

THE MILITANT

INSIDE

Int'l socialist conference celebrates increasing union-building opportunities

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Appeal is issued demanding visas for wives of Cuban militants in U.S. prisons

BY ARGIRIS MALAPANIS

“We are urgently requesting your support to help win the right of Olga Salanueva, wife of René González, and Adriana Pérez, wife of Gerardo Hernández, to enter the United States for the purpose of visiting their husbands, who, as you know, are wrongfully imprisoned in the U.S.,” says a July 8 appeal by the San Francisco-based National Committee to Free the Five. “Olga and Adriana were recently denied entry visas for the third time.”

The appeal asks for letters to that effect to be sent to U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell, Homeland Security Director Thomas Ridge, and Attorney General John Ashcroft.

The five men—Gerardo Hernández, Ramón Labañino, Fernando González, René González, and Antonio Guerrero—

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Bush tour in Africa aimed at continent's oil resources

BY SAM MANUEL

U.S. president George Bush wound up a five-day visit to five African nations in Abuja, Nigeria's capital, July 19. In meetings with Nigerian president Olusegun Obasanjo, Bush stressed plans for increased “trade and investment” by U.S. corporations and an expanded allocation of resources to “fight terrorism.” The U.S. president was accompanied by his Secretary of State Colin Powell and National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice.

Securing exploration and processing rights to the extensive oil reserves in West Africa and the rest of the continent against Washington's imperialist rivals is a central aim of the U.S. administration.

Oil imports from Africa, mostly from Nigeria, have risen to 17 percent and are expected to reach 25 percent of total U.S. petroleum imports. According to Reuters, “U.S. oil companies have a firm presence” in the region. Nigeria—the world's fifth

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U.S. high court rulings register rulers' foreboding of effects of shift to right in politics

BY MARTÍN KOPPEL

The U.S. Supreme Court has issued major rulings in the past two months that register deepgoing trends in social attitudes on fundamental rights. They reflect the judgment among some in ruling circles that the bourgeoisie has gone too far in its attacks on these rights.

The two most prominent cases were the landmark June 23 judgment upholding the constitutionality of affirmative action in university admissions and the June 26

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Florida garment workers win new union victories

NLRB orders Point Blank to pay back wages to fired, locked-out workers

BY MARK HAMM

OAKLAND PARK, Florida—Garment workers here scored a new victory in their fight for union recognition and a contract at Point Blank Body Armor, one of the largest clothing manufacturers in southern Florida with nearly 500 employees.

A judge at the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) found the company, which produces bullet-proof vests for various police departments and the U.S. military, guilty of labor law violations for firing three employees and locking out hundreds of workers trying to organize themselves into the Union of Needle-trades, Industrial and Textile Employees (UNITE) last year. Judge Ira Sandron ordered Point Blank July 15 to cease and desist from offering bribes and threatening employees to prevent them from joining the union. He also ordered the company to pay back wages—estimated at more than \$300,000—to workers whose rights it had violated.

Company president David Brooks released a statement dismissing the importance of the ruling, but said the company

will appeal to a higher NLRB panel.

“I am very happy, and everyone I work with is very happy,” Virginia Salazar, a union organizer and sewing machine operator in the plant here, told the news media. “I'm one of those people who believe that justice also exists for the poor, not just for the rich. We've won a victory against the

company, and I trust that, although they're appealing, the law will be on our side.”

In a related victory, the Miami division of the industrial laundry chain Linens of the Week signed a contract with the newly recognized UNITE local there July 11, according to union organizer Mervilus

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Militant/Nicole Salgado

UNITE members at Point Blank Body Armor in Oakland Park, Florida, rally outside plant July 18 to celebrate NLRB ruling. The labor board instructed the company to give back wages to three workers it fired last year in the middle of a union-organizing drive, and hundreds of others it locked out for a day. On factory wall are silhouettes of paratroopers landing, advertising bullet-proof vests the company manufactures. Workers say the ruling will aid their ongoing struggle for union recognition and a contract.

Rural workers in Brazil press fight for land

Land takeovers, public employee strikes worry Wall Street



Reuters/Bruno Domingos

Members of Celina's Settlement, established by landless Brazilian women on land they took over in the state of Pernambuco, northeast Brazil, weed field June 13.

BY MICHAEL ITALIE

The Movement of Landless Rural Workers (MST) in Brazil has launched some 120 land occupations this year and is demanding the government step up land distribution to the dispossessed, while the owners of vast latifundia are adamant in their calls for the administration to clamp down on those who challenge their hold on property.

The new administration of Luis Inácio Lula da Silva in the nation of 165 million people—Latin America's most populous—initiated proposals for cuts in pensions recently. In response, thousands of public employees walked out for several days in early July to oppose these cuts—the most prominent strikes since da Silva took office six months earlier.

These developments reflect a growing self-confidence among Brazil's toilers in fighting to defend their livelihoods. They increasingly worry Wall Street, especially since Brazil has a ballooning foreign debt to imperialist financial institutions of \$260 billion.

The sharpening struggle over land ownership and use has brought the new social-democratic administration into con-

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Bush visits Africa

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largest exporter of crude—also heads the 12-member African Petroleum Producers Association. It has extensive off-shore oil reserves in the Gulf of Guinea, along with Gabon and Ivory Coast. Oil imports to the United States from the Gulf of Guinea totaled 25.1 million barrels in April, according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration.

Leading up to Bush's visit to the continent, strikes against increases of up to 50 percent in the price of fuel paralyzed Nigeria. By the time the U.S. president spoke on Goree Island in Senegal about the evils of slavery, Nigerian police had killed 10 strikers in unprovoked assaults. The Nigeria Labor Congress agreed to end a weeklong walkout just days before Bush's arrival in the country after the government agreed to reduce fuel prices. The union has also demanded a public inquiry into the deaths of the 10 strikers and threatens to resume the strike if needed to obtain justice for their families.

The walkouts began June 30 when the government raised prices in order to eliminate fuel subsidies. The Nigerian government is under pressure by imperialist powers to end the subsidies in order to qualify for relief on its \$30 billion foreign debt. Nigeria exports more than two million barrels of crude oil per day. It relies on fuel imports, however, because it does not have the domestic refinery capacity to meet the country's needs.

Coup in São Tomé and Príncipe

The week following Bush's departure, troops on the twin-island nation of São Tomé and Príncipe overthrew the government of Fradique de Menezes, a wealthy cocoa exporter, while he was on a visit to Nigeria. The former Portuguese colony is located in the oil-rich Gulf of Guinea and recently signed an agreement with Nigeria to share revenue from future oil reserves. São Tomé's rulers would receive 60 percent of the revenues.

Obasanjo and United Nations secretary general Kofi Annan, along with other heads of state who are members of the African Union, condemned the coup. Mozambican president Joaquim Chissano, who is also chairman of the African Union, flew to Nigeria July 17 to discuss with Obasanjo possible military action to restore the de Menezes government. In response, revolt-

ing São Tomé military forces surrounded the Nigerian embassy July 17, according to the *Daily Champion* of Lagos, Nigeria.

With unexplored oil reserves estimated at billions of barrels in the surrounding waters, Washington views São Tomé as an important source of oil. According to an Associated Press report, an official at the Nigeria-São Tomé Joint Development Authority said that ExxonMobil, Royal Dutch/Shell, Chevron/Texaco and the French-owned TotalFinalElf are among the companies seeking oil rights in the Gulf of Guinea.

Bush also praised the Nigerian president for his role in preparing the groundwork for the removal of Liberian president Charles Taylor and the deployment of troops in that country that will be led by the U.S. military. "We will work with Nigeria and the ECOWAS (Economic Community of West African States) on issues such as Liberia," Bush said after talks with Obasanjo. "I told the president we'd be active."

Following his return to the United States, Bush met with Kofi Annan, who has requested that U.S. troops head a "peacekeeping" force of up to 3,000 troops in Liberia. The *International Herald Tribune* reported that the U.S. president announced "a meeting of minds" on Liberia. Jacques Klein, a U.S. diplomat who accompanied Annan and participated in the meeting with Bush, gave a scenario for the deployment of U.S. troops to the West African nation. Liberian president Charles Taylor would depart the country the day U.S. troops arrive. An interim government headed by Liberia's current vice president would be installed. Elections would be held in October 2004.

New fighting broke out July 17, however, as the government and rebel forces attempted to maximize territory under their control in advance of the arrival of a West African military technical team, which would verify the positions held by the rival sides.

Expanding U.S. bases across Africa

"We will not allow terrorists to threaten African people or to use Africa as a base to threaten the world," Bush said in Abuja. As he began his African tour Gen. James Jones, commander of the U.S. European command that's responsible for African operations, said Washington was trying to negotiate long-term agreements for use of a "family" of military bases across the continent.

Jones said the bases would include sub-



Demonstrators protest price hike up to 50 percent for fuel in Lagos, Nigeria, June 30. Nigeria, the world's fifth largest crude oil exporter, must import fuel due to lack of refining facilities in the country. Nigerian police have killed at least 10 protesters.

stantial facilities holding up to 5,000 troops "that could be used robustly for a significant military presence." The bases would be augmented with a larger naval presence in the Gulf of Guinea. "The carrier battle groups of the future...they'll spend half the time going down the west coast of Africa," Jones told journalists.

Washington has also pressed African governments to cooperate in the "war on terrorism." This included providing substantial funds to strengthen security and intelligence forces and laws to make it easier to crack down on so-called terrorist groups. Human rights and student organizations in Kenya have demonstrated against an "antiterrorist bill" considered by the government there. Seventy protesters burned the U.S. flag to protest the bill, which they say "is being imposed on Kenya by the United States." Ng'ang'a Thiong'o, chairman of People Against Torture—one of the 10 groups that organized the protest—said the bill would enable the government to declare any organization terrorist and to arrest and prosecute "persons dressed like terrorists."

Cool reception in South Africa

Bush received a cool welcome in South Africa. Former South African president Nelson Mandela, who pointedly criticized the U.S.-led war on Iraq and described Bush as a man who "cannot think properly," was out of the country during Bush's visit. A protest of 2,000 at the U.S. embassy in Pretoria against Bush's visit was led by the African National Congress, the governing party. According to the South African newspaper the *Sowetan* several members of parliament declined South African president Thabo Mbeki's invitation to attend a state luncheon with Bush.

One week before his arrival in the South African capital, the Bush administration suspended military aid to Pretoria. The South African government is among 35 countries that have refused to sign bilateral agreements with Washington exempting U.S. citizens from prosecution by the new International Criminal Court in The Hague.

The governments of Botswana, Uganda, Senegal and Nigeria—the other four nations Bush visited on this tour—have signed such agreements.

A key objective of Bush's visit to South Africa was to enlist Mbeki's aid in removing the Zimbabwean government of Robert Mugabe. The South African government has opposed Washington's efforts to remove Mugabe. Asked about their differences on Zimbabwe, Bush accused reporters of trying to "create tensions which don't exist."

Speculation abounded in the media that Bush's conciliatory remarks were based on assurances from Mbeki that progress was being made in negotiating an agreement by which Mugabe would voluntarily resign from government. The Johannesburg *Business Day* charged that Mbeki has told Bush that election for a new government in Zimbabwe could be held by next June. At a July 17 press conference Mbeki dismissed the reports as rumors. "It is not true," Mbeki said. "There was no discussion between President Bush and me about anybody stepping down."

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Bush, Blair dismiss criticisms of war on Iraq, occupation

BY PATRICK O'NEILL

Liberal politicians and pundits have stepped up criticism of the administration of U.S. president George Bush in recent weeks, charging that the White House exaggerated or falsified evidence that Saddam Hussein possessed "weapons of mass destruction" and asserting that Washington may face a "quagmire" in Iraq. At the same time, these liberal critics offer no alternative to the imperialist occupation of the country.

In response, Bush and British prime minister Anthony Blair have comfortably defended their actions in justifying the U.S.-British takeover of Iraq and reaffirmed their determination to maintain and strengthen the conquest of the country.

The failure of the occupying forces to turn up any sign of Iraqi stockpiles of biological, chemical, or nuclear weapons has opened the way for the liberal disparagements. In mid-July CIA director George Tenet took the fall for Bush on the issue. U.S. intelligence operatives say that the president's claim that Baghdad had tried to purchase African uranium in 2002 was based on unsubstantiated information from their British counterparts.

Blair and Bush waxed unrepentant at their July 17 joint press conference in Washington. "I strongly believe [Saddam Hussein] was trying to reconstitute his nuclear weapons program," said the U.S. president. For

his part, the British prime minister repeated the discredited accusation that Hussein tried to buy uranium from Niger.

In a speech to the U.S. Congress the same day, however, Blair said that the U.S.-British war was justified regardless of the verdict of history on the weapons issue. The U.S. and British armed forces struck a blow against "the virus [of] terrorism," he said. "If we are wrong, we will have destroyed a threat that, at its least, is responsible for inhuman carnage and suffering."

Thomas Friedman, a liberal commentator for the *New York Times*, endorsed this approach in a July 16 column. He advised the White House to avoid getting "tied up defending its phony reasons for going to war." Instead, Friedman said, Bush should concentrate on "the real and valid reason for the war: to install a decent...government in Iraq."

A week earlier, a *Times* editorial had said the situation in Iraq is "badly deteriorating," while endorsing the occupation. It called on the president to acknowledge that "stabilizing and reviving Iraq will take many more months and could cost many more American casualties... Mr. Bush must now see the job through to a successful conclusion."

Critics of the administration's course have also focused on the buildup of casualties among the occupying troops. U.S.

Argentina: 10,000 workers occupy factories



Some 3,000 workers from Brukman garment plant and supporters marched in Buenos Aires, Argentina, July 17 to demand the government take over the factory to guarantee their jobs. Until ousted by the police in April, workers had occupied the plant for more than a year. Altogether 10,000 workers in 160 sites have taken over workplaces, organizing production without the obstacle of bosses.

officers claim that soldiers face up to a dozen fire fights, bomb blasts, and other skirmishes every day, resulting in one death every two days during June and July. A total of 147 U.S. soldiers have been killed in combat since the Pentagon launched its invasion on March 20, including 32 in the two-and-a-half months since Bush declared major military hostilities over.

The new head of the U.S. Central Command, Army Gen. John Abizaid, said July 16 that U.S. forces faced a "classical guerrilla-type campaign." Groups of "six to eight people" are involved, he said, "attacking us at, sometimes, times and places of their choosing. And at other times we attack them at times and places of our choosing."

Bush said July 2 that the imperialist

forces were "plenty tough" to deal with the military resistance. To those in Iraq "who feel that the conditions are such that they can attack us," he said, "My answer is: Bring 'em on. We've got the force necessary to deal with the security situation."

The two imperialist powers, with Washington in the lead, have also made progress in drawing major Iraqi political forces behind their occupation. In mid-July, Paul Bremer, the U.S. government's chief "civilian" representative, convened the first meeting of the Iraqi Governing Council.

The advisory body consists of 25 prominent Iraqi politicians. It includes leaders of the Kurdish Democratic Party and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan—both based among the Kurdish people in the north; former Iraqi exile groups organized with Washington's support; and the Daawa party and the Supreme Council for the Revolution in Iraq, which are based among the Shiite population in the south. Hamid Majid Musa, the secretary of the Iraqi Communist Party, is also on the council.

The new formation will be dominated by leaders of the Kurdish organizations, which joined in the U.S.-led invasion and war, and U.S.-sponsored big-business politicians like Ahmad Chalabi of the former Iraqi National Congress. "Freedom is on the march from north to south," Bremer boasted in the July 13 *Times*.

New attack on Iran

Meanwhile, a U.S. federal court has issued a ruling backing Washington's campaign against Iran. On July 18, Judge Royce Lamberth of the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia ordered the Iranian government to pay \$313 million to the children of a U.S. citizen killed in a 1997 Hamas bomb attack in Jerusalem. "Clear and convincing evidence" had been presented that Tehran trained and funded Hamas, the judge claimed.

State Department spokesman Richard Boucher indicated that payment could be made out of Iranian funds once competing claims have been settled. Iranian assets were frozen more than two decades ago in the immediate aftermath of the Iranian revolution, which overthrew the U.S.-backed shah.

At the same time, Iran's vice president Mohammad Ali Abtahi stated that right-wing opponents of his so-called "reform" government were responsible for the death of Zahra Kazemi, a Canadian-Iranian photojournalist. The Iranian Students News Agency reported that Kazemi was beaten to death while she was in a hospital run by the Revolutionary Guards. She had been arrested on June 23 for taking photos of a demonstration for democratic rights at the Evin prison in northern Iran.

Student leaders staged more actions July 9, the anniversary of student protests in 1999 for democratic freedoms during which a soldier and protester was killed by pro-regime thugs as he was visiting a friend at a dormitory.

The authorities clamped down in preparation for the commemoration, banning gatherings and closing campuses and dormitories. Those who did turn out faced physical attacks. According to a Reuters report, security forces, including hundreds of riot police, "poured in to take control of an area" near Tehran university, "dispersing crowds and chasing youths into side streets and beating them with batons."

Land occupations are on the rise in Brazil

Continued from front page

conflict with landless rural workers. Capitalist landowners, some of whom own tracts of territory as large as some European countries, are also dissatisfied with how the government is handling the crisis.

Leaders of the big landowners' organizations are taking the new government to task for "not applying the law" to protect their wealth, while others have organized private militias to do the job themselves.

While the polarization in the countryside deepens, da Silva appears to have weathered the strike by government workers as he presses ahead with a pension "reform" plan that will cut benefits, raise the retirement age, and make pensions taxable.

Presented in the mid-1990s as a model of capitalist development in the semicolonial world, Brazil's economy entered a tailspin in 1998 when the country's gross domestic product contracted and unemployment soared. The downward spiral continued into 2002, with the real, Brazil's currency, declining 35 percent, and inflation reaching double digits. The previous government of Fernando Enrique Cardoso received a \$41.5 billion "rescue" loan from the International Monetary Fund in exchange for cuts in social security and tax increases that reduced the take-home pay of most working people.

Da Silva took office January 1 after a landslide victory in last October's presidential ballot as the candidate of the Workers Party (PT). His election, like that of Lucio Gutiérrez in Ecuador and Néstor Kirchner in Argentina, registered the rising expectations among working people in these countries, who have been devastated by the effects of economic depression and attacks by the outgoing regimes on basic social programs.

Rise in land seizures

The number of land occupations has reached its highest point since March, when the MST ended its two-month moratorium on the actions, initiated as a good-faith gesture to the new president. Confrontations with landlords have been sharpest in the western state of Sao Paulo, where large-scale agricultural production is centered, but have also occurred in at least 20 of the nation's 26 states.

In Presidente Epitacio, 3,500 families have set up a camp to demand land and resources. When the number of families reaches 5,000—about half the population of the city—the MST plans to march into the nearby city of Presidente Prudente, where

some of the ranchers live, to press the demands of the landless. The mayor said he'll block the entrance to the city.

"Nobody wants to do anything illegal," Antonio Santos, 38, told the *Wall Street Journal* in a July 10 dispatch, "but we'll do what we must to survive." Santos and his family moved to the camp in June after he lost his job in a nearby slaughterhouse.

Government statistics indicate that the number of land seizures has increased by 62 percent in the first half of 2003 in comparison with the same period last year.

Agricultural exports have played a key role in the recovery in profits for Brazilian capitalists since Lula's election, accounting for a projected \$23 billion trade surplus this year. The real's precipitous devaluation has given such exports a big boost. Today Brazil is the world's largest exporter of raw sugar, second-largest exporter of soybeans, and third-largest exporter of beef.

The distribution of land in Brazil is among the most unequal in the world. Nearly half of the arable territory in the country is owned by a mere 3 percent of the population, while the poorest 40 percent own just 1 percent of the land. The MST is demanding land for 1 million families by 2006 as a first step in addressing the gross disparity in land ownership.

Lula is trying to bring the MST actions to a halt by seeking to assure the rural population that such actions are not needed, while demagogically identifying with the need for agrarian reform. "I do not imagine that in a country of this size, with the amount of land that it has, a violent occupation is necessary," he said in June.

At a press conference that followed a meeting with MST leaders at one of the group's camps in July, Lula put on an MST cap. One MST representative said that "the government plays on our team." Business leaders, meanwhile, were outraged by the act and bitterly complained that the da Silva administration has not cracked down on the "illegal" land seizures.

"It is totally unacceptable that the government opened its doors to a violent guerrilla group like the MST," said Humberto Sa of the Movement of anti-MST Rural Producers.

Sa is the owner of 1,200 acres in the state of Parana, and is one of many ranchers who have formed militias to put a stop to the occupations by landless workers. "The constitution of the country gives us that right," he stated.

Supreme Court ruling advances gay rights

BY MARTÍN KOPPEL

Of the raft of recent U.S. Supreme Court decisions that affirm or expand basic rights won by working people, one of the most striking was the 6-3 ruling that struck down Texas's antisodomy law. That law had been used by government authorities and employers to justify victimizing and discriminating against homosexuals.

The June 26 ruling was sweeping in two respects. It expanded the constitutional right to privacy and singled out equal protection for homosexuals.

The case stemmed from the 1998 arrest of John Geddes Lawrence and Tyron Garner in Houston. On the basis of a neighbor's false report of an armed Black man "going crazy," county sheriffs barged into Lawrence's apartment and detained the two men on charges of "deviate sexual intercourse with another individual of the same sex." Garner is Black, Lawrence is white.

The ruling unambiguously stated, "The liberty protected by the Constitution allows homosexual persons the right to choose to enter upon relationships in the confines of their homes and their own private lives and still retain their dignity as free persons." The Court added, "When homosexual conduct is made criminal by the law of the State, that declaration in and of itself is an invitation to subject homosexual persons to discrimination both in the public and in the private spheres." Individuals convicted under the Texas law are stigmatized by the "notation of convictions on their records and on job application forms, and registration as sex offenders under state law."

The decision overruled the Supreme Court's 1986 ruling upholding Georgia's sodomy law in *Bowers v. Hardwick*, noting that its arguments and assumptions had become severely discredited by subsequent legal rulings and the continuing evolution of broadly held social attitudes. It dismissed the argument of *Bowers* that "proscriptions against sodomy have ancient roots," observing that "American laws targeting same-sex couples did not develop until the last third of the 20th century." The justices noted that by 1961 all states had sodomy laws, but since then these statutes have been repealed or blocked in court in all but 13 states, where they are rarely enforced today.

Rejecting the invocation of "Judeo-Christian moral and ethical standards" used in the *Bowers* decision as a basis for such laws, Kennedy stated, "The Nation's laws and traditions in the past half century are most relevant here. They show an emerging awareness that liberty gives substantial protection to adult persons in deciding how to conduct their private lives in matters pertaining to sex."

The decision roots itself explicitly in previous benchmarks in the expansion of privacy rights, particularly the 1965 and 1972 court rulings that overturned bans on the use of contraceptives, and the 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision protecting a woman's right to abortion. These legal victories were a consequence of the mass struggles of the 1950s, '60s, and '70s for Black rights and women's rights, which transformed the social attitudes and expectations of the U.S. population, especially working people.

It states that later legal decisions have "confirmed that the Due Process Clause protects personal decisions relating to marriage, procreation, contraception, family relationships, child rearing, and education."

Subsequent actions in three Southern states continued this trend towards expanding the right to privacy and upholding a woman's right to choose abortion. On July 8 U.S. district judge Stanwood Duval blocked the state of Louisiana from issuing specialty plates, including "Choose Life," a code word of anti-abortion rights forces. The next day Missouri governor Robert Holden vetoed a bill that would have required women seeking abortion to sign a state-approved consent form and their physicians to provide them with certain information about "risks involved" at least 24 hours before performing the procedure. A day later the Florida Supreme Court struck down a state law requiring doctors to notify the parents of a teenager under 18 seeking an abortion before she can have the operation.

Also on July 9, U.S. district judge Edward Harrington dismissed a challenge by opponents of abortion rights to a Massachusetts law that mandates a protest-free "buffer zone" around abortion clinics.

For the first time in a Supreme Court case, the June 26 ruling cited precedents around the world as a factor. It pointed out that the European Court of Human Rights and courts in other countries have affirmed the "rights of homosexual adults to engage in intimate, consensual conduct." It emphasized "values we share with a wider civilization" and the fact that privacy for gays "has been accepted as an integral part of human freedom in many other countries."

A wide array of organizations filed "friend of the court" briefs in support of the two men challenging the Texas law—from gay rights, human rights, and medical groups to conservative organizations such as the Republican Unity Coalition and the Cato Institute.

"Not only does this ruling let us get on with our lives, but it opens the door for gay people all over the country to be treated equally," said a jubilant Lawrence, one of the plaintiffs, in a press conference after the ruling.

Texas officials defended the law, saying they were protecting marriage, the family, the birth of children, and "moral standards." In his dissenting opinion, Justice Antonin



John Geddes Lawrence (left) and Tyron Garner won their fight against Texas antigay law.

Scalia declared bitterly that the court ruling abetted "the so-called homosexual agenda," which he said was "directed at eliminating the moral opprobrium that has traditionally attached to homosexual conduct."

The Bush administration was noticeably

silent on the ruling. On the other hand, right-wing groups were furious. Several *National Review* columnists predicted that the ruling would open the door to gay marriage and the erosion of the traditional nuclear family. Former editor Joseph Sobran warned that it would lead to sanctioning pedophiles. Ken Connor of the Family Research Council called it "a direct attack on the sanctity of marriage."

Meanwhile, in one of the first efforts to use this precedent, a former army officer who was discharged in 1997 under "other than honorable" conditions for being gay has filed a lawsuit challenging as unconstitutional the U.S. military's antigay "don't ask, don't tell" policy and the military sodomy statute.

The army brass discharged Lt. Col. Loren Loomis—a recipient of two Bronze Stars and a Purple Heart during the Vietnam War—just one week before he completed a 20-year career in the army, depriving him of a full retirement pension and other benefits. They did so after his home was burned and a firefighter found a videotape of him having sex with another man and turned it over to authorities.

High court decisions show rulers have gone too far

Continued from front page

decision establishing that gays and lesbians have a right to privacy and to freedom from discrimination and harassment. But several other rulings strengthened women's rights in employment, due process in death penalty cases, and the right to privacy.

Advocates of civil and democratic rights "seemed almost stunned by the string of victories they had been handed by a group of justices who were put on the bench mostly by Republican presidents," the *Washington Post* stated June 29.

In a July 28 editorial titled "Left Turn," the right-wing magazine *National Review* lamented that "the Supreme Court first decided to write 'diversity' into the Constitution" and that "a few days later, it issued a ruling on sodomy laws that called into question its willingness to tolerate any state laws based on traditional understandings of sexual morality." It added that "President Bush actually cheered the affirmative-action decision for recognizing the value of 'diversity.'"

Family leave for women and men

In addition to the gains for affirmative action and gay rights, the Supreme Court issued a decision that represents a victory for the rights of women and of all workers. The Supreme Court ruled May 27 that state employees have the right to sue their employers for violating their federally guaranteed right to take extended time off work for reasons such as the birth of a child or to care for a family member who is ill.

In a 6-3 ruling, the high court rejected a claim by the Nevada state government to immunity from being sued under the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA). The law, adopted in 1993, grants up to 12 weeks of unpaid leave a year to both women and men to care for a newborn baby or a family illness, or to recover from a personal illness. It applies to public and private companies with more than 50 employees and to workers with at least 12 months' seniority. More than 24 million workers a year—nearly 18 percent—take family leave, mostly women.

The case involved William Hibbs, a Nevada state employee who took family leave to care for his wife, who was recovering from a car accident. Hibbs was fired after he failed to return to work when his bosses told him he had exhausted his time off.

Reporters for big-business dailies such as the *New York Times* expressed surprise that the author of the ruling was Chief Justice William Rehnquist, a Nixon appointee who has often issued conservative opinions.

In the majority opinion, Rehnquist wrote that "a long and extensive history of sex discrimination with respect to the administration of leave benefits by the States" justified removing the constitutional immunity from lawsuits that state governments normally have. Rehnquist added that "the history of many state laws limiting women's employment opportunities is chronicled in—and, until relatively recently, was sanctioned by—this Court's own opinion," and cited rulings from previous decades that upheld

legislation barring women from practicing law or tending bar, or limiting the hours women could work.

"Stereotypes about women's domestic roles are reinforced by parallel stereotypes presuming a lack of domestic responsibilities by men," Rehnquist wrote. "Because employers continued to regard the family as the woman's domain, they often denied men similar accommodations or discouraged them from taking leave. These mutually reinforcing stereotypes created a self-fulfilling cycle of discrimination that forced women to continue to assume the role of primary family caregiver, and fostered employers' stereotypical views about women's commitment to work and their value as employees."

The Court said the FMLA was needed "to ensure that family-care leave would no longer be stigmatized as an inordinate drain on the workplace caused by female employees, and that employers could not evade leave obligations simply by hiring men." The White House, and dozens of members of Congress, urged the court to uphold the FMLA.

In a related development, last September California became the first state to pass a paid-leave law that allows workers to take up to six weeks' family leave and receive 55 percent of their wages. The program will be funded by payments of about \$26 a year by workers at private companies.

In a less-publicized case, the Supreme Court issued a unanimous ruling June 9 that will make it easier for workers to win lawsuits against bosses for discrimination due to nationality, sex, religion, or national origin. The opinion, written by Clarence Thomas, states that it is not necessary for workers to provide "direct evidence" of discrimination—often difficult to prove—but rather "sufficient evidence for a reasonable jury to conclude" that discrimination was at least one factor involved. The case began as a sex discrimination and harassment suit by Catharina Costa, a truck driver and heavy equipment operator at Caesars Palace Hotel and Casino in Las Vegas. Costa, the only woman working in the hotel's warehouse, had been fired after a fight with another employee that the bosses cited as a reason for dismissal. She won back pay and damages.

Rights of defendants in capital cases

Working people won another victory in two death penalty rulings. In one case, the Supreme Court asserted the right, not only to counsel but to "effective counsel." It overturned the death sentence against Kevin Wiggins, a Maryland man charged with murder, on the grounds that a federal appeals court should have granted him a writ of habeas corpus on the basis of ineffective representation by his court-appointed attorney.

Wiggins's case is typical of those facing many working people, especially Blacks and others from oppressed nationalities, who are routinely denied the right to due process and lack the resources to hire a lawyer. Based on circumstantial evidence, Wiggins was accused of murdering a woman in the apartment complex where he worked

as a handyman. No physical evidence linked him to the 1988 killing and he has always denied the charge.

The high court ruled 7-2 that the failure of Wiggins's lawyers to investigate and inform the jury of the abuse Wiggins had suffered as a child—relevant mitigating evidence—"fell short of the minimum constitutional standards of competence." The court-appointed public defenders, who had never tried a death penalty case, advised him to waive his right to a trial despite the shaky case against him. The defendant, a slightly retarded man, had no prior criminal record.

In the second case, the Supreme Court ruled 8-1 in favor of Thomas Miller-El, a Texas death row prisoner who accused Dallas County prosecutors of engaging in racially biased jury selection for his trial in 1986. The court ruled that during his federal appeal he was denied the opportunity of presenting evidence that the prosecutors had systematically excluded Blacks from the jury—10 of the 11 potential Black jurors were removed. It ordered the federal appeals court to grant Miller-El a habeas corpus hearing.

The evidence "reveals that the culture of the district attorney's office in the past was suffused with bias against African-Americans in jury selections," Justice Anthony Kennedy wrote. One month after Miller-El was sentenced to death, the Supreme Court had ruled that it is unconstitutional to strike jurors solely on the basis of race.

In yet another decision, on June 26 the Supreme Court struck down as unconstitutional a California law that retroactively lifted a three-year statute of limitations on child sex abuse cases and allowed prosecution years and even decades after the alleged crimes occurred. The law was part of efforts to undermine basic legal protections in the name of prosecuting "sexual predators." Ruling 5-4, the court held that the 1993 law violated the Constitution's Ex Post Facto Clause, which prohibits certain retroactive criminal laws. The clause protects individuals from arbitrary government action changing the legal status of actions that occurred in the past.

The Los Angeles County district attorney's office said it would review more than 200 cases since 1993 that might be affected by the ruling.

Right-wing complaints about 'left' shift

Right-wing columnists have decried these decisions. Commentator Joseph Sobran complained in a July 3 syndicated column that "justices appointed by Republican presidents often issue the most liberal rulings," a trend that has been true since the 1930s labor upsurge and the "New Deal" administration of Franklin Roosevelt. He noted that in 1973, for example, "Harry Blackmun, recently named to the Court by Richard Nixon, wrote the majority opinion striking down the abortion laws of all 50 states." Today, he said, Justices Kennedy and O'Connor, both Reagan appointees, ruled "that sodomy laws 'discriminate' against homosexuals as a 'class' or 'group.'" Such reasoning, he warned, "could lead anywhere."

Alabama carpenters campaign for union

BY CHERYL GOETZ
AND BRIAN TAYLOR

BIRMINGHAM, Alabama—“This is a fight,” said Pascual Hernández, a newly hired carpenter picketing outside the office building of the concrete construction contractor Concrete Form Walls here July 7. “Even though I just started working here, I support this struggle to the end.”

Nearly two dozen carpenters, union representatives, and others turned out for the 5:30 a.m. picket denouncing the company’s attempt to nullify a recent union certification election held there. Carrying signs in Spanish reading “Workers have rights” and “Vote union, Sí,” pickets also demanded the reinstatement of four workers they said were fired for union activity.

“Organize or die” is the bottom line for the unions, said Craig King. “If we don’t organize, we’re going away.” King is the field representative of the Alabama Carpenters Regional Council, which is carrying out an organizing drive among workers employed by concrete construction contractors in the Birmingham/Tuscaloosa area.

The union won an election at Concrete Form Walls June 24. The owner is challenging the results, claiming that undocumented workers who participated in the election had no right to vote. A hearing before the National Labor Relations Board in July will rule on the issue.

The Council, a division of the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America, began laying the groundwork for the organizing drive seven months ago. In late June informational pickets were set up at five targeted companies: Concrete Form Walls; Concrete Walls; Superior Concrete Walls and Footing Company; Cornerstone Poured Walls; and JeffCo Concrete Contractors. Workers from all of these companies have expressed interest in union representation. None of these employers offers pension plans or affordable family health insurance. Hourly wages average \$8–\$10, well below union scale.

The Carpenters union is targeting a “market segment,” or group of companies that do basically the same kind of work, instead of one single company at a time, King said. Jerry Brooks, an organizer from Mobile, Alabama, said this approach has been used successfully by the union in its organizing drive at petrochemical plants along the Gulf of Mexico coast from Texas to Florida. Brooks said the union has won recognition and has been fighting for contracts in the Mobile area for the past two years.

JeffCo attorney Bruce Henderson dismissed the organizing drive, telling the *Tuscaloosa News* that this is “a typical campaign attack.” The company is considering legal action, he said.

Workers are drawn to the union because they want higher wages, family health coverage and other benefits, and rights to dignity and to combat discrimination, Brooks said. “Nobody should have to live under the poverty level,” he stated. “Immigrants should have the same rights as other workers.”

King said that both union and nonunion contractors bid on jobs based on the same average labor costs, about \$35 per hour per worker. Since nonunion companies pay lower wages and offer no benefits, “Where does the difference go?” he asked. “The bosses’ attitudes towards the workers is to ‘use them ’til they get worn out, then get new young ones they can hire at lower pay.’”

Johnny Arguedes, a union organizer and member of Carpenters Local 127 in Birmingham, told these reporters that 90 percent of the 150 employees of the five targeted companies are either Latino or Black, including many immigrants. Some of the Latino workers have lived and worked in the United States for a number of years. Others are recent arrivals. “We get a good response from the Hispanic workers,” he said.

“Latino workers will stand strong, even though some may be fearful and feel like everybody is against them,” said Larry Hodge, a Carpenters Local 127 organizer. “But constant pressure from the company can have an effect. You can’t have a fair election with intimidation tactics.”

Pascual Hernández was a union surface miner in Mexico for 16 years before coming to the United States. A year ago he was

part of a successful 43-day strike there by some 1,500 workers demanding a wage raise and rejecting attempts by the bosses to set up a pro-company union. “That experience will be useful here,” he said.

King stated that the union organizes all carpenters at a construction site regardless of race, gender, or immigration status. “All workers in the United States have a federally protected right to organize,” he said.

On July 2, a number of regional staffers and members of Carpenters union locals in the area were on hand with signs to greet workers coming to vote on union representation at Concrete Walls.

One of the carpenters present was Alejandro Arcos, 36, originally from Vera Cruz, Mexico. He came with three other union



Militant/Jeanne FitzMaurice

Carpenters picket office of Concrete Form Walls—a concrete construction contractor in Birmingham, Alabama—on July 7, demanding union recognition.

carpenters who work out of Wilsonville, Alabama. The pickets were standing at a turnoff from the highway, and many passing truckers honked in solidarity. “We’re here to support the union because the union sup-

ports us,” Arcos said.

Brian Taylor is a member of United Mine Workers of America Local 2133. Janine Dukes contributed to this article.

Róger Calero tours West Coast cities

BY SAMUEL DELAWARE

LOS ANGELES—“Our class loses too many fights—not because we don’t want to fight, but because we don’t know how to fight,” said Róger Calero, speaking at the Dunbar Hotel here June 28. A banner near the speaker’s platform captured the main theme of his international speaking tour: “Fight to win! Sí se puede!”

Wendy Lyons, a member of the Socialist Workers Party and of United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) Local 770, chaired the event. The defense effort began when immigration cops arrested Calero on Dec. 3, 2002, and concluded successfully May 22, Lyons stated, when a New Jersey immigration judge ruled that Calero was “not deportable.”

Washington tried to deport Calero on the basis of a plea-bargain conviction when he was in high school for selling an ounce of marijuana to an undercover cop, which the INS had later waived in granting him permanent residency. In the course of the fight, Calero won the backing of unionists, journalists, immigrant rights activists, and others who then sent letters of protest to the INS, raised thousands of dollars, and heard Calero speak in cities around the United States. Calero is an associate editor of *Perspectiva Mundial*, a Spanish-language socialist monthly magazine published in New York, and a *Militant* staff writer.

“Róger is using this tour to throw the weight of his victory behind other fighters in struggle,” said Lyons, as she introduced the evening’s first speaker, Cliseria Piñeda.

“Unity makes strength,” said Piñeda, a leader of garment workers at Forever 21 in Los Angeles who have been locked in an ongoing battle with their bosses over back pay denied them following a sudden plant closure. “I thank God that this young man won his fight,” said Piñeda, a staunch supporter of the defense campaign. She asked the audience to also lend their support to the struggle of the Forever 21 workers. “We need to put an end to the super-exploitation of workers,” she said.

A worker at Farmer John, a local meat-packing plant, who had met with Calero the previous day also addressed the meeting. “I’m here first of all to express my approval and congratulations for everything that has been done to prevent the deportation of Róger Calero,” she said. The workers at Farmer John are involved in a campaign to revitalize their union and increase its membership in face of abusive actions by the bosses. The company is denying workers bathroom breaks and has sped up the line to the point that the 100 workers on the kill floor now slaughter 6,500 pigs during an eight-hour shift, she said.

José Velasquez, 20, a construction worker who had met Calero prior to his arrest at an international youth conference in Mexico, said, “When I heard what happened to Róger I knew it was my responsibility to get involved. I began gathering signatures on petitions and getting out the word about what the government was trying to do. I did all I could.” Velasquez and several other youth at the meeting will travel to Cuba to participate in the Cuba-U.S. Youth Exchange at the end of July.

Lyons read a statement sent to the meet-

ing by Angela Sanbrano, executive director of the Central American Resource Center. “When the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) announced its decision to terminate deportation proceedings against Róger, it was an important victory for the immigrant community at large,” the message said. “By coming together to fight this blatant injustice, we send a message loud and clear: these attacks must stop.... Congratulations on this momentous occasion.”

“They picked the wrong fight at the wrong time, when the abuses of *la migra* are more and more being recognized in their rawest form,” said Calero. “They failed to see the increasing political price they would pay as we fought back loudly and publicly.”

Calero also highlighted several other struggles by fighters victimized by the government under the pretext of “national security.” Referring to a recent congressional report criticizing the Justice Department’s handling of detainees arrested in post-9/11 sweeps, Calero said, “That report says nothing about Farouk Abdel Muhti. It says nothing about Omar Jamal. It says nothing about the five Puerto Rican political prisoners who have been imprisoned the longest of all the political prisoners in the United States. And it says nothing about the five Cuban revolutionaries locked up in U.S. jails.

“The growing number of immigrants in the workforce is a test for the entire union movement,” said Calero, describing the strike of meat packers in Jefferson, Wisconsin, against Tyson Foods. Those workers, who are in their majority native-born, “are getting a crash course in how the bosses sow divisions between workers based on nationality,” he noted. The company has attempted to recruit scabs by advertising in English, Spanish, and Chinese.

Calero also recounted some of the experiences he went through while working at Dakota Premium Foods in St. Paul, Minnesota, where workers organized a sit-down strike two years ago, won a union certification election, and then waged a long struggle to force the company to sign a union contract. “Today, they continue to use the power of their union to reach out to others,” he said.

A collection among the 40 participants at the event raised \$450 for the Political Rights Defense Fund (PRDF) to replenish its war chest for future battles in defense of workers rights. PRDF led the effort to launch the Róger Calero Defense Committee.

BY BILL KALMAN

SAN FRANCISCO—Róger Calero spoke at the New College here June 29, where he was welcomed by campus representative Eduardo Waller. “Our doors are open to these kinds of cases,” Waller stated. Calero was joined on the speakers platform by Daz Lamparas, organizer for Service Employees International Union (SEIU) Local 790, and John Fogarty from the Irish American Unity Council.

Lamparas, who helped lead the fight of Filipino airport screeners in San Francisco against the federalization of the airport’s workforce, has been a supporter of Calero’s case since the beginning. “Some 13,000 people [who registered with the INS last fall and winter] are languishing in U.S.

jails awaiting deportation because they don’t know how to fight,” he said. “It’s important to wage public fights to defend workers’ rights: when a fight is publicly known, the enemy backs down.”

Fogarty said that he was amazed how quickly Calero had won his case. The Irish republican Joe Dougherty “was in a holding pen for eight years in New York City,” he stated, “long enough for them to name the street in front of his jail for him. Dougherty was eventually deported; we were told at every stage that we could not win.”

Calero noted that “my defense effort was spearheaded by members of my party—the Socialist Workers Party—anchored in decades of political fights. We offer the lessons learned to other fighters to use.”

Letters of support were sent to the meeting by Riva Eenteen of the National Lawyers Guild and Tim Hamaan, president of UFCW Local 120. Over \$500 was collected among the 30 people in attendance to cover tour costs and to help PRDF have funds for future cases. Calero also was interviewed by *El Reportero*, and spoke live on Radio Unica.

BY CONNIE ALLEN

SEATTLE—“I was elated to hear of this victory, that he actually won,” said Cecile Hansen, chairperson of the Duwamish tribe, at a meeting here July 1 as part of Róger Calero’s tour. The Duwamish people are fighting government denial of their official status as a tribe. “Our people will never give up fighting for our recognition,” Hansen stated.

Jonathon Moore of the Immigrants Rights Project congratulated Calero on his victory. Moore detailed many of the changes in immigration law going back to bills passed during the William Clinton administration. These laws expanded the number of convictions that are the basis for exclusion.

Adrienne Bradbury of the Hate Free Zone Campaign of Washington brought “sincere congratulations from her organization for ‘this victory for all.’” She announced the Immigrant Workers Freedom Ride, which will set off from 10 U.S. cities September 23 headed toward Washington. The freedom ride aims to focus attention on struggles of immigrant workers against discrimination on the job and their right to live in the United States.

“I will wear the label ‘non-deportable’ as a badge of honor,” Calero told the 30 people at the meeting. He discussed the goals of his tour that began June 19 in Houston.

“Some of the principles of our defense were that the effort was open to anyone. We did not subordinate the defense to any political party and had no illusions in any institutions of the capitalist system. When we were advised not to provoke the courts by a public defense, we stayed the course, and showed no panic or fear in the face of the government’s attacks. We acted on the understanding that in the class struggle, when we can’t change the course, we can make the ruling class pay a political price for their assaults on our rights.”

The meeting raised \$831 to cover the costs of the tour and make sure that PRDF has funding when it is over.

International socialist conference increasing trade union–building

BY PATRICK O'NEILL
AND MICHAEL ITALIE

OBERLIN, Ohio—An International Socialist Workers Conference took place here July 10–12. It laid the basis for socialist workers in coal mining, textile and garment, and meatpacking to rapidly extend their involvement in union-building work in every factory, mine, or mill where they are employed—whether it be work toward organizing unions, or toward mobilizing existing union structures to be used by the membership.

“We have a union orientation, not a factory orientation,” said SWP national secretary Jack Barnes in his conference summary July 12. This is a life and death question, he stated, speaking at a postconference meeting of the party’s National Committee July 14. “In our work today we aim at the transformation of the unions—the only mass defensive organizations of the working class—into instruments of revolutionary struggle.”

The growing integration of socialist workers in the vanguard of the working class over the last two years, Barnes said, has laid the basis for this turn toward making mass work in the unions universal in the SWP. The conference sessions reflected this, as delegates described progress in linking up with unionists and other workers on picket lines, in organizing drives, and on other fronts of labor resistance—and incorporating communist propaganda tasks at the plants and mines along this axis of work.

Hosted by the SWP and Young Socialists and held at Oberlin College here, the conference drew 355 people. Around 80 were delegates elected by SWP branches and organizing committees in the United States. The party’s National Committee members were fraternal delegates. Communist Leagues in Australia, Canada, Iceland, New Zealand, Sweden, and the United Kingdom also sent fraternal delegates.

Meetings of socialist workers and young socialists in the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA), the Union of Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Employees (UNITE), and the United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) took place at the very beginning of the conference and the morning after it ended. On July 13, young people at the gathering took part in a meeting organized by the Young Socialists. Supporters of the communist movement involved in Pathfinder’s Print Project also held a number of workshops that day on the various aspects of their work in producing and distributing Pathfinder books.

Barnes and SWP leaders Joel Britton and Mary-Alice Waters gave the three main presentations at the conference, each of them followed by discussion from the delegates in plenary sessions.

The program included a series of educational classes on questions of Marxist theory and communist program, as well as movies and social events. The classes proved popular, with the classrooms and



Militant photos by James Stanley
Above, delegates to the socialist conference in Ohio. At right, SWP national secretary Jack Barnes addresses participants at July 12 summary session; Mary-Alice Waters (left) and Joel Britton (far right) were the two other reporters; chairperson Diana Newberry is in middle.



lecture halls where they were held frequently filled to capacity. Participants also took advantage of the special discounts offered by Pathfinder Press on books covering the subjects discussed in the classes and other titles, purchasing \$2,500 worth of books.

International crisis of capitalism

The report by Barnes was titled “The reality of world capitalist crisis today.” The SWP leader said he found much of this election year boring because of the low level of bourgeois politics. The smokescreens capitalist politicians use cover up the real questions. “Underneath this boring level, though,” he stated, “you can see that for the first time since the early part of the 20th century, capitalism in the United States is marching into a period of depression and a pattern of imperialist wars and inter-imperialist conflicts, which will transform international relations and raise the specter of nuclear war, fascism, and the combination of struggles for national liberation and workers power in a way none of us has lived through.”

Bourgeois politics in the United States seems more boring than usual every time the political system heads into a crisis, Barnes said. That was the case in the early 1850s, just prior to the founding of a brand new party, the Republican Party, which soon won the elections and presided over the government during the U.S. Civil War.

In the early 1930s, too, he stated, the country was stunned coming out of the Great Depression and both of the main capitalist parties—the Democrats and Republicans—were saying many of the same things. Within a couple of years, mass labor battles had spread across the country against the backdrop of fascist victories in Europe and the looming clouds of another world war. That’s when the Democrats were remade from the party of the former Southern slavocracy to the self-professed “friend of labor” and purveyor of the New Deal.

“Today we are convinced that something similar is happening,” Barnes said.

The twin ruling parties of U.S. imperialism have accelerated their offensive against the rights and social wage of working people over the past decade, the SWP leader noted, in a way that will lead to new social explosions. This offensive is profoundly bipartisan, he said, regardless of the acrimonious debates politicians from both parties engage in for electoral purposes.

This marks an important change, Barnes stated, the first signs of which came during the 1992 election campaign of William Clinton. Until Clinton’s administration, the Democrats regularly differentiated their

party from the Republicans by presenting themselves as the defenders of Social Security and other entitlements working people won in struggle. In fact, the twin parties’ contest over their domestic platforms provided a contrast to U.S. foreign policy, which had been consistently bipartisan since World War II. But since the mid 1990s, “we have the opposite of what defined the two-party system for decades—a bipartisan domestic policy.”

Both parties aim to dismantle the social wage won in the course of massive labor and civil rights battles, said Barnes. And this comes “just at the time it is desperately needed”—as unemployment rises and the bosses cut wages and health insurance, even before inflationary outbursts that can devastate workers’ pay. In New York, he pointed out, it costs \$10 to go to a movie now. “The real costs for workers to function as human beings continue to rise.”

The rulers’ drive to strip legal protections from immigrants, and other calculated moves to divide the working class, began in earnest under Clinton’s two terms, said Barnes. “So too did the steps to establish a North American command of the U.S. armed forces and the attacks on rights codified in the Bush administration’s Patriot Act.”

Barnes noted that the capitalist politicians’ calls for a leaner government are nothing but hot air. Since World War II the government bureaucracy has steadily become more and more bloated, whatever the stated aims of the given ruling party. Under the latest administration of President George Bush, in fact, this expansion has continued. An article in the July 18 right-wing *National Review*, titled “Bush’s bigger, fatter welfare state,” and other similar recent reports in the media confirm that.

Rightist demagogues rail against this development, Barnes noted. They hark back to the “good old” years of cheap government—that is, the decades before the end of World War II. It was in the mid-1940s that Washington became the uncontested top world power, emerging as the unambiguous victor from the inter-imperialist slaughter and establishing permanent, massive armed forces and a monstrous state apparatus—a structure typical of an imperialist colossus.

Under today’s conditions, Socialist Workers candidates must present clear slogans of struggle against the bipartisan capitalist attacks, said Barnes. They include demands for jobs for all, a massive program of public works, a sliding scale of hours and wages to

spread the available work around and protect the incomes of working people, and other demands to oppose the bosses’ offensive and unify the working class and its allies on the land.

“No communist movement can grow or get heft if it does not organize to defend the most fundamental interests of working people,” said the SWP leader. Socialists aim to increase the self-confidence and consciousness of the working class—“the class that is the source of all creativity.”

In addition to defense of workers’ and farmers’ economic interests, he said, working-class candidates “call for all U.S. troops to be brought home now.” They demand full rights of freedom of speech and association for the citizen-soldiers who make up the imperialist armed forces. Above all, Barnes said, socialists campaign for independent working-class political action. They should make a point of asking workers to financially support their election campaigns.

Shift to right has gone too far

The offensive against working people’s rights has a “cumulative side” to it, said Barnes. “The rulers continually probe how much to soften us up for further assaults.” However, he said, some in ruling circles realize they have gone too far for their own political good. This is what recent Supreme Court rulings on affirmative action, gay rights, and the right to privacy, among others, signify (see articles on pages 1 and 4).

This was a “set of astounding decisions,” Barnes said. They register a shift to the left in bourgeois politics. “I say nothing about the longevity of this shift, or its shallowness, but it’s a development that we must note of and take into account.” This is different from the ruling-class measures in the early years of the Clinton administration, which had a rightward bias.

Since World War II, the main role of the Supreme Court has been to anticipate the longer-term consequences of the course the ruling class is following, “to prevent the bourgeoisie from pushing beyond what the relationship of forces will allow,” the SWP leader said. The rulers have assigned this task to one of their most undemocratic institutions, a body made up in its majority of unelected, largely reactionary men who are justices for life. Its composition—whether the greater part of its members have been appointed by Republican administrations, as is the case now, or Democrats—has no bearing in its decisions. “The Supreme Court doesn’t have to use demagoguery,” Barnes said. Bourgeois politicians are pompous, snake oil salesmen who usually look backwards. “The Supreme Court looks ahead.”

In the name of the Republican Party, and with substantial support from the Democrats, the ruling class was heading toward starting a fight it could not sustain, Barnes said. It will take a civil war to dismantle affirmative action, a woman’s right to choose abortion, and other such basic gains. “This is the best reading of the relationship of forces we’ve gotten from the bourgeoisie since the so-called Gingrich revolution,” Barnes stated. He was referring to former Speaker of the House of Representatives

Help put Socialist Workers candidates on the ballot!

Partisans of Socialist Workers candidates for public office are campaigning to get them on the ballot in Boston, Des Moines, Philadelphia, and Seattle on the July 26–27 weekend. Ballot status gives socialist candidates greater access to media coverage, speaking engagements, candidate debates, and other opportunities to reach youth and those who toil for a living with the only working-class alternative to the twin parties of economic depression and war—the Democrats and Republicans.

In addition to petitioning, there will be forums and other political events taking place in each city. If you can help, please contact campaign supporters at the addresses listed on page 8.

Further Reading

Capitalism’s World Disorder Working-Class Politics at the Millennium

by Jack Barnes

Today’s spreading economic and social crisis and acts of imperialist aggression are not the product of something gone wrong. but the lawful workings of capitalism. Yet the future can be changed by the united struggle and selfless action of workers and farmers conscious of their power to transform the world. Also available in Spanish, French, Greek. \$23.95



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Newton Gingrich who in 1994 put forward the "Contract with America"—a series of budget cuts and assaults on basic rights that the ruling class had to abandon.

Among the developments that changed the class relationship of forces in favor of working people was the movement for Black freedom and its interrelationship with the fight against the Vietnam War, said Barnes. Black soldiers, in particular, were affected by these social changes. Rebelling against the racism of the white officer corps, and less and less convinced that the subjugation of Vietnam was a goal worth dying for, these soldiers helped make the imperialist army a less effective killing machine.

While the ruling class and its officer corps is no longer plagued by the Vietnam Syndrome, which resulted from Washington's defeat by the Vietnamese people, the class memory of the 1960s and the Black struggle is there, Barnes said. Barnes pointed to the friend-of-the-court brief backing affirmative action that top retired military officers submitted to the Supreme Court. These generals were in fact telling the ruling class, Barnes noted, "You can't have the same kind of war at home that prevented us from winning the war in Vietnam."

Sea change in working-class politics

These rulings reflect the reality that, in spite of setbacks, working people have not been dealt crushing blows on these social questions. As such, Barnes said, the Supreme Court decisions are a "vindication of the 'Sea Change.'"

The SWP leader was referring to "A Sea Change in Working-Class Politics," the opening chapter of *Capitalism's World Disorder: Working-Class Politics at the Millennium*. In that December 1998 speech in Los Angeles, which was subsequently printed in this Pathfinder book, Barnes presented the conclusions of the SWP national leadership that the retreat of the labor movement through the 1990s had bottomed out, and that in the new struggles that had begun to unfold, "what happens...has less and less connection to earlier defeats."

Since then, socialist workers have organized to respond to the new openings by extending their geographic reach through organizing committees and by rebuilding fractions in the meatpacking, garment and textile, and coal-mining industries—where the assaults by the bosses have been deep-going and the resulting labor resistance tenacious.

Contrary to the view expressed in a recent *Militant* editorial, said Barnes, there is no "uptick in labor resistance" at the present time. "We shouldn't confuse changes in the broader class struggle with changes in ourselves," he said. In the last year socialist workers have taken important steps forward, becoming more integrated into the working-class vanguard leading these struggles and knowledgeable about the labor resistance. But these struggles are not new. "We simply lifted the blinders off our eyes."

The communist movement is building today on the same political trajectory outlined in the "Sea Change." Whatever the outcome of any particular fight, Barnes said, social-

ists are guided by the *Communist Manifesto*, in which Karl Marx and Frederick Engels wrote in 1848 that "the real fruit" of such guerrilla battles "lie not in the immediate result, but in the ever-expanding union of the workers."

Economic problems and the war drive

The drive to more imperialist wars like the assault on Iraq is framed by the deep economic crisis of capitalism, Barnes said. Tax cuts for the wealthy and other measures to stimulate growth work well enough in a long-term period of expansion, he said. But in a period of decline like the one we're in, sooner or later "what can go wrong will go wrong." When the bubbles of the stock markets and housing prices burst, he said, working people will be threatened by both deflation—the contraction of credit and economic activity—and inflation—a monetary phenomenon that results in the rapid loss in buying power of workers' wages.

All these developments are confirmation that U.S. imperialism lost the Cold War, he said. This loss—which meant that Washington could no longer rely on Moscow or other Stalinist regimes in Eastern Europe to put the brakes on revolutionary struggles—gave the U.S. rulers no choice but to adopt the aggressive military strategy that was evident in the recent invasion of Iraq.

The adjustment was not immediate, said Barnes. In the 1990–91 Gulf War, Washington and London employed massed armor bearing close resemblance to the units that had defeated their German counterparts decades earlier in World War II.

Following that Kuwait war, the rulers confronted anew "how to use the military strength of the United States," Barnes stated. The new strategy emphasizes high-tech weaponry—including new generations of nuclear arms now under development—and smaller and more mobile forces. It also assigns a central role to elite Special Forces.

The rulers continue to target Iran and north Korea, he noted—particularly their capacity to strike back with missiles that have an expanding range. The "weapons of mass destruction" have been expanded to include "quiet diesel submarines" and anything else that threatens the imperialist monopoly of strategic or even tactical military hardware.

At the same time, the U.S. imperialists are pressing ahead with the occupation of Iraq. The course this represents has won a clear majority among the U.S. ruling class, said Barnes. Whatever the tactical criticisms offered by the administration's liberal critics, they offer no significant opposition or alternative road.

Long-term trends favor working class

"The leadership of the Socialist Workers Party is convinced that long-term trends are in favor of workers and farmers," said Barnes in concluding his report.

"The rise of secularism and the decline of religion—the refusal of growing sections of humanity to rely on dogma and authority—especially in the West, is the first such trend," he said. "This is one of the great guarantees of the possibilities for revolution and reorganizing society along rational lines."

Despite calls from the right to include a mention of Christianity as an alleged part of Europe's "heritage" in the new European Union constitution, said Barnes, the final draft contained no mention of religion. "Godless in Brussels" read one despairing headline in the right-wing *National Review*.

The second trend is "the scope and size of the place of the fight for women's rights," said Barnes. This has a world character, as "women and their supporters take positions on the basis of what has been shown to be possible elsewhere. The Internet and television are immensely helpful in this respect."

The third progressive development, Barnes said, is the increasing opposition to the exploiters' use of the death penalty and

L.A. event sends off Youth Exchange to Cuba



Militant/Nan Bailey

Some of the 80 youth who are members of the Los Angeles delegation to the July 24–31 Cuba-U.S. Youth Exchange in Havana, at July 18 send-off event. More than 100 people attended the program, where Mary-Alice Waters, president of Pathfinder Press, was a featured speaker.

torture to defend their rule. One indication of this trend is the recent denials by the U.S. government that it has used torture at its prison camp in Guantánamo—Cuban territory occupied despite the wishes of the Cuban people.

A number of delegates spoke to the fight for women's rights and its key place in the struggle to transform the unions into class-struggle organizations.

Alyson Kennedy, a coal miner in Utah, said that her male co-workers had backed her up when the boss had attempted to fire her on a blatantly discriminatory basis. With their support, she kept the job.

Janet Roth, a meat packer and delegate from the Communist League in New Zealand, told of a woman in India who recently rebelled against her husband-to-be's violent insistence that her family increase her bride-price, or dowry. Hundreds of women rushed to the New Delhi home of the 21-year-old to offer congratulations after she had the man arrested under anti-dowry laws.

The Marxist explanation of the origins of women's oppression and the place of the fight for women's rights in the socialist revolution was the subject of a class titled "Communism and the Struggle Against Women's Oppression." Topics covered by other classes included "The 1931–39 Spanish Revolution and Civil War"; "Marx and Engels on the United States"; and "V.I. Lenin on Imperialism."

Delegates took up other questions in the discussion. Susan Lamont of Birmingham, Alabama, noted that ex-prisoners and other anti-discrimination fighters continue to resist the state's denial of their voting rights, after Governor Robert Reilly vetoed a bill that would have allowed some to vote.

Trade union work

Joel Britton gave the second report, entitled, "Joining forces with militant workers in labor and farm struggles and building the communist movement." He described developments in the labor movement ranging from a recent strike by meat packers in Hunts Point, New York, for union recognition, to the growing number of Mexican immigrants working in the coal mines in Utah.

While there has been no qualitative increase in the number of union-organizing drives or other working-class struggles in the United States, said Britton, there are important opportunities for communists in the unions to link up with others to strengthen the unions as fighting instruments of the working class.

Hollander Home Fashions in Chicago was one example, he said. There, UNITE-organized workers circulated a petition to demand that a union meeting be called in the run-up to contract negotiations. When no meeting was called they decided to don red T-shirts for a day in a show of union pride.

"It is important for socialist

workers to function through our unions in building solidarity" with the 480 members of UFCW Local 538 who have been on strike against Tyson Foods in Wisconsin, for nearly four months, said Britton. Members of the Local's Truth Squad participated in a June 26 program to protest government threats to deport Róger Calero, held at a UFCW hall in Omaha, Nebraska. Squad members have gone to other packinghouses in the Midwest to build support for the union's fight against Tyson's union-busting demands.

While building solidarity with this struggle through their unions as the number one task, socialist workers have discussed with fellow fighters at Tyson their disagreement with a union petitioning campaign that attacks Tyson for hiring "people with criminal records," said Britton. Such arguments play into the hands of the rulers in their drive to criminalize the working class, he said, and "threaten the solidarity that is needed to defeat company attacks on wages, conditions, and dignity on the job."

Since the U.S. government is the largest jailer in the world, said Britton, with some 2 million behind bars, it's common in any workplace to meet workers who have had run-ins with capitalist "justice"—including in the course of the class struggle, like those at Tyson. Many workers rightly support campaigns to expunge previous convictions from the records of working people, he noted. These campaigns are often driven by ex-prisoners, especially African-Americans.

For the first time in some years all three industrial fractions of the communist movement reached their goals for selling subscriptions to the *Militant* and *Perspectiva Mundial* in the spring circulation drive, said Britton. They will build on this success with a renewal drive in the summer and a fall circulation campaign.

While the unions continue to weaken,
Continued on Page 8



Militant/Elizabeth Olson

Conference-goers took advantage of special sales on books related to classes given on imperialism, women's liberation, the rise of fascism, and other subjects.

From Pathfinder

The Changing Face of U.S. Politics Working-Class Politics & the Unions

by Jack Barnes

A handbook for workers, farmers, and youth repelled by the class inequalities, economic instability, racism, women's oppression, cop violence, and wars endemic to capitalism, and who are determined to overturn that exploitative system and join in reconstructing the world on socialist foundations. Also available in Spanish, French, Greek. \$23.00



from bookstores, including those listed on page 8

Fund will build Socialist Workers Party

BY ANGEL LARISCY

OBERLIN, Ohio—The concluding rally of the International Socialist Workers Conference launched an \$80,000 Socialist Workers Party Building Fund to finance the work of the communist movement. The fund runs through October 15. Participants in the rally pledged and contributed more than \$51,000.

Róger Calero, who just defeated a U.S. government effort to deport him, spoke about the first leg of his "Fight to Win, Sí Se Puede" national tour. "The victory came about not through a particular set of tactics, but through the activity of working-class campaigners with a rich history in struggle," he said. John Studer, executive director of the Political Rights Defense Fund (PRDF) and coordinator of Calero's defense committee, said that the second leg of Calero's tour will take him to New Zealand, Australia, Iceland, Sweden, and the United Kingdom. The defense committee will wrap up the campaign with all bills paid in full, he said. Any surplus will be donated to the PRDF "to be ready for the next fight."

Young Socialist Olympia Newton from Los Angeles reported on the July 24–31 Cuba-U.S. Youth Exchange. The trip will involve more than 250 young people from across the United States. Newton noted that participants have prepared by studying documents of the Cuban Revolution like *The Second Declaration of Havana* and *Marianas in Combat: Teté Puebla and the Mariana Grajales Women's Platoon in Cuba's Revolutionary War, 1956–58*.

"We regret that due to obstacles beyond our control we cannot accompany you," said a message to the rally by the Socialist Revolutionary Nucleus of Paraguay. "But we want to make sure that our voice is present, even from afar, given that in junctures



Militant/James Stanley

Speakers at spirited July 12 rally launching \$80,000 SWP Party Building Fund. Left to right: Olympia Newton (obscured), and John Studer, Róger Calero, James Harris, Maggie Trowe, Arrin Hawkins. Participants contributed \$51,000 toward the fund.

such as the present one—a juncture where imperialism brazenly unleashes a whirlwind of wars with force and violence against all the peoples of the world—only two roads

are open: 'socialism or savagery.'

"We, like you, compañeros, choose the first, the working-class road, that of revolution for socialism."

Socialist workers discuss union building

Continued from Page 7

Britton said, they remain the main defensive organizations of the working class encompassing millions. In addition, more and more workers in the last half decade turn to the unions as the main instruments to defend their livelihoods and rights.

Following discussion on Britton's report, a panel of supporters of the communist movement described the increased responsibilities they have shouldered in the preparation, printing, and sales of Pathfinder books. Many conference-goers said that before hearing these presentations they

had not appreciated the scope of the tasks undertaken by the supporters movement.

50 years since assault on Moncada

On July 26, millions in Cuba will celebrate the 50th anniversary of the 1953 assault on the Moncada barracks by revolutionary forces led by Fidel Castro, said Mary-Alice Waters in her report titled, "Cuba's vanguard place in the proletariat's line of march toward power." They will be joined by more than 250 students and other youth from the United States in the July 24–31 Cuba-U.S. Youth Exchange.

The attack on Moncada "embodied in its conception, composition, and execution the popular revolutionary course that the Cuban leaders have followed consistently since that time," Waters said. "It was neither a putchist action, as the Stalinist lead-

Continued on next page

Workers' struggles have impact on youth

BY MAURICE WILSON

OBERLIN, Ohio—"My questions about why U.S. imperialism lost the Cold War and why the Soviet Union fell apart were answered" at the International Socialist Workers Conference, said José González, who traveled to the July 10–12 gathering from Omaha, Nebraska.

González, who is from El Salvador, was one of a number of first-time participants interviewed here by the *Militant*. He told of participating in a victorious effort to organize a union at the meatpacking plant where he works, and of building solidarity with the strike by fellow meat packers at Tyson Foods in Wisconsin.

Several youth said they had first met the Socialist Workers Party and Young Socialists at actions protesting the Washington-led war against Iraq. In the case of Nicole Salgado, who is from Miami, this was followed the very next day by a trip to Georgia to meet Cuban revolutionary leaders Víctor Dreke and Ana Morales and the Black farmers who were hosting them.

"Dreke taught us about the gains of the revolution, including its agrarian reform," Salgado said. She joined the Young Socialists in March and recently got a job as a garment worker.

Ryan Scott, 20, had been involved in building antiwar actions at California State University, Monterey Bay, in Seaside, California. "The conference gave me a better understanding of the Socialist Workers Party in relation to labor battles," said Scott. "My favorite thing was the classes, especially the one on the The 1931–39 Spanish Revolution and Civil War."

Juán, who was born in Mexico, appreciated the working-class "analysis of the political situation in the world" presented by conference speakers. He first bumped into *Militant* supporters at a meeting to protest attempts by immigration authorities to deport Róger Calero, he said. Like González, he had been involved in union-organizing efforts in his native country.

Diego Negro Guerra met socialists at the University of South Florida in Tampa. The conference discussions persuaded him that his hopes of reforming the education system were not possible. "It's going to take a revolution," he said.

Pete Musser, a 23-year-old line cook from Pittsburgh, said that the conference discussions were "intense." He was very

interested in the delegates' contributions on their experiences as union fighters and socialists.

"I attended the classes on Marx and Engels on the United States, and The Final Political Contributions of Frederick Engels," said Zulema, who is originally from Peru. "Now that I have a better idea of the communist movement, I want to participate, to help

in the election campaign of the SWP."

"I don't think I've talked this much politics in my life," said José Velásquez, a 20-year-old construction worker from Los Angeles. "I'm learning a lot and it's making me think about joining the Young Socialists." He said the classes showed that "I need to read more, learn more, and be more disciplined."

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Balancing the budget—“Infant mortality study in Delaware will not continue—Budget constraints end program despite growing



Harry Ring

concern”—*Wilmington Journal* (Delaware, you’ll find it in the vest pocket of DuPont Chemical.)

Capitalist planning—To reduce congestion, and pick up

some spare pounds, an \$8 fee has been imposed on non-residents driving into London. It’s reported that the penalty has reduced traffic congestion. Apparently it has also cut into retail sales. Said an owner of a landmark fish shop: “It happened virtually overnight. Within 24 hours, I lost 20 percent of my business.”

Corporate culture?—Under pressure from donors, the director and board of trustees of the Museum of Northern Arizona resigned. Confronted with a \$1 million deficit, the museum operators said, they sold off paintings and Navajo weavings to museums and collectors across the country.

Homeland Security—“STERLING, Colorado—More than 1,100 high-security prisoners remained confined to their cells after inmate cooks walked off the job to protest wage cuts enacted to help balance the state budget. Authorities say they won’t negotiate with the inmates. Prisoners will get cold food until the cooks return to work.”—July 3 news item.

They call him ‘Flash’—“URBANA, Illinois—A University of Illinois professor was chosen to head the Center for Bioinformatics and Computational Biology at the National Institute of General Medical Sciences. Eric Jacobson is the first permanent head of the center that

will combine biology with computer science, mathematics, engineering and physics.”—News item.

Try it in your juicer—The ingredients include extracts from soy beans, lemon grass, kelp, green tea, and grape seeds. It’s a facial cream called Re-Storation Deep Repair Facial Serum and is available for roughly \$200 an ounce. The name of the Minnesota-based company that makes the cream is Z. Bigatti. Its founder says her partner came up with the name, adding, “I thought it was kind of sexy...It could be anything luxurious.”

A bit less, but sexy too—Stop by your local Neiman Marcus

shop for Intensite Creme Lustre. Two ounces, \$375.

‘Detain’ them at Guantánamo?—The Los Angeles County supervisors ordered the operators of the L.A. county jail to come up with an alternative to holding teenage inmates in jail with adults. Apparently to keep them isolated from “bad” adult prisoner influence, they’re being held in cells for up to 23 and a half hours a day. So far, two have tried suicide.

Proud to be an ‘American’?—“Prisoner suicide attempts in Cuba dismay Pentagon”, “U.S. plans mental ward for [Guantánamo] detainees”—News headlines.

50th anniversary of Moncada assault discussed

Continued from previous page

ers in Cuba labeled it at the time, nor an act of individual terrorism.” On its heels came the broad distribution of Castro’s *History Will Absolve Me*, outlining the radical democratic program of the July 26 Movement; the successful campaign to win amnesty for the revolutionaries held in Batista’s prisons; the regroupment of the revolutionary forces in Mexico; their return to Cuba and launching of the revolutionary war; and the triumph of the rebel forces over the U.S.-backed dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista.

Along this course, Waters said, the Cuban rebels developed a program for land reform, literacy, and workers’ rights that they began to implement in the mountains of the Sierra Maestra. Above all, they built a revolutionary army able and willing to take power.

“Nothing has been more stable” in U.S. foreign policy through nine administrations than Washington’s determination to destroy the Cuban Revolution, said Waters. She noted that those who state that the policies of the current Bush administration represent “the worst danger” ever faced by Cuba exaggerate at best.

Castro has pointed to U.S. government hostility many times over the past four decades, she said. In December 1988, for example, he told a rally of a half million people that in the eyes of the U.S. rulers the revolution stands guilty of not just “wounding the empire’s pride but also of causing a great injury to its imperial interests.

“As long as the empire exists,” he said, “we will never be able to lower our guard, to neglect our defense.”

Cuba faced more immediate threats during the 1961 U.S.-organized invasion of the island at the Bay of Pigs, and the October 1962 “missile” crisis, Waters pointed out. Moreover, she said, former president William Clinton’s special advisor on Cuba, Richard Nuccio, told *Business Week* in 1999 that three years earlier the Democratic administration had also weighed a military attack.

Nuccio explained that in the days after Cuban fighter jets shot down two planes piloted by counterrevolutionaries who were flying over Cuban airspace in 1996, the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff sent Clinton a memo on the “options for attacking Cuban air force units and defense structures.”

“If the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs had said we can do it quick and cheap, I think the president would have done it,” Nuccio stated.

But the Clinton administration came up against the same reality that stayed Kennedy’s hand 36 years earlier, said Waters: there is no way to attack Cuba without taking major blows. As the chiefs of staff acknowledged at that time, any invading forces would face massive military resistance from the Cuban army, militias, and armed citizens, and would suffer a politically untenable level of casualties in a matter of days.

In 1999—the same year as Nuccio’s interview—a blue-ribbon “Task Force on U.S.-Cuba Relations” released a report defending Washington’s course, she said. Co-chaired by former secretary of state William Rogers, the task force disputed any notion that U.S. “policy over the last four decades has been a failure.” In reality, it said, that policy, “including the embargo, has enjoyed real, though not total, success

[since] the dominant goal of U.S. policy toward Cuba during the Cold War was to prevent the advance of Cuban-supported communism in this hemisphere.” The document concluded by stating that “Cuban communism is dead as a potent political force” in Latin America.

Such wishful thinking notwithstanding, Washington has no alternative but to maintain its course of aggression against Cuba, Waters said, precisely because of what it fears will develop in the Americas and elsewhere under the impact of the spreading depression.

Revolutionary gains by women

“Nothing captures more sharply the proletarian character of the revolution than the advances made by women in Cuba,” Waters stated. From their integration into the workforce, to the provision of socialized medicine, to the attainment of abortion rights, Cuban women have accomplished “in less than 30 years what it took women 150 years to achieve in the imperialist countries.”

During a recent visit to the United States, Carolina Aguilar, a leader of the Federation of Cuban Women (FMC), told Waters that “women had to fight every step of the way for these gains, but with the backing of the revolution’s central political leadership.”

There was total continuity between Russian Bolshevik leader V. I. Lenin and Cuban president Fidel Castro on the place of women’s liberation as an indispensable part of revolutionary strategy, Aguilar said. There had been a hiatus on this question in the communist movement in the decades between Lenin and Castro, she said, as the bureaucrats who came to power after Lenin’s death denied that the struggle for women’s liberation was an immediate necessity and claimed this would happen in passing as a by-product of the fight for socialism.

The FMC leader told Waters how incensed she and others became while attending a women’s conference in the Soviet Union in 1987, when then-Russian president Mikhail Gorbachev blamed the country’s rising social problems on women’s alleged abandonment of their family responsibilities. Women, he said, needed to return to the home. It was an attempt to disguise unemployment by driving women to become domestic servants again.

Under the impact of the collapse of Cuba’s trade relations with the USSR and Eastern European countries at the opening of the 1990s, the FMC leader said, some in Cuba had raised similarly reactionary arguments, proposing that women should help alleviate unemployment by leaving their jobs and returning to their domestic tasks. “What army are you going to use?” was the reply of FMC activists, according to Aguilar, “because you are going to need an army to drive women out of the factories and into their homes.” Following such debates, Waters said, the priority for jobs was given to heads of households, who are frequently women.

In a message to the conference, Chief of the Cuban Interests Section in Washington, D.C., Dagoberto Rodríguez said, “We cannot share these moments with the delegates in such an important conference because the State Department does not authorize Cuban Officials to travel outside the Beltway.

“We would like to take advantage of this opportunity to greet all the comrades who

fight against oppression and injustice, to express our respect for the work you develop, and to wish you success in the debates of the conference. At the same time, we reiterate our deepest appreciation for the permanent solidarity with Cuba, especially at this time when it is needed most.”

Latin America a political volcano

Latin America is a “smoldering volcano” today, said Waters. In one indication of the explosive material accumulating, candidates have been swept into office in Argentina, Brazil, Ecuador, and Venezuela on the illusions and hopes of working people to slow down the ravages of imperialist exploitation. Washington doesn’t have confidence in these new governments’ ability to prevent revolutionary outbreaks, she said, but neither does it have an alternative at the ready.

The U.S. rulers have no plan to confront this situation in Latin America now, she said. They are focused on strengthening their domination of the Middle East and Central Asia and opening up new fields of exploitation in Africa.

It’s important to watch developments in Brazil and Mexico, in particular, she noted. Out of what is brewing in this part of the world, Waters said, the working class will go through new experiences that will mold new revolutionary cadres.

In the discussion Argiris Malapanis from New York said that “There is more potential for social explosions in Latin America than anywhere else in the world.”

Following the discussion, the three reporters presented summary remarks. The final evening featured a rally to launch a 10-week party-building fund (see article on page 8). During the rally and throughout the conference socialist campaigners in Boston, Des Moines, Philadelphia, and Seattle staffed tables to sign up volunteers

to help with petitioning efforts to get Socialist Workers candidates on the ballot in those cities.

Capital Fund for publishing projects

The conference also launched a new round of donations to the Capital Fund, which takes in donations of \$1,000 or more to finance long-term publishing plans. Enthusiastic applause greeted SWP leader Dave Prince’s announcement that \$128,000 had been pledged by the end of the conference.

Prince reported that donors included Arthur Lobman, a 45-year party veteran who bequeathed \$10,000 to party publishing projects. Lobman died in early July. Several meat packers contributed the “blood-money” bonuses they received at the time of recent contract signings, he said, continuing a proud tradition among the industrial fractions of the SWP and YS.

The day after the conference ended, socialist workers in the UFCW, UMWA, and UNITE concluded their meetings and elected steering committees to guide their work in these unions. The members of these steering committees then met together with other SWP leaders to assess the next steps to take coming out of this conference. The proposals from that gathering were discussed and adopted by a meeting of the SWP National Committee July 14.

At the center of the SWP leadership’s conclusions was taking rapid steps to move beyond factory work to systematic communist trade union activity everywhere socialists are building fractions, including moving to workplaces where union organizing or utilizing existing union structures to the benefit of the membership is possible. The elected leadership bodies of the SWP trade union fractions subsequently called new national fraction meetings August 2–3 to draw up plans to implement this perspective.

—25 AND 50 YEARS AGO—



August 3, 1979

Big gains have been registered by the Nicaraguan workers and peasants in the brief period since former dictator Anastasio Somoza fled to Miami. U.S. policymakers are nervously watching, fearful that even bigger gains are to come.

As liberation fighters of the victorious Sandinista National Liberation Front marched into Managua July 19, they released hundreds of political prisoners, while disarming and arresting units of Somoza’s hated National Guard.

The first actions of the new government were to authorize legal action seeking Somoza’s extradition, to wipe his name from public buildings, and to expropriate all property of Somoza and those who fled the country with him.

Top U.S. officials are openly fearful of the possibility that Nicaragua will continue along the path charted by Fidel Castro and his July 26 Movement. Washington, which was responsible for the Somoza dictatorship in the first place, has made it clear that it will tie any economic aid to the politics followed by the government.



August 4, 1953

The ending of the fighting in Korea has been greeted with little jubilation by the folks at home and the troops at the front. Some newspaper commentators have attributed the lack of popular celebrations to “indifference.” That is false and a slander.

If there is no great mass display of joy and elation it is because there is little confidence in the truce. The people and the GI’s themselves know that there can be no possibility for a lasting peace in the Far East until the U.S. troops are withdrawn from Korea and brought home.

Everyone knows that so long as a giant U.S. armed force remains in Korea poised as an ever-ready threat to the Chinese border, the American troops can be plunged into war on a moment’s notice. So long as U.S. forces are kept in Korea...there can be no peace.

When the shooting was stopped on July 27, the Associated Press reported:

“There was no celebration on the eastern front. Soldiers accepted the armistice calmly and asked: ‘Do I go home now?’ ”

Grant visas to family of Cuban 5!

Washington's repeated denial of visas to Olga Salanueva and Adriana Pérez to visit their husbands imprisoned in U.S. jails is an outrage, and a form of cruel and unusual punishment against these Cuban militants and their family members. We urge you to circulate the appeal issued by the National Committee to Free the Five, calling for letters to be sent to U.S. government officials demanding that these visas be granted immediately and that Salanueva and Pérez be permitted to visit their loved ones.

This is an attack not only on the Cuban Five and their relatives but on the rights of all working people—both behind bars and outside prison walls.

Partisans of the campaign to demand freedom for the five can also use this appeal as an opportunity to spread the truth about the case in its entirety.

The five men—Gerardo Hernández, Ramón Labañino, Fernando González, René González, and Antonio Guerrero—were framed up and convicted in June 2001 on spying and other conspiracy charges. What was their real crime? Gathering information on the activities of ultrarightist groups that, operating on U.S. territory with the knowledge and complicity of Washington, have a record of carrying out violent attacks on Cuba. In other words, defending their country in face of attacks that are part of the U.S. government's four-decade-long campaign of aggression against the Cuban Revolution.

All five men are examples of revolutionaries who have

devoted their lives, not only to the defense of Cuba, but to the worldwide fight for liberation from imperialist oppression. Prior to taking on their mission in the United States, three of the five served in Angola as part of the 300,000 Cuban volunteer combatants who fought shoulder-to-shoulder with Angolan freedom fighters and helped crush the invasion of that African country by the apartheid regime of South Africa in the 1970s and '80s.

Consistent with their lifelong records, the five Cuban patriots have set an example from behind prison walls, refusing to bend their knee to Uncle Sam despite the draconian sentences and harsh treatment imposed on them. And they have been "model prisoners," as their attorneys point out.

After sentencing them on frame-up charges, the U.S. authorities, in one of their many efforts to isolate them, dispersed the five men to separate penitentiaries thousands of miles from each other. At the end of February, the U.S. Bureau of Prisons threw them into solitary confinement for a month on orders of the Justice Department. International solidarity was instrumental in getting them out of the "hole."

Likewise, such solidarity can force the hand of U.S. authorities to let Salanueva and Pérez visit their husbands in jail. Let the five Cuban patriots see their families! Free the Cuban Five!

Garment workers win union victories

Continued from front page

Jean-Baptiste. The 117 workers there won the contract only seven months after they began their fight for union recognition.

On July 18 workers at Point Blank celebrated their victory and marked the one-year anniversary of a turning point in their struggle. On that date in 2002, managers closed the plant in response to a workers delegation asking the company to recognize UNITE as their union. The company called sheriffs deputies and private security guards to eject workers from the plant.

After the lockout the company fired three union supporters, prompting a six-month strike demanding union recognition and the rehiring of the three unionists. The walkout ended in February when a federal court ordered the company to reinstate the three and rehire all the strikers.

To reaffirm their unbroken spirit one year later, union partisans organized break-time gatherings outside the Oakland Park plant and brought inside the facility hundreds of red, helium-filled balloons inscribed with "UNITE."

"One year of struggle—that is really a victory," Prospero Eljuste told *Militant* reporters at the celebration.

"Unfortunately, the fight is not yet over," Anesies Jean-Gilles added.

Leonor Hurtado, another worker, stated: "We will continue fighting until Point Blank signs the contract and gives us the union."

While not yet recognized by the company, the union has a definite presence inside the plant here, workers said.

Ever Gonzalez, who has one year in the plant and was on strike for six months, celebrated the gains already won. "Many things have changed for us since the union got in, such as a pay raise and better bathroom conditions," he said. "Now we have water. Without the union we'd have nothing. We wouldn't have respect, either. Thanks to the union we are fighting for our rights."

The crowd of workers wearing red union T-shirts far outnumbered a company-organized counterprotest of about 30 employees wearing blue company shirts.

The pro-union crowd included workers won to UNITE since the strike ended. Marie Perlicier, who has four years at the company, did not participate in the walkout. Now she has signed a union card and says she is 100 percent for union recognition. "The union is a good thing for the

workers," she said.

The NLRB ruling decreed that the company must pay all the workers for their lost hours on July 18, 2002, since the plant closure was unjustified. It also ordered the company to pay back wages to the three fired workers, whom management was forced to rehire in February under the federal injunction.

After the strike, Point Blank relocated the replacement workers it had hired during the walkout from Oakland Park to a brand new facility it opened in nearby Deerfield Beach. It has tried to use the new plant as a non-union stronghold.

Since the end of the strike, UNITE supporters in the Oakland Park plant have organized an ongoing campaign to press for union recognition and a contract. They have organized plant-gate rallies at breaks and lunch time regularly over the last months. New members have been won to the union. A UNITE office is maintained across the street from the factory and organizers continue to work full time on the fight.

The NLRB ruling will aid the union's effort, workers said. It requires that the company post a notice in the plant in English, Spanish, and Creole stating that workers have the right to unionize, pledging that the company will not threaten workers, and affirming that Point Blank will pay back wages as ordered by the labor board. The notice must explain that the company was found to be engaging in unfair labor practices.

UNITE members have distributed informational flyers at both plants letting workers know about the latest union victory.

Response at the Deerfield Beach facility to the union outreach reflects polarization. Union organizer Maria Revelles said July 18 that more workers took flyers after the NLRB ruling than during previous efforts, and at least one stopped to ask questions about the significance of the decision for the replacement workers. One worker there told *Militant* reporters that the flyers generated a lot of discussion inside that factory.

Union supporters are a small minority in the Deerfield Beach plant so far, another worker said. Like the majority in that factory, he is originally from Haiti, and was hired as a replacement during the strike. "I support the efforts of the union on behalf of the workers," he stated. "The company should stop trying to manipulate us."

Nicole Salgado contributed to this article.

Australian troops sent to Solomons

Continued from page 12

small-scale farmers on clan lands.

There are scarcely any jobs, with 80 percent unemployment in Honiara. Mass layoffs in the public service, central to imperialist-imposed austerity measures, have deepened this crisis. The per capita gross domestic product has halved in the last few years from \$1,000 to less than \$500.

The country is saddled with a debt of \$152 million, equaling some 55 percent of gross national product. Foreign trade, dominated by Australian business, has slumped by 80 percent since 1997. A gold mine, once proclaimed by capitalist pundits as the country's "economic salvation," has been closed since 2000.

Senior officials from Australia and New Zealand arrived in Honiara July 1 to finalize details of the intervention with the Solomon Islands government.

This intervention, with New Zealand imperialism joining in as junior partner to defend its own interests in the South

Pacific, marks a sharp extension of the Australian rulers' militarization drive. "The Pacific Islands are about to reap their Iraq dividend," the *Australian Financial Review* stated June 26. Some 2,000 Australian military personnel participated in the assault on Iraq. The Australian government has also declared its backing for Washington's aggressive plans to intercept north Korean ships and planes, while maintaining its more than decade-long warship presence in the Persian Gulf. In addition, a battalion of Australian troops remains garrisoned in East Timor as a central component of the UN-mandated military force there.

There are indications that Australian imperialist military intervention in the Pacific may extend elsewhere. The Australian government has described Papua New Guinea as a "failing state" too. A proposed \$6-7 billion pipeline to Australia from oil and gas fields in Papua New Guinea's Southern Highlands province to Australia, is a central focus of imperialist concerns over "security" there.

Appeal for visas

Continued from front page

are Cuban revolutionaries serving draconian sentences in U.S. prisons on frame-up charges brought by the U.S. government. The Cuban Five, as they are known, had been carrying out an internationalist mission to gather information on ultrarightist organizations with a record of violent attacks on Cuba carried out from U.S. soil with Washington's complicity. They were arrested by FBI agents in 1998, charged with conspiracy to commit espionage and conspiracy to act as an unregistered foreign agent. Hernández was also charged with conspiracy to commit murder. They were convicted in June 2001, given sentences ranging from 15 years to a double-life term, and sent to five federal prisons in different regions of the country.

On February 28 the five men were thrown into solitary confinement after an order by the Justice Department charging that the extensive solidarity they had received in the form of correspondence and the few visitors they were allowed made them a "national security risk." An international campaign of protests was launched against this unsuccessful attempt by Washington to break them. They were released from the "hole" a month later. They are now in the process of appealing their convictions and sentences.

On July 25, 2002, Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) and FBI agents detained Pérez upon her entry into the United States at Houston Intercontinental Airport. She had arrived from Cuba that day with a visa issued by the U.S. Interests Section in Havana to visit her husband, Gerardo Hernández, in a federal penitentiary in Lompoc, California, whom she has not seen for five years. After holding Pérez for 11 hours and interrogating her, the INS—now reorganized under the Homeland Security agency as the Bureau of Customs and Immigration Enforcement—revoked her visa and deported her to Cuba.

Earlier last year U.S. authorities also revoked a visa they had issued to Salanueva. The action stopped Salanueva and her daughter from visiting René González, who is imprisoned in Edgefield, South Carolina. Washington had deported Salanueva to Cuba during her husband's trial.

"As they wait for the appeals of the cases of the Cuban Five, which could take years, the families should not be denied the right to stay together," reads the July 8 appeal by the Committee to Free the Five, which is among the U.S. groups organizing the campaign to release the five men.

Letters demanding that visas be granted to Pérez and Salanueva can be sent to Secretary of State Colin Powell, 2201 C St. NW, Washington, D.C. 20520, tel: (202) 647-4000, fax: (202) 261-8577; Homeland Security Director Thomas Ridge, Washington, DC 20528; and Attorney General John Ashcroft, 950 Pennsylvania Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20530-0001, tel: (202) 353-1555, e-mail: askdoj@usdoj.gov

As part of this effort, we reprint below a June 23 letter that Olga Salanueva and Adriana Pérez sent to Mary-Alice Waters, president of Pathfinder Press.



We write you as two Cuban women who have been unable to communicate with our husbands because our entry into the U.S. has been prevented. Our husbands have been imprisoned in U.S. jails since Sept. 12, 1998, receiving long prison terms for being fighters against terrorism.

My name is Olga Salanueva Arango, wife of René González Schwerert, sentenced to 15 years in prison, with whom I was living when he was arrested. Since that time our family has been subjected to humiliation and to blackmail against my husband. This treatment has been utilized as a form of psychological torture against him.

In November 2000, faced with my husband's refusal to plea bargain in exchange for his family's remaining in U.S. territory, I was arrested and jailed for three months, separated from my daughters, and deported to Cuba.

On repeated occasions the U.S. government has denied my request for a visa so I could visit my husband. In this way they have prevented us from seeing each other physically, and they have prevented communication between René and our young daughter Ivette González, who is five years old. The child was four months old at the time of the arrest. For that reason, the only face of her father she recognizes is that in photographs. She does not even remember the feeling of a fatherly embrace and kiss.

The other case is mine, Adriana Pérez Oconor, wife of Gerardo Hernández Nordelo, who is serving two life sentences plus 15 years.

Each time I've requested authorization to enter the United States to visit my husband, the government of that country has denied it to me. On the first occasion, it reached the point where they granted me such authorization, letting me travel as far as Houston. There they detained me for 11 hours, submitting me to a humiliating interrogation, and forcing me to return to Cuba without being able to fulfill the objective of my visit, which was to visit my husband, who was anxiously awaiting my visit to the jail.

Every human being who is imprisoned has a right to be treated with dignity and with the appropriate respect for his rights. Among the most elementary of these is the right to receive visits from his closest family members such as his wife and young children. These cannot be denied him as a form of torture and as an additional punishment.

We know that in you we have a friend who has shown warmth and support for our people and for all just causes. For that reason, we come to ask for your support and collaboration in denouncing this inhuman violation of our rights. For any information on the case, or to communicate with us, you can contact us through familia5h@hotmail.com

Certain of your understanding and support,
Sincerely,
Olga Salanueva Arango and Adriana Pérez Oconor

Cubans teach Maori reading and writing

BY FELICITY COGGAN

AUCKLAND, New Zealand—"In Cuba we have hunger—hunger to learn, not hunger for food," Grisel Ponce Suarez told a meeting here July 5, organized by the New Zealand Cuba Friendship Society.

Ponce is one of three internationalist volunteers who have spent several months in New Zealand teaching reading and writing. She and her colleagues, Mercedes Zamora Collazo and Gloria Mendez Martinez, were invited by Te Wananga o Aotearoa, a college-level educational institution based in the small town of Te Awamutu, to help develop a program to improve literacy among the establishment's mainly Maori students. Most of the 60,000 students study online, by correspondence, or at a number of satellite campuses around the country.

Government statistics indicate that 99 percent of New Zealanders are literate. A survey by the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), however, found that 45 percent of New Zealand adults—100,000 of whom are employed—have literacy levels below what is "required to meet the demands of everyday life." Functional illiteracy is disproportionately higher among Maori and Pacific Islanders. Unemployment among these oppressed peoples is way above the national official average of 5.4 percent—12 percent for Maoris and nearly 9 percent for Pacific Islanders.

Introducing the speakers, Rongo Wetere, the university's chief executive officer, described how he went to Cuba to initiate the project "afraid he might be laughed at in [New Zealand] education circles." He said he was impressed by what Cuba had achieved with the literacy campaign in the first years of the revolution, and the impact today of Cuba's efforts to send volunteers to help eradicate illiteracy in Latin America. "We're really indebted to Cuba for providing these three women to work together with us," he said, noting that Cuba, "a poor country, is paying their salaries."

In September 1960, a year and a half after the triumph of the Cuban Revolution that overthrew the U.S.-backed Batista dictatorship and established a workers and farmers government, Cuban prime minister Fidel Castro addressed the United Nations General Assembly, announcing to the world: "In the coming year, our country intends to wage its great battle against illiteracy with the ambitious goal of teaching every single illiterate person in the country"—one million Cubans, roughly one-third of the adult population—"to read and write." That's what the Cuban government did, as some 100,000 young people, most of them teenagers, went to the countryside and lived and worked alongside peasant families, eliminating illiteracy by the following year and learning much in the process themselves.

Mercedes Zamora Collazo described her experience as a 13-year-old participating

in the 1960–61 literacy campaign in Cuba. There were not enough teachers to meet the challenge at the time, she said, so high school students like her "didn't study for a year" and volunteered to go to the countryside. "We realized that if people were not able to read and write, they could not aspire to further development," she stated.

At the 1961 Rally of the Pencils Collazo attended in Havana to celebrate the successful conclusion of the campaign, the students asked, "Fidel, Fidel, tell us what else we have to do." Castro replied, "Study, study, study."

In response to a question, Ponce explained the pressures on the Cuban Revolution today and the campaign known as the Battle of Ideas. This is a political offensive to deepen the involvement of working people and youth in the revolution, central to which is broadening the educational and cultural opportunities available to the Cuban people. The goal of the campaign is to counter the imperialist ideological drive promoting capitalism as the future, and to address the social inequalities that have widened as Cuba has become more directly exposed to the capitalist world market since the collapse of preferential trade relations with the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe more than a decade ago.

The difficulties the revolution faces that the Battle of Ideas aims to address include the demoralization among certain layers of youth who were not working, had dropped



Liborio Noval

Literacy brigade volunteers at December 1961 "Rally of the Pencils" in Havana to celebrate completion of literacy campaign after triumph of Cuban Revolution.

out of school, and, in some cases, had become involved in petty crime. Cuba's revolutionary leadership launched a fight to win these youth back to productive participation in society and to build revolutionary consciousness among them by involving them in a number of educational campaigns. These initiatives comprise more than 100 programs, including a school for revolutionary social work, popular libraries, and video and computer clubs for those who live in the most remote and less developed areas of the country.

"The mass media abroad presents a Cuba that is not our Cuba," Ponce said. "They say we have a dictatorship. They ask how long

Fidel will be in power. We say 'as long as we want,' because in Cuba the people rule the country. Our people have a tradition of struggle. If they didn't want Fidel, no army could keep him in power. The government of the U. S. hasn't been able to create a break in the revolution to be able to destroy it."

The speakers also urged the 45 participants in the meeting to back the campaign to win freedom for five Cuban revolutionaries serving draconian sentences in U.S. prisons under frame-up charges, including conspiracy to commit espionage for Havana.

The literacy program here, which uses audio and video technology to broaden its reach, is set to be launched in September.

Cuban authorities foil two hijackings in July

BY SETH GALINSKY

MIAMI—For the first time since the executions in April of three hijackers who commandeered a passenger ferry at gun point in Havana's harbor, two hijackings of Cuban boats took place July 14–15. Cuban authorities eventually foiled both.

Cuban officials blamed U.S. policies for these incidents. Washington makes it difficult for Cubans who want to emigrate to obtain visas to move to the United States. At the same time, Cubans who set foot on Florida's shores, regardless of the means they used to get there, are granted virtually automatic permanent residency as codified in the 1966 Cuban Adjustment Act. If picked up on the high seas, they are supposed to be returned to Cuba.

The first recent incident took place July 14. Three men in their 20s, armed with handguns and knives, overpowered a guard at the port of La Coloma, southeast of Pinar del Rio, and attempted to hijack a fishing boat to the United States. Unable to operate the craft, they kidnapped a boat's captain who escaped by jumping overboard.

Seeing the commotion, fishermen and Cuban security agents in boats surrounded the vessel, blocking its path.

A women with her two sons, 10 and 17

years old, who had been part of the hijacking, at first pretended to be a hostage. It later became clear, however, that she was complicit in the criminal act. During the standoff the hijackers shot and seriously wounded the 10-year-old child in the head. The woman then fled the boat along with the 17-year-old, who carried the wounded boy in his arms.

When Cuban authorities boarded the vessel later they found two hijackers dead and a third wounded, who died shortly afterwards. The men had apparently shot each other.

According to a statement by Cuba's Ministry of the Interior, the three had several convictions on their records, including for cattle theft and armed robberies.

The next day a boat belonging to the Cuban company GeoCuba with 15 people on board was hijacked in Camaguey. The boat made it into international waters with the Cuban Coast Guard in pursuit until it reached Bahamian waters.

The Cuban Ministry of Interior stated that "it is not the policy of the government of Cuba to attack hijacked vessels with people on board due to the serious risk of accidents and loss of lives." Since the boat was heading to the United States, the Cuban government requested that Washington return the vessel and the hijackers to Cuba. At first

Washington claimed this was not a hijacking but a "theft." According to the July 18 *Miami Herald*, however, after the FBI and a federal prosecutor interviewed 15 passengers on the ship, they concluded "the vessel may have been hijacked after all."

Cuban authorities informed the U.S. State Department that if the hijackers of the GeoCuba are returned to the island they will not face the death penalty.

On July 21, James Cason, chief of the U.S. Interests Section in Havana, issued a statement to the Cuban media discouraging hijackings and saying Washington will honor its immigration accords with Havana. He also announced that the man who had hijacked an AN-24 plane in Cuba on March 31 had been convicted by a U.S. court July 10 and faces up to 20 years in prison.

The same day, the U.S. Coast Guard returned to Cuba the 15-person group on GeoCuba, including three guards who had been overpowered by the hijackers.

On April 11, after a speedy trial, Cuban authorities convicted and executed three ring-leaders of the hijacking of a passenger ferry in Havana eight days earlier—one in a string of such incidents over the previous eight months. Until the latest two attempts, there had been no hijackings since that time.

LETTERS

Affirmative action

In last week's editorial and article concerning the Supreme Court decision on affirmative action the *Militant* rightly celebrates the law school decision, but says almost nothing on the defeat of the undergrad program.

Why? More importantly the *Militant* proclaims that affirmative action has an "overwhelming support...among the majority of the U.S. ruling class," but does not fully explain why this took place among the U.S. ruling class and what, if anything, it means for working people.

C.C.
Richmond, Virginia

Defending Morgan

In a letter to the editor in the July 7 *Militant* ("Morgan or the History Channel"), reader Tom Lobello raised a question about a recent History Channel documentary on human social evolution that apparently challenged Lewis Morgan's view of the evolution of human

social life, from its primitive form of matriarchal clan to its modern patriarchal family form.

Lobello gave the impression that Morgan's views on this, as well as those expressed by Engels in *Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State*, are somehow the accepted scientific view of modern-day anthropology and that this documentary was challenging these. Nothing could be further from the truth.

As Evelyn Reed explained in her book *Sexism and Science*, the evolutionary views of the founders of modern anthropology like Lewis Morgan were long ago repudiated and overthrown by apologists for capitalism and women's oppression who control the academic departments of anthropology today, and that this repudiation of a scientific approach to the origins of human society had led anthropology into a blind alley. Since her death, Evelyn's judgment continues to be confirmed on this score, as anthropology as a discipline today

has all but buried even the mention, much less the serious study, of the pioneering founders like Lewis Morgan and Edward Taylor.

So the documentary Lobello referred to, far from challenging modern-day views, simply repeats the antiscientific prejudices and rationalizations that dominate official anthropology and are the biggest roadblock to its scientific progress to this day.

Finally, on the question of barbarism and the Egyptian Pharaohs. Reed, like Morgan, always explained that it was during the stage of barbarism, a period covering roughly 8,000 years, that human society evolved from the primitive communism of the matriarchal clan to the class-divided society of the patriarchal father-family. It is the key stage to study to learn the roots and evolution of women's oppression. By the end of that period the social status of women had become degraded and the oppression of their sex codified into the social norms of class society. Properly speaking,

however, the great Egyptian society of the Pharaohs marks the end of barbarism and the beginning of civilization.

Mike Galati
New York, New York

Haddad deported

I just learned from CAIR (Council on American Islamic Relations) that Rabih Haddad has been deported. (CAIR has been informed that Rabih Haddad, whose closed deportation hearings prompted lawsuits by Detroit-area newspapers, U.S. Rep. John Conyers, and the American Civil Liberties Union, has been deported to Lebanon. Haddad is the co-founder of the Muslim charity Global Relief Foundation—July 15 news release from CAIR.)

I am in shock that this cultivated man is gone, while the liberals talk about Patriot Act II. He really looked to the Calero case, and did the translations into Arabic for it as we corresponded with him in prison in Monroe, Michigan.

According to the *Detroit Free Press* he was accompanied by two FBI agents all the way to Lebanon where he was put in custody. The Lebanese daily *Al-Nahar* doesn't have that news yet. At the same time, the U.S. State Department is making statements about Syria pulling out of Lebanon, and the Lebanese papers are reporting that Syria is pulling out of Baalbeck.

The U.S. government is quietly using him as a pressure on Lebanon to show they are pressing the war on terrorism. It does look like he will now be in prison in Lebanon.

Dennis Hoppe
Ann Arbor, Michigan

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.

Australian troops sent to Solomons

BY ROB GARDNER

SYDNEY, Australia—An Australian-led intervention force of some 2,000 troops and police is due to begin arriving in the small South Pacific nation of the Solomon Islands by the end of July. Announcing the deployment June 25, Australian prime minister John Howard declared, "It is not in Australia's interests to have a number of failed states in the Pacific," pointedly leaving open the possibility of future interventions in other South Pacific countries.

Asserting that a collapse of governmental authority in the Solomon Islands, some 1,000 miles northeast of Australia, could be exploited by "drug dealers, money launderers and international terrorism," Howard stated that Australia would "assist" the Solomon Islands government to re-establish "law and order" and rebuild government services.

Backing the intervention, New Zealand foreign minister Phil Goff echoed Howard's claims, saying that the Solomon Islands were fast becoming "ungovernable." The "overwhelming majority of Solomon Islanders want something done to restore the rule of law," he asserted.

The force heading to the Solomon Islands is expected to comprise 1,200 Australian army personnel, including 200 combat troops, some 300 Australian police, and up to 240 soldiers and cops from New Zealand. Smaller numbers of troops and police from South Pacific countries such as Fiji and Papua New Guinea will also be involved. Dubbed "co-operative intervention" by Australian foreign minister Alexander Downer, the plan was approved at a specially convened meeting of the South Pacific Forum in Sydney June 30. Earlier, after a June 5 meeting with Howard in Canberra, Solomon Islands prime minister Allan Kemakeza issued a public invitation for the intervention. The Forum, which includes 14 South Pacific governments, is dominated by the imperialist governments of Australia and New Zealand.

"It'll be nothing short of recolonizing this country," declared former Solomon Islands prime minister Manasseh Sogavare, during a July 9 debate on the intervention in parliament in Honiara, the island nation's capital. "We have a reason to be extra careful...so that we strike a proper balance between achieving the objectives of such an intervention," Sogavare said, "without subjecting ourselves to becoming long-term puppets of foreign parliaments."

According to a report in the *New Zealand Herald*, Sogavare, who was in office in 2000 and 2001, complained that "previous pleas for help had been ignored by major aid donors Australia and New Zealand." With 42 of the 50 members of the Solomon Islands' parliament present, a unanimous vote for a resolution in favor of the intervention was recorded July 10.

A central goal of the Howard government—and its counterpart in New Zealand, the Labour Party government of Prime Minister Helen Clarke—is to install a new administration in the Solomon Islands tightly controlled by the two imperialist powers. "Under the plan," the *Australian* reported June 26, "experts drawn from Australia, New Zealand, and the South Pacific region will be embedded throughout the Solomon Islands government system, especially in its financial institutions and the judicial system."

According to a July 15 report on Radio Australia, the troops and police in the intervention force would be authorized to use "reasonable force" and would have immunity from local law while on duty, under a Solomon Islands law being drafted on instructions from the Australian government. The "international assistance program" would be reviewed every two years.

The Australian and New Zealand governments intervened in the Solomon Islands in 2000 to broker a peace deal between rival militias after civil war broke out in 1998. These powers have now decided that a more forceful, long-term intervention is

required to shore up their domination of the Solomon Islands and other countries in the South Pacific.

Taking its cue from Howard, the *Sydney Morning Herald* stated June 26 that "the Solomons has descended into lawlessness and corruption, and is effectively bankrupt. The police force is racked by divisions, extortion attempts on senior public officials are common, and killings are a weekly occurrence."

"It is estimated 90 percent of the Solomons' consolidated revenue does not reach the country's Treasury but is handed out in bribes, bogus allowances, and 'compensation' payments to whoever possesses a gun and demands money," intoned the *Australian*

the same day

Militia leader Harold Keke, who refused to be part of the peace talks in 2000, has been a major target of demonization in the build-up to intervention. *Australian Financial Review* editor Rowan Callick, writing in the July 9 *Wall Street Journal*, declared, "The Weathercoast on the south of Guadalcanal island—the capital, Honiara, is on the north coast—is today the country's heart of darkness, an anarchic zone ruled through fear by tribal warlord Harold Keke, who has killed scores of people including a government minister and clergy."

New Zealand foreign minister Goff has stated that the military intervention will target 300 "armed thugs" in Honiara, as

well as Keke's force of about 60. With the intervention pending, Keke has declared a cease-fire.

The Solomon Islands is a former British colony that won independence only in 1978. The country faces imperialist oppression and exploitation, especially through foreign domination of gold mining and logging.

Family, clan, and tribal social relations still predominate among the 465,000 people throughout the seven large and numerous smaller islands and outlying atolls. While English and Pijin are widely used, more than 60 local languages are still spoken.

Some 80 percent of the population live in the countryside as subsistence gardeners and

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Sydney metal workers win union contract

BY JOANNE KUNIANSKY

SYDNEY, Australia—A 110-day strike at the Morris McMahon can factory in Sydney ended with a victory for the workers. The strikers began returning to work July 2, having approved their first collective agreement between the Australian Manufacturing Workers Union (AMWU) and the company.

Jumping up and down with excitement as news of the settlement broke June 27, Van Djaya, who organized the kitchen throughout the strike, said, "We made it! We're so happy. When we went out we felt so alone. Now we feel like one big family." She was referring to the unity the strikers forged and the impact of wider union solidarity.

Prior to the strike the company owner, Judith Beswick, told the workers that she would sign a union agreement "over her dead body." Thirty-nine workers—in their majority migrant women from all over Asia and the Pacific—stuck it out for the 16 weeks of the strike, maintaining a 24-hour picket line, seven days a week. They reached out to other workers, speaking first at AMWU-organized factories and then to other unions. They leafleted about the strike in front of hardware stores that sold products in the cans produced by Morris McMahon. They organized protests in front of Beswick's city law office and her residence.

Bosses shocked by strong solidarity

By the time the company won an injunction against the strikers in mid-May, solidarity actions had begun to grow. Wharfies and construction workers, through their unions—the Maritime Union of Australia (MUA) and the Construction, Forestry, Mining, and Energy Union (CFMEU)—organized several pickets of up to 100 people. Money poured in to the strike fund from work site collections. Toward the final weeks of the strike, enough had been raised to increase weekly payments from \$180 to the equivalent of full pay, easing the economic hardships faced by the strikers.

Phil, a machine setter who asked that his last name not be used, explained how important solidarity was. "The managers were shocked by all the support. They never dreamed that wharfies, construction workers, teachers, and fire fighters would come down to our picket line. They thought we'd only last four weeks."

A hand painted sign that hung on the picket shack, "Never give up. Stay strong!" captured the spirit of the strike. Marina Pomare, one of the strikers, said that all the people that came down regularly to the picket line boosted their spirits. "Look how strong the women have grown over these weeks," she said. "Women have the inner strength."

Sarita Singh chimed in, "It was hard at first but now we know what to do. It was the first time [on strike] for me but I wouldn't be a scab. I'm a single mum and I couldn't get family assistance. Surviving on \$200 a week has been very difficult. My mum was there to help with my son."

"I know what a strike is now," said An-



Militant/Rob Gardner

Members of the Australian Manufacturing Workers Union on strike against Morris McMahon in Sydney listen to report on negotiations with company June 12. Workers began returning to work with a new contract July 2 after 110-day victorious strike.

drew Fernandez, another machine setter. "This was my first time and I have come to know what a union and a strike is. We have had a very positive response from other workers. The next time someone else is on strike and comes to me for help, I'll be there."

Striker Edith Rapana described the visit by eight Morris McMahon strikers to a picket line at Crown forklifts in western Sydney. The workers at Crown struck for a week over their enterprise agreement (contract). "It was a real quiet picket line," she said. "The blokes had been told that they were not allowed to stop trucks going in to the factory. We told them 'That's not true, you don't have an injunction against you yet.' We jumped in front of a big truck and told the driver 'This is a picket line, don't cross!'" The driver responded that he'd been crossing all day, but turned around, Rapana stated, when "we said, 'Well, afternoon shift is here now and you're not crossing.'"

Walkout gained national prominence

The strike gained national prominence. This was reflected in a May 27 article in the *Australian Financial Review* titled, "Unions draw line on collective power." It stated, "An 11-week-old picket line at a small private tin factory in Sydney has become a national test of whether an employer should be forced to negotiate a collective union agreement." The company had tried to get workers to sign individual contracts, called Australian Workplace Agreements, by offering a bribe of a \$1,000 bonus for signing. According to federal anti-union "workplace relations" laws, workers can ask for a union contract but their boss can refuse to negotiate one. A 25-minute documentary on the strike was screened nationally on the SBS-TV program *Insight* July 10.

During the strike national union officials and politicians visited the picket line. They included Greg Combet, secretary of the Aus-

tralian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU), Simon Crean, leader of the Australian Labor Party (ALP), Federal Workplace Relations Minister Anthony Abbott, and the ALP's workplace relations spokesman, Robert McLelland. The media coverage of these visits aided in getting word out about the strike. When Pedro Ross Leal, general secretary of the Central Organization of Cuban Workers (CTC), was visiting Australia he came down to the picket line to offer solidarity.

During the strike, 18 workers crossed the picket line supplementing the casual workers hired as scabs. "We tried to talk to the scabs," said striker Sarita Singh. "They said we were stupid and would never win." But the tenacity of the strikers forced the company into negotiations beginning June 3. On June 30 workers approved a three-year union agreement. James Bridge, one of the delegates, reported that the contract includes a 4.3 percent wage increase each year. After one year the workers will have a schedule that includes an additional day off each month. "All we wanted was a fair go and to be looked after by our union and we got that," he said.

The company sacked Bridge, Rapana, and two other workers during the strike. Pickets were adamant that they be reinstated. As part of the return to work their cases were taken to an "independent inquiry." At a July 11 victory party attended by about 100 strikers and supporters, the union announced that all four would be back at work July 14.

Teila Tifa reported that on her first day back at work she was at first upset because the company had split up all the strikers by moving them into different sections. "But all the women had morning tea and lunch together," she said. "We laughed and were happy. And the boys went outside and had lunch in our picket shack!"

Rob Gardner contributed to this article.