

## Food workers in Omaha fight for union recognition

BY LISA ROTTACH

OMAHA, Nebraska—After months of organizing efforts, more than 60 percent of the 220 workers at a tortilla factory here signed cards asking for a vote on union representation by United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) Local 271. On July 23 union officials announced they had petitioned the National Labor Relations Board to conduct a secret ballot election at Casa de Oro, a division of ConAgra Foods. They expect a date to be set soon, they said, anticipating an election within a month or so.

“We began the campaign in February,” said Hilda Guillén, 36, a UFCW organizer

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## Black man may have been lynched, say Florida civil rights groups

BY OMARI MUSA

MIAMI—Robert Doctor, director of the southern region of the U.S. Civil Rights Commission, decided July 30 to launch an inquiry into the death of Feraris “Ray” Golden. A 32-year-old Black man, Golden was found hanged from a tree next to his grandmother’s house in Belle Glade, Florida, on the morning of May 28. Doctor’s decision was prompted by persistent statements by civil rights groups and some of Golden’s relatives that he was lynched because he was dating the daughter of a white cop. The federal inquiry was announced one day after a local inquest judge ruled that Golden committed suicide.

The Belle Glade NAACP has demanded an investigation into Golden’s death. According to Associated Press and the *Miami Herald*, some in the town said that Golden’s hands were tied behind his back when he

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## ‘Revolution has made possible what Cuban women are today’

Cuba-U.S. Youth Exchange delegates meet leaders of Federation of Cuban Women

BY MARTÍN KOPPEL

HAVANA—“The revolution has made possible what we Cuban women are today, and it’s the revolution that will make possible what we will become as we fight for further progress,” said Yolanda Ferrer, general secretary of the Federation of Cuban Women (FMC), speaking to a group of youth visiting from the United States.

Since the victory of the Cuban Revolution more than four decades ago, she said, the FMC has helped lead “the fight for the full integration and advancement of women in all areas of economic, political, cultural,

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# Imperialist-backed force is deployed in Liberia

‘Peacekeeping’ troops aimed at stronger U.S. position in West Africa

BY SAM MANUEL

With the blessing of the United Nations Security Council, the deployment of an “international peacekeeping force” in Liberia began in the early morning of August 4. The initial elements of two Nigerian battalions, some 200 troops, were airlifted into the main airport in Monrovia, the West African nation’s capital, that day. At the same time, U.S. warships carrying as many as 2,300 Marines steamed just off the country’s coast.

Three days earlier, the UN Security Council authorized the deployment of a “multinational” force to intervene in Liberia “to support the implementation of the June 17, 2003 ceasefire agreement” between the warring parties. This includes, the resolution stated, “establishing conditions for initial stages of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration activities, to help establish and maintain security in the period after the departure of the current President and the installation of a successor authority.”

Washington was the main sponsor of the resolution.

The Security Council made the decision because it was “concerned over the conflict in Liberia and its effects on the humanitarian situation, including the tragic loss of countless innocent lives,” the resolution said. It added that “the situation in Liberia constitutes a threat to international peace and security, to stability in the West Africa subregion, and to the peace process in Liberia.”

The main purpose of the intervention under this “humanitarian” cover, however, is to advance the aim of the U.S. administration of securing exploration rights of oil reserves in the Gulf of Guinea, off West Africa’s coast. The government of Nigeria, which is providing the bulk of troops from Africa, is one of the main regimes in the region with which Washington is developing



The amphibious assault ship USS *Iwo Jima* (above) is leading a three-ship group carrying 2,300 U.S. Marines for intervention in Liberia. The ship is currently stationed off the coast of the West African nation, along with the USS *Carter Hall* and the USS *Nashville*. Hundreds of troops from Nigeria have already been deployed.

stronger relations.

Another 476 Nigerian troops equipped with armored personnel carriers are to be deployed within nine days. “I have told them to get the men ready,” said Brig. Gen. Festus Okonkwo, the Nigerian commander of the force. “When I come in on Monday it’s business,” he stated. When fully deployed, there could be as many as 1,500 Nigerian troops, augmented by 2,000 others from various countries who are members of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

Pentagon officials continue to stress that the U.S. government has not made a decision yet to deploy troops ashore. They

added, however, that “the leading option” is to deploy 300 Marines to begin with to provide communications for the Nigerian troops. The Marines are also equipped with artillery, armored vehicles, and attack helicopters.

Washington’s sponsorship of the Security Council resolution underscores its increasing drive to gain a larger foothold against its imperialist rivals in the oil-rich region of West Africa. U.S. president George Bush visited countries in the region during his recent tour in Africa—only the second U.S. president to conduct an official visit to the continent. When Bush began his tour, Gen.

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## Rural workers in Brazil intensify fight for land

State governor says northeast of country is becoming ‘powder keg’



AP/Dario López

Member of Movement of Landless Rural Workers (MST) constructs home June 7 at Tres Marias ranch, state of Paraná, southern Brazil, on land taken over by MST.

BY MICHAEL ITALIE

The Movement of Landless Rural Workers (MST) has intensified the struggle for land in Brazil, as signs of growing self-confidence and increasing expectations among the rural poor have continued to multiply. Occupations of farms and a variety of protests by peasants and other toilers in the countryside have prompted a warning by one state governor that the situation in the northeast of the

country has become a “powder keg.”

Politicians from the region, said the July 29 London *Financial Times*, “are pressing the government to act firmly against a wave of land seizures” organized by the MST. The occupations have targeted large farms, cattle ranches, and sugar mills. The protesters have also set up expanding encampments along highways to publicize their demands. Some 150,000 families are living in 1,300 squatter

settlements established by the MST.

“We need to discuss this issue to avoid social turmoil,” said Wilma de Faria, the governor of Rio Grande do Norte state. “There are a lot of expectations and I need to know how the government is going to deal with them.”

On July 28 several governors sent a delegation to President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva to demand “more decisive action to crack down on the illegal occupations,”

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# Vancouver protesters expose cop brutality

BY JOE YATES

VANCOUVER, British Columbia—“What motivates me is to get to the truth,” said Julie Berg-Wyman at a rally against police brutality here July 6. Her brother, Jeff Berg, died as a result of an Oct. 22, 2000, police beating. She organized the rally as part of her efforts to win justice for Berg and give voice to victims of cop violence.

Berg-Wyman, a fashion designer, chaired the rally. She said that through her experiences she had “lost total faith in the concept of ‘to serve and protect.’ There is an alarming pattern of how marginalized people are handled by the police department.”

After an internal police inquiry ruled there were no problems with her brother’s treatment, Berg-Wyman hired a private investigator. He found three witnesses who gave statements that Jeff Berg did not resist arrest but was beaten when he tried to surrender. An autopsy concluded that the cause of death was an aneurysm brought on by a blow to the neck. On June 23 the British Columbia police complaints commissioner ordered a public inquiry into Berg’s death.

Berg-Wyman encouraged people to sign a petition for “a judicial inquiry into the Vancouver Police Department internal investigation of complaints of police misconduct.”

A range of speakers exposed other cases of police brutality.

Stewart Phillip, president of the Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs, addressed the crowd. “From a Native perspective, too many people have died at the hands of law enforcement,” he said. “But despite numerous inquiries with hundreds of recommendations, nothing has been implemented.”

Berg-Wyman pointed to the example of Frank Joseph Paul, a Native man, who froze to death in an alley in the early hours of Dec. 6, 1998, after police dumped him there in the rain. A videotape shows him nearly comatose at the police station. His family says that dumping him outside in his condition was a sure death sentence.

Paul’s sister, Francis Jourdain, who lives in Maine, declared, “What they did to Frank shouldn’t have been done to a dog.”

His death parallels those of Natives in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, at the hands of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. They were driven out of town in sub-zero tem-

peratures and left to freeze to death without their coats.

Berg-Wyman read a message from Cameron Ward, a civil-rights lawyer who was handcuffed, denied immediate access to a lawyer, strip searched, and arrested on Aug. 1, 2002. His car was impounded because the cops claimed he resembled someone who threw a pie at Canada’s prime minister.

Charlotte Airlie, mother of Barry Lawrie, spoke of how her son and two others were detained and beaten by police in Stanley Park January 14. “There was no crime being committed,” she said. “They were not suspects. They were not loitering. They should not have been terrorized, beaten, and tortured.” The three and Shannon Pritchard, who was with them at the time, filed a civil suit against the police. “The lesson I learned is stand up for yourself and fight,” Pritchard said. These police officers have also been charged with 33 offenses including assault with a weapon and obstruction of justice.

Two groups have filed reports critical of the actions of the Vancouver police. The Pivot Legal Society report includes 50 different cases. The provincial police complaints commission began its investigation of these incidents June 9. The affidavit of Eric Amos, a Native, states that he was assaulted by a police officer in an alleyway in the Downtown Eastside. José Cardona, a



Julie Berg-Wyman, whose brother was brutally beaten by the police three years ago and died of his injuries, organized rally in Vancouver July 6 to demand the cops who are responsible be brought to justice. A range of speakers exposed other cases of police brutality, including the cop crackdown in Downtown Eastside.

Honduran who was granted refugee status in Canada, was kneed in the groin after an officer asked him to open his mouth so police could search for drugs.

Jill Weiss, executive director of the Canadian Pelvis Inflammatory Disease Society, saw two male officers beating an unarmed man; one of them repeatedly struck the man with a baton. When she asked police to stop, Weiss and a number of other bystanders were pepper-sprayed by the cops.

Human Rights Watch has condemned the Downtown Eastside police crackdown, which was launched April 7 on the pretext of fighting drug trafficking and use. The group’s report details accounts from 20

individuals about police action including kicking, hitting, or stepping on people suspected of having drugs and conducting random street searches.

Vancouver mayor Larry Campbell responded angrily to this report. He said the group made allegations about police misconduct that “appear to be unfounded,” adding, “We are not Afghanistan. We are not a country that tortures people.” Campbell, a former coroner and RCMP officer was elected last November as the candidate of the Coalition of Progressive Electors. COPE presents itself as a progressive alternative to the Civic Non-Partisan Association, which governed city hall before.

## Ottawa ups pressure on Iranian government

BY MICHEL PRAIRIE

MONTREAL—Taking advantage of the death of Canadian-Iranian photojournalist Zahra Kazemi while in Iranian police custody, the Canadian government has stepped up its involvement in the U.S.-led campaign against Iran.

On July 16, Minister of Foreign Affairs William Graham recalled Canada’s ambassador in Iran and raised the possibility of imposing economic sanctions against Tehran as retaliation for the burial of Kazemi’s body in Iran. Ottawa demanded that her remains be repatriated to Canada.

Zahra Kazemi, 53, was apprehended June 23 as she was taking pictures of a demonstration in front of the Evin jail in northern

Tehran by parents demanding the release of their children arrested during protests earlier that month.

According to a report issued July 20 by five ministers of the Iranian government, she was beaten by cops and security officials while interrogated. On June 27, Kazemi was declared brain dead by doctors who kept her artificially alive. Her death was officially announced July 10.

Kazemi’s death has become a football in the ongoing fight between the two main contending factions in the Iranian government. The report on her beating was ordered by Iranian president Mohammad Khatami, head of the so-called reformist wing. The police, other repressive forces, and the courts are controlled by the so-called conservative clerics.

The day Graham recalled Canada’s ambassador to Iran and threatened additional economic sanctions, the Montreal daily *La Presse* published an editorial calling on the federal government to expel all 16 Iranian diplomats in Ottawa and break diplomatic relations with Iran.

A similar editorial in the July 25 *Toronto Star* stated: “Canada imports millions of dollars worth of luxury goods from Iran each year. We can get along with fewer Persian carpets, and less caviar and pistachio nuts, if Iran doesn’t co-operate. And we don’t have to continue hosting Iranian students here.” According to the paper, 1,200 Iranian post-secondary students study in

Canada each year.

On July 24, the Iranian foreign ministry charged the Canadian government with the murder of Iranian-Canadian teenager Keyvan Tabesh, killed near Vancouver, British Columbia. According to the police, Tabesh, 18, was shot July 14 by a cop in civilian clothes after the teenager allegedly ran at him with a machete. Witnesses said the cop was driving an unmarked car and never identified himself.

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Garment workers fighting for union recognition and contract at Point Blank in south Florida.

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# Costa Rica electrical workers strike, block gov't attempt to privatize utility

BY JANNE ABULLARADE

SEATTLE—After striking for three weeks in late May and early June, workers at the state-owned Costa Rican Institute of Electricity (ICE) succeeded in blocking a privatization probe by the government. Their struggle, which drew broad solidarity from working people, coincided with a strike by teachers to protest delays in payment of salaries, and to cuts in education and pensions.

The 13,000 ICE workers, members of the Workers Internal Front union (FIT), walked out May 16 demanding that the government stick to a February accord to issue bonds for \$100 million to finance needed electricity and phone projects. The Central Bank had refused to do this, arguing it would drive up inflation and interest rates.

Rejecting a government “compromise” offer of \$40 million in bonds, union representatives said that the government was starving ICE of funds to set it up for sale to private investors. On June 4 a march in solidarity with the strike drew 50,000 people into the streets of San José, the capital. That same evening the government settled the dispute, pledging to issue the full amount of bonds and to refrain from any reprisals against the union.

“We will defend this agreement in the streets,” said Albino Vargas, the secretary general of the National Association of Public Employees (ANEP), which had organized support for the strikers. Workers saw the dispute as an extension of the government’s attempt to privatize the company in 2000. That threat sparked a two-week wave of strikes, demonstrations, roadblocks, and confrontations with the police throughout the country that forced the government to back off.

Two days before the massive San José march, 70,000 teachers from the National Association of Educators (ANDE) and the Costa Rican Union of Educators joined a strike by the Association of High School Teachers. The stoppage began May 23 in solidarity with the FIT workers, and in opposition to the economic policies of the Social Christian Unity Party government of President Abel Pacheco. Among other issues, teachers demanded repeal of recent

changes to their pension entitlements. These “reforms” would require teachers to work for 33 years—up from 20—to qualify for a pension that has been reduced to around 63 percent of their salary.

They also protested government plans to shift the management of the education budgets to the municipalities, and cuts in funding for school cafeterias and buses. Defying government threats of firings, suspensions, withholding of wages, and other sanctions, the teachers organized numerous marches and protests. They called off the stoppage on June 28 when the government agreed to introduce legislation modifying the pension reforms, and said it would take no action against the strikers, provided that they make up the working days lost in the strike.

These union actions received widespread support from increasingly hard-pressed workers and farmers. According to Social Watch, almost one third of the population is living in poverty or very close to it.

Under pressure from the IMF and World Bank to step up payments to imperialist coffers on its \$3.3 billion debt, the Costa Rican rulers have sold off state sugar and other companies, outsourced the construction of public works, and allowed health clinics to be managed by private interests.



June 4 demonstration of 50,000 in San José, Costa Rica, to protest government economic policies. Strike by electrical workers pushed back recent government probe to privatize state-owned electric company and coincided with walkout by teachers.

## U.S. tariffs devastate Vietnam’s catfish exports

BY SETH GALINSKY

The U.S. International Trade Commission struck a blow against Vietnamese catfish farming July 23. The government body ruled unanimously in favor of an allegation that Vietnam was “dumping” catfish—that is, selling it below cost—in the United States.

The ruling came just 20 months after Washington and Hanoi signed a bilateral trade pact, which ostensibly lowered trade barriers between the two countries. Vietnam’s exports to the United States—especially garments, shoes, seafood, and furniture—more than doubled in 2002 to \$2.4 billion. In the first five months of this year exports nearly tripled compared to the same period the year before. Vietnam

had captured 20 percent of the U.S. frozen catfish-fillet market.

Next possible target of the trade commission: Vietnam’s shrimp exports to the United States, which last year were worth more than \$466 million compared to catfish exports of \$55 million.

The ruling follows measures already taken that severely affected Vietnam’s sale of catfish to the United States. Last year, Congress declared that out of 2,000 types of catfish only the American-born family could be labeled “catfish.” The Vietnamese were forced to market their catfish using the terms “basa” and “tra.”

Even though there was no evidence that the imported fish were being sold in the United States more cheaply than in Viet-

nam, or below its cost of production, the U.S. Commerce Department declared that since Vietnam has a “nonmarket” economy there was something suspect going on and imposed tariffs ranging from 37 percent to 64 percent. The commission ruling makes these tariffs permanent.

The July 22 *New York Times* noted the impact of these measures in Vietnam. Tran Vu Long is a 35-year-old Vietnamese catfish farmer who lives atop his floating fish trap. He recently sold 40 tons worth at a loss of \$2,000—a small fortune there—due to plummeting prices caused by the oversupply resulting from loss of the U.S. market.

In 1994 the U.S. rulers lifted a trade embargo on Vietnam that had been in place since 1975, when the Vietnamese people defeated U.S. imperialism in the Vietnam War. With the lifting of the embargo, the signing of the trade pact, and the implementation of “market reforms” designed to open the country to the capitalist market, the Vietnamese government hoped to give a boost to the economy that was devastated by Washington’s brutal war.

“The United States preaches free trade, but as soon as we start benefiting from it, they change their tune,” Tran Vu Long told the *Times*.

## Peasants in Brazil intensify fight for land

Continued from front page

according to the *Financial Times*. The politicians joined with capitalist farmers in calling for the indictment and imprisonment of MST leader João Pedro Stedile after he was quoted as saying, “The peasant struggle includes 23 million people. On the other side are 27,000 ranchers. That is the dispute. We won’t sleep until we do away with them.”

Nearly half of arable land in Brazil, a country of 165 million people, is owned by 3 percent of the population; the poorest 40 percent own just 1 percent of the land.

Big landowners are stepping up pressure on da Silva’s seven-month-old Workers Party (PT) administration to move against the protests. “We have a president who swore to respect and uphold the constitution but is not doing so,” fumed rancher Luiz Antônio Nabhan Garcia, president of the Democratic Rural Union. “When land invasions take place, the police stand by with arms crossed, because this government has no will to enforce the law.”

“People can protest and react...but we won’t accept the law to be broken,” da Silva’s justice minister Márcio Tomaz Bastos said. “The government will act energetically to ensure legality.”

Government officials have stated that increases in agricultural production and exports are key elements in steadying the capitalist economy after years of crisis. Da Silva’s administration has granted land titles to 2,500 families this year. PT president José Genoino told the *New York Times*, “There is room in Brazil for everything from agribusiness to cooperatives and family farms. They can all coexist comfortably, just as some people wear jackets and ties and others prefer shorts and sandals.”

Garcia, the rancher, had a different approach. “Landowners can’t take it any

more,” he said, “and they are taking advantage of their right under law to arm themselves, their relatives, and their employees to protect their property.”

The MST has organized many land seizures since its founding in 1984. Its website states that through these struggles some 250,000 families have won title to 15 million acres of land across the country. The organization has also created 60 food cooperatives, and has initiated a literacy program involving 600 teachers.

Occupations have spread to the cities. On July 18 some 4,000 people organized by the Movement of Workers Without a Roof

(MTST) occupied land in São Paulo owned by Volkswagen. The squatters are demanding title to the land so they can build new homes. The government has threatened to use riot police to evict them. “We’re open to negotiations, but the negotiations have to produce a victory,” said MTST leader João Batista Jota. “If there’s no place to go, we’re going to resist.”

## Eurocan paper workers on strike in British Columbia for two months

BY NICOLE SÉGUIN

VANCOUVER, Canada—Three hundred and sixty workers went on strike May 27 to defend job safety and seniority rights at the Eurocan pulp and paper mill in Kitimat, British Columbia. Earlier that day, members of Communications, Energy, and Paperworkers Union (CEP) Local 298 voted down the bosses’ final offer by more than a two-thirds margin.

Two months later, the strike is holding strong. Workers are demanding that the company establish a safety officer elected by and responsible to the union membership. Over the past four years, they say, four workers have been hospitalized with severe burns. Strikers note that last year the company was written up twice by the Workers Compensation Board for inadequate training and supervision.

CEP western region vice-president Dave Coles told the union journal that Eurocan “has been violating the collective agreement at every opportunity for the past five years. The membership has said enough is enough.”

The company has also brushed aside seniority agreements in its promotion

and hiring practices, prompting the union demand that higher-seniority workers get priority for training on better-paying jobs.

CEP Local 1127 members, who work in another section of the plant, are honoring the picket lines. The strike has forced the closure of the company’s Terrace sawmill. On Friday July 18 a Petro Canada truck crossed the picket line with fuel for the plant. The union has called for a boycott of Petro Canada and its products.

The Eurocan strikers took solidarity and news of their struggle to a Local 198 barbecue at the Carnaby saw mill July 3. The mill workers have been off the job for more than two years. They are demanding that Northwest Pulp and Paper, which bought the mill from Skeena Cellulose, fork out severance pay.

When Local 198 members heard recently that parts of the mill are up for sale, they immediately set up a barricade of the facility. Coles told the union publication that severance pay owed the workers totals almost \$3.5 million. “They are prepared to fight on and we must support them and their families,” he said.

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# Florida unionists welcome Calero

## Antideportation fight gets hearing in South

BY MARK HAMM

OAKLAND PARK, Florida—Róger Calero was greeted as a fellow fighter at two plant gate gatherings outside the Point Blank Body Armor plant here July 18. Workers were celebrating one year of struggle to get the bullet-proof vest manufacturer to recognize their union, UNITE. A six-month strike to press their union-organizing campaign ended in August, but the fight continues.

Calero spoke to two groups of 20-30 unionists at both lunch breaks. Workers came outside the factory to welcome Calero and learn more about his victory, which they had helped win.

An associate editor of *Perspectiva Mundial* and staff writer for the *Militant*, Calero won a court ruling in May that he is “non-deportable,” after a six-month effort by the INS to send him back to his native Nicaragua. The government based its exclusion effort on a minor plea-bargain conviction for selling an ounce of marijuana to an undercover cop 15 years ago, while Calero was in high school, which immigration authorities waived when they granted him permanent residency.

Strikers first learned of this anti-deportation fight while on picket duty shortly after Calero’s arrest last December. Dozens signed petitions right away to get him out of detention. After his release, Calero came to south Florida and visited the picket line in January, speaking to a gathering of 75 workers.

This time, Calero was introduced by union organizer Maria Revelles. He spoke in Spanish and his remarks were translated into Creole. The union presented him with a red UNITE T-shirt. Calero also visited the union office across the street to help blow up helium balloons for the celebration of the recent NLRB ruling awarding back pay to many workers who were locked out by the company one year ago and three who had been fired. Workers released hundreds of balloons inside the plant.

Later that night Calero spoke at a meeting of Veye Yo, a Haitian rights organization, in nearby Miami. About 65 people attended, most of them Haitian. The meeting was hosted by Veye Yo leader Tony Jeanthenor, who also translated Calero’s remarks into Creole. Calero pointed to the experiences of workers at Point Blank and at Tyson Foods in Jefferson, Wisconsin, as examples of how workers are “learning rapidly to unite.”

“Your rights have been violated,” one participant told Calero in the discussion period. “With your experience, do you feel like this government is more a fascist dictatorship than a democracy? Look at all the Haitian immigrants in jail right now. What crime is it to come by boat to the U.S. to look for a better life?”

“One way the government tries to deepen the divisions among us is to make us look like criminals,” Calero responded, pointing to the harsher laws that put more and more workers behind bars. “But who are the real criminals? When I was in jail I met people like you and me, like we were all in a factory together. They are trying to create a layer without legal rights, without the right to counsel, subject to indefinite detention.

“This is how imperialist democracy works. This is democracy under capitalism. I don’t rule out that we will see the

rise of a fascist movement. But if we lived under fascism now, we wouldn’t be here tonight, and we wouldn’t have scored the victory we did.”

“Between the Democrats and Republicans, which is worse?” another participant asked, and another followed up, “I am still not satisfied with your answer because you haven’t said how bad Bush is.” Calero said he agreed 100 percent that the current U.S. president is bad news for working people. He also outlined the bipartisan character of U.S. foreign and domestic policy. “The most important thing is to break from both,” he said. “We have to advance demands that can unify the working class and organize independently of the twin parties of the rich.”



BY RACHELE FRUIT

TAMPA, Florida—Róger Calero addressed a meeting at the University of South Florida (USF) here July 19. Nearly 30 people attended, including students from USF, the University of Florida at Gainesville, and King High School in Tampa. About half of the participants were workers, some of whom had already backed his fight against deportation.

A worker at the Port of Tampa said during the discussion that all port employees are now required to get security clearances. Some 12 percent have failed because they have prior felony convictions or other infractions on their records, he said. “The magnitude of the number of workers who have had contact with the criminal justice system shows that the government aims to criminalize the entire working class,” Calero said. “It’s important for the labor movement to support the demand to expunge these records. All rights should be restored once a person has served their sentence.”

Marisol, a new subscriber to *Perspectiva Mundial*, the magazine Calero helps edit, grew up in Puerto Rico. She came to the meeting with her husband, Mohammed. He is Tunisian and was held in prison for six months with no charges following the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon.

In response to her question about why it will take two years to try Sami Al-Arian, Calero said the stakes for the government are high. Al-Arian, who is Palestinian and a former professor at USF, is being held at the Federal Coleman Correctional Facility in solitary confinement under charges of supporting the Palestinian Islamic Jihad. “They have nothing on Sami—nothing,” said Calero. “We must stand together to demand his release. They are trying to get us to accept strip searches, isolation, the conditions at Guantánamo, and torture. This is not about terrorism. It is aimed at every one of us.”

A lively informal exchange took place in Spanish after the meeting that included a group of workers from Plant City. Discussion centered on how to fight against intolerable working conditions. A woman who works at a tomato packing plant with hundreds of others was anxious to hear how workers at Dakota Premium Foods in Minnesota were able to win union recognition and improve their conditions at work. Prior to joining the *Militant* and *Perspectiva Mundial* staff, Calero worked at Dakota and was part of the struggle to bring in the union.



Militant/Nicole Salgado

Calero, second from right, with UNITE members at Point Blank factory July 18.

BY SUSAN LAMONT AND BRIAN TAYLOR

BIRMINGHAM—Congratulating Róger Calero on the victory in his fight against deportation, immigrant rights activist Helen Rivas opened a meeting here July 20 at the Five Points West Library. Rivas is from the Greater Birmingham Ministries, an endorser of the Róger Calero Defense Committee.

“The victory would not have been possible without the efforts of my party, the Socialist Workers Party,” Calero said. By understanding the mood of resistance to attacks on wages and living conditions meted out by the bosses, the SWP was able to collaborate with many others in drawing on the wide support from workers, farmers, and other defenders of democratic rights.

Susan LaMont thanked Calero’s many supporters on behalf of the Birmingham SWP. “There is an old saying in the labor movement,” LaMont said. “‘An injury to one is an injury to all.’ This simple but profound statement of the life-and-death necessity for solidarity among workers is the underlying principle that the Socialist Workers Party believes in and acts on in defending not only our own members, but all victims of capitalist injustice.”

The meeting was attended by 20 people, including members of the United Mine Workers of America, one of whom brought his neighbor; two young workers from Argentina and Peru; and others.

“The bosses and government use the attacks on immigrant workers to deepen the divisions among working people and cripple our ability to fight back,” Calero said. “They try to split us, to crush us, to keep us from fighting together—blame the immigrant workers for the crisis, the single moms, the ‘deadbeat’ dads, the old people living too long. Never their system.

“In the name of ‘fighting terrorism,’ the rulers are targeting the whole working class,” Calero said. “But there is resistance among workers and immigrants are often in the lead.

“What is the most important contribution immigrant workers bring to this country?” Calero asked. “It’s not that they do some of the hardest jobs or that they pay taxes, which they do. It’s their willingness to fight. For that reason we say, the more the better!”

“How can we heal the divisions in the working class that you talked about?” asked Ralph Timberlake, a postal worker who drove an hour and a half from Huntsville, Alabama, to attend the event.

“Unemployment is a major weapon the rulers have to keep us fighting each other,” Calero said. “Instead of blaming each other, we have to advance demands like 30 hours of work for 40 hours pay and public works programs to spread around available jobs and fix badly deteriorating infrastructure. These kind of demands can help unite us by fighting for jobs for all.”

Glenn Davis, a UMW member who works at a nearby mine where a massive layoff just occurred, joined the discussion. “In the past, big business kept Blacks and poor whites divided. Now it seems like Black and Latino workers will start fighting among each other.”

“We have to be confident that workers can see it is in their interests to fight together,” Calero said. “We have to explain how racism keeps us from moving forward together. A few decades ago there was Jim Crow segregation in the South, but Black workers and farmers led a movement that had a huge impact on the whole class that helped unite us.”

In response to a comment questioning whether much had in fact changed since the civil rights era, Calero said, “Don’t underestimate the advances our class has

made—these were won with sweat and blood. We can’t forget these lessons and what they mean for the present.”

“We will make gains and take concessions—back and forth—as long as capitalism exists,” he said. “That’s why we must get rid of the system altogether.”

The discussion drew to a close only when the library started turning off the lights. More than \$200 was donated to the Political Rights Defense Fund, which backed Calero’s defense effort.

The next day, Calero was interviewed by *Radio Que Buena!* Later he met with two organizers from United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners Local 271, who are involved in an organizing drive in the area. A majority of carpenters at the five construction companies the union is trying to organize are immigrant workers from Mexico. “I was interested in the Calero case,” said organizer Larry Hodge, “because the example helps immigrant workers we are trying to organize see for themselves that you can fight the establishment and win.”



BY JANICE LYNN

WASHINGTON, D.C.—At the Smithfield Packing plant in Landover, Maryland, more than 35 workers had signed petitions supporting Róger Calero’s fight against deportation. During a July 24-25 visit in this area, Calero was able to visit the plant gate and thank the meatpackers for their support. Workers from El Salvador, Guinea, the Sudan, Nicaragua, and native born stopped to congratulate him.

At the A.M. Briggs meatpacking plant in D.C. the following day, Calero had similar discussions with workers. One member of United Food and Commercial Workers Local 400 stayed around for more than a half hour to discuss with Calero how to strengthen the union.

At Linens of the Week laundry, Calero and his supporters heard from workers about their successful fight for representation by UNITE. The 250 laundry workers recently ratified their first union contract. It included pay raises, improvements in job safety, and health-care benefits. Several workers said the struggle now continues to enforce the contract.

Calero pointed to the demonstration the day before at the Capitol by 30 day laborers fighting for a minimum daily wage, overtime pay, and company-provided health and safety equipment. According to the immigrant rights group Casa de Maryland, there are 50,000 day laborers in the Washington, D.C. area.

“This is another example of how more and more immigrant workers are fighting back,” Calero said. “It’s important to support them.”

While here, Calero also met with a dozen supporters of his campaign against deportation at Café Mawonaj. He was introduced by Norberto Martínez, a paralegal with the Central American Resource Center, who was part of Calero’s local defense committee.

Some \$250 was collected and supporters pledged to double that amount to ensure that all outstanding bills of the Calero Defense Committee are met in full.

Reporters from one of the area’s Spanish-language newspapers, *El Pregonero*, stayed afterwards to interview Calero. Calero also discussed the lessons of his fight with several Howard University students from Afro-Latinos Making Alliances, who have been following his fight in the *Militant*.

Calero was also interviewed by *El Tiempo Latino*, the *Washington Hispanic*, and the Pacifica Radio program, “Pueblos sin Fronteras.”

### Róger Calero Fight to Win/‘Sí se puede’ Tour

The Róger Calero Defense Committee is organizing a speaking tour for Calero in cities across the United States and around the world to build on his successful antideportation fight. Below is the schedule for the tour. Requests for additional tour dates can be made to: Róger Calero Defense Committee, c/o PRDF, Box 761, Church St. Station, New York, NY 10007; phone/fax 212-563-0585; calerodefense@yahoo.com

<b>Cleveland</b>	August 6–7	<b>New Zealand</b>	August 28–30
<b>Boston</b>	August 8–9	<b>Australia</b>	Aug. 31–Sept. 1
<b>Philadelphia</b>	August 16	<b>Britain</b>	Sept. 4–7
<b>Utah/Colorado</b>	August 18–19	<b>Sweden</b>	Sept. 8–10
<b>Montreal</b>	August 20–21	<b>Iceland</b>	Sept. 11–13
<b>Toronto</b>	August 22–23	Return to <b>New York</b>	Sept. 14
<b>Vancouver</b>	August 24–25	Tour Concludes	



# Alabama protesters demand voting rights for former felons

BY SUSAN LAMONT

BIRMINGHAM—On July 18, hundreds of people marched to the Alabama state capitol in Montgomery to protest Gov. Robert Riley’s recent veto of a bill that would have allowed some people convicted of felonies who have served their sentences to regain their voting rights.

“Voting is a civil right. No one should be denied,” read one sign at the demonstration.

The bill, which passed the Alabama legislature June 16, would have given people convicted of nonviolent crimes, who have served their sentences and paid restitution, a certificate saying they were eligible to register to vote.

Many workers in Alabama were outraged by the governor’s veto and feel strongly that those who have served their time should be able to function in society as normal people. This is especially true among Blacks, due to the high percentage of African-Americans

who end up in the prison system at some time in their lives. In Alabama 62 percent of the 28,406 people in state prisons are Black, although only 26 percent of the population is African-American.

Ralph Timberlake, a postal worker from Huntsville, participated in the action. “It was a very enthusiastic demonstration,” he told *Militant* reporters. “People came from all over the state. People who have paid their dues shouldn’t be denied their right to participate. I think the government should grant ex-felons all of their rights to participate in society.”

The Alabama Legislative Black Caucus, which backed the bill, called the march. The protest was supported by the Alabama chapters of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. Rainbow/Operation PUSH president Jesse Jackson also participated.

## Four teenagers arrested for Farmingville, Long Island, anti-immigrant firebombing



August 1 press conference at home of family of five Mexican immigrants in Farmingville, New York, which was firebombed July 5. Four teenagers were arrested July 30 for the attack. Representatives of the Long Island Immigrant Alliance charged local politicians and the rightist group Sachem Quality of Life with creating an atmosphere that led to this and similar assaults.

# Imperialist-backed force is deployed in Liberia

Continued from front page

James Jones, chief of the U.S. European command that’s responsible for African operations, said Washington was negotiating long-term agreements for use of a “family” of military bases across Africa.

The resolution was passed by a vote of 12 to 0 with representatives of three governments in the 15-member council—France, Germany, and Mexico—abstaining. They objected to a paragraph that gives officers and troops of the UN-sanctioned force immunity from prosecution by the UN’s International Criminal Court should they be accused of crimes while in Liberia. Washington has not ratified the treaty that established the court

and has negotiated bilateral agreements with other countries prohibiting them from turning over U.S. citizens to the court’s jurisdiction. It has suspended military assistance to 35 countries that refused to sign such an agreement.

In recent weeks a swell of prominent bourgeois politicians and liberal groups have called on the Bush administration to deploy U.S. troops at the head of the intervention in Liberia. Among them are U.S. secretary of state Colin Powell, UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, the Archbishops of Monrovia and Sierra Leone, Human Rights Watch, the international relief agency Oxfam, and leaders of the Congressional Black Caucus

and the NAACP.

An August 4 *New York Times* article noted that by contrast 82 percent of African Americans polled by the newspaper responded that Washington should “mind its own business,” when they were asked whether the U.S. government should try to change a dictatorship to a democracy or stay out. The *Times* also reported that some Black organizations support African intervention in Liberia but oppose the deployment of U.S. troops, among them TransAfrica Forum and the National Conference of Black Lawyers.

Democratic Party politicians and other liberals have been most vociferous in calling for military intervention in Liberia.

Conservatives have also backed the deployment of U.S. forces to the country, adding only that the administration needs to identify what are U.S. “national interests.” The day Bush ordered Marines to the Liberian coast, editors of the conservative *Washington Times* carried an editorial entitled, “The case for Liberia?”

“The White House has yet to identify what America’s interests, even broadly defined, could be,” it said. “While we are not

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# Concerted effort needed in sub renewal drive

BY SAM MANUEL

A concerted effort is needed to get the subscription renewal campaign for the *Militant* and its sister Spanish-language monthly *Perspectiva Mundial* on schedule. In the first week of the campaign, ending August 3, the business office received 18 *Militant* and 3 *PM* subscription renewals. Socialist workers who are members of the Union of Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Employees (UNITE) and the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) have sent in two of the first three *PM* subscription renewals.

Detailed attention must be paid to calling and visiting the hundreds of current readers whose subscriptions are about to expire and encourage them to renew. More than 700 received renewal notices in early August.

Ilona Gersh from Detroit reports that a worker from an IBP meat packing plant that shut down a year ago decided to renew his subscription after bumping into a *Militant* distributor who was out doing some errands. He remembered the team of socialist workers who sold the paper outside the plant; that was when he first subscribed. “This experience

convinced us we should approach some of the former subscribers from the sales campaigns of the last year or so,” wrote Gersh. “We may not have gotten in touch with them when their subscriptions were running out.”

In addition, a number of new subscriptions to the *Militant* arrived in New York since the renewal campaign began July 26. Among them were two workers at Verizon at a rally by telephone workers in Newark, New Jersey, as their union contract was about to expire; two participants in the UNITE national convention; and a Carpenters union organizer from Birmingham.

The three-week campaign ending August 17 is aimed at expanding the long-term

readership of the socialist press, including among members of industrial unions. The overall goal is now set at 225 renewals for the *Militant* and 80 for *Perspectiva Mundial* to correspond to the locally adopted targets.

Jacob Perasso from Omaha said a meat-packer at the Swift plant there renewed his *Militant* subscription. “He is from the Czech Republic and enjoys the photos even though he is still learning English,” Perasso said. “He subscribed in large part because the paper supports union struggles around the world.”

Please keep these reports coming. The deadline is Sunday night each week.

# Florida lynching inquiry

Continued from front page

was found, which would be proof of a lynching. “When you get this kind of allegation, a young man’s hands tied behind his back, you have to take it seriously,” Doctor said. Police contend that a video camera attached to a patrol car showed the man’s hands were dangling and not tied when they found him.

Sevell Brown, the Florida president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), called upon the Civil Rights Commission to intervene and conduct an investigation after Circuit Judge Harold Cohen ruled that Golden had committed suicide. He said the SCLC had found “serious inconsistencies and inadequacies” during the testimony at the inquest. According to an Associated Press report, Brown said witnesses did not come forth because they felt uncomfortable calling attention to Golden’s relationship with a white police officer’s daughter.

Belle Grade is a town of nearly 15,000 people, 40 miles west of Palm Beach. The population is more than half Black and largely agricultural. The town is dominated by sugar plantations and cornfields. It is reportedly among the poorest and most segregated towns in Florida. In the mid 1980s, Belle Grade drew international attention for

having the highest AIDS rate in the country. Many residents tell stories of police brutality. African-Americans there have a median income lower than residents of 96 percent of U.S. cities.

According to the medical examiner’s report, Golden’s blood had a high alcohol content to the point of being “legally” drunk. Golden was also allegedly found to have traces of cocaine. Many residents argue that if this is the case it weakens the cops’ claim that he got a sheet, climbed to a tree limb 10 feet off the ground, and hung himself. They also noted that the cops who came to the scene didn’t check for other footprints and didn’t examine Golden’s shoes to determine if he was brought to the lynching site. The police story was first reported as a “suicide in progress” when they received a call from family member Henry Drummond. Daniel Paige, a lawyer working with the NAACP, questioned the investigation and the suicide ruling.

He noted that everyone called to testify came believing that was the only possibility. “Don’t close out the case and just say suicide,” he said. “That’s not an inquest. That’s a quest. It’s a quest to show that it was a suicide.”

## Militant/Perspectiva Mundial Subscription Renewal Drive July26–August 17: week 1

Country	Militant			PM	
	Goal	Sold	%	Goal	Sold
UNITED STATES					
Omaha	3	2	67%	5	1
Twin Cities	8	2	25%	6	1
Boston	4	1	25%	3	0
Tampa	5	1	20%	1	0
Newark	6	1	17%	2	0
New York	12	2	17%	6	0
Detroit	8	1	13%	2	0
Seattle	8	1	13%	1	0
Washington, DC	8	1	13%	4	0
Los Angeles	12	1	8%	5	0
Chicago	15	1	7%	8	0
Atlanta	8	0	0%	2	0
Birmingham	5	0	0%	2	0
Cleveland	3	0	0%	1	0
Des Moines	4	0	0%	2	0
Houston	6	0	0%	1	0
Miami	7	0	0%	3	0
NE Pennsylvania	7	0	0%	0	0
Philadelphia	5	0	0%	2	0
Pittsburgh	8	0	0%	0	0
San Francisco	8	0	0%	4	0
Utah	4	0	0%	5	1
Western Colorado	8	0	0%	6	0
U.S. total	162	14	9%	71	3
AUSTRALIA	8	0	0%	1	0
CANADA					
Montreal	4	0	0%	3	0
Toronto	6	0	0%	1	0
Vancouver	7	0	0%	1	0
CANADA total	17	0	0%	5	0
NEW ZEALAND					
Auckland	4	1	25%	0	0
Christchurch	4	1	25%	0	0
N.Z. total	8	2	25%		
SWEDEN					
Gothenburg	4	1	25%	0	0
Stockholm	4	0	0%	1	0
SWEDEN total	8	1	13%	1	0
UNITED KINGDOM					
London	10	1	10%	2	0
Scotland	3	0	0%		
UK total	13	1	8%	2	0
ICELAND	8	0	0%		
International totals	224	18	8%	80	3
Goal/Should be	225	75	33%	80	27
IN THE UNIONS					
	Militant			PM	
	Goal	Sold	%	Goal	Sold
UNITED STATES					
UNITE	13	1	8%	2	1
UFCW	13	0	0%	15	0
UMWA	9	0	0%	4	1
Total	36	1	0%	17	2

## —MILITANT LABOR FORUMS—

### ALABAMA

#### Birmingham

The carpenters union organizing drive: why all workers should support it Speakers: representatives of United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners Local 127, Socialist Workers Party. Fri. Aug. 15, 7 p.m. 3029-A Bessemer Rd. (205) 780-0021.

### MASSACHUSETTS

#### Boston

Labor resistance to employers’ assault: the war at home. Speaker: Andrea Morell. Fri. Aug. 15, 7 p.m. 12 Bennington St., 2nd Floor (617) 569-9169



# Cuba-U.S. youth exchange

**Continued from front page**  
and social life. This includes the fight to promote gender equality, to advance relations of equality between men and women within the family, and for nonsexist education in all areas of life.”

The U.S. visitors listened intently to Ferrer’s presentation. Then, for more than two hours, they engaged in a lively exchange with a panel of FMC leaders on subjects ranging from women in employment to abortion, gay rights, and women in the defense of the revolution. The panel, which included several members of the FMC’s National Secretariat, was led by Vilma Espín, president of the women’s organization and a leader of the Cuban Revolution since the beginning of the clandestine struggle to bring down the Batista dictatorship.

For many, the July 29 meeting, held at the Fe del Valle Women’s Training School, was one of the highlights of their visit to the island on the Third Cuba-U.S. Youth Exchange, a one-week trip by nearly 300 young people from across the United States. Most were visiting Cuba for the first time.

The July 23–August 1 Youth Exchange was sponsored by the Federation of University Students (FEU), Union of Young Communists (UJC), and other Cuban youth groups. The visitors participated in a rally in Santiago de Cuba to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the assault on the Moncada barracks, which opened the revolutionary struggle in Cuba that deepened into the first socialist revolution in the Americas (see article in last week’s issue).

They also visited the Latin American School of Medicine, the University of Havana, a working-class community where students are carrying out revolutionary social work, a national computer center, the Museum of the Revolution, a Cuban Border Brigade post at Guantánamo, and several scientific research centers. They met with UJC and FEU leaders, members of a municipal legislative assembly, relatives of five Cuban revolutionaries locked up in U.S. prisons on frame-up charges of conspiracy to commit espionage, and a number of leaders of the revolutionary government.

Ferrer outlined some of the background to the Cuban Revolution and the struggle against women’s oppression. “Before the revolution, women faced conditions similar to those in other capitalist countries dominated by imperialism,” she said. “They had a second-class status of complete dependency on men, and were treated as sexual objects and commodities.”

At the time of the revolutionary victory in January 1959—when the Rebel Army overthrew the U.S.-backed Batista dictatorship—only 194,000 women were employed. Some 70,000 of them were domestic workers and 100,000 were prostitutes—“something

that for many was the only way to survive,” Ferrer remarked. Fifty-nine percent of women were illiterate—more than double the overall illiteracy rate at the time.

“Women played an important part in the revolutionary struggle against Batista,” which was led by the July 26 Movement and the Rebel Army under the command of Fidel Castro, Ferrer said. “In three of what was then our six provinces, the July 26 Movement was at times headed by women.” Vilma Espín, in fact, coordinated July 26 Movement activities in the key province of Oriente in eastern Cuba prior to becoming part of the Rebel Army.

“Fidel was very clear on the importance of women’s involvement in the revolutionary struggle,” Ferrer stated. “During the revolutionary war in the Sierra Maestra mountains, he led a sharp political struggle over this question among commanders of the Rebel Army.” Some commanders, reflecting anti-woman prejudices that were then still deeply ingrained even in some of the best combatants, argued that women should not be allowed to take part in combat, especially when there weren’t enough weapons for all.

Rejecting this argument, “Fidel organized the Mariana Grajales Women’s Platoon,” the FMC leader said. This action signaled the social course that the new revolutionary power would continue to take after the overthrow of the dictatorship in 1959.

The FMC, which today has 3.9 million members, was founded Aug. 23, 1960, as working people in Cuba mobilized to consolidate their power. At its founding convention, Ferrer said, “Fidel pointed to the initial tasks—to organize women, to teach them to read and write, and to fight to eliminate discrimination against them. To do so, he posed two tasks for the FMC: to create child-care centers and to establish schools for peasant women.”

Women—especially young women—participated massively in the 1960–61 literacy campaign, which virtually wiped out illiteracy in a year. “They joined voluntary work brigades in agriculture and in building hospitals and schools,” Ferrer said.

### 1961: job training for rural women

In 1960, the FMC leader said, “the Ana Betancourt School for Peasant Women was created. Over a few years’ time, 14,000 young women from the countryside, including the most remote areas, came to Havana” to learn basic job skills. The program included sewing, reading and writing, and basic health and hygiene such as eliminating body parasites and fixing teeth. On Mother’s Day “parents coming to Havana to visit their daughters attending the school could barely recognize them because of the changes” in their skills, confidence, and health, Ferrer said.

In addition, the Schools to Upgrade Skills



Militant photos by Martín Koppel  
**Representatives of Federation of Cuban Women (above) speak to members of Cuba-U.S. Youth Exchange (inset).**

for Domestic Workers gave women training in skills that would enable them to break out of household work. As a result, “Black women, formerly domestic servants, were for the first time hired as bank workers,” a job from which they had previously been excluded.

Over the past four decades, Ferrer said, Cuban women have made huge strides in the fight for equality, from employment to education to free access to abortion. For example, she added, women now make up half of university graduates, compared to 3 percent in 1959. They are now 44.7 percent of the work force—up from 12 percent in 1953. Two out of three skilled technicians are women. In industrial jobs, 22 percent of workers are women. And women are active in the defense of the revolution from the militias to the Revolutionary Armed Forces.

Ferrer described the challenges that women faced in the 1990s with the economic crisis that followed the collapse of Cuba’s aid and trade on favorable terms with the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe—known here as the Special Period. The severe shortages of everything from fuel to soap to food, and the steep decline in industrial and agricultural production, especially in the first half of that decade, left many workers without jobs to go to and compounded women’s burden of domestic chores enormously.

### More women in work force

“The severity of the crisis, however, did not mean that women returned to the home,” Ferrer said. Through the efforts of the FMC and the revolutionary leadership, the proportion of women in the workforce is now even higher than it was at the beginning of the Special Period—up from 38.7 percent in 1989 to 44.7 percent as of last year. This is not far from the comparable figure in the United States, where in 1994 some 46 percent of the work force was female.

In response to a question, Ferrer said that the FMC and the country’s revolutionary leadership rejected arguments that in face of increased unemployment, men should be given priority in jobs over women. A number of employment programs were organized to make sure that women and youth were not disproportionately affected.

“We assessed women’s employment possibilities in every municipality and province in the country, and made progress in maintaining the percentage of women in the work force,” she said. “Programs were established to find jobs for female heads of household and women with disabilities.

“A national women’s employment commission was established, made up of representatives of the Labor Ministry, Central Organization of Cuban Workers (CTC), and Federation of Cuban Women. When there is a workplace shutdown or reduction in workers, women workers are evaluated on an equal basis with men to relocate them to other jobs. For example, urban agricultural projects were created in the cities, and 100,000 women have been hired into these jobs.”

Panelists added that one recent advance was a 2001 regulation, which the FMC and the CTC had pressed for, that extended paid maternity leave from 6 to 12 months.

“What about the rights of gays and lesbians?” asked another youth from the U.S.

Vilma Espín responded to this question. Espín, who fought in the Rebel Army during the revolutionary war, was the founding president of the FMC. Today she is a deputy in Cuba’s National Assembly, a member of the Council of State, and a Heroine of the Republic of Cuba.

Espín said the approach by Cuba’s revolutionary leadership toward homosexuals

has been a process. “For a long time in this world there has been discrimination against homosexuals and transsexuals,” Espín said. After the revolution, Cuba faced a legacy of sexist prejudice against women and gays.

As the revolutionary leadership advanced the fight for women’s rights, promoted sex education, and expanded broader education, “we began to learn about discrimination and other problems faced by homosexuals,” the FMC president said. That process was aided by discussions with individuals in the United States and other countries where, as a result of the women’s rights movements there, advances had been made in combating antigay discrimination. “We say there can be no discrimination against women or homosexuals. Homosexuals have the same rights as everyone else to their personal life.”

Espín also replied to a question on whether there is child abuse in Cuba. Yes, she said, there are cases of sexual abuse and violence against children, although much less than in the United States or other capitalist countries. “Our laws prohibiting violence against children are very strong and the FMC works hard to combat it,” she said. Last April Cuba hosted an international conference on child abuse.

Another question was about the resurgence of prostitution in Cuba since the early 1990s, especially around the tourist centers. FMC leader Sonia Beretervide said that one of the first results of the advancing revolution was dismantling of the organized prostitution business that flourished in capitalist Cuba. The FMC worked to train women who had been prostitutes with skills that would allow them to work in productive jobs, to teach them to read and write, and to integrate them into the work of the revolution. “It was the women themselves who did this,” she said. “At first we thought this would be a long process, but we were surprised at how quickly organized prostitution virtually disappeared.”

With the economic crisis of the Special Period, prostitution in Cuba began to grow into a significant social phenomenon again. Unlike the pre-1959 period, Beretervide stated, women engaging in prostitution today do so “not as a means of bare survival but to get the latest fashions and other consumer products that are scarce and expensive in Cuba.”

As always, however, it is driven by economics and is a concrete expression of women’s second-class status.

“Prostitution involves a relatively small number of women today, but working with them is an important part of the work of the FMC,” Beretervide added. While pimps are dealt with as criminals, FMC members, social workers, and health volunteers are working in neighborhoods where prostitution is most widespread in order to integrate the women into jobs, school, and other productive activity. “This work requires individualized attention,” she noted.

After the meeting, many of the youth from the United States said that, for them, one of the high points of the exchange was the reading by an FMC member of a poem titled “Letter from a Cuban mother to an American mother.” The letter says that if the American mother’s son Robert comes to Cuba in peace, he will be welcomed by her son Juan to play baseball and be friends. But if the U.S. government sends Robert to invade Cuba as “a pirate,” he and the other invaders “will not remain alive.”

“That’s the kind of women’s organization I like,” remarked a student from Los Angeles during the dinnertime exchange of experiences that night.

## N.Y. meeting celebrates July 26 anniversary



Militant photos by Dean Hazlewood

**More than 500 people attended a New York meeting July 26 to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the attack on the Moncada barracks, the opening battle of the Cuban revolution. Held at the midtown Manhattan headquarters of Hospital Workers union Local 1199, it featured the speakers pictured above, (left to right) Luis Miranda of Casa de las Américas; Bruno Rodríguez, Cuba’s ambassador to the United Nations; and Rafael Cancel Miranda, Puerto Rican independence fighter and former political prisoner. Over 60 organizations sponsored the meeting. A taped message by Black journalist Mumia Abu Jamal who is on death row was played. Teresa Gutierrez, from the National Committee to Free the Five, urged those in attendance to join in demanding the U.S. State Department grant visas to the wives of two of the five Cuban militants locked up in U.S. prisons on frame-up charges of conspiracy to commit espionage, allowing them to visit their husbands. (More coverage in the next issue).**



# Tortilla workers sign up for union

Continued from front page

who has been active in the local organizing drive over the past few years. “We organize house calls, meetings, and regular handbilling. It has been a tough campaign, but a strong committee of workers from several different countries has come together. They know what they want and need, which is a union. I see a lot of support in the plant because the workers see this as their election. We’re there to show them we’re behind them.”

“All workers deserve dignity and respect in the workplace,” said Donna McDonald, president of UFCW Local 271. “UFCW Local 271 is committed to the Casa de Oro workers to make sure they have all of their rights under the law.”

The union effort at Casa de Oro is related to the campaign launched three years ago to organize thousands of food workers in the Omaha area. In May 2002 meat packers at the Swift Foods cattle slaughterhouse voted by a margin of 2-1 for union representation,

and in October of the same year they approved their first union contract.

This was the first union victory at one of the cut-and-kill operations in this area since the UFCW and a community group called Omaha Together/One Community (OTOC) launched an organizing drive in June 2000. Since then, workers at a smaller sausage plant voted for the UFCW. The union lost the election at Nebraska Beef, a slaughterhouse with close to 1,000 workers.

Four Swift workers joined Local 271 officials, other supporters, and representatives of OTOC for early-morning handbilling July 29 outside the large tortilla plant. They greeted the morning shift workers with a thumbs-up and neon-color posterboards in English and Spanish, which read “Swift workers, union-experienced, support you! Union yes!”

Workers from Bosnia, Vietnam, Mexico, Sudan, and countries throughout Latin America stopped to take leaflets, with some smiling and others stopping to talk. Some walked or drove by, refusing to take the leaflet.

Casa de Oro is located in an industrial

sector of Omaha where the unionized meat-processing plant Omaha Steaks is one of its neighbors. Many workers from these workplaces enter by the road in front of the plant, and several waved and showed their support for the organizing effort.

Benita Espinoza, a Swift kill-floor worker for nearly 10 years and participant in the victorious organizing drive at that plant, explained why she was at the plant gate to show her support.

“I think working in a place with no union is like having a car with no insurance,” she said. “I want the Casa de Oro workers to know that they’re not alone in their fight, and together we can make a difference in the lives of our families and ourselves. Now that the company has begun its campaign against the union, they need our support more than ever.”

Guillén said the union campaign will continue strong through election day. “If Casa de Oro workers win their union, it can inspire other workers to stand up for their rights as well,” she said.

*Lisa Rottach is a kill-floor worker at Swift and a member of UFCW Local 271.*

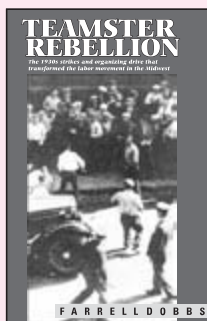
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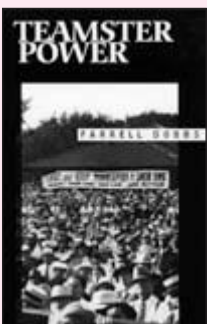
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PART THREE IN A SERIES

# The Minnesota Strike of 1934

Mass Protest Was Turning Point For American Labor Movement

IN 1934, TRUCK DRIVERS FROM TEAMSTERS LOCAL 574 IN MINNEAPOLIS, ALONG WITH THOUSANDS OF OTHERS IN SOLIDARITY WITH THEM, SHOWED THE WORLD THE TRUE MEANING OF TRADE UNIONISM.



*After a long summer that included “Bloody Friday” where 52 pickets were shot while trying to stop a wholesale grocery delivery, the workers won their settlement on August 22, 1934.*

Throughout the history of Minneapolis prior to 1934, truck drivers and other workers in the truck transportation industry suffered from miserable conditions. It was common for drivers and helpers to start work at two a.m. and continue until six p.m. They were low paid, often had to work seven days a week without any extra pay and if complaints were made, they were fired. When the economic crash came, their misery was intensified.

Workers in trucking and most other industries in the city were not unionized before 1934 and had to accept whatever conditions employers imposed. Many strikes were called between 1920 and 1934 and all suffered defeat. Business leaders were confident that the city would always be non-union. They were wrong.

#### Fight For Justice

The three strikes in February, May and June through August proved that business leaders, the police and national guard could not crush the forces of organized labor in what was previously considered the worst scab town in the country. Even when martial law was

declared, not a truck could move without a strike exception—given only to unionized milk, ice, coal and hospital trucks. In sympathy strikes, all of the taxi drivers and 35,000 building trades workers walked out. Tens of thousands attended mass protests and rallies.

During the first days of the strike, workers were beaten in the most brutal manner. Sixteen women were beaten unconscious after being lured into an alley where newspapers were being delivered. But the workers fought back.

#### The Battle of Deputy Run

Under the pressure of the strikers’ superior force, 2,000 uniformed police and deputies were forced to run for their lives from a hostile crowd in what was known throughout the country as “The Battle of Deputy Run.”

After a long summer that included “Bloody Friday” where 52 pickets were shot while trying to stop a wholesale grocery delivery, the workers won their settlement on August 22, 1934. The strike had far reaching effects, as they were a turning point for labor in the 30’s and marked the transition of Minneapolis to a union town.

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# Their morals & ours

The following is an excerpt from *Their Morals and Ours*, one of Pathfinder's Books of the Month for August. The author, Leon Trotsky, was a leader of the October 1917 Russian Revolution. Following the death in 1924 of V.I. Lenin—the central leader of the Bolsheviks and the Russian Revolution—a political counterrevolution by a privileged social layer, whose principal spokesperson became Joseph Stalin, led to the degeneration of the

## BOOKS OF THE MONTH

Communist Party in the Soviet Union and the Communist International. Trotsky led the international fight for the revival of genuine Marxism as it was expounded and practiced in the Russian Revolution and in the early days of the Comintern under Lenin's guidance. He wrote *Their Morals and Ours* in early 1938, while in exile in Coyocan, Mexico. It is copyright © 1969, 1973 by Pathfinder Press, reprinted by permission.

### BY LEON TROTSKY

Moralists of the Anglo-Saxon type... appear conscious or unconscious students of Viscount Shaftesbury, who—at the beginning of the eighteenth century!—deduced moral judgments from a special “moral sense” supposedly once and for all given to humanity. Supraclass morality inevitably leads to the acknowledgment of a special substance, of a “moral sense,” “conscience,” some kind of absolute, which

is nothing more than the cowardly philosophical pseudonym for God. Independent of “ends”—that is, of society—morality, whether we deduce it from eternal truths or from the “nature of man,” proves in the end to be a form of “natural theology.” Heaven remains the only fortified position for military operations against dialectical materialism....

Whoever does not care to return to Moses, Christ, or Mohammed; whoever is not satisfied with eclectic *hodgepodes* must acknowledge that morality is a product of social development; that there is nothing immutable about it; that it serves social interests; that these interests are contradictory; that morality more than any other form of ideology has a class character.

But do not elementary moral precepts exist, worked out in the development of humanity as a whole and indispensable for the existence of every collective body? Undoubtedly such precepts exist but the extent of their action is extremely limited and unstable. Norms “obligatory upon all” become the less forceful the sharper the character assumed by the class struggle. The highest form of the class struggle is civil war, which explodes into midair all moral ties between the hostile classes.

Under “normal” conditions a “normal” person observes the commandment: “Thou shalt not kill!” But if one kills under exceptional conditions for self-defense, the jury acquits that person. If one falls victim to a murderer, the court will kill the murderer. The necessity of courts, as well as that of self-defense, flows from antagonistic interests. In so far as the state is concerned, in peaceful times it limits itself to legalized killings of individuals so that in time of war it may transform the “obligatory” commandment, “Thou shalt not kill!” into its opposite. The most “humane” governments, which in peaceful times “detest” war, proclaim during war that the highest duty of their armies is the extermination of the greatest possible number of people.

The so-called “generally recognized” moral precepts in essence preserve an algebraic, that is, an indeterminate character. They merely express the fact that people in their individual conduct are bound by certain common norms that flow from their being members of society. The highest generalization of these norms is the “categorical imperative” of Kant.<sup>1</sup> But in spite of the

## South Koreans demand U.S. troops out



On July 27, the 50th anniversary of the end of Korean War, about 1,000 people protested at Imjingak, near Panmunjom, close to the “demilitarized” zone that divides Korea, to demand the withdrawal of 37,000 U.S. troops in the south.

fact that it occupies a high position in the philosophic Olympus this imperative does not embody anything categoric because it embodies nothing concrete. It is a shell without content.

This vacuity in the norms obligatory upon all arises from the fact that in all decisive questions people feel their class membership considerably more profoundly and more directly than their membership in “society.” The norms of “obligatory” morality are in reality filled with class, that is, antagonistic content. The moral norm becomes the more categoric the less it is “obligatory upon all.” The solidarity of workers, especially of strikers or barricade fighters, is incomparably more “categoric” than human solidarity in general.

The bourgeoisie, which far surpasses the proletariat in the completeness and irreconcilability of its class consciousness, is vitally interested in imposing *its* moral philosophy upon the exploited masses. It is exactly for this purpose that the concrete norms of the bourgeois catechism are concealed under moral abstractions patronized by religion, philosophy, or by that hybrid which is called “common sense.” The appeal to abstract norms is not a disinterested philosophical mistake but a necessary element in the mechanics of class deception. The exposure of this deceit which retains the tradition of

thousands of years is the first duty of a proletarian revolutionist.

In order to guarantee the triumph of their interests in big questions, the ruling classes are constrained to make concessions on secondary questions, naturally only so long as these concessions are reconciled in the bookkeeping. During the epoch of capitalist upsurge especially in the last decades before the World War, industry expanded almost uninterruptedly. The prosperity of the civilized nations increased—partially, too, that of the toiling masses. Democracy appeared solid....The rising line of progress seemed infinite to “common sense.”

Instead, however, war broke out with a train of convulsions, crises, catastrophes, epidemics, and bestiality. The economic life of humankind landed in an impasse. The class antagonisms became sharp and naked. The safety valves of democracy began to explode one after the other. The elementary moral precepts turned out to be even more fragile than the democratic institutions and reformist illusions. Lying, slander, bribery, venality, coercion, murder, grew to unprecedented dimensions. To a stunned simpleton all these vexations seem a temporary result of war. Actually they were and remain manifestations of imperialist decline. The decay of capitalism denotes the decay of contemporary society with its laws and morals.

<sup>1</sup>**Kant, Immanuel** (1724–1804)—German philosopher, developed theory of ethics based on universal moral law, the “categorical imperative.”

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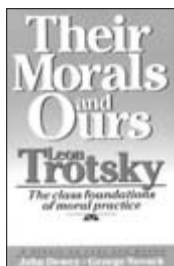
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**Don't waste time job-hunting**—The headline in the *Los Angeles Times* read: "Mexican official urges unemployed to be creative."



Harry Ring

**Finally, a fresh idea**—In a radio broadcast, Mexico's economy

minister, Fernando Canales, said the government would make cash available to help people who came up with good ideas for jobs. He emphasized the importance of creating your own job, even if it means making tacos or baking cakes.

**P.S.**—Reportedly the Mexican jobless ranks have swelled to their highest level since February 1999.

**Capitalism's best: screw the poor**—"Schools serving the poor miss goals—California educators say the overwhelming major-

ity of campuses with low income students failed to meet academic targets."

**Next, the death penalty**—The state of Delaware has dismantled its gallows. Built in 1986, it hung one person that year and switched over to chemical injections (Dunp?). The massive wooden structure was knocked down after area historical institutions rejected taking it as a gift.

**Better than we expected**—"Corporate reform's baby steps: The law to clean up Wall Street's worst abuses is getting mixed re-

views a year after its enactment. But some elements are a work in progress."—*Los Angeles Times* headline.

**Probably a maybe factor**—"Volkswagen profits eroded by slow sales"—News headline.

**Solidarity**—The Cleveland *Plain Dealer*, runs a weekly "Thankful Thursday" column, some of it tripe.

One we liked: "Thanks to the staff of an area nursing home for their efforts to protect their patients, even though they now have lost their jobs."

**How about cooking books?**—"NEW YORK—Federal prosecutors have reportedly opened an investigation into whether long-distance giant MCI defrauded other telephone companies of hundreds of millions of dollars."

**Los Angeles Times psst**—Walmart said it would partially obscure the covers of four women's magazines sold at its checkout counters. The decision was supposed to be an effort to sell as many copies as possible while addressing concerns expressed by some customers about racy cover lines in some magazine.

# Property and the origins of women's oppression

Continued from Page 10

were becoming owners of herds and land. Full-blown class society developed when the surplus product of the labor of all was expropriated and controlled by a tiny ruling class, which was patriarchal. The ideological rationalization of the "superiority" of men was developed to justify the oppression of this class against the rest of society and the abolition of the status of women under the matriarchy. "Mother right"—where kinship relations passed through the women, not the men—had to be done away with.

"The overthrow of mother right was the

world-historic defeat of the female sex," Engels said. "The 'savage' warrior and hunter," he explained, "had been content to occupy second place in the house and give precedence to the woman. The 'gentler' shepherd, presuming upon his wealth, pushed forward to first place and forced the woman into second place" because the division of labor outside the family had changed with the development of class society.

Or, as Reed outlined in *Problems of Women's Liberation*, "It is not nature, but class society which robbed women of their right to participate in the higher functions of

society and placed the primary emphasis upon their animal functions of maternity."

As for the pharaohs in ancient Egypt, the fact that they were male doesn't disprove the existence of social relations in which women were not oppressed in the earlier, prehistoric period of savagery and early barbarism.

Barbarism was the middle period between classless and class society, when the transition that resulted in the oppression of women took place.

Reed makes the point in the introduction Lobello refers to that "Barbarism

came in about 8,000 years ago, and gave way to the first urban populations from Egypt through Mesopotamia and India to China." This was precisely the period when the development of agriculture, a social surplus, and the concomitant development of a ruling class, began. By 3000 B.C.—the time of the unification of Egypt by the pharaoh Menes—not only agriculture and property, but substantial trade had developed. This was a society in which the respected status of women had long before been shattered.

Why is this debate on prehistory so important to class-conscious working people today? In her 1954 article "Anthropology: Marxist or Bourgeois?" Evelyn Reed explained, "To declare oneself on the side of the matriarchy as the earlier form of social organization, therefore, is to openly or implicitly declare oneself in agreement with the theory that primitive socialism or communism preceded class society. And that is the rub. To declare that primitive communism preceded class society is to admit that class society did not always exist and by the same token will not always exist. It is, in effect, to support the Marxist position and theory."

I hope this exchange will kindle in Tom Lobello and other *Militant* readers a desire to study or reread Engels' work, which takes up not only the origins of women's oppression, but of private property and the state, and the domination of society by ruling classes representing a tiny minority of the population. Understanding the material origin of these phenomena is central to advancing the struggle to rid humanity of class exploitation and oppression of any kind—especially women's oppression.

# U.S.-backed forces deployed in Liberia

Continued from page 5

prepared to expressly oppose deploying U.S. troops to Liberia, such an engagement appears to be ill-advised, unless a better case is soon made."

The editors of the *New York Times* took the occasion of the UN Security Council action to call upon the Bush administration to order the Marines ashore and "join the West Africans in trying to impose a ceasefire and stop the killing. While he hesitates, Liberians die."

In congressional hearings July 24, Joint Chiefs of Staff chairman Gen. Richard Myers warned of possible lengthy military involvement. Alluding to the ongoing civil war, Myers said, "It's not going to give way to any instant fix. Whatever the fix is going to be is going to have to be a long-term fix."

As the Nigerian troops deployed, a spokesman for Liberian president Charles Taylor reiterated that he would resign of-

fice August 11 but added that the president would leave the country only after war crimes charges lodged against him have been dropped. Washington has demanded Taylor's departure from the country before sending in troops.

In an interview with BBC, UN special envoy to Liberia Jacques Klein warned that if Taylor delayed his departure too much longer the offer to allow him to go into exile in Nigeria may be withdrawn. Despite the offer of exile, Klein added that Taylor must face justice once he has left the country. "I hope at some time a warrant would be served," he said.

West African states have hosted talks in Accra, Ghana's capital, between Taylor's government and the armed groups opposing it.

Two armed forces are arrayed against the Taylor regime. Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD)

is a loose association of military groups and defectors from Taylor's government. The second group, the Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL), emerged from a factional split in the LURD in March. Both groups are divided along ethnic lines—with Mandingos supporting LURD, and MODEL based largely among Krahn.

Neither group has demonstrated popular support among Liberians. The larger LURD has been unable to capture Monrovia after two months of heavy mortar bombardment of the densely populated center of the city. Some 1,000 people, mostly civilians, have been killed during the fighting.

As Taylor announced his plans to step down government troops were delivering what *Reuters* described as a "blistering" counteroffensive against LURD forces dislodging them from three strategic bridges entering the city.

# How AMFA won vote at United

BY ERNEST MAILHOT

CHICAGO—By a vote of 5,234 to 2,997, mechanics at United Airlines chose the Aircraft Mechanics Fraternal Association (AMFA) rather than the International Association of Machinists (IAM), which had represented them since the 1940s.

The results of the ballot were announced July 14, two months after the company imposed pay cuts. For months leading up to the recent union election, United Airlines management demanded and won massive concessions from unionized workers. The company used its December 2002 bankruptcy filing to threaten workers with a court-imposed contract with even greater concessions than the company demanded. The pilots union officialdom was the first to push for accepting pay cuts of 30 percent and other takebacks. The IAM leadership followed suit, speaking at union meetings across the country in favor of taking concessions as the only way to supposedly save jobs and the airline.

In late April, the mechanics accepted a concession contract that extends to 2009. Included in this deal are 13 percent wage cuts, new work rules, and the contracting out of all heavy maintenance work on United's fleets, which IAM officials had opposed in the past. These takebacks are widely seen as having contributed to the already existing dissatisfaction with the IAM officialdom and fueled the vote for AMFA.

Prior to the mechanics' vote at United, AMFA represented 11,000 workers, mainly mechanics, at seven airlines, including Northwest's 7,617 mechanics, and those

at Alaska and Southwest. With the addition of mechanics and related workers at United, AMFA has now more than doubled its membership.

Previously the most recent victory for AMFA came in January, when it won a union representation election against the Teamsters at Southwest, bringing another 1,700 mechanics into its fold. O.V. Delle-Femine, head of AMFA, announced that the union is now moving to represent mechanics at USAir and American Airlines.

In reporting AMFA's victory at United the big-business press—from the *New York Times* to the *Chicago Tribune*—referred to AMFA as a more "militant" and "combative" union, which is a false assertion.

The AMFA tops put forward a craft-union orientation that says "skilled" mechanics are better off bargaining separately from ramp workers, reservations agents and others. AMFA's company-minded officialdom organized these raiding operations to break off mechanics from the IAM, which has traditionally organized mechanics in common locals with ramp workers and other more poorly paid airline workers. Some IAM members voted for recertification out of a desire for a change from the officialdom's refusal to wage a fight to defend the interests of union members. The bureaucracy of the Machinists has sought to parry AMFA's challenge by adapting to its reactionary orientation. In their unsuccessful effort in late 1998 to repel the AMFA challenge at Northwest, for example, the IAM bureaucracy aped AMFA's craft mentality by establishing a separate district for mechanics.

# —25 AND 50 YEARS AGO—



Aug. 11, 1978

LIMA, Peru—Workers deputies in Peru's newly elected Constituent Assembly took the offensive at the assembly's opening session July 28.

Hugo Blanco, Victor Cuadros, and other deputies introduced a motion calling for an immediate end to the country's military government and for the assembly to assume all the legislative and executive powers of the nation..."

Debate on the motion was postponed until the next session of the assembly. However, the question has been posed: Will the assembly act as a servile tool of the military regime, or will it act as the representative of the Peruvian people?

The proposal of the workers deputies is that the Constituent Assembly use its authority "to implement an emergency plan that would include: full democratic liberties; reinstatement of the fired workers; and urgent measures to solve the economic crisis, which would have as their axis the nonpayment of the foreign debt, a general increase in wages and salaries, and free land for the peasants."

This is not what the government of Gen. Francisco Morales Bermúdez had in mind when it scheduled elections for the Constituent Assembly. But Morales Bermúdez has been caught between the extortionate demands of imperialism and the deepgoing radicalization of the Peruvian masses.



Aug. 17, 1953

Four million French workers are on general strike in a solid united front action of every section of the labor movement against the anti-labor decrees of the Wall Street-backed Laniel government. In a mounting movement that surged forward during all last week, the unions have halted rail, air, maritime, bus and subway transportation; paralyzed telephone, postal and telegraph service; and shut off electric power, gas and other utilities, and brought mines, metal works and construction building to standstill. All government offices, banks, insurance agencies, and municipal services are closed tight.

Not since the June 1936 general strike has France witnessed such a massive and united action of the working class. The movement, which began as a protest over Laniel's proposed "economy" decrees, quickly turned into a show-down struggle for political power between the workers organizations and the capitalist regime.

Wall Street and Washington are reeling at this body blow to their "cold war" schemes. This is the answer to their gloating over "troubles behind the iron curtain." The malicious chuckles are silenced. There is no joy in Wall Street. American capitalism now confronts in France the same class force that erupted against the Stalinists in East Germany last June 17.



# Fraud of Medicare ‘reform’

The Medicare “reform” bills approved by the Senate and House of Representatives foreshadow another round of assaults by Congress and the White House on social entitlements won by working people in the United States during mass struggles—particularly the labor battles of the 1930s and the civil rights revolution of the 1950s and ’60s.

The proposals pick up where initiatives by the administration of William Clinton left off. In his 1992 presidential election campaign, the Democratic Party candidate pledged to “end welfare as we know it.” He kept that promise by signing the welfare “reform” bill four years later, the first attack on the Social Security Act since World War II. Millions of working people have had that safety net taken away since Aid for Families with Dependent Children was gutted.

Like the attack on welfare, the new push to chip away at Medicare as a social entitlement has enjoyed bipartisan support from the beginning. Leading liberal Edward Kennedy is a key sponsor of the Senate bill, while President George Bush has endorsed both versions of the legislation, saying they are consistent with his own proposals of a year earlier.

In effect, these capitalist politicians are driving toward privatizing health care for retirees. The attack is hidden under the guise of allegedly meeting the need for including prescription drugs in Medicare. The heart of the changes, however, is not additional coverage of some medication expenses, but carrot-and-stick proposals—including stepped-up means testing—aimed at nudging people off government-provided Medicare and into the arms of for-profit “health-care providers.” If they wanted to expand Medicare, as some capitalists politicians claim, there’s a simple way: include prescription drugs free of charge in the existing government-guaranteed program.

The various proposals on the table will result in millions of working people 65 and older—many on fixed incomes—being forced to dig even deeper into their own pockets to pay higher deductibles and co-payments. It will also deepen the disproportionate impact on the health of Blacks and other oppressed nationalities.

To justify such proposals, Democratic and Republican politicians and media pundits argue that

Medicare is being strained to the breaking point. Costs are much higher than originally expected, they say, because people are living longer on average. Looking at the fact that people live longer today as a problem is a blatant sign of the dog-eat-dog reality and morality of capitalism.

There is a direct connection between the assault on social entitlements and broader attacks on labor. As working people face fewer possibilities of getting jobs and holding them, the capitalists’ attacks on social welfare programs take a bigger toll. The more Medicare is weakened, the more workers’ compensation is eroded, the less often unemployment benefits get extended, the larger the proportion of medical bills workers and their families must cover without government programs—the less confident we are. The more likely we are to rush right back out, begin looking for work, and take a job for one, two, three, four dollars an hour less.

Workers have a different class view, a different moral view of society. Elementary human solidarity is in our interests, not in conflict with them. We cannot make ourselves think of other human beings as though they do not, or should not, exist after the age of 65.

To the political vanguard of the working class, Social Security has always been about the battle to bring *all* welfare payments, *all* medical claims, *all* supplemental payments for education and child care into a comprehensive, nationwide, government-guaranteed entitlement. That is why the term “social wage” is useful. It describes something that goes beyond the wage any individual worker receives from an employer. It denotes what the working class and labor movement fight to establish as social rights *for all*. It is something that ties our class together.

But for the capitalists, Social Security was about making the smallest concessions necessary. It was about looking at actuarial tables to ensure that payments would never take much out of their potential profits or reduce their power over a divided and insecure working class. That’s how the exploiters still look at it.

For those who toil for a living there is no meaningful medical-care program, or any other social entitlement, that is not free of charge, for a lifetime, and for all.

# Lessons of Teamsters battles

A deep-going change in the attitudes of many workers and farmers—an increased hunger for solidarity, for fighting together in face of the attacks by the employer class—has marked working-class politics in the United States since at least 1997. Working people emerged then from a period of retreat, resisting the consequences of the speculation-driven boom of the 1990s and the assault by the imperialist rulers on working people worldwide that is sometimes described as “globalization.” As Socialist Workers Party national secretary Jack Barnes put it in “A sea change in working-class politics,” the opening chapter of *Capitalism’s World Disorder*, “The emerging pattern is taking shape, defined by the actions of a vanguard resisting indignity and isolation, whose ranks increase with every single worker or farmer who reaches out to others with the hand of solidarity and offers to fight together.”

As this process continues today, more workers become interested in learning from examples of the past when labor’s battalions were successful in scoring victories that altered the class relationship of forces in favor of working people. Under this kind of pressure, glimpses of such examples sometimes make it into the pages of official union publications, even though partially, without the whole story being told. This is the case, for example, with “The Minnesota Strike of 1934,” published in *Teamster* magazine and reprinted in this issue.

It is well worth reading the entire story as told by one of the leading participants, Farrell Dobbs, author of the four-volume *Teamsters* series published by Pathfinder Press (see ad on page 7).

The first volume, *Teamster Rebellion*, tells the story of the 1934 Teamsters organizing drive in Minneapolis. Dobbs, who emerged from the ranks as part of the class-struggle leadership of the strikes, describes how a fighting industrial union movement was built in Minnesota, helping to pave the way for the rise of the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO). In subsequent volumes, Dobbs outlines the 11-state Teamster over-the-road organizing drive in the 1930s, of which he was an architect. He also explains how many of labor’s gains during that period were set back because of the class-collaborationist course of the top union officialdom.

As Dobbs, who became SWP national secretary in 1953, put it in the “Afterword” to this series,

published in the last volume, *Teamster Bureaucracy*, the accomplishments of the rank-and-file militants who made Minneapolis a union town in the mid-1930s “were made possible through the interplay of two basic factors. One of these was the skillful and considerate leadership of the workers by revolutionary socialists. The other was our championing of trade union democracy. Full membership participation was encouraged in the organization’s internal affairs. Freedom to express all points of view was upheld, as was the workers’ right to set policy by majority vote.”

This situation, however, was unique to Minnesota, as the relationship of forces in the workers movement at the time was not as favorable to revolutionary socialists in other parts of the country.

“The misleaders were able to prevent the labor upsurge from going beyond the unionization of the unorganized mass production workers into the CIO, although much more was possible at the height of its energies,” Dobbs wrote. “They managed to tie the new industrial union movement to the Democratic Party, beginning with the 1936 elections, thereby keeping the workers mired in capitalist politics. By mid-1937, class-collaborationist norms were reestablished to a large extent in setting trade union policy. Reliance on help from the Roosevelt administration was substituted for use of the union’s full power, and a staggering setback resulted for the CIO with the defeat of the Little Steel strike” in 1937.

Since then, these misleaders have increasingly tied the labor movement to a course of subservience to the ruling class. That is why today the unions continue to be weakened—while at the same time a vanguard of militant workers and farmers has emerged, leading the resistance to the bosses’ offensive.

“As that contradictory situation unfolds,” Dobbs notes in his “Afterword” to the *Teamsters* series, “large numbers of workers can be brought, in stages, toward adoption of a class-struggle program required to defend their interests—if the left-wing forces in their midst proceed with the necessary patience and astuteness.”

This is one of the many invaluable lessons for today that working people will find in these books by Farrell Dobbs.

# Property and origins of women’s oppression

BY MAGGIE TROWE

BOSTON—In a letter to the editor published in the July 7 *Militant*, Tom Lobello asks whether a History Channel documentary on a Neanderthal archeological site in Germany showing differences in how men and women were buried, disproves the thesis that women’s oppression did not exist in primitive—that is, pre-class—society.

“I read the article in the June 16, 2003, issue about Engels’ *Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State*,” Lobello said. “In Lewis Morgan’s *Ancient Society* there are mentioned the three ages of human-kind: savagery, barbarism, and civilization, and how women were treated equally on account of the fact that there was no dominant patriarchy.

## REPLY TO A READER

“But I was watching a documentary on the History Channel which claimed there was archaeological evidence in Neanderthal burial sites that males were buried upright with pottery, food, and other artifacts for the afterlife, but that females were not buried this way. The conclusion was that, contrary to modern-day assertions that Neanderthal women were treated equally, such was not the case and they were treated poorly, on account of the fact that one could conclude that how a society buries its members also directly represents how that same society treats its living.

“So, who is right? Lewis Morgan or the History Channel? Also, in the age of barbarism, Egyptian society was male-dominated, because the Pharaohs were all men.”

### Lewis Morgan, Frederick Engels, and Evelyn Reed are right

I am convinced Morgan is right, along with Frederick Engels and Evelyn Reed. But let’s step back a moment and review some important facts.

Lewis Morgan propounded the theory, based in part on his lifelong study of the North American Iroquois communities, that prehistoric matriarchal societies where women were respected predate the later male-dominated societies. He, along with other early anthropologists, sought to understand the social origins of the family. He noted that matrilineal kinship—tracing family lines through the mother—or its vestiges existed among primitive peoples. Engels, who along with Karl Marx founded the modern communist movement, drew on Morgan’s work and supported his thesis in *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State*. Lobello cites Evelyn Reed’s introduction to that book, which the *Militant* excerpted.

### Neanderthal people did not place women in lower status

Did the Neanderthal people place women in a lower status? Definitely not. I didn’t see the History Channel program Lobello refers to, but I would caution him to avoid giving credence to such “scientific” assertions that try to impose the social relations of modern, class-divided society on prehistoric people. Many pseudoscientific articles, books, and radio or TV programs have appeared in recent years about prehistoric humans. Jean Auel’s *Clan of the Cave Bear*, part of her *Earth’s Children* series novels, is among the most notable. It presents Neanderthal society as more “sexist” than the modern humans who came to dominate in prehistoric times.

The hominids classified as *Homo neandertalensis* were an early form of human being. Archeological research in the Neanderthal valley, east of Dusseldorf, Germany, shows that this branch of the human family developed in Europe more than 100,000 years ago, and evolved as hunters and gatherers until they became extinct some 28,000 years ago. The Neanderthal people lived in the middle stage of the Paleolithic or stone age, which corresponds with the period of savagery Morgan and Engels describe.

I did some reading about Neanderthal burial practices. Evidence is spotty, and conclusions are contradictory. *Desolate Landscapes*, a thorough study of ice-age settlement in eastern Europe by John Hoffecker, notes that evidence of burials in open sites of that region are scant, and more poorly preserved than cave burials further west.

While some archeologists state that most of the individuals buried in Neanderthal sites were male, others report different findings. A University of Leicester professor notes that most Neanderthal skeletons are in a crouched position, contradicting the idea that men were buried upright and females otherwise. Israeli archeologists report that a cave in Tabun, Israel, “contains a Neanderthal-type burial of a female, dated to about 120,000 years ago.” Another archeologist reports that in a cave in Iraq, “archaeologists uncovered skeletons of a man, two women and an infant buried together.” Female remains were also discovered at the La Ferrassie site in France. I found no evidence to back up History Channel’s assertion that females were buried in a way demonstrating inferior social status.

### Differences do not equal oppression

Pseudoscientific claptrap aside, the level of social development of the Neanderthal people could not have provided the material foundation for class society and male domination. That doesn’t mean there were no differences in how men and women lived, died, and were buried. But these differences do not equal oppression of one sex.

As Engels explained, “The division of labor between the two sexes is determined by causes entirely different from those that determine the status of women in society. Peoples whose women work much harder than we would consider proper often have far more real respect for women than our Europeans have for theirs.”

In primitive society, before the development of a social surplus that enabled class society to be born, the fact that women were child-bearers and gatherers, while men were hunters, did not prevent women from actively participating in society. In fact, as Reed states, “It was the mothers who first took the road of labor, and by the same token blazed the trail toward humanity. It was the mothers who became the chief producers; the workers and farmers; the leaders in scientific, intellectual, and cultural life. And they became all this precisely because they were the mothers, and in the beginning maternity was fused with labor.”

### Rise of property resulted in ‘world-historic defeat of female sex’

Engels explained that with the advance of humanity through the development of agriculture, leading to a surplus, the societies that began to dominate were those in which some of the hunters, who were male,

Continued on Page 9



# Union tops misled East German strike

BY ANITA ÖSTLING

STOCKHOLM, Sweden—At the beginning of June, IG Metall, one of Germany’s largest unions, called a strike to push for shortening the workweek in eastern Germany from 38 to 35 hours. That would bring it in line with the rest of the country. Four weeks later, the union leadership called off the walkout without a settlement, admitting defeat. Large numbers of workers crossed the picket lines. It was the first time IG Metall has lost a strike since 1954. The walkout’s failure has led to an intensive discussion in Germany about the course of the labor movement in Europe’s largest country.

It is clear that the debacle was due to the top officialdom’s course of disregarding the terrible economic situation in the east, where unemployment is 18 percent and many workers are justifiably apprehensive about the possibility of further job losses.

More than 300,000 workers in Saxony and Berlin initially took to the picket lines. A month later, the strike affected Germany’s auto factories. Many had to close down for lack of parts and 10,000 workers were laid off. This led thousands of strikers to cross picket lines and return to work afraid of losing their jobs.

As picket lines crumbled, the IG Metall officialdom called off the strike. “The bitter truth is that the strike has failed,” said Klaus Zwickel, the union’s chairman. “There is no doubt IG Metall miscalculated,” Claus Eilrich, another union spokesman, told German television. “We misjudged the political situation and we estimated that the economic situation in Germany was more positive.”

IG Metall is one of Germany’s biggest unions with 2.7 million members. Earlier

this year it won a wage settlement of 4 percent after a strike. The effects of the defeat in the eastern strike may be profound in Germany.

Klaus Zwickel was due to resign his post at the union’s next constitutional congress. He will now leave earlier. A special IG Metall congress has been called for late August to elect a new chairperson. There is now a public fight on who is responsible for the defeat in the strike. Hundreds of workers have resigned from the union as a result. This comes on top of IG Metall losing 1 million members over the last 10 years due to factory shutdowns.

### A turning point for labor?

But more important is the discussion about the place of the union movement in Germany, especially in the east, and its weight for the future of labor’s battalions. “This could be a turning point for the labor movement in Germany,” said Klaus Zimmermann, president of the German Institute for Economic Research. “I don’t think it’s the end of collective bargaining, but it will definitely change the face of the labor movement.”

René Vits, union council chairman of auto-part supplier Federal Mogul, based in Dresden, said the following about the outcome of the strike to *Berliner Zeitung*. “This defeat will weaken unions for many years to come. It will lead to a clear isolation of the east. What should smaller, weaker unions do, when even IG Metall can’t push through anything?”

The strike took place as the German economy continues in a recession that began at the end of the 1990s. No upturn is in sight. Growth of the gross domestic product for this year is expected to be a mere 0.75 percent or even less. Production of consumer goods is down 2 percent. Production of new cars has declined 20 percent. Unemployment nationally is 10.6 percent.

Thirteen years after reunification the eastern part of the country still lags behind. Joblessness is almost double that of the west. The workweek is 38 hours, compared to 35 in the rest of the country for the same pay. Capitalists maintain that this is necessary to attract investment because of lower productivity levels in the east. Only about 30 percent of the workforce is under collective bargaining contracts.

The cost of reunification is one reason for the bleak situation. Over the past 13 years the government has poured \$700 billion into the east mostly for unemployment benefits



IG Metall member pickets June 23 at auto parts plant, Brandenburg, East Germany.

and other social programs in order to avoid a social explosion over the disparities between the two parts of the country. This has not boosted the German economy, but instead become a heavy burden.

Germany’s poor performance from its position as the leading economy in the European Union leads to continent-wide effects.

### Effects of strike across Europe

“The budget deficits of France and Germany, the two largest countries in the 12-nation euro zone, are expected to exceed 3 percent of gross domestic product this year and possibly next year, too,” said an article in the July 25 U.S. big-business daily *Wall Street Journal*. “If that happens, it would mean that for the third year in a row Paris and Berlin will have violated the terms of the so-called Stability and Growth Pact, which requires euro-zone countries to bring deficits into—or close to—balance within a few years, and threatens massive fines for noncompliance.”

“France and Germany have argued that those rules shouldn’t be strictly enforced so they can stimulate growth.” These are the two governments that initially pushed the hardest to impose this pact on other EU countries. The *Journal* pointed out that the euro zone countries—with a combined population larger than the United States and a GDP exceeding that of Japan’s, the world’s second largest national economy—are in the third year of an economic slump, with an average GDP growth expected to reach only 0.6 percent this year.

“The problems are not unique to Germany; you find them all over Europe,” said Michael Fichter, executive director of the

Center for Labor Studies at the Free University in Berlin. As Europe’s markets become more open, he said, unions are being viewed as an obstacle to competitiveness.

All governments in Europe, regardless of political combinations, aim at cutting the social wage amidst conditions of economic depression. In Germany the social security system is still virtually untouched. In March, Chancellor Gerhard Schröder presented a program, dubbed Agenda 2010, to “reform” the welfare system. His social-democratic government struck a deal with the opposition Christian Democrats for cuts in the health-care system. Citizens will now have to pay for medicine and for visiting doctors. Next along this course are similar agreements on pensions and labor laws.

“Cuts—at last!” was the headline of the main editorial in the July 23 issue of the Swedish conservative daily *Svenska Dagbladet*. An article in the July 10 issue of the paper had discussed the situation facing the union movement in a number of European Union countries in the aftermath of the defeat of IG Metall.

It pointed to unions in Italy not being able to stop the government’s new labor laws and said the union movement in France is on the defensive with no more than 2 million members nationally.

“Gerhard Schröder in Germany, Raffarin in France and Berlusconi in Italy have a golden opportunity to increase the reform pace in Europe,” the article said. “Primarily they have to deal with the crisis in the pension systems, health care and public spending—in other words the big structural issues that no politician dared touch as long as there was a strong organized opposition among the employees.”

## In New International no. 11 U.S. Imperialism Has Lost the Cold War



by Jack Barnes  
Explains why world capitalism has suffered a historic defeat in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. Includes: “Socialism: A Viable Option.” \$14.00

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## LETTERS

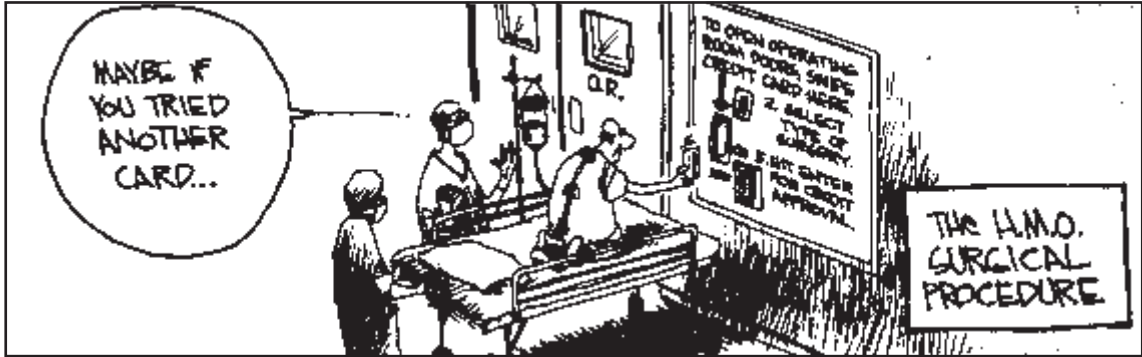
### Bush lies! Oil in Africa

The only thing George Bush is compassionate about that is Black in Africa is “oil.” I was watching the comedy channel (Fox News), unfair and very unbalanced, when a U.S. ambassador to Africa for years made the statement that in the next 10 years we, the U.S., will get about 25 percent of our oil from Africa. I had no idea Africa had oil at all!

I went to the Internet, typed “oil in Africa.” Pages of information. Bush meeting privately with leaders of 11 African nations. Cheney spotlighted West Africa as the fastest-growing source of oil and gas for the American market! Bush discussed a \$3.5 billion pipeline project in Africa that includes U.S.-based Exxon/Mobile Corp. and Chevron/Texaco Corp. These companies are to invest billions!

Now I hear from our president and his administration we are going to go to Liberia for humanitarian reasons. They are going to make it safe for oil companies to drill and ship oil!

When I heard this compassionate conservative administration was going to send billions of dollars to Africa for HIV AIDS, it didn’t make any sense. I thought maybe for the Black vote. Then, when no fight came from the Repuppetcan Party in Congress, something was



wrong. I knew they were not doing it to be nice people.

Now it is so clear. Just like the “L”iberate “I”raq “E”xcuse, Lie! The media and the American people went for the story. The war went well. There was no other plan, except save the oil wells, which was first.

Saying going to Lie-beria for humanitarian reasons, and we have a past with them because of being freed slaves from America, is so ridiculous! I am worried that the American people and the media are going for this story too. Please check into this.

Richard Whitey  
Las Vegas, Nevada

### Insurance scam

There are serious crimes oc-

curing right now against injured workers by insurance companies. When people are at their most vulnerable, they are denied medical and therapeutic care.

The saddest part of it is that the Worker’s Compensation Board and state governors are doing absolutely nothing about it. No one seems to care about injured workers. The insurance companies, if they were not obsessed with profit and were moral, would consider providing for injured workers a sacred trust.

We as a society look to them to take care of injured workers’ needs? Unbelievable!

The insurance companies are being allowed to exploit, re-injure, verbally attack and deny workers the things they need to get better. They are criminal and I do not see any discussion about this nation

wide invisible fist on some of our most vulnerable citizens.

How can anyone respect a country that treats its own people, especially injured and disabled workers, in this way?

Karen Hetherington  
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

### Democrats collapse

With the disappearance of the socialist camp and the rise of the United States as the only great power, the world is the victim of neoliberalism and neofascism.

I say the world because there is no corner of the earth that is not affected by this phenomenon that has brought a general economic crisis.

In the United States we have seen the collapse of the Democratic Party, which can no longer

be differentiated from the Republicans and cowardly supports the policies of constantly violating human, civil, and political rights of the American people.

In Latin America the traditional parties have joined this farce, some of a “Social Democratic” others of a “Christian Democratic” leaning.

In Europe the same thing happens with parties with these same names, that in reality have a rightist direction and represent the rich. Others, like the Spanish Socialist Workers Party, are not socialist or worker.

I believe the workers can only move forward with a political line. They have to forget all those parties that just represent the large interests wearing socialist, worker, and social-democratic disguises and create workers parties with workers leaders.

José Martínez  
Miami, Florida

**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.**



# Gov't whitewashes Queecreek disaster

BY JEREMY ROSE

PITTSBURGH—On July 24, 2002, company negligence at Queecreek Mining led to a disaster that trapped nine miners underground for 78 hours. On the event's first anniversary, Pennsylvania's Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) issued its final investigative report, whitewashing the true causes of last year's flooding and aiding the company cover-up of its responsibility.

State investigators rejected the contention of some of the trapped miners and of officials of the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) that Queecreek's bosses disregarded warning signs that miners were getting close to the nearby, water-filled Saxman mine. Instead, the report blamed inaccurate maps of the adjoining, abandoned mine.

"This is a story about insufficient maps," said DEP secretary Katherine McGinty. She announced new guidelines for issuing mine permits. These will give mine safety officials veto power over new permits, she said, and would compel companies to prove that they know the extent of adjacent mining.

Meanwhile, other investigations continue including by the federal Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) and by the Pennsylvania Inspector General's office.

UMWA officials had joined the lawyer of six of the trapped miners, Howard Messer, in criticizing a preliminary report the DEP released last November as "woefully inadequate." There is "little new in the Queecreek report," said the July 24 Somerset County *Daily American*, referring to the DEP verdict.

The report glosses over conditions in the mine and blames former mine and mining officials for inadequate maps of the Saxman Mine, which had been abandoned since the 1960s. At the same time, the report does show some of the problems in the process of issuing permits to the operators of Queecreek.

The facts revealed include: The map of the abandoned Saxman mine shows digging through 1961, while the mine was in operation until 1963; no maps in use at that mine met state requirements as "true, complete, and correct"; state authorities

approved a permit for Queecreek without the company reviewing coal production or county tax records for abandoned adjacent mines; no additional map search was conducted when Queecreek's permit was greatly expanded in 1999.

A retired miner in the area had warned of a large, dug-out cavity in the adjacent mine at the time.

Messer filed lawsuits May 16 at Allegheny County Common Pleas Court on behalf of



**Final miner is removed from Queecreek mine in Somerset, Pennsylvania, July 28, 2002. Nine miners were trapped for more than three days there when mine flooded with water. The company had disregarded warnings from residents and workers about impending danger.**

six of the nine trapped miners. They charge that a simple search of Somerset County tax assessment records by Queecreek Mine managers and their engineering firm would have revealed the true dimensions of the abandoned mine next door.

Unexploited coal reserves are taxed as property in Pennsylvania. About 3 percent of Somerset County's revenue reportedly come from unmined coal. When a coal seam is exhausted, taxes on underground

property are significantly lower. For this reason, mine owners have a substantial incentive to provide accurate information.

Tax records would have alerted the company that Saxman's groundwater-flooded void was hundreds of feet closer than their plans showed. Underground miners could have been prevented from breaching it.

Messer's lawsuits are based on a claim that mine officials had a legal obligation to use "reasonable care." He told reporters that someone at Mincorp—a strip-mining giant that owns Queecreek Mining—must have looked at the assessment records and suspected that something was wrong. Messer said he has uncovered a "paper trail" from the Somerset County Recorder of Deeds office to the Tax Assessor's office.

The lawsuits have been filed against Mincorp and its subsidiaries—PBS Coals, Inc., Rox-Coal, and Queecreek Mining Co. Musser Engineering is also a defendant.

Although McGinty and the DEP blame inaccurate maps of Saxman to explain away the Queecreek disaster, the tax records tell a different story. They reveal that detailed information about coal mining in the area was available—including at the Saxman mine.

"The records are only as good as what the coal companies give us," said John Riley, Somerset County Tax Assessor. "In this case, it looks like the old miners removed most of the coal in that tract. We don't take off the assessment unless they've proven to us that they mined out all the coal."

The paper trail began Jan. 1, 1951, when Saxman executives leased the rights to the "C Prime" coal seam near the village of Queecreek. Saxman mined the "Elias Bittner Tract" of coal until 1963. The 121 acres of coal taken out of the Bittner Tract formed the bulk of the underground lake pierced by the nine miners last year.

Citigroup, one of the nation's largest financial institutions with profits exceeding \$15 billion last year, is the largest single shareholder of Mincorp. In 1998, Citigroup and PBS managers seeking to salvage PBS from near bankruptcy announced a buyout of PBS and formed Mincorp.

It is the profit drive of these companies that's behind the Queecreek disaster and a rising number of accidents and deaths in the mines. The number of fatalities in U.S. coal mines, surface and underground, was up to 21 as of July 26—compared to 16 for the same period last year and a total of 27 for all of 2002. Underground deaths this year are double the same period in 2000.

## Canadian miner admits guilt for 1992 blast

### Co-workers don't believe Warren is responsible for mine explosion that killed nine

BY JOE YATES

VANCOUVER, British Columbia—The July 9 *Edmonton Journal* reported that Roger Warren has now admitted he was guilty of the explosion that killed nine gold miners 11 years ago during a strike at Yellowknife, Northwest Territories. Warren, a miner himself, had been convicted Jan. 19, 1995, for the deaths.

The walkout at the Giant Mine began as a lockout May 22, 1992, and lasted 18 months. At the center of the strike was on-the-job safety. Between January and April of that year there were 81 accidents in that mine. The previous year, compensation payments were 10 times higher than at the other gold mine in Yellowknife. The company had also fired 13 miners between November 1990 and the beginning of the strike.

Locking out the workers a day before the strike began, the owner, Margaret Witte, brought in scabs and hired security guards in an attempt to break the walkout. Throughout the strike, the police continually harassed the 240 members of Canadian Association of Smelter and Allied Workers (CASAW) Local 4. Police and security guards carried out attacks on the picket line. About 100 miners were charged; some went to jail.

On May 26 a 58-member Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) "tactical team" was flown up from Edmonton, Alberta. In July over 50 RCMP cops attacked a rally of 50 strikers and their supporters. They fired tear gas and discharged firearms in the air. Agnes Christensen, wife of striking Steve Christensen, was hospitalized overnight. She was pregnant at the time.

Striker Corey Wells described the violence he witnessed on the picket line. "It was being spurred on by the police," he said. "A lot of arrests were trumped up. Wayne Campbell got a \$1,000 fine for pointing his finger at a helicopter. If Peggy (Margaret) Witte hadn't brought in replacement workers this would not have happened."

The Giant Mine owners callously reopened the facility after the death of the nine scabs. The day of the explosion, the owners took one and a half hours to inform the police that it had taken place. It was common knowledge that explosives were often

transported on mine cars along with miners. An inspection the day after the explosion found dynamite with firing caps improperly stored in 20 locations in the mine.

The possibility that the explosion was an accident was never seriously considered. Instead, the company and the police used the deaths to attack the strike. The RCMP conducted more than 500 interrogations, often without the presence of lawyers for those questioned. Police harassed relatives and friends of strikers, including individuals living in other provinces. After the strike ended, more than 30 unionists and their families received letters confirming that their phones had been tapped. Between 30 and 40 undercover RCMP agents operated throughout the strike.

The battle became an important cause for the union movement across Canada and won support internationally. The strike finally ended in December 1993 with the union intact and a contract.

The explosion that killed the nine strikebreakers occurred Sept. 18, 1992. After intense police pressure, including 12 interrogations, Warren confessed in October 1993 to having set off the explosion and was charged for the nine deaths. During his trial, however, he insisted he was not guilty, and maintained his innocence until this year.

Warren, now 59, was convicted on nine counts of second-degree murder and sentenced to life without chance of parole for 20 years.

According to the *Journal* article, Warren confessed in January this year to two Edmonton lawyers, Phil Warner and Jeff Champion. The attorneys are acting on behalf of the widows and children of those who died, in a civil lawsuit set to start in Yellowknife September 26. Warren didn't intend to harm anyone, the article adds, but wanted to shut down the mine. He thought that a rail car full of men would pass unharmed, and instead an ore-train with protruding dump arms would trigger a bomb. The blast would shake up the driver but not kill anyone.

Fellow strikers who know Warren well refuse to believe that he is responsible for the deaths. Al Shearing, a former striker, told *Militant* reporters, "People have to know

Roger to know what he is up to. He was not capable of doing what was done."

Bill Schram, a former president of the union local, told the *Ottawa Citizen*, "I didn't believe it the first time, and I don't believe it now. I don't think he's capable of having done it physically, mentally, or any other way." Harry Seeton, the president of the local during the strike, is also quoted by the *Citizen*, saying: "I still feel that he is not guilty. I know inside he didn't do it. Roger is a very, very peaceful person."

In May of last year the Toronto-based Association in Defense of the Wrongly Convicted started to look into Warren's case. They have now dropped the inquiry at his request. According to the *Journal* article, one factor that led Warren to admit guilt this time was his concern that the Association lawyers were searching for evidence on others who might have set the bomb, including Al Shearing.

## Alabama miners laid off without notice

BY BRIAN TAYLOR  
AND CLAY DENNISON

BIRMINGHAM, Alabama—With no more than a day's notice, in some cases through an answering machine message, PinnOak Resources laid off over 40 percent of the workforce at the Oak Grove mine here July 20. PinnOak bought Oak Grove and another mine in West Virginia from U.S. Steel less than a month ago. The company simultaneously threw a similar percentage of miners at the West Virginia mine onto the streets.

More than a dozen of the laid-off miners had moved here recently from as far as Kentucky, West Virginia, and Oklahoma to work at the mine. Now, tied into one-year-plus apartment leases and other obligations, these workers face steep challenges. Unemployment compensation in Alabama is one of the nation's lowest, with maximum benefits of \$210 a week. "Some of the miners have to figure out how they are going to survive with no job or go back home," commented one Oak Grove miner, who asked that his name not be used. "It's just wrong."

PinnOak president Benjamin Statler told miners that a "review of staffing levels" would take place.

Miners here, members of United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) Local 2133, are questioning the legality of the no-notice layoff, viewing it as a probable violation of the WARN Act, which mandates 60 days notice for layoffs exceeding a certain size. Workers are entitled to 60 days pay under these circumstances. The act contains broad loopholes for the employers.

PinnOak claims the layoff is "temporary," possibly lasting six months. The company has given no guarantees all workers will be recalled, but has told the press that "a significant number" might be called back after "staffing issues" are resolved.

Employment office personnel said that if workers have no return-to-work date they are not considered "temporarily" laid off.

Several workers have filed grievances over layoffs out of seniority.

*The authors are members of UMWA Local 2133 and are among those laid off.*