon Hobbes and Joseph Priestley in England. Not all of these persecuted philosophers were thoroughgoing materialists. But there was enough of a materialist bent in their criticisms of the prevailing religious and idealist doctrines to render them suspect of unorthodoxy and susceptible to punishment.

Motive force for scientific progress

Up to our time materialist thinkers and their adherents have almost always and everywhere been in a minority. Some have been forced to lead a hole-and-corner existence and often to withhold the full implications of their ideas. They have been the oppressed tendency in the field of philosophy. However extensive its influence has been at times in certain departments, the materialist outlook has never yet ruled society or the intellectual world as a whole. Nevertheless, the ideas of the materialist scholars and scientists have been among the greatest motive forces of ideological and scientific progress. They have inspired epoch-making achievements in natural science from the broaching of the atomic hypothesis by the Greeks to Darwin's theory of organic evolution.

Despite all this, the materialist viewpoint is still unpopular throughout the Western world, and not least in the United States. Materialism is disfavored not only because it is the principal theoretical weapon against

supernaturalism, spiritualism and obscurantism of all kinds. It is so vehemently fought nowadays because the materialist philosophy has become so closely associated with the Socialist movement and Marxism, with the struggles of the workers for liberation from capitalism, with political opposition to the established order.

The struggle between materialism and its opponents which began over 2,500 years ago is still being waged around us. The defenders of capitalism from the universities and churches to the agencies of mass propaganda exert persistent efforts to ward off the penetration of materialist thinking. Here is one typical instance.

The Luce publication, *Life*, the most widely circulated magazine in the United States, is one of the most vigilant participants in the anti-materialist crusade. In 1956 it published a series on The Epic of Man which presented the latest findings of science on the origins of civilization. It was impossible to make such a report without undermining, at least by implication, orthodox Christianity. If, as the theory of evolution undeniably demonstrates, mankind rose up out of the animal kingdom, then what credence can be given to Adam and Eve and similar fables of man's divine parentage?

The editors hastened to steer their readers away from any materialist heresy. "The materialist cosmogony," they wrote, "has proven just as unsatisfactory as a literal reading of Genesis, or as Ptolemy's earth-centered welkin, or as the clock-work universe of Newton. And the secret of man's origin and purpose on this planet remains no more and no less mysterious than before." All the conclusions of science, that is to say, tell us nothing more than the Israelite tribes knew about the development of the world and the destiny of mankind!

Eternal morality counterposed to science

Having thus disposed of "the materialist cosmogony"—and obliterated the results of science in the bargain—the editors point to the emergence and activity of "conscience" as the decisive proof of man's divine nature. They counterpose eternal morality to the conclusions of modern science based upon the method of materialism. The theoretical arguments of these apologists for the existence of God are as weak as their financial resources and influence are immense.

But one thing is plain. These defenders of religion and capitalism regard materialism as the main ideological enemy to be overcome even at the cost of scientific suicide. These brains at work in skyscrapers fall into line with the adversaries of materialism in ancient Greece, the heresy-hunters of Catholic Europe, and the Baptist bumpkins who tried to ban the teachings of Darwinism in Tennessee decades ago.

The issues between the materialists and anti-materialists have immense practical importance and are far from being settled in real life. This gives our theoretical study its social and political purpose.

In this prolonged and unfinished contest for supremacy between materialism and anti-materialism, science and religion, enlightenment and obscurantism, there is no doubt which will eventually be victorious. Although materialism does not command the field in philosophy or in everyday affairs, on the historical scale it has been gaining and consolidating its ground. It has rich traditions, an ever-growing content and the most diversified applications. It operates today upon much firmer foundations than in the past and has far keener weapons with which to combat its adversaries and solve the problems of science and society.

Materialism receives constant confirmation from the onward march and verified results of technology, the sciences and the developments of industry. It is further fortified by the progress of the class struggle and the successes of the international workers movement. It derives the most powerful social support and fresh sources of replenishment from the activities of the masses in their quest for a better life.

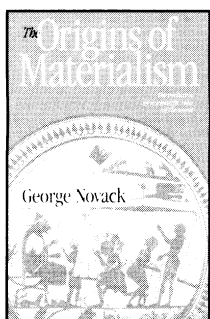
But its biggest battles lie ahead. As in its infancy, materialism has still to contend for its rightful place as the outlook of emancipated humanity. Its definitive triumph in the domain of thought is still to come. May this introduction to its early history help bring that conquest closer.

August BOOKS OF THE MONTH

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West Coast dockers defy bosses' threats and authorize strike

BY BILL KALMAN

OAKLAND, California—On July 24 the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU), which organizes 10,500 West Coast dockworkers, staged a rally in downtown San Francisco following its rejection of a contract offer by shipping industry bosses. The union opposed management's proposals for a five-year contract and a provision allowing shippers to outsource jobs to lower-paid nonunion outfits. ILWU contracts have historically spanned three years.

The following day, the ILWU announced that it had empowered its contract negotiating committee to seek strike authorization from dockworkers, due to the refusal of the Pacific Maritime Association (PMA) "to guarantee continuation of current levels of health benefits for new members and [its] disappointing responses to long sought technology proposals." The union officials also decided to extend until August 13 the current day-to-day extension of the ILWU-PMA contract, which expired July 1.

As at least one major railroad announced contingency plans in the event of a stoppage, PMA president Joseph Miniace called the union's action "a threat to the economic well-being of millions of Americans.... The delegation of authority to call a strike is a threat to an already fragile economy."

More than \$260 billion worth of goods travel through the 29 West Coast ports every

year, representing 42 percent of all U.S. shipping trade.

The shipping capitalists point to a report prepared by Berkeley professor Stephen Cohen titled "Economic Impact of a West Coast Dock Shutdown." Cohen forecasts that \$4.7 billion and 30.2 million man-hours would go down the tubes in just five days of a strike. Cohen cites the increasing dependency of U.S. manufacturers and distributors on imported goods.

"I think the vast majority of the [textile] industry will be affected," Jeffrey Hollander, the president of Florida-based Hollander Home Fashions, told *Home Textiles Today* magazine. "Even companies that think they don't import, do at some point, whether it's a vinyl bag, fill, or whatever."

The president of the National Retail Federation (NRF), Tracy Mullin, urged U.S. president George Bush to "consider immediate steps to prevent a slowdown or a shutdown...and to inform the American public of the consequences of such a scenario."

NRF-represented stores rang up \$3.5 trillion in sales in 2001. "Any disruption at the West Coast ports would have serious ramifications," Mullin said, "not only to the U.S. retail sector...but also the entire U.S. economy." Officials of the International Mass Retail Association expressed similar sentiments.

Under the antilabor Taft-Hartley Act, President Bush has the executive power to

Workers defeat concession demands by Navistar bosses

Continued from Page 16

for concessions by the workers were defeated. These included a \$4-an-hour wage cut for production workers and a \$6-an-hour cut for the skilled trades; a standard 56-hour workweek instead of 39.5; a reduction in vacations for the most senior workers; increased payments by workers for benefits; an increase in mandatory overtime and massive changes to contract language wrapped up in a seven-year term.

The new contract is for two years. There are no wage increases but a cost-of-living clause is included. The company agreed that there will be no closure prior to June 1, 2003. There will be no discipline and/or firings as a result of any picket line activity.

Workers mobilize to prevent use of scabs

The workers faced a military-style attempt by the company to get scabs across the picket line to restart production. They confronted an army of security goons, cops, a hostile mayor, court injunctions to limit picketing, and a level of violence by the

"goonies" used against them they had never experienced in any of the previous strikes against Navistar, including the longest one in 1974. About a third of the strikers were veterans of that walkout.

The company-instigated violence reached its peak on June 24 when a security thug driving a van deliberately ran down six strike supporters from CAW Local 444 in Windsor at DaimlerChrysler. The wheels of the van passed completely over picket Don Milner, who remains in critical condition six weeks later. For four weeks he was in a coma.

The union organized flying squads to detect the transport of scabs by van or bus. Strikers watched the local police stations and pickup points for the scabs who were recruited in the nearby cities of London and Windsor. They followed the vans that left the plant to see if they were picking up scabs to bring back. They were asked to be on call 24 hours a day in addition to their regular shifts on the picket lines. The majority canceled their summer vacations.

The 110 office workers who are members of CAW Local 35, who were not on strike, refused to be driven into the plant in buses. They used their own cars and were ready to walk out if scabs got into the plant. They were the ears and eyes of the strikers in the plant where supervisors were working.

Many workers are expecting another union-busting effort in two years when the contract expires. In the meantime the struggle is continuing in one form or another.

The bosses have asked all workers to wear Navistar clothes on August 12, the 100th anniversary of the company. Many workers will be wearing their strike T-shirt instead.

On August 27 the security guard who injured Milner will appear in a Chatham court, charged with three counts of dangerous driving causing bodily harm. CAW 127 members and others will be at the court to demand a conviction.

Workers have also reported that the company may make a statement on the future of the plant September 15.

John Steele is a meat packer and a member of United Food and Commercial Workers Local 175 in Toronto. Owen Bray, a member of Canadian Auto Workers Local 127 at Navistar in Chatham, contributed to this article.

Prison goon squad in New Zealand

Continued from Page 13

ing us that those convicted of crimes are guilty now and guilty forever. Working people and youth must join with those fighting inside prison and welcome them to the ranks of the broader struggle against this system of exploitation and oppression.

Recognizing how the capitalist system works points to the need to advance the fight to wrest political power out of the hands of the ruling rich and their goon squads and establish a workers and farmers government that can begin building society on a new basis. This includes overturning the bourgeois system of justice for the capitalist rulers—a system of injustice for the toiling majority.

Working people can join with the prisoners at Paparua protesting the murder of David Haimona, and insisting on their right to be free from arbitrary search and seizure. All those involved in the episode that ended David Haimona's life should be charged, put on trial, and prosecuted to the full extent of the law.

Montreal march defends Algerians' struggle against deportations



A. Karim / Comit, d'action des sans-statut

Several hundred people demonstrated in Montreal July 26 in support of the fight by 1,000 Algerian immigrants against deportations. The Canadian government refuses to recognize them as refugees. Ottawa recently lifted a moratorium on deportations that had allowed them to stay in Canada. The Algerian refugees are demanding that the moratorium be reinstated, that their status be regularized, and that none of them be deported.

order the ILWU back to work if there is a strike. In words clearly aimed at the ILWU, White House spokesman Ken Lisaius stated, "We are continuing to monitor this situation closely and encouraging both sides to continue negotiations. We are acutely aware of what a strike would do to the economy, and we would ask them to take that into consideration."

Bosses call for 'modernization'

The PMA proposes a program of "modernization" of the West Coast ports, involving the use of computerization and other technological advances to increase container traffic, drive down labor costs, and increase productivity. ILWU representatives have repeatedly said that union members should benefit from such steps—an approach that runs counter to that of the employers.

For instance, the PMA has called for the elimination of the jobs of marine clerks, who track the contents of containers. The union

maintains that shipping companies are sending these jobs to other states where there is no union. Whoever does the work should be union members, say ILWU officials. They also demand increased pensions for remaining clerks.

On July 17, Miniace complained that "the union's [contract] proposal does not adequately address the technology and efficiency needs of the West Coast waterfront."

The PMA president stated last May that he hoped for an "electronic technology pact" similar to the "Modernization and Mechanization Agreement" signed with the union in 1960. That agreement allowed the shipping companies to cite changes in ship design, the introduction of strapped loads, and the large-scale employment of containers as grounds for the gutting of various guarantees and safeguards in the union contract.

The "M&M," as the agreement is known, helped the bosses offset rising costs by cutting ship turnaround time.

—25 AND 50 YEARS AGO—

25 CENTS
THE MILITANT
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August 5, 1977

CHICAGO—Hundreds of white racists went on the rampage in the Marquette Park area of this city July 24. They attacked Black passersby, threw rocks and beer cans at Black motorists, and overturned cars.

The racists gathered near a park to wait for an open-housing demonstration called by the Martin Luther King Movement Coalition. The demonstration, which began about a mile-and-a-half from where the racists assembled, was broken up by police after it had proceeded only six blocks.

Although the forty Black demonstrators were orderly and peaceful, police arrested three marchers, claiming the march was "disorderly."

Meanwhile, mobs of racists near the park began random attacks on Blacks. Nineteen people were treated in nearby hospitals, most of them hurt by flying rocks and bottles. Ten cars and a city bus were damaged.

One Black couple driving through the area crashed into an oncoming car while trying to flee the racists. Police pulled them out of their car and took them away. Later, racist youths turned over the car.

Several Black youths fled into a nearby home after they were attacked. Their car was demolished.

The Marquette Park area has been the scene of violent attacks on Blacks for the past several years. Homes of Black families have been bombed and burned by racists. Black bus drivers, passersby, and motorists have been attacked. Marchers demonstrating a year ago for open housing were assaulted by racist mobs while police stood by.

THE MILITANT
PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF THE WORKING PEOPLE
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August 4, 1952

The following is the full text of a speech delivered by Farrell Dobbs, Socialist Workers Party candidate for President of the United States, over NBC-TV, July 27, 1952. Candidate Dobbs was introduced by George Clarke, SWP Campaign Manager:

In introducing me Mr. Clarke referred to my background as a union organizer. You may be interested to know why I left union work to enter politics. It's a simple story.

Time and again I participated in union organization campaigns and walked picket lines with my fellow workers to win improved wages and working conditions. Time and again I saw these gains undermined at a single stroke by the Democratic and Republican political agents of the employers in government.

We built strong unions with the power to win improved wages and then the capitalists politicians in Washington slapped a wage freeze on the workers. We built strong unions that had the power to represent the members on the job and the capitalists politicians slapped on the Taft-Hartley Act, restricting the right to strike and legalizing outside intervention in the unions.

I became convinced that the workers needed their own representatives in government and their own Independent Labor Party to elect them. I looked around for an honest party of the working people and found it in the Socialist Workers Party. I joined the SWP to help work for independent labor political action and I have proudly accepted nomination as the presidential candidate of the Socialist Workers Party to urge that policy be adopted by all the American working people.

Union drive in Florida gains support

BY MARK HAMM

MIAMI—Garment workers at Point Blank Body Armor in Oakland Park, north of Miami, are reaching out to other workers to share experiences and win support for recognition of the Union of Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Employees (UNITE) at their workplace. More than 100 workers turned out July 25 at a union support meeting held at the offices of the Communication Workers of America (CWA) in nearby Pompano Beach. Workers cheered each other as they entered the meeting hall, the loudest for Sadius Isma, who has been fired and arrested for his union activity.

The meeting, held in Spanish and Creole, included messages of support from the Farm Labor Organizing Committee; Jobs with Justice; the Coalition of Immokalee Workers, a farm worker group; and other garment workers from Miami.

Two days later more than 40 workers turned out in their red UNITE! T-shirts for the Miami Workers Rights Board hearing in downtown Miami. The event, sponsored by Jobs with Justice and the Institute for Policy Studies, was held in the auditorium of the United Teachers of Dade County. Whenever a speaker at the program sounded a militant tone in defense of workers' rights, the workers from Point Blank jumped to their feet and chanted, "Si se puede!" and "Wi nou kapab!" ("Yes we can!" in Spanish and Creole). The Workers Rights Board that oversaw the program included civil rights and immigrant rights activists, elected officials, church leaders, and actor Danny Glover.

Isma described to the more than 300 people present at the July 27 meeting the harassment he has received from the company and the state. Point Blank had discharged Isma after accusing him of leading chants of "Si se puede" during work hours. He was arrested July 18 by Broward County sheriffs



Workers rally outside Point Blank Body Armor plant, located north of Miami, in fight for union recognition.

for "breach of the peace" while participating in a union support rally outside the plant.

Isma worked at the plant for two-and-a-half years and was receiving \$6.75 per hour at the time he was fired and arrested. Point Blank estimates it will generate \$350 million in sales from a contract to produce bulletproof vests for the U.S. armed forces, and

local, state, and federal police. Customers include the Marine Corps, Army, Navy, Coast Guard, federal marshals, the Immigration and Naturalization Service, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Secret Service, North Atlantic Treaty Organization, and the New York Police Department.

March backs hospital workers' fight

The high point of the day was when workers marched to Mt. Sinai Hospital's Miami Beach facilities. Workers from the Point Blank plant in their red union shirts mixed it up with dozens of nursing home workers in their purple Service Employees International Union (SEIU) T-shirts, as they marched and circled the hospital complex to support the Mt. Sinai workers' fight for a union.

On February 28 nursing assistants and housekeeping, dietary, and laundry workers at the Mt. Sinai facility in Miami Shores voted 49-37 in favor of joining SEIU 1199 Florida. Management is now challenging the validity of the election, charging that half-filled glasses of water and pennies on the floor were voodoo tactics used by union supporters to intimidate other workers.

Prosper Eljust, a 32-year-old sewing machine operator with three years at Point Blank, told the *Militant* at the July 27 event that the company has ratcheted up production since September 11. "We start at 7 in the morning and sometimes don't leave until 10 or 11 at night. The air-conditioning

will stop, and as much as a week will go by with no water for us."

Workers at the plant have been discussing how to respond to these conditions for a long time, said Eljust, and several months ago the workers in his department "went to the supervisor and asked for a raise in pay. The supervisor signed a paper agreeing with the wage raise, but the manager said 'no.'" Eljust pointed out that workers learned from this experience, and rather than relying on the supervisor to work it out, eight workers were chosen to go to the bosses on July 18 to argue that Point Blank should recognize the union and negotiate a contract for improved pay and conditions. "We all brought the paper to the office this time," he said, "and everyone chanted 'Si se puede.'"

Each step of the way the owners of Point Blank have shown their surprise at the enthusiastic support among workers in the plant for joining UNITE. Union organizers report that a big majority of workers have signed union cards, and the company's response to this success was the panicked decision to close the factory for half a day when the eight workers went to the office on July 18, and to call in the cops from the Broward Sheriff's Office. Workers turned the short workday into an opportunity to rally and demonstrate their support for the union outside the plant.

"It was at the 9:45 a.m. break," said Eljust, "and we looked out the window and saw the police. Later we were all told to go home. But everyone stayed in the parking lot and continued to chant." He concluded that workers will continue the fight for a union because "they can fire us anytime they want and we can't speak out against it. They don't respect us—we need respect."

At an August 3 UNITE-sponsored party, held at the CWA hall in Pompano Beach, Govnier Jeune, a sewing machine operator at Point Blank, said the company is now threatening to send the work to the Atlanta Federal Penitentiary factory, and to subcontractors in Miami. Jeune said that the bosses are now asking everybody, "Why do you support the union?" Like many others he is standing up to this company harassment and scare campaign, and talking back to the bosses.

Jeune responded to the supervisor's bullying: "I support the union because I have worked here for three years and you don't give me good money." Seventy workers, their families, and supporters turned out for the August 3 event.

Continued on Page 15

Strike ends at Ontario Navistar plant

BY JOHN STEELE

TORONTO—High fives and expressions of pride in the victory they wrested from Navistar International marked the return to work July 22 after a six week strike, of 650 truck assemblers who are members of Canadian Auto Workers Local 127 (CAW) in Chatham, Ontario.

"The way I see it," said Owen Bray, who mounts tires and has 14 years seniority, "we didn't lose our jobs, and we gave no concessions. And the fight's not over. We'll be at it again in two years. We're stronger now because of the strike."

Many of the workers displayed the determination and militancy that marked their struggle by wearing their black strike T-shirts to work. The tension was palpable. The supervisors did not speak to workers unless spoken to. During the strike the supervisors attempted to maintain production of the big rigs crossing picket lines each day in buses.

Workers expressed anger when they learned that each supervisor got a bonus of \$850 a week over the course of the strike for crossing the line to work in the plant. This was compounded by a "welcome back" letter from the bosses that hypocritically stated that the "bigger challenge than getting the plant running again is the challenge of rebuilding trust. That won't happen overnight for any of us. But we urge everyone to make the effort."

"Management has lost all credibility," said Bray. "The bonus was the final drop of the shoe."

During the first week back homemade signs appeared at workstations around the plant commenting on the company's disrespect for the workers. One had the word "respect" in a circle with a line through it with the comment "you locked us out for six weeks—Y?" At another workstation a worker had hung up a plastic bag filled with

shredded paper with the words "Navistar's new accounting system" written on it. At least one reply to the company "welcome back" letter was written by a worker and circulated around the plant.

The strike began June 1 despite company

threats to close the plant and move the work to its facility in Mexico. It ended at a ratification meeting July 15. Eighty-one percent of the votes cast supported the agreement.

All the demands by the Navistar bosses

Natives reject referendum results in Canada

BY BEVERLY BERNARDO

VANCOUVER, British Columbia—"You cannot take away our rights by referendum, just simply because you are the majority and you can outvote us," said Herb George, a spokesman for First Nations Summit. "A substantive majority of more than 1.5 million British Columbians chose to boycott or spoil their referendum ballot," he added, noting the results "do not represent the views of the majority."

George was responding to a July 3 announcement by the government of British Columbia that its anti-Natives referendum had been overwhelmingly approved. The eight proposals put to a vote included limiting the authority of Aboriginal governments to that of municipal governments, rejecting land claims by barring the expropriation of private property and provincial parklands, and ending tax exemptions for Native people.

Premier Gordon Campbell's claim to have won a mandate "to forge a new era of reconciliation with First Nations" is being widely challenged. Voter participation in the mail-in referendum was 35 percent of the province's 2.1 million eligible voters. Of those up to 60,000 were spoiled. One indication of the thoroughly anti-Natives stance of those who did cast valid ballots is that between 84.5 percent and 94.5 percent voted "yes" to all eight questions.

Native organizations led a campaign to boycott the referendum, saying it violated the right of Native people to self-determination because it allowed "all British Columbians" to have a say on what Native peoples can negotiate during the treaty-making process. Many trade unions, churches, and other organizations supported the boycott.

"B.C. and natives square off," read the headline of an article in the July 4 *Globe and Mail*. An editorial the next day called the referendum "pointless and divisive." The paper is one of Canada's major dailies and speaks for an important sector of Canada's ruling class.

Neither the provincial nor federal governments in Canada negotiated treaties with Natives. In British Columbia, Natives now have land claims covering the entire province. Talks have begun with 50 groups in the First Nations, which represent 111 Indian bands and two-thirds of all Aboriginal people in the province. Almost a decade of talks between First Nations and the governments in Ottawa and Victoria have yet to produce a single treaty, aside from the 1998 Nisga'a Treaty negotiated separately from the rest.

Before his party captured a majority in the B.C. parliament, Liberal leader Gordon Campbell carried out a racist campaign against the Nisga'a Treaty and vowed to

organize a province-wide referendum on treaty negotiations with Natives.

Native leaders are now urging Campbell to abandon his position that the referendum results are binding, saying the stance will rule out the possibility of reaching a settlement. "If the inherent right to self-government is not on the table for negotiations, then we are not at the table," George said of the referendum proposal limiting the powers of Native governments.

Chief Stewart Philip, president of the Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs, whose members don't participate in treaty negotiations, said the referendum results will lead to "more litigation and conflict on the land." In March, the Haida launched a claim in court to the Queen Charlotte Islands—a claim that has been supported by nonnative loggers on the islands. Chief Philip added that if the B.C. government sticks to the positions set out in the referendum, "it could very well bring about the collapse of the treaty process."

The First Nations Summit, which speaks on behalf of Natives involved in the treaty process, issued a press release July 3 calling on both the provincial and federal governments to return to substantive negotiations immediately. The talks are not to be based on the results of the referendum but on the inherent right of Native people to self-government, the statement said.