

# THE MILITANT

INSIDE

**Bolivia: workers protest sale of gas for imperialist profit**

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A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

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## *In an act of war, Tel Aviv bombs Syria for first time in 30 years*

BY PATRICK O'NEILL

Israeli jets struck deep inside Syria on the morning of October 4, the first such raid on Syrian territory since its 1973 war against Egypt and Syria. The assault registered the spreading of the war in the Mideast.

At the same time, Tel Aviv's armed forces attacked targets in the Gaza Strip, using helicopter gunships to destroy two houses. Israeli troops also took up positions inside the West Bank city of Jenin.

The Israeli government seized on the suicide bombing in Haifa the previous day,

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## Thousands rally in N.Y. for rights of immigrants

BY RÓGER CALERO

NEW YORK—Tens of thousands of supporters of the rights of immigrant workers rallied here October 4 in Flushing Meadows-Corona Park in Queens. The rally was the final event of the Immigrant Workers Freedom Ride, a cross-country caravan of 18 buses that carried 900 unionists and immigrant rights activists from 10 different cities to call for legalizing the status of millions of undocumented workers living in the country today. The two-week-long action was organized by the AFL-CIO, together with a number of immigrant rights groups.

The organizers of the event called on the government to legalize the status of

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## Socialist Workers candidate: 'struggles by immigrants strengthen all workers'

BY SUSAN LAMONT

TARZANA, California—"You're speaking of 'we'—but there isn't just one big 'we' in California or in the United States. There is 'we' the working people, on one hand, and 'they' the employers and their government, on the other. As working people we need to understand that we have everything in common with the workers and farmers in other countries and nothing in common with the bosses right here," said Joel Britton, Socialist Workers candidate for governor of California.

Britton was responding to the question, "What should we do about protect-

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## Utah coal miners set up pickets in fight for union

Locked-out workers win solidarity from fellow unionists

BY MARCO ANTONIO RIVERA

PRICE, Utah—Coal miners set up a picket line October 3 at the entrance to the Co-Op mine, located near the town of Huntington, about 20 miles south of Price in central Utah.

"Miners united will never be defeated," some 50 workers shouted in Spanish in front of a video camera operated by a young member of the Kingston family, which owns the mine, also known as C.W. Mining Company or Canyon Mining Co.

These union supporters were in a festive mood. They chanted, waved United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) picket signs, and pointed their fingers at the company camera in front of this mine portal.

"We've been eager to start the picketing so that every worker and everyone around here knows we're not going anywhere and that we're going to get our jobs back," said Jaime Rodríguez, a picket captain and a coal miner at Co-Op for 14 years.

"It's October and the bosses might think this is the end of it," he said, "but this is just the beginning. Our union representative reported that we will have brothers from the [UMWA-organized] Deer Creek mine and from other mines in the region and the country come to our picket line. I can't wait to see my supervisor's face when he sees this."

On September 22, all 75 miners walked out of this underground mine. They were protesting unsafe working conditions and the suspension of a co-worker for union activity. The company fired and locked out the workers, who vowed to continue their



Militant/Alicia Guerrero

**First day of picketing at Co-Op mine, October 3. Miners have been receiving solidarity from other unionists, and spouses have organized a women's auxiliary (see page 3).**

fight and to organize into the UMWA.

On the picket line, miners held up signs listing some of their demands. These included, "Protest the unfair labor practices of Co-Op, we want our jobs back," "We want a safe workplace," and "We are fighting for dignity and respect." Miners proudly wore UMWA hats they had received earlier that week at the union's national convention in Las Vegas, Nevada, which pledged to back the locked-out miners.

The day before, at an event held at the UMWA District 22 offices in Price, min-

ers received the first shipment of donations for the UMWA-organized food bank. The newly established women's auxiliary had organized many families to bring their children to the union offices to get information about medical assistance programs and other available social entitlements such as food stamps.

Representatives from the Association of Utah Community Health (AUCH) were on hand to answer questions about health-care facilities that are available and

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## Venezuela: gov't communications building is target of grenade attack

Big-business media promotes actions against Chávez

BY ARGIRIS MALAPANIS

CARACAS, Venezuela—Two individuals riding a motorcycle threw a hand grenade at the headquarters here of the state telecommunications agency, Conatel, around midnight on October 3. The glass entrance to the building was blown in; no injuries were reported. This was the second armed attack on government facilities in

two weeks. A bomb blast on September 19 had damaged the barracks of the presidential Honor Guard located in front of Miraflores, the presidential palace.

"What happened is the result of the use of the media to incite violence," said Venezuelan information minister Jesse Chacón about the attack on Conatel. He was referring to shrill calls by opposition

politicians, publicized by the big-business media that day, for protests against the government of President Hugo Chávez in response to measures taken against one of the main opposition TV stations.

Earlier on October 3, Conatel technicians had seized seven transmission dishes and an antenna from the privately owned

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## 'Militant' backers offer matching fund to boost donations for replacement camera

BY PAUL PEDERSON

Contributions from readers have begun to arrive in response to a fund appeal to offset the \$4,000 cost of replacing the *Militant's* stolen digital camera and lenses. Two supporters of the paper have offered to match contributions, dollar for dollar, up to \$500.

On September 10 the *Militant's* brand-new Canon EOS 10 D digital camera was stolen along with three lenses at an event in New York covered by a *Militant* reporter. An appeal for contributions to replace this valuable equipment was launched three weeks ago.

In response to political developments in Venezuela, however, funds were borrowed to buy a camera and lens right away. A

two-person team of *Militant* editor Argiris Malapanis and Carlos Cornejo from Vancouver, Canada, have been reporting from Venezuela since September 26, as readers can see from the firsthand coverage in this and last week's issue. The accompanying photos were taken with the new camera equipment, which allows digital pictures to be downloaded directly and sent to the *Militant's* office immediately by e-mail.

Contributions have already arrived or are being sent from supporters of the socialist newspaper in Miami, Boston; Tucson, Arizona; and North Carolina.

Please send your contribution, earmarked for the photo equipment fund, to the *Militant* at 152 W. 36th St. #401, New York, NY 10018.

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# Workers at tortilla factory in Nebraska vote ‘union yes’

BY LISA ROTTACH

OMAHA, Nebraska—Workers at the Casa de Oro tortilla factory here voted September 23 to organize a union in the plant. Around 110 of the 205 workers—54 percent—voted “union yes,” casting ballots for the United Food and Commercial Workers union (UFCW).

“It was such a tight vote, but we came out on top,” said one worker, who asked that her name not be used. Now the union supporters must convince those who voted “no” to join the union, she said.

The organizing campaign got under way in February as UFCW organizers and Casa de Oro workers organized house visits and broader meetings to build the base of union support in the plant. They collaborated with activists in Omaha Together One Community (OTOC), a community organization that has been active in several union-organizing efforts.

Organizers distributed union leaflets at the plant gate in four languages. Tortilla production is spread over three shifts, and involves workers from Bosnia, Vietnam, and a number of countries in Latin America, along with U.S.-born workers.

The drive to unionize Casa de Oro is one of the most recent UFCW organizing efforts in this city. It built on a union-OTOC campaign launched in June 2000 to organize Omaha meatpacking workers. In May 2002 this campaign scored its first success at a cut and kill operation, when meat packers at the Swift cattle slaughterhouse voted for union representation by a margin of two to one.

Since then, workers at a smaller sausage plant have voted to join the UFCW. The union also suffered a reversal with a lost election at Nebraska Beef, a slaughterhouse with close to 1,000 workers.

Two days before the September 23 election some 15 Casa de Oro workers gathered with families, organizers, and supporters of the union-building effort for a picnic at a local lake. Workers from the tortilla plant and other factories spoke briefly about their struggle, stressing the importance of

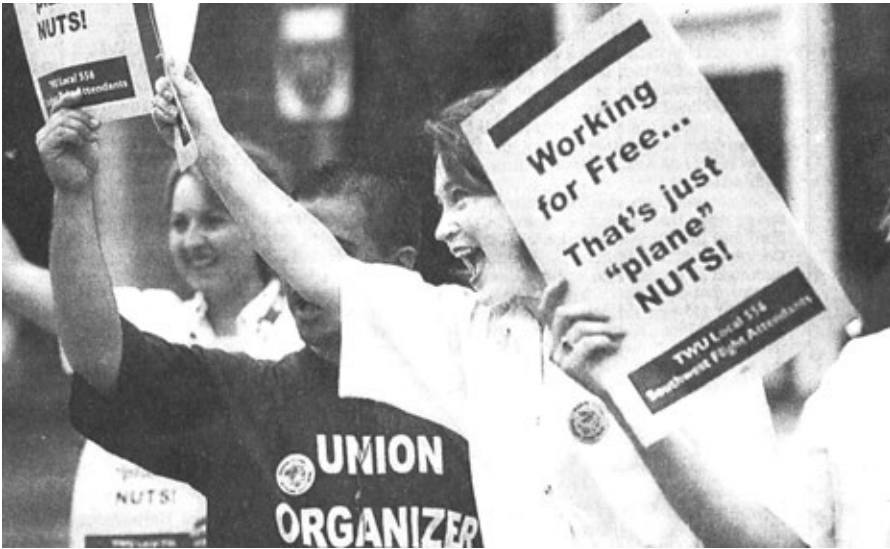
sticking together in the face of company attacks. “The company has tried to intimidate us by saying they’d shut down the plant,” said one man with nine years on the job. “They threaten to fire us. But we just get fired up!”

Martin Cortez, a Swift kill floor worker and union steward with 24 years seniority, was one of 10 workers at the picnic from the cut and kill plant. Winning the union at Swift gave workers “a way to defend ourselves, to organize to win respect,” he said. “My co-workers and I are here today to share our fight and experiences with these fellow workers, and the fight that continues as we work to build the union inside the plant. These kind of fights will continue anywhere that people are being treated unjustly and inhumanely.”

Many Casa de Oro workers took pro-union flyers with them to distribute inside the plant the next day. On September 23 supporters of their fight assembled outside the plant gate at each shift change to encourage a “union yes” vote. From 10:00 p.m. to after midnight students from Creighton University, four Swift union activists, and one Casa de Oro worker joined organizers and OTOC members beside the security gate to welcome the third shift. Swift workers held signs saying, “Victory is only minutes away, union yes!” and “Swift workers say union yes!”

“Although we’re not inside the plant with

## Southwest Airlines flight attendants demand a contract and an end to unpaid overtime



Southwest Airlines flight attendants cheer as passing cars honk to support them at Houston’s Hobby Airport September 18. The flight attendants, members of Transport Workers Union Local 556, have been negotiating for 16 months for a new contract. Signs refer to one of their demands—an end to unpaid overtime. The company requires the attendants to clean the planes for free between flights. The airport action was called in response to Southwest’s insistence that the union call an end to its public protests.

the workers, we are committed to helping them better their workplace,” said Adam Young, a 20-year-old Creighton sophomore. Kelly Orbik, 19, said, “I’m sure more students would come out if they saw how glad the workers are to see our support.”

Casa de Oro workers now face a fight to win a contract. “It’s been a long road and the journey has just begun,” said Jared Westbrook, a 21-year-old worker who helped lead the fight. He joined co-workers and fellow unionists from the Swift plant onstage at the September 27 Omaha rally

for the Immigrant Workers Freedom Ride, during a section of the program set aside for workers involved in local organizing victories.

“This election shows us that a large company is vulnerable,” Westbrook said. “Our next step is to negotiate a contract to say what we want, not what they want to give us.”

*Lisa Rottach is a kill floor worker at the Swift and Co. plant in Omaha and a member of UFCW Local 27.*

# New York protesters: jail racist thugs

BY DON PANE

STATEN ISLAND, New York—Nearly 100 people rallied outside Staten Island Borough Hall here September 21 to protest recent racist attacks.

On September 1, Rachel Carter, an 18-year-old college student from South River, New Jersey, was visiting friends here. Carter, who is Black, and five friends who are white or Latino, were going for a walk at

Crescent Beach Park when confronted by a gang of white youth who screamed, “Nigger go home” and other racist slurs.

Refusing to be intimidated, Carter and her friends refused to leave, and sat on a bench.

Five of the racists jumped on each of Carter’s male friends. A broken bottle and a sickle were used in the attack. When Carter tried to intervene, she was badly beaten.

One of Carter’s friends called 911. The racists fled when the cops arrived. Carter told the press that the cops refused to arrest one of the racists who returned to the scene of the attack. “Sources said the cops were spotted putting one suspect into their patrol car, then letting him go after driving around the corner,” the New York *Daily News* reported September 9.

Carter said the cops refused to take a report on the attack and told her and her friends to return to New Jersey. The five drove themselves to a hospital in New Brunswick, New Jersey, for medical treatment.

No police investigation into the racist assault took place until four days later, when Joan Carter, Rachel’s mother, and another parent of one those attacked went to Staten

Island to file a formal report with the police department and to talk to reporters.

Within a few days 11 people were arrested and four were charged.

At the September 21 rally, Debi Rose of the Staten Island African-American Political Association told the crowd, “We need to reject this idea that ‘boys will be boys.’ They need to be prosecuted!”

Another speaker, Edward Josey, president of the Staten Island NAACP, said, “No one should be subjected to any kind of racial assault, be they Black or white. When someone is confronted with any kind of racial remarks, physically attacked, and told to go back where you belong, they have had their civil rights and human rights violated.”

The protest was initiated by City Council members Charles Barron and Yvette Clarke, and Eric Adams, head of 100 Blacks in Law Enforcement.


Sheila Andrews came to the protest to “let people know about the racism here. I’ve lived here 20 years and have experienced the racism in education and economics.”

The two cops who came to the scene of the September 1 attack were suspended from the police department two days before the rally.

THE MILITANT

*Free the prisoners at Guantánamo!*

Washington’s arrest of three men stationed at the U.S. naval base at Guantánamo, Cuba, puts a spotlight on its continued imprisonment there, without charges or trial, of some 660 men from 43 nations it labels ‘unlawful combatants.’ Read the ‘Militant’ for truthful coverage from a working-class standpoint.



Prisoner at Guantánamo is taken for interrogation

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# Utah miners begin picketing Co-Op mine

Continued from front page

to help those who are eligible to register for assistance programs. A short program preceded the distribution of food.

Jesús Salazar spoke for the leadership committee of the miners at Co-Op. "I am speaking of behalf of a committee of representatives that has been working to advanced this fight over the past month," he said. Salazar introduced the women's auxiliary organization as one of the important accomplishments of the miners' fight. He welcomed everyone and expressed thanks for their participation and solidarity.

"[UMWA] President Cecil Roberts told us at our convention that our union will do what ever is necessary to help you," said Warren Oviatt from District 22. He said he would be administering the miners' food bank in Huntington, where most of the miners live.

"This union has taken on and won against much more powerful opponents than the Kingston Family," Oviatt said. "I can assure you we will win this fight."

"My grandfather was a coal miner," said Edward Armour, who was representing the Salt Lake Central Labor Council. "I have also done some jobs in ventilation systems for coal mines as a sheet metal worker," he added, "so I know what is like underground, and I have loads of respect for miners. Look at the pictures that are hanging from the walls of this hall," he said, pointing to portraits of UMWA members going back a century. "You will find pictures of my family. And now your families join them. The Central Labor Council is with you and will continue to do so until you win. *Si se puede!* [Yes we can]," he concluded.



Militant/Alicia Guerrero

**Locked-out miners and supporters picket Co-Op mine October 3**

"You are not alone," said Corey Hilton, an organizer for the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, who was speaking for a coalition of building trade unions in Salt Lake City. Workers from Co-Op explained that Hilton had been instrumental in organizing this first food shipment. He had met the coal miners the previous week at the send-off rally for the

Immigrant Workers Freedom Ride in Salt Lake City.

"Your fight is our fight," said Darryl Terk, a Communications Workers of America organizer who explained that he spoke for the 1,700 CWA members in Utah.

"It is an honor to be among such courageous miners," said George Neckle from Utah Jobs with Justice. The miners gave

thanks to Neckle for inviting the UMWA to the immigrant rights march in Salt Lake City. "We normally don't do this kind of hands-on work," said Gina Cornia, who spoke in Spanish for Utahns Against Hunger. "We normally do work related to achieving grants and passing legislation in Congress that pertains to making food and nutrition accessible to people," she said. "But when we learned about your fight, we decided we had to come today." A photographer from the Price *Sun Advocate* took pictures of the coal miners and their new backers outside the District 22 offices.

On the morning of October 4, miners reported they succeeded in getting four out of seven workers to either turn back or join the picket line. They were either coming in or just getting off work. One of these workers reported that the bosses were working very hard trying to operate the mining equipment to try to get some coal delivered. "But yesterday they couldn't get any out because of some belt problems," he said. Workers also report that stockpiles at the coal load are also down.

"We've tried to change the situation in this mine before," said Jaime Rodríguez. "But the company was successful in pushing us back. My cousin was fired on my fourth day on the job because he had been trying many years ago to organize what we are doing today," he said.

"But with the UMWA and the way we are united, it will be different this time."

## Miners' spouses organize into the struggle

BY ALICIA GUERRERO

PRICE, Utah—At a meeting on September 23, when more than 70 miners at the Co-Op mine heard the bosses had refused to back down on their intent to fire one of their co-workers, they decided to organize a struggle against this and other injustices at the mine.

They also discussed the need to involve their spouses in this fight to get the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) organized at the mine.

Three coal miners who are women volunteered to contact the wives and organized a meeting that same night.

"At one of the meetings, a miner raised the idea that the women get together to involve the families in support of the fight. Eighteen women attended the first meeting. At the second meeting there were even more new faces," said Ana María Sánchez, 24.

At the first meeting Sánchez and Berthila León, both of whom work at the mine, reported why the miners were out of work and why they were fighting for a union. The miners' wives knew their husbands were out of work, but only three knew what any of the issues were. They decided to organize a yard sale in nearby Huntington to raise funds for the fight.

León, who helped organize the yard sale, said \$250 was raised from the two-day sale. The wife of one of the miners volunteered her house for the sale. A big sign saying "Yard sale—Help the unemployed miners at Co-Op" was put in the yard. The miners also went door-to-door in Huntington handing out fact sheets on the fight and telling people about the yard sale.

A retired miner came by and said he knew workers from the nearby Deer Creek mine who wanted to help. The women told him how to contact the Co-Op miners, and that day he took Lou Shelley, president of UMWA Local 1769 at the Deer Creek mine, and other local members to meet the miners. One of the Deer Creek miners contributed \$50 to the yard sale.

Many other people came over and expressed support for the miners' fight against Co-Op. Another \$50 contribution was made by a member of the local Catholic church that many of the miners attend.

Another yard sale was held in Price the next weekend. Rosa Salazar, who helped organize it, said "We are not just standing by with our arms crossed. They see that we are with them."

Zamaria Salazar, also a member of the women's auxiliary, said, "It's important to be together with our husbands in support of this fight. There have been so many in-



Militant/Alicia Guerrero

**Members of the women's auxiliary committee at a yard sale they organized to raise funds for the miners locked out at the Co-Op mine. Ana María Sánchez, a coal miner at Co-Op who helped organize the auxiliary, is seated in the middle. Zamaria Salazar, also a member of the committee, is standing behind Sánchez to her right.**

justices—mistreatment, low wages."

Wives and other family members are invited to attend many of the miners' meetings where the fight against Co-Op is discussed. At these meetings, reports from the women's auxiliary are given. Five wives of miners attended the September 18 Immigrant Rights Freedom Ride rally in Salt Lake City, Utah. One miner said, "My wife attended the Salt Lake City rally and now she is into this."

The women's auxiliary also sent a repre-

sentative to be part of the miners' delegation that participated in the recent UMWA convention in Las Vegas, Nevada.

On September 28 members of the auxiliary cooked a barbeque for the miners and their families. A Mexican-born coal miner from Colorado donated two goats that were barbequed and used to make a stew. Rice, beans, and homemade tortillas were also served. Several Mexican miners who work at other mines in the area attended to lend their support to the fight.

## Australia strikers: no givebacks

BY LINDA HARRIS

SYDNEY, Australia—"We will win if everyone sticks together as we're doing. We'll win with solidarity. The company is starting to hurt," James Addo told fellow unionists on the picket line at Rheems, a plant here that produces hot water heaters. Addo is the Australia Manufacturing Workers' Union (AMWU) shop steward at Rheems.

Some 320 members of the AMWU and the Australian Workers' Union are fighting for a union agreement at Rheems that will protect their working conditions and entitlements, including pension and redundancy payments in case of layoffs, as well as provide a wage increase.

Over the past month the workers have been taking rolling industrial action to support their claim. The company has refused to negotiate on the issue of entitlements and has locked out the workers each time they have had a stop-work meeting. The union-

ists responded to these strong-arm tactics by setting up picket lines and turning away trucks delivering parts.

During the last four years the company has "restructured" while markedly increasing production. Workers who have left the plant have not been replaced. Overtime has been cut, which means a take pay cut for most of the workers there. "Train fares have gone up, medical costs have gone up, and supermarket prices too. We need a decent wage increase," Addo said.

The workers are also pressing for improved long service leave and provisions for maternity and paternity leave. But the main sticking point with the company is its refusal to guarantee workers' entitlements.

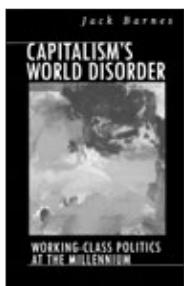
Addo said they were aware of what workers at companies such as HIH, Ansett, and Metrosheff faced. These companies collapsed and workers lost everything. "The company says 'trust the boss' but we want our entitlements guaranteed," he said.

### Recommended reading from Pathfinder

#### Capitalism's World Disorder

"A new pattern is being woven in struggle today as working people emerge from a period of retreat, resisting the consequences of the rulers' final blow-off boom, of 'globalization'—their grandiloquent term for imperial arrogance and brutal assaults on human dignity the world over. The emerging pattern is taking shape, defined by the actions of a vanguard whose ranks increase with every single worker or farmer who reaches out to others with the hand of solidarity and offers to fight together."

—Jack Barnes, "A Sea Change in Working-Class Politics" \$23.95. Available in Spanish and French



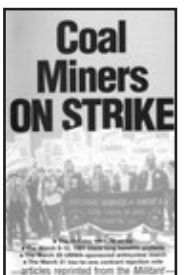
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# ‘Immigrants’ struggles strengthen all workers’

**Continued from front page**  
ing our borders?” asked by a teacher at the Sherman Oaks Center for Enriched Studies at a September 30 assembly. Don LaFraniere, who teaches social studies at the high school, had invited Britton and several other gubernatorial candidates in the October 7 recall election to speak to the assembly, which drew nearly 300 high school students over two class periods.

The socialist candidate called for an end to all factory raids, deportations, “no-match” Social Security letters, and secret detentions of immigrant workers, which have stepped up under both Democratic and Republican administrations in California and nationally.

“I am for international working-class solidarity, and am completely against what the wealthy rulers of this country do with the borders, trying to divide us. I solidarize with those who say, ‘We didn’t cross the border—the border crossed us.’” Britton concluded, drawing applause from many of the students.

This slogan of immigrant rights protests expresses the reality of the United States today, in which the working class has been transformed by a massive wave of immigration—where millions of working people go back and forth across the U.S.-Mexican border for everyday job and family reasons.

At the end of the assembly, students crowded around the socialist literature table set up at the front of the room by the Young Socialists for Britton.

“That’s my mother!” said Andrea Contreras, a 17-year-old senior, pointing to a front-page picture of the *Militant* of the September 20 rally in Los Angeles to send off the Immigrant Workers Freedom Ride bus caravan. “I agree with what Joel Britton said,” Contreras told the *Militant*. “There shouldn’t be any borders. People shouldn’t be penalized for coming here trying to find a better life for their families.”

Many at the assembly took copies of the “Vote Socialist Workers” appeal to working men and women in uniform, and several students signed up to find out more about the campaign. One of the campaigners was Christal Ramjattan, a student who had arrived from Miami the previous day to join the activities of the Young Socialists for Britton for a week.

The debate on immigration continued later that morning when Britton spoke at a candidates’ forum sponsored by the Humanist Association at California State University in Los Angeles. He expressed a sharply different point of view from the eight other candidates who participated.

One of those, Douglas Anderson, a mortgage broker and right-wing politician, says in his campaign literature that “the state...is in shambles. If you take a look at our educational system, our budget, and everything else...it all comes back to illegal immigration.” At the forum, he called for closing the border with Mexico and enforcing it with the National Guard. He decried the new state law allowing

people to get driver’s licenses without having a Social Security number. Other candidates expressed a range of views on these questions, with several echoing Anderson’s positions.

### Immigrants strengthen working class

“The Socialist Workers Party’s position is in favor of driver’s licenses for everyone who needs one—to drive to work or for recreation or any other purpose,” Britton said, referring to Gov. Gray Davis’s earlier stance that he would only sign a law that restricted immigrants’ licenses to those who had jobs and needed to drive to work, an untenable position he later dropped. “We also believe that immigrant workers should have full rights to an education, to medical care, and in every other sphere of life.”

The socialist candidate explained, “The immigration of workers from Mexico and elsewhere is strengthening the capacity of working people here to fight. They bring their experiences of struggle with them. We see this today in the meatpacking, garment, coal mining, and other industries. We can all learn what the word *huelga* [strike] means.”

“I think it is outrageous to consider any human being ‘illegal.’ A century ago when there was a huge wave of immigration from Europe, there was no big paperwork that people had to go through, no green cards they had to get. People just came, to work in the factories and to farm.” At the Cal State-Los Angeles forum, Britton was wearing a “No concessions” button from the United Food and Commercial Workers union (UFCW), given to him by a campaign supporter. The contract covering some 71,000 Southern California supermarket workers at Vons, Ralphs, and Albertson’s stores was due to expire at midnight on October 5, and union members were expected to vote on a contract proposal a few days later. The supermarket



Militant photos by Robin Mace

**Tens of thousands rallied October 4 in Flushing Meadows Park, Queens, at the close of the Immigrant Workers Freedom Ride. Many came as part of union contingents, like hotel workers pictured above.**

owners are demanding major concessions in wages and medical benefits.

“The UFCW’s ‘no concessions’ position is an example of working people digging in their heels to defend what we’ve won from past struggles,” Britton told the audience. “I join with these union members today and will join them on the picket line if they go on strike.”

In the Los Angeles area, Young Socialists for Britton teams also campaigned at a protest against tuition hikes held September 24 at Cal State-Northridge, at the September 27–28 Latino Book Fair held at Exposition Park, and at a September 28 demonstration against the U.S. occupation of Iraq. On the evening of September 28, Britton attended a dinner hosted by a worker from the UFCW-organized Farmer John meatpacking plant here that drew two

dozen workers from his neighborhood.

Traveling to the Napa Valley in northern California, Britton spoke to 18 students from the Hispanic Club at Napa High School on October 2. The meeting was arranged by Vicente Ramírez, one of the Young Socialists for Britton campaigners. Ramírez, 18, graduated from the high school last year and now attends Napa Valley College as a freshman. After the meeting, Britton, Ramírez, and other Young Socialists for Britton from San Francisco headed over to the college to campaign for several hours. Among those they met were three members of the Latina Club on campus, who invited Britton to return to Napa to speak to their group. Nearly 20 students also signed up for the Government Club, which Ramírez helps to organize. They plan to bring Britton back to campus to speak as soon as possible.

## Thousands rally for rights of immigrants

**Continued from front page**  
immigrant workers, guarantee equal legal protection on the job to all workers regardless of immigration status, and shorten the long wait for relatives of U.S. residents who have applied for residency.

Many of the demonstrators brought their own hand-made signs with a multitude of slogans including “Amnesty now,” “Stop the deportations,” “No human being is illegal,” and “Legalize yes, criminalize no.”

Thousands of marchers, most of whom were from New York City and the Northeast region, came with union contingents, wearing colorful T-shirts with their union logos. Among the most sizable were delegations of health-care workers organized by the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) Local 1199; garment workers from Local 23-25 of UNITE, the Laborers International Union (LIUNA) Local 79, and the Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees (HERE). Workers organized by Local 1445 of the United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) from Boston came in three buses sponsored by the union.

Many of the participants were Spanish-speaking workers, but there were also significant numbers of immigrants from Haiti, the English-speaking Caribbean, South Asia, Korea, and China. Feeder marches were organized by community organizations, local mosques, and churches in Queens and Brooklyn. Many came holding flags of their native countries with signs in different languages. Smaller groups of students came from Brown and Columbia universities, as well as Sarah Lawrence College, Wesleyan, Yale, and other campuses.

Two days earlier the caravan had converged in Washington, D.C., for a rally and a day of lobbying for immigration legislation. On the way to New York they stopped in Jersey City, New Jersey, for a rally of 1,000 at Liberty State Park.

The initiative for the Immigrant Workers Freedom Ride was launched two years ago by HERE, a union with a large immigrant membership. HERE helped spearhead an effort that led the AFL-CIO executive board to reverse its position in 2000 and declare its support for amnesty for undocumented

workers already living in this country. The labor federation’s previous long-standing position advocated the deportation of undocumented workers and gave support to other anti-immigrant policies of the U.S. government.

### Pro-Democrat ‘defeat Bush’ theme

The rally’s sponsors put forward a broad demand that the U.S. government establish “a road to citizenship” but did not advocate any concrete legislation or other measures. At the rally in Washington, speakers expressed support for a bill that would grant legal status to some 500,000 farm workers and to undocumented workers who have lived in this country for five years and have graduated from a U.S. high school.

At the New York rally, AFL-CIO president John Sweeny praised the “hard working, law-abiding immigrants who built this country.” He stated that the fight for immigrant rights is a struggle for the entire labor movement.

Linda Chavez-Thompson, AFL-CIO executive vice president, John Wilhelm, president of HERE, and other top union officials who spoke at the rally gave remarks along similar lines.

A number of Democratic Party elected officials also spoke, including Congresspeople John Lewis of Georgia, Nydia Velásquez and Charles Rangel of New York, and members of the New York City Council. New York archbishop Edward Egan, representatives of several immigrant rights organizations, and a few of the bus riders addressed the rally as well.

A dominant theme of the speakers’ remarks was to urge the defeat of George Bush in the 2004 presidential elections and to vote in a Democrat. Many blamed the Bush administration for the attacks on the rights and standard of living of working people. A similar theme had been present from the launching of the Freedom Ride. At the sendoff rally in San Francisco, for example, Democratic governor Gray Davis was a featured speaker and union officials used the platform to call for a “no” vote in the California recall election threatening Davis’s administration.

## —MILITANT LABOR FORUMS—

### NEW ZEALAND

#### Christchurch

**Behind the Hysteria against Genetic Modification.** Militant Labor Forum. Speaker: Stuart Needham, Communist League. Fri., Oct. 17, 7:00 p.m. 129 Gloucester St.

## — CALENDAR —

**WASHINGTON, D.C.**  
**March for an End to the Occupation of Iraq; Money for Jobs, Education and Health Care; Fight Back against the Patriot Act.** Sat., Oct. 25. Sponsored by Act Now to Stop War and End Racism (A.N.S.W.E.R.) and United for Peace and Justice.



# ‘Militant’ sub drive is off to a good start

BY PATRICK O’NEILL

One week into the international drive to win new and long-term readers to the *Militant*, *Perspectiva Mundial*, and Pathfinder books, Marco Antonio Rivera reported October 5 that many of the locked-out miners at the Co-op coal mine in central Utah were “very happy” with the coverage in the socialist press of their fight to organize a union.

“Dozens of workers bought copies of the special *Perspectiva Mundial* supplement, and were sitting reading it together and to each other before one organizing meeting,” Rivera said. The supplement contains the article, “Coal miners in Utah fight for a union,” which reports the facts about how the union fight began. “One miner bought an extra copy, framed it, and hung it on his wall.”

Four of the locked-out workers have bought subscriptions to the Spanish-language monthly in the past two weeks.

The firsthand accounts of the miners’ fight have attracted new readers across the country, helping to get the international drive off to a brisk start. As can be seen in the chart, campaigners are ahead of the pace right now, having sold 134 *Militant* subscriptions, 100 subscriptions to *Perspectiva Mundial*, and 54 books.

On October 4 a team of *Militant* cam-

paigners in Utah selling door-to-door in a trailer park reported that all the workers they met there declared support for the miners. One invited the sellers in for a 45-minute discussion, in the course of which he took out a *Perspectiva Mundial* subscription and bought a copy of the Spanish-language edition of *The Working Class and the Transformation of Learning: The Fraud of Education Reform under Capitalism*, by Jack Barnes. He told the team that hearing of the Co-Op mine fight had encouraged him and his co-workers to discuss organizing a union.

Sales drive organizers in East Coast cities said rallies for the AFL-CIO-organized Immigrant Workers Freedom Ride provided a big opportunity to introduce workers to the socialist press and books on revolutionary politics.

Some 50 campaigners from Atlanta, Boston, Detroit, Houston, New Jersey, New York, Northeast Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, and Washington, D.C., took part in the October 4 immigrant rights rally in New York. They sold 26 *Perspectiva Mundial* and 22 *Militant* subscriptions as well as \$1,220 worth of Pathfinder books and pamphlets to people at the event and on buses providing transportation to and from it.

Afterward, the three Socialist Workers candidates for New York City Council—Luis Madrid, Paul Pederson, and Olga Rodríguez—met demonstrators at a socialist open house at a nearby restaurant. Several people who attended the event said it was their first encounter with the Socialist Workers campaign. One was a new *Militant* subscriber and medical student



Militant/Patrick O’Neill (above), Robin Mace (inset) Olga Rodríguez, Socialist Workers candidate for New York City Council District 1, campaigning among demonstrators at October 4 rally in Queens, New York, concluding the Immigrant Workers Freedom Ride.

from Albany, New York, who told campaigners of the impact that a 1960 speech by Argentine-Cuban revolutionary leader Ernesto Che Guevara, entitled “To be a revolutionary doctor you must first make a revolution,” had on her. She had read the speech on an Internet site.

Three days earlier, on October 1, *Militant* supporters in New Jersey set up two morning campaign tables at Rutgers University in Newark to inform students about a meeting that afternoon featuring Mary-Alice Waters, president of Pathfinder Press and a member of the National Committee of the Socialist Workers Party.

Waters explained how workers and farmers in Cuba had successfully organized a fight for state power and carried out a

socialist revolution just 90 miles from the mightiest imperialist power on earth. Some 50 people attended the meeting, titled “U.S.-Cuba Relations: Why Washington’s Cold War Doesn’t End.”

Two people subscribed to the *Militant* and one to *Perspectiva Mundial* after the meeting, reported Mike Taber from Newark. People crowded around the Pathfinder table, buying more than \$110 worth of titles to add to the \$85 taken in earlier.

Taber noted the high proportion of subscribers who have taken advantage of the 25 percent discount they are offered on any one Pathfinder book. Of the 23 subscribers signed up in the drive so far in Newark, he said, 13 have bought at least one Pathfinder title.

Militant/Perspectiva Mundial Fall Subscription Drive September 27–November 23: Week 1							
Country	Militant Goal	Sold	%	PM Goal	Sold	Book Goal	Sold
SWEDEN							
Stockholm	8	3	38%	3	1	5	3
Gothenburg	10	3	30%	2	2	5	3
SWEDEN Total	18	6	33%	5	3	10	6
NEW ZEALAND							
Auckland	15	3	20%	1	0	5	0
Christchurch	12	2	17%	1	0	6	2
N.Z. total	27	5	19%	2	0	11	2
UNITED STATES							
Los Angeles	60	17	28%	30	8	35	0
Omaha	18	5	28%	38	7	15	3
Twin Cities	45	11	24%	35	3	15	0
Seattle	25	6	24%	6	0	10	0
Des Moines	25	5	20%	12	7	15	2
Detroit	25	5	20%	8	3	15	2
Utah	10	2	20%	10	5	8	1
New York	75	14	19%	35	11	40	0
Chicago	40	7	18%	25	7	25	1
Houston	25	4	16%	10	0	20	0
NE Pennsylvania	20	3	15%	8	0	10	0
Boston	35	5	14%	25	20	25	0
Tucson	7	1	14%	2	0	0	0
Western Col.	15	2	13%	10	3	0	0
San Francisco	50	6	12%	20	1	40	2
Washington	25	3	12%	12	4	12	1
Birmingham	18	2	11%	3	0	5	8
Tampa	20	2	10%	8	1	10	0
Newark	55	5	9%	20	1	25	13
Pittsburgh	25	2	8%	2	0	12	0
Atlanta	40	2	5%	17	8	25	5
Miami	42	2	5%	12	3	21	0
Cleveland	15	0	0%	5	1	10	1
Philadelphia	30	0	0%	7	1	7	1
U.S. total	745	111	15%	360	94	400	40
CANADA							
Montreal	12	2	17%	6	0	15	0
Toronto	25	4	16%	5	1	15	1
Vancouver	30	2	7%	5	0	15	0
CANADA total	67	8	12%	16	1	45	1
UNITED KINGDOM							
London	25	4	16%	5	2	10	5
Cent. Scotland	8	0	0%	0	0	4	0
UK total	33	4	12%	5		14	5
AUSTRALIA	30	0	0%	5	0	15	0
ICELAND	15	0	0%	1	0	10	0
Int'l totals	935	134	14%	394	100	505	54
Goal/Should be	950	124	13%	400	50	500	63
IN THE UNIONS							
	Militant Goal	Sold	%	PM Goal	Sold	Book Goal	Sold
AUSTRALIA							
AMIEU	4	0	0%			1	
CANADA							
UFCW	10	0	0%	2	0	8	
NEW ZEALAND							
MWU	2	0	0%	0		1	
NDU	2	0	0%	0		1	
Total	4	0	0%	0		2	
UNITED STATES							
UNITE	25	5	20%	22	4	12	1
UMWA	13	2	15%	3	0	6	0
UFCW	50	3	6%	75	11	30	2
Total	88	10	11%	100	15	48	3

AMIEU—Australasian Meat Industry Employees’ Union; Efling—Union of unskilled workers; LIVS—Food Workers Union; MUA—Maritime Union of Australia; MWU—Meat Workers Union; NDU—National Distribution Union; UFCW—United Food and Commercial Workers; UMWA—United Mine Workers of America.

## Final effort needed to meet fund goal

BY ANGEL LARISCY

In the final stretch to complete the Socialist Workers Party-Building Fund, supporters around the country have stepped up the collection of pledges to the fund. In some cities they have raised their goals and sought additional pledges to help meet the national goal of \$80,000. Nearly \$24,000 remains to be collected in the final week and a half. The fund drive ends October 15.

From Washington, D.C., Glova Scott reports that socialist workers who are members of the United Food and Commercial Workers union at a local packinghouse received donations from two co-workers.

Fund-raising meetings featuring public presentations on key political questions facing working people have been held in cities across the country.

Ryan Scott of San Francisco reports that a successful event was held September 27 at New College in San Francisco’s Mission District to hear Wendy Lyons, a Socialist Workers Party leader in Los Angeles, speak about the crisis of imperialism and the prospects for building the revolutionary workers movement. The audience responded to a fund appeal by Young Socialist Chessie Molano by contributing close to \$1,700 toward the San Francisco goal of \$8,000. Many of those present had been campaigning for Joel Britton, Socialist Workers candidate for governor of California, and were more than glad to contribute to the party that is offering the only revolutionary working-class perspective in the election campaign.

In Seattle, Olympia Newton, organizer of Young Socialists for Britton in California, spoke on “The Road of Moncada and Party Building Today.” Connie Allen reports that more than \$1,400 was collected at the meeting.

Dave Prince, a member of the National Committee of the Socialist Workers Party, spoke in Atlanta at a program entitled “Defend the Cuban Revolution: Its Lessons for Fighting Workers and Youth Worldwide.” Ned Measel reports that the audience included a sewing machine operator who had heard about the event from socialist co-workers, and a warehouse worker originally from Cuba attending his first socialist event in the United States. They along with others at the meeting contributed and pledged enough for

Atlanta supporters to decide to raise their local goal to \$6,800 from \$5,200.

In addition to Atlanta, Twin Cities and Des Moines fund supporters have raised their goals in the past couple of weeks. Pledges to the fund now stand at \$84,500.

Fund organizers have until Saturday, October 18, to send in payments to be included in the final chart in issue no. 38 of the *Militant*. All payments should be sent to SWP, 152 W. 36th Street, Room 401, New York, NY 10018. Please make checks payable to the SWP.

### \$80,000 Party-Building Fund July 12–October 15: Week 12

	Goal	Paid	%
Tampa	1,800	1,761	98%
Cleveland	1,000	855	86%
Detroit	2,500	2,100	84%
Newark	3,500	2,915	83%
Seattle	6,000	4,815	80%
NE Pennsylvania	2,000	1,570	79%
Atlanta	6,800	5,275	78%
Utah	1,100	820	75%
Los Angeles	7,500	5,540	74%
Des Moines*	2,000	1,460	73%
Miami	1,800	1,315	73%
Twin Cities	5,100	3,670	72%
Boston	2,800	2,015	72%
Houston	3,500	2,455	70%
Western Colorado	2,700	1,805	67%
New York	10,000	6,111	61%
Birmingham	1,400	830	59%
Chicago	4,200	2,436	58%
Philadelphia	3,200	1,600	50%
Pittsburgh	3,600	1,735	48%
Washington, D.C.	2,700	1,175	44%
San Francisco	8,000	3,100	39%
Omaha	1,300	470	36%
Other		1,661	
Total	84,500	57,293	72%
Goal/Should be	80,000	71,125	89%
*raised goal			



# Bombing in Caracas

**Continued from front page**  
Globovisión TV station. The equipment was used by the station to broadcast live reports. The government said the measure was taken because Globovisión was broadcasting on a frequency it is not authorized to use and because it had repeatedly refused to comply with regulations.

Globovisión is one of four nationwide TV stations that the opposition coalition Coordinadora Democrática (Democratic Coordination) has been using to publicize its campaign against Chávez’s government. The opposition, led by the main employers’ association, Fedecámaras, has used these stations as part of several attempts to topple Chávez: promoting a short-lived military coup against Chávez in April 2002, a two-month bosses’ “strike” earlier this year to undermine the government, and more recently an effort to hold a referendum to recall the president. Each time, mass mobilizations by working people have pushed back the bosses’ efforts.

“This is the first step they are taking to shut down the channel,” Globovisión director Alberto Federico Ravell charged. Opposition politicians immediately got on the airwaves to call for protests against what they described as a new government attack on “freedom of the press.” Hundreds of people surrounded the Globovisión building in an angry demonstration as Conatel technicians were removing the equipment.

Meanwhile, the TV channel continued to broadcast much of its programming, using the signals of television stations sharing a similar political slant. A Globovisión spokesman interviewed on the evening news October 3 equated the Conatel seizure with government tolerance of land takeovers by the peasants. This is a sign of “democracy’s funeral,” he declared.

Chacón denied the charge that the government is moving to shut down the TV channel. He said Globovisión must apply for authorization to recover the confiscated equipment, which could be granted in 90 days, if the station meets its obligations under existing law to apply for a different frequency.

Later that day, National Guard troops used tear gas and rubber bullets to disperse a smaller action outside the Conatel building, after opposition-organized protesters started throwing bottles and cans of paint at the state telecommunications headquarters.

The U.S. embassy in Caracas issued a statement siding with the opposition. “We see as unacceptable any action by a government to coerce or silence any media for expressing opposition to government policies,” the communiqué said, according to the October 4 *El Nacional*. The U.S. State Department made a similar statement.

**Smears tie Chávez to ‘terrorists’**  
Five days earlier, *U.S. News and World*

*Report* had published an article alleging that the Venezuelan government has ties both with “Arab terrorists” operating out of the country’s Margarita Island and with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), which has been waging guerrilla warfare against the Colombian government for four decades. The article, by Linda Robinson, cited unnamed U.S. government officials as sources for its assertions. On October 1 Chávez went on national television denouncing the claims by Robinson as “disgusting,” “cynical,” and “irresponsible.” He demanded that Washington clarify its stance on these charges by stating whether “they are true or false.”

Chávez has drawn the wrath of the U.S. government and its backers in the Venezuelan bourgeoisie for taking measures that cut into the prerogatives of big capital, including an agrarian reform law and a bill strengthening state control over the country’s oil, gas, and other mineral resources. Washington’s hostility has also been fueled by closer economic and political ties between Venezuela and Cuba, and by Chávez’s public criticisms of the U.S.-led wars and occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan.

After failing to overthrow Chávez through last year’s coup and the most recent bosses’ “strike,” the pro-imperialist opposition has focused again on organizing a referendum to recall the president. On September 12 the National Elections Council (CEN) rejected a petition by the Coordinadora Democrática



Security guard surveys glass entrance to Conatel, the state communications agency, in Caracas after it was shattered by a grenade blast on October 3.

for such a referendum on the grounds that the opposition collected signatures prior to the mid-point in the president’s term, an election law violation. The CEN then issued new, stricter rules for such referenda.

The Coordinadora Democrática filed a request October 1 with the elections board for a new petition campaign to hold a recall referendum. The same day, the governing Fifth Republic Movement, Chávez’s party, filed similar requests to petition for referenda to recall some 45 opposition politicians who are deputies in the National Assembly, state governors, and mayors. The CEN subsequently accepted all these requests. Most political forces now expect that these

two competing referenda will take place by February.

“If he’s not cornered yet, then at least he’s in a blind alley where the only way out is through a referendum,” said opposition leader Antonio Ledezma, referring to Chávez.

Many working people here, however, see it differently. “This is not a battle between Chavistas and anti-Chavistas,” said Graciela Rojas, a peasant leader in Veroes, Yaracuy state, in northwestern Venezuela, in an October 2 interview there. “This is a battle between the workers and the bosses, between the rich and the poor. Remember, we have prevailed three times so far.”

## Tour in Canada tells truth about Cuban 5

BY JOHN STEELE

TORONTO—Around 500 people turned out for a public meeting here to build support for the campaign to free five Cuban revolutionaries jailed in the United States since 1998 on frame-up charges of conspiracy to commit espionage. Held at a University of Toronto auditorium in downtown Toronto, the September 29 event was organized by the local Free the Cuban Five Committee and the group Science for Peace, in conjunction with the Canadian Network on Cuba.

The featured speakers were Irma González, a university student and daughter of René González, one of the five prisoners, and Aleida Guevara March, a Cuban doctor and daughter of Ernesto Che Guevara. Che was a leader of the Cuban Revolution who was murdered in 1967 by Bolivian troops during an internationalist mission there.

The Toronto meeting launched a two-week national speaking tour by the two Cubans.

René González, Gerardo Hernández, Ramón Labañino, Antonio Guerrero, and Fernando González were arrested

by U.S. cops in 1998 and held in solitary confinement for 17 months. In late 2001 a Miami court convicted them of a number of “conspiracy” charges and imposed jail sentences ranging from 15 years to a double life term. They were dispersed to five different maximum security prisons across the United States. Millions of Cubans have demonstrated in solidarity with them and an international campaign is under way to fight the frame-ups.

The five prisoners explained in court that they were in Florida to gather information on plans by right-wing counterrevolutionary organizations based in the United States to carry out terrorist attacks against Cuba. Such assignments, they said, are elementary measures of self-defense by the Cuban government.

“The people of Cuba support my dad and the others who have been jailed,” said Irma González. “We need international solidarity to put pressure on the U.S. government.” Earlier in the day she and Guevara March had been warmly received by 150 students who attended a meeting at George Brown College.

The U.S. government “is afraid that

the example of Cuba could be multiplied throughout Latin America,” said Guevara March. “There is always economics behind it. They fear the loss of their control over natural resources if other nations follow the example of Cuba.

In response to questions, González and Guevara March talked about recent actions by the Cuban government to defend Cuba against U.S.-sponsored subversion, the activities of the Cuban Five in the U.S. prisons, and the situation facing the Cuban Revolution today.

### Ideas more powerful than weapons

“For us, ideas are more powerful than weapons,” said Guevara March. “Through what we call the ‘Battle of Ideas’ we are fighting to prepare a new generation of Cubans who did not participate in the revolution itself. They were born with the rights already established by the revolution. We can’t offer them designer clothes or good shoes and we can’t isolate them from the world in which we live. We can offer them the principles of the revolution.

“There are a few in Cuba who accept the U.S. lies about Cuba and are dedicated to overthrowing the revolution in collaboration with Washington,” Guevara March said. “But anyone who tries to threaten Cuba’s sovereignty or the lives of Cubans will be dealt with under Cuban law. Cuba is a country at war. The U.S. blockade is an act of war. We need and have a legal system that defends us.”

Asked her views on the international campaign led by Washington to condemn Cuba for the recent conviction and execution of three persons who hijacked a ferry in April, endangering the lives of crew and passengers, Guevara March said: “I can assure you if the United States ends its blockade, and if it ends its aggression against us, that day we will drop the death penalty.”

“My Dad and the other prisoners are respected by the prison population,” González said. “After their trial when they went to prison, they were applauded. They have made friends. They are teaching people to read and write. They are doing a beautiful job winning respect for Cuba. The other prisoners know they are not there because of criminal activity. One drug dealer said he would never sell drugs in Cuba because he supports Fidel.”

Participants in the meeting noted the connections between the fight to free the five Cubans and other struggles for justice, including the one to free the 21 Pakistani and Indian immigrants jailed in Toronto on August 14 without charges on suspicion of being threats to “national security.”

## Jailed Cuban revolutionary: ‘U.S. gov’t can’t break us’

The following message by Gerardo Hernández, one of five Cuban revolutionaries being held in U.S. prisons, to supporters of the campaign for their release was dated September 12, the fifth anniversary of their arrest.

Hernández along with Ramón Labañino, Fernando González, Antonio Guerrero, and René González are currently serving prison terms of between 15 years and a double life sentence after being framed up and convicted in 2001 in a U.S. court. They had been gathering information on the actions of counterrevolutionary groups in Florida that for years have launched violent attacks on Cuba from U.S. soil with the complicity of the U.S. government. They were convicted on false charges of conspiracy to act as an unregistered agent of a foreign power, to commit espionage, and to commit murder. An international campaign is being waged to demand the U.S. government free the Cuban Five. The translation from the Spanish is by the *Militant*.



Dear *compañeros y compañeras*:  
Brothers and sisters of Cuba and the world:

This September 12 marks five years since our arrest. It has been five difficult years, far from our homeland and our loved ones. It has been five years marked by the cruelty of those who bear the frustration of having been unable to defeat us, having been unable to get us to renounce our principles and betray the revolution and our people.

Many things have happened since September 1998. But without a doubt it has been the solidarity and support from all of you that deserves to be highlighted and recognized on this date.

Thanks to you, every day there are more people who learn about our case, in an open challenge to the shameful curtain of silence imposed by the same media that calls itself “free.”

Thanks to you, today we are in the general population of our respective prisons, and not in the punishment cells where they had tried to keep us indefinitely.

Thanks to you, there is not a single moment when we feel alone or discouraged, and thanks to you we are certain that one day we will achieve the victory in this battle for truth and justice.

Every day we continue to receive many letters and messages of solidarity—so

many that is now impossible to reply to all of them. But we continue to devote a great amount of our attention to these letters because it is the least we can do to reciprocate your unbounded generosity.

We ask you not to be discouraged if our replies to you take a while or sometimes do not arrive, because there is never enough time, after a full day of work, to answer so many letters. Nevertheless, you should know that we read all of your letters with great satisfaction and pride. Each and every message from you brings a dose of optimism and strength into our cells, and for that we thank you from the bottom of our hearts.

Once again, brothers and sisters, on this September 12 we send you our sincere and eternal gratitude, with the certainty that your support and solidarity are more important and necessary every day. We count on you!

And in the name of Fernando, Ramón, Antonio, René, and our families:

Thank you very much!

*Hasta la victoria siempre!* [Ever onward until victory]

*Gerardo Hernández Nordelo*  
*U.S. Penitentiary, Lompoc, California*



# Workers in Venezuela occupy plants

BY ARGIRIS MALAPANIS  
AND CARLOS CORNEJO

CARACAS, Venezuela—“*Fábrica cerrada, empresa tomada!*” (plant shut down, company occupied) chanted 200 workers from Industrial de Perfumes and their supporters as they marched toward Miraflores, the presidential palace.

Outside Miraflores they were joined by hundreds of workers from Constructora Nacional de Válvulas (CNV) valve plant, a Pepsi-Cola bottling plant, and other factories that workers have occupied for months.

The main demand of the October 1 rally here of about 500 was that the government of President Hugo Chávez either force the owners of these companies to pay workers more than 10 months of back wages and benefits they are owed, or nationalize the plants and allow workers to restart production.

Working people throughout Venezuela, as in the rest of Latin America, are facing an economic depression. The grinding impact of this crisis on workers and farmers here intensified this year as a result of a bosses’ “strike” last December and January. This employer lockout, backed by Washington, was aimed at undermining the nationalist government of Hugo Chávez. It crippled the oil industry for months—in the fifth-largest petroleum-producing country in the world—and caused temporary shortages of gasoline, natural gas, and many food items.

After February 4, when the bosses’ strike ended, the Venezuelan government fixed the exchange rate of the currency, the bolivar, at 1,600 to the U.S. dollar; imposed price controls; and took other measures to slow down capital flight. Businessmen were taking their capital out of the country, worried that their profits were in danger after this second failure by the Venezuelan bourgeoisie in less than a year to topple Chávez. The previous attempt had been a short-lived military coup in April 2002.

Since February, hundreds of factories and other enterprises have shut down.

Faced with growing unemployment and the specter of poverty, workers have taken over many plants in recent months to protect jobs and demand back pay.

According to an October 1 news item in the Caracas daily *El Mundo*, as many as 63 companies have been taken over by workers since the beginning of this year. Settlements between the workers and the bosses are now being reached at many of these enterprises.

## Fight at Industrial Perfumes

The Industrial de Perfumes plant is located on Baralt Avenue near downtown Caracas. Workers there manufacture the Cristine Carol line of cosmetics and perfumes.

“Problems began before the bosses’ ‘strike,’” said Joel Mata Lanz, in an interview in the factory cafeteria the morning of October 1. Dozens of workers had gathered there, the organizing center of the occupation, in preparation for the march to Miraflores that day. Mata Lanz is the secretary of the local of the National Union of Workers of the Chemical and Pharmaceutical Industry (SUNTIQF), which organizes the 400 production workers.

“The company now owes us 17 months of unpaid benefits,” he said, including vacation pay, social security, and credit union interest payments. “For more than a year before the plant shut down, the bosses were deducting benefits from our paychecks. But it turns out they never deposited these payments in the appropriate bank account, so we can’t collect now that they have declared bankruptcy.”

During the employers’ lockout in December, said Carlos Enrique Rángel, a truck driver for Industrial de Perfumes, “the company shut down for three days, but they had to reopen because of pressure by the workers.” All workers interviewed said that none of the union members there backed the bosses’ strike.

In addition to production workers, the company employs about 600 drivers and salespeople, who were paid piece rate, for a total workforce of 1,000. “Drivers averaged 195,000 bolivars (\$122) per month,” Rángel said, compared to the average monthly pay of 330,000 bolivars (\$207) for factory work-



Militant/Argiris Malapanis

**Some 200 workers from Industrial de Perfumes, an occupied cosmetics plant in Caracas, march to the presidential palace October 1 to demand that the government force the bosses, whose names are on the banner, to pay back wages and benefits owed to them or that it nationalize the plant and allow the workers to restart production.**

ers. Even the production workers’ wages make it hard to make ends meet. Rent in working-class neighborhoods is a minimum of 200,000 bolivars per month and rice now costs 3,000 bolivars per kilo (1,600 bolivars equal one dollar).

The drivers did not belong to SUNTIQF and were not covered by the union contract. The union reached out to involve them in the fight, however. Dozens like Rángel have been taking part in guard duty and other assignments related to the occupation.

“On May 29 the situation got worse,” Mata Lanz continued. “That day the company called a meeting with the workers. They told us that in order for them to continue operations we would have to take a wage cut, agree to the layoff of 40 union members, accept a reduction of the workweek, and increase production. They told us we basically had to throw out the union contract and work under their terms, if we wanted a job.”

Workers overwhelmingly rejected the bosses’ proposal. The next day the owners filed for bankruptcy and announced they would shut the plant down. After a court accepted the company’s request for liquidation June 27, effective 10 days later, a union meeting was held where a large majority decided that workers should take over the plant as a last resort to pressure the company to pay them what they were due. After not getting a response from the courts or the Ministry of Labor on their demand to put the bankruptcy on hold until workers received their back pay, the union organized the takeover.

## Plant occupation began July 7

“On July 7, just before the bankruptcy was to take effect, dozens of us rushed the security guards in the evening and took over the factory,” said Clarissa Bezera, a production worker at the company for seven years.

A number of workers pointed out that the bosses’ liquidation request did not include many company assets, such as the 200 delivery trucks and vans. “Their bankruptcy was a fraud,” Bezera said. “Selling all these trucks alone would be more than enough to pay all their debts to us. They were simply trying to rob us.”

“This is the first conflict of this kind here,” said Carmen Rosa González, a warehouse worker with nine years at the company. “Until the end of May they had sales of more than 1 billion bolivars (\$625,000) per month. They say they are in bankruptcy, but there are enough raw materials in the factory and they have many trucks, so they could pay us.”

In addition to taking over the plant, the factory workers managed, with the help of friendly company drivers, to gather up more than 100 of the delivery vehicles. They locked them up in a yard where they have been under union guard ever since, we were told.

While a good number of production workers have tried to get other jobs, more than half have remained active with the occupation. “We get a stipend from the union and donations of food and funds from other

workers,” said Alexis Mejía.

“This is not an economic but a political problem,” Mejía continued. “There are enough raw materials to produce here for nearly two years. But we can’t restart production before we resolve the legal dispute with the company.” Mejía and other workers said they are worried that the army and the police, who workers have managed to keep out of the plant so far, could be easily sent in to evict them if they did so.

“Since we’ve been getting no response to our demands to get paid from either the company or the courts, we are now asking that the government nationalize the factory and allow us to run it,” Mejía said. The union recently showed videos from plant takeovers in Argentina where workers are raising the same demand, he added.

Other workers were more guarded. “If expropriation and nationalization benefit the workers,” said Carmen Rosa González, “I agree with it. If it could lead to jobs for all.”



Militant/Argiris Malapanis

**Workers at Constructora Nacional de Válvulas, a factory that produces valves for the oil industry in Miranda state, do a *botellazo*—shaking the can on the street to solicit donations—to help them sustain their months-long occupation of the plant.**

González and other workers said that if the company came up with the benefits and severance pay the workers are owed according to labor law, they would have no option but to end the occupation.

The owners have begun to take some steps in that direction, hoping to divide the workforce and defuse the struggle at a minimal cost to them. On September 30 management notified workers that they could go to a designated bank the next day and collect a small portion of the benefits owed to them. Having gone for months without income, many workers did just that.

“This was a calculated move to minimize how many people would come out for the march to Miraflores,” Mata Lanz told workers at the cafeteria in a meeting before the demonstration. About 100 workers from the plant showed up for the march that morning, half the expected participation, we were told.

On the way to the presidential palace, workers from Industrial de Perfumes got many honks of solidarity from motorists and greetings from passersby. The rally in front of Miraflores grew to about 500 people, as workers from Constructora Nacional de Válvulas, a Pepsi-Cola plant, the Fénix textile mill in the state of Guárico, and other factories joined in.

A delegation of five unionists, including a representative of the recently formed National Union of Workers (UNT), went in to meet with government representatives. No agreement of any kind was reached that day, González said, and a second meeting with government authorities was set for October 9. Meanwhile, workers from these plants organized another protest rally in front of the National Assembly October 7.

## Takeover at valve plant

Constructora Nacional de Válvulas (CNV) is a plant that produces valves for the oil industry. It is located on top of a hill in a mountainous area outside Los Teques, Miranda state, about one hour southeast of Caracas. The plant used to employ 110 workers. It is owned by Andrés Sosa Pietri, a figure in the big-business association Fedecámaras that led the two-month employers’ lockout. Pietri was a former president of Petróleos de Venezuela (PdVSA), the state-owned oil monopoly. CNV workers say they have a video showing Pietri in opposition demonstrations early this year calling for civil disobedience to bring down Chávez.

When these reporters arrived at the plant on the afternoon of October 3, workers were doing a *botellazo*—shaking the can for donations from motorists on a street near the plant to help sustain the occupation.

“On December 9 the bosses sent us home saying we should take vacation for a month because there was no work for now,” said Juan Padilla, a member of the *comité de conflicto* (Conflict Committee), which organizes the plant occupation. “When we went back January 6, the plant was closed and we were sent home with no explanation.” After the bosses’ strike ended, Padilla said, “We had a meeting with management.

They paid us 30 percent of wages they owed us, sent us home, and we haven’t heard from them again.”

At that meeting, “the company asked us to suspend the union contract and agree to cuts in wages and layoffs,” added William Salas, also a member of the Conflict Committee. “We didn’t agree with that. The boss was demanding that we shift onto our backs his losses from a ‘strike’ that he called and we rejected.”

After being told the plant would be shut down because sales to PdVSA were close to nil, workers found out that the bosses had organized a small crew of the better-paid workers to continue production and to finish and ship out truckloads of valves that had been started in December. “Then we decided to take over the plant,” said Salas.

About 80 workers took part in the plant takeover on May 15. The officers of their

**Continued on page 11**



# Che: workers must take power, run state

The following is an excerpt from *Che Guevara and the Fight for Socialism Today: Cuba Confronts the World Crisis of the '90s* by Mary-Alice Waters, one of Pathfinder's Books of the Month for October. The article featured in this pamphlet appeared as the introduction to the French-language edition of Pathfinder's *Che Guevara: Economics and Politics in the Transition to Socialism* by Cuban author Carlos Tablada.

Ernesto Che Guevara was an Argentine-born revolutionary who joined the struggle led by Fidel Castro to overthrow the U.S.-backed Batista dictatorship in Cuba in the mid-1950s. He became one of the central leaders of the revolutionary government that triumphed in January 1959. His responsibilities included assignments as head of the National Bank and Minister of Industry. Guevara was

war of independence against Spanish colonialism, which began in 1868. From the crucible of these and subsequent battles emerged leaders such as Antonio Maceo, Máximo Gómez, and José Martí, whose words and revolutionary deeds left a heritage of anti-imperialist intransigence, internationalism, political integrity, selflessness, and courage. The leadership that left Mexico on the *Granma* in 1956 drew strength from this rich revolutionary continuity in uncompromisingly leading the transition from Cuba's national democratic revolution that brought a workers' and farmers' government to power in the fall of 1959 to the socialist revolution that accelerated in late 1960 and early 1961 in response to the hostile actions of domestic and foreign reaction, above all U.S. imperialism.

## The Russian Revolution

The socialist road that Cuban working people set out on at the beginning of the 1960s had been opened some four decades earlier by the October 1917 revolution in Russia. The Bolshevik Party leadership headed by V.I. Lenin went through the world's first experiences in organizing workers and peasants to begin the building of socialism in the course of fighting to advance the world revolution. These efforts, from late 1917 through the end of Lenin's active political life in March 1923, left an invaluable legacy to revolutionists such as Guevara and Castro who later sought to continue Lenin's course. The record of the Soviet government, Communist Party, and Communist International in Lenin's time is rich in lessons in the economics and politics of the transition from capitalism to socialism.

The socialist revolution, as Guevara explains repeatedly in the works cited by Tablada, marks the first time in history that expanding political participation and revolutionary consciousness of the toiling



Che Guevara speaks with Cuban sugarcane workers, 1963.

majority becomes necessary to the economic organization of society. The door is opened for working people to cease being the objects of blind economic laws that determine their living and working conditions and social relations, and instead to begin placing society's productive forces under their own conscious control.

This is not optional, not just one way among others following a successful popular revolution to advance the transition to socialism. The most committed and self-sacrificing vanguard of the working people, organized in a communist party, *must* lead growing layers of their class in taking more and more control over the political direction and administration of the state and economy. This is the *only* way workers can transform themselves as they collectively transform the social relations under which they work, produce, and live. It is the only way they can make these social relations among human beings more and more open and direct—tearing

away the veils and fetishes behind which the capitalist system hides the brutal consequences of its exploitation of toilers and obscures the unique contribution of labor to all social and cultural progress. Along any other road, society will not advance toward socialism and communism, but will instead—mired in bureaucratic planning and management—regress toward capitalism.

## 'Nationalize foreign trade, banking'

"Our revolution nationalized the domestic economy; it nationalized basic industry, including mining," Guevara explained in an August 1961 speech to a conference of Latin American government officials in Punta del Este, Uruguay. "It nationalized all foreign trade, which is now in the hands of the state, and which we proceeded to diversify by trading with the whole world. It nationalized the banking system in order to have in its hands the efficient instrument with which to exercise the function of credit in accordance with the country's needs. It provides for the participation of the workers in the management of the planned national economy."

The fundamentally *political* character of economic questions and decisions during the transition to socialism is central to Guevara's writings and speeches. His contributions in this regard, like those of Lenin, extend well beyond what is normally, and narrowly, thought of as "economics." Che constantly stressed the inseparable interrelationship between the transformation of the social relations of production and the transformation of the political and social consciousness of the working people carrying out this revolutionary process. "To build communism it is necessary, simultaneously with the new material foundations, to build the new man," as he put it in his 1965 article, "Socialism and Man in Cuba."

Thus, Tablada's extensive summary of Guevara's views encompasses a wide range of economic and political questions that confronted revolutionary Cuba.

## BOOKS OF THE MONTH

killed by U.S.-trained troops in Bolivia in October 1967 while leading a guerrilla struggle to overthrow the tyrannical regime in that country. The pamphlet is copyright © 1992 by Pathfinder Press, reprinted by permission. Subheadings are by the *Militant*.



BY MARY-ALICE WATERS

The long emancipation struggle of Cuban working people dates back to the first

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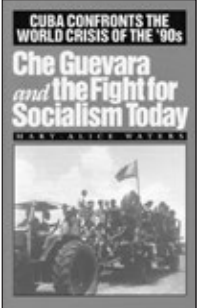

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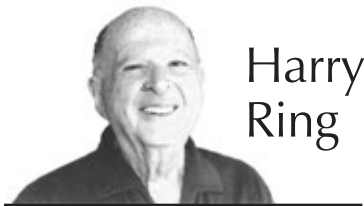
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**Weak**—Addressing current revelations of sexual victimization of women at the U.S. Air Force Academy in Colorado, top brass



Harry Ring

hat Lt. Gen. John Rosa tagged the ongoing scandal as a problem of “weak leadership.”

**Perplexed**—The general added,

“I find it curious that women were admitted here 27 years ago and we still have this question.”

**Homeland defense**—“ST. PAUL, Minnesota—Black, Hispanic and American Indian drivers were more likely than white drivers to be stopped and searched by police in Minnesota last year, even though they were less likely than whites to possess anything illegal.”—*USA Today*, September 25.

**No comment**—“LOUISVILLE, Kentucky—A judge will decide whether to grant probation for a former Louisville police

detective who pleaded guilty to creating bogus search warrants and other felony charges. Mark Watson was sentenced to 20 years in prison. His wife, Virginia, testified that her husband has suffered enough after six months in prison and needs to see his four children.”—News item.

**Breaking news**—“Business bosses are continuing to pay themselves huge pensions while closing down the pension plans for their workers, complained the Trades Union Congress. Company directors routinely pay themselves pensions worth 50 times more than those they have given to their em-

ployees.”—*The Times* of London.

**Wasn’t in their books?**—This summer, a group of teenagers in Tucson, Arizona, spent three weeks at a local historical museum. They pored over old clippings and other memorabilia. Reported Laura Hernandez, 14, “What was surprising to me was that a lot of lawmen were also outlaws.”

**No messin’ around**—“Police want DNA of every man, woman and child” – Headline, *The Times* of London.

**It fits**—Paul Evans, former Boston top cop, will move to London

to give professional advice on cutting crime.

**Think maps grow on trees?**—Swiss International Airlines conceded it supplied its pilots with navigation maps containing errors. A company spokesperson said the pilots have computers on board for navigation and can also call controllers. There are no plans to replace the maps.

**Thought for the week**—“This is very serious. We’re developing a campaign just as we’ve done in Iraq.”—General Rosa on his war against Air Force Academy sexist abuse.

# Pathfinder in demand at Madrid festival

BY GERALD ARCHER

MADRID, Spain—“Do you have anything on the class struggle in the United States?” asked Jon Hernández.

Hernández and Haizea Gorai, students from the Basque city of San Sebastián, were among dozens of people who approached the Pathfinder stand at this year’s festival hosted September 12–15 by the Communist Party of Spain wanting to learn more about politics in the United States and the world. Teams of communist workers from the United Kingdom and other countries have maintained a regular presence of Pathfinder books at this large annual festival.

Six young people who came to the adjacent Young Communist League stand approached Pathfinder volunteer Linda Joyce from Atlanta, Georgia, and peppered her with questions: “Can you wear political T-shirts in the U.S.? Can you openly sell literature like this?”

“All we hear is about is Bush and the government,” Gorai said. “We need to know about the class struggle.” Hernández and Gorai took away with them two books that address that question—the Spanish language edition of *Socialism on Trial* by James P. Cannon, and *Cuba and the Coming American Revolution*, by Jack Barnes.

Books on the U.S. class struggle and broader world politics were among the top sellers from the Pathfinder stand at the two-and-a-half-day event. Many visitors to the booth said they were trying to understand why the pacifist demonstrations that were organized in many imperialist countries, including large ones in Spain, had not stopped the U.S.-British invasion of Iraq, as their organizers had claimed they could.

Altogether 150 books were sold at the Pathfinder booth, among them 19 copies of the Marxist magazine *New Internationalist*, four copies of *Capitalism’s World Disorder*, eight of the pamphlet *Washington’s 50-Year Domestic Contra Operation*, and more than a dozen books by revolutionary leader Malcolm X. Books by James P. Cannon, a leader of the communist movement and a founder of the Socialist Workers Party in the United States, were in high demand, including 7 copies of *History of American Trotskyism* and the same number of *Socialism on Trial*.

Thousands of young people from around Spain were drawn to the festival. As usual, it was dominated by entertainment and cultural features, such as rock concerts and food and refreshment stands erected by Communist Party organizations from different regions and other countries. There were some political meetings and a couple of book launchings.

Pathfinder’s display of Marxist literature stood out. As is always the case at the annual event, books on the Cuban Revolution were in demand at the booth. The best selling title was *Marianas in Combat: Teté Puebla and the Mariana Grajales Women’s Platoon in Cuba’s Revolutionary War, 1956–58*, an interview with Brig. Gen. Teté Puebla of Cuba’s Revolutionary Armed Forces. Dioni, a 15-year-old high school student, said she decided to buy the book after reading Fidel Castro’s comments printed on the back cover about how women like Puebla proved themselves as combatants in the Rebel Army during the revolutionary war that led to victory in 1959.

Antonio, a taxi driver, took advantage of a special Pathfinder Readers Club offer to pick up copies of Che Guevara’s 1965 Congo diary and *Playa Girón/Bay of Pigs*

*Washington’s First Military Defeat in the Americas* by Fidel Castro and José Ramón Fernández. Like dozens of other festival-goers who browsed the Pathfinder stand, Antonio had visited this stand at previous festivals. Last year he bought the *New Internationalist* with the article “The rise and fall of the Nicaraguan revolution.”

Fabio, an 18-year-old student from the Canary Islands, was interested in how the Cuban Revolution has tackled the question of racism. Originally drawn to the stand by the Malcolm X titles, he decided to buy *From the Escambray to the Congo* by Victor Dreke, which takes up this issue.

## Immigration a key question in Spain

Teresa Sáez, 35, currently living and working as a vet in north Wales, talked with Pathfinder volunteers about her disgust at the treatment of immigrant workers in capitalist countries. Wanting to learn more about why immigration is a central political question in all imperialist countries today, she bought *Capitalism’s World Disorder* by Jack Barnes.

The day before the festival began, the Popular Party government of José Maria Aznar had amended the anti-immigrant Law on Foreigners to grant undocumented immigrants who register with the government a permit to look for work for the first three months after their arrival.

Until the change immigrants were legally obliged to secure employment prior to their arrival in Spain. The change reflects the dependency of Spanish capitalism—as in virtually all imperialist countries—on immigration. The construction industry here, for example, employs thousands of Ecuadorians, the largest group of undocumented immigrants from a single country.

Meanwhile, anti-immigrant raids and arrests continue, as the country’s rulers seek to keep immigrant workers in low-wage work and intimidated against fighting back. Seventeen North African workers were arrested September 10 in Tarifa, Cádiz.

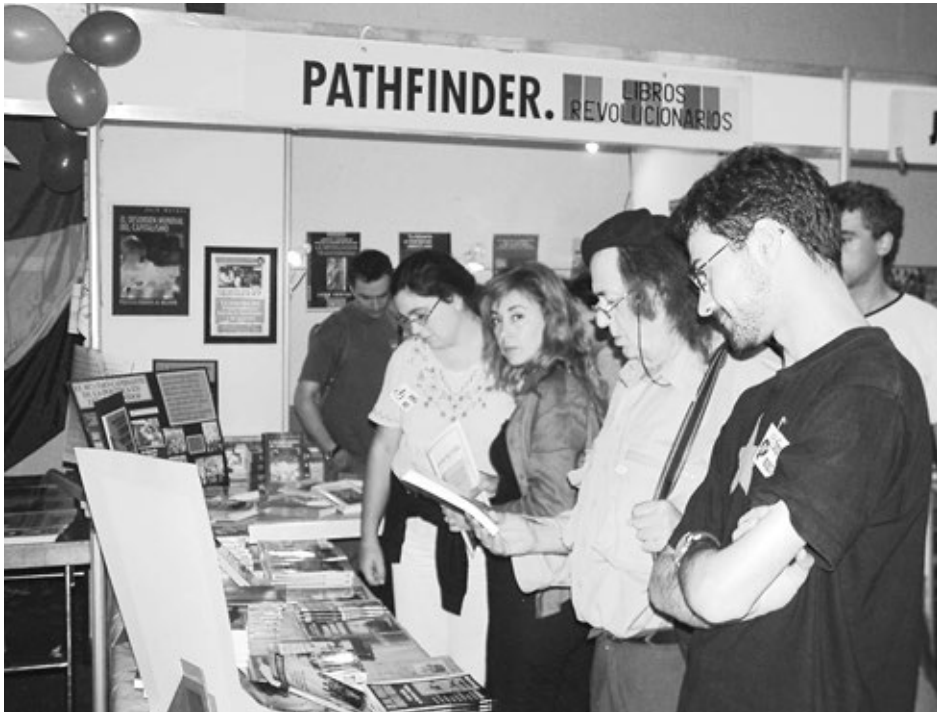
Many people who came to the Pathfinder booth listened with great interest to presentations on the successful fight against deportation by Róger Calero, a *Militant* staff writer and associate editor of *Perspectiva Mundial*. One couple took out a subscription to *Perspectiva Mundial*—one of five *PM* and *Militant* subscriptions sold during the festival—to find out more about Calero’s fight and U.S. politics today.

A conference on African immigration and Black communities in Spain was scheduled for the first weekend of October in Madrid. Twenty copies of *Malcolm X Talks to Young People* were on sale at the event on the initiative of conference organizer Abuy Mfubes, who visited Pathfinder’s stand at last year’s festival.

## Sales to bookstores

In the two days following the festival, the five members of Pathfinder’s volunteer team—from London and Manchester in the United Kingdom, and Atlanta and New York in the United States—stayed around to visit bookstores. As a result of their efforts, Pathfinder books are now on their way to Madrid, Barcelona, Valencia, Vigo (in Galicia), Gijón (in Asturias), and Bilbao, the main industrial city in the Basque country.

Altogether 286 books were sold. Cash sales totaled more \$2,000 and the wholesale value of book orders obtained through bookstore visits was more than \$1,000.



Militant/Linda Joyce

Many visitors to Pathfinder stand at Madrid festival organized by Communist Party of Spain were particularly interested in books about the U.S. class struggle, which is virtually absent in literature of left organizations in Spain and elsewhere.

## — 25 AND 50 YEARS AGO —



### October 20, 1978

STEARNS, Kentucky—Striking coal miners charge that scabs working under a company-union contract at the Justus mine here have been seriously injured on the job in recent weeks.

Blue Diamond Coal Company is trying to keep news of the accidents under wraps. And despite the usual rush to report any “violence” that can be pinned on the striking miners, no news media anywhere in the state have reported Blue Diamond’s violence in the mine.

The strikers say the accidents bolster their assertion that they are fighting for their lives by demanding a United Mine Workers contract with a union-controlled safety committee.

The wages for the eighty scabs now crossing the picket line are up around union scale. But unsafe working conditions are the issue that has prompted 129 miners to stay on the picket line for twenty-seven months.

After refusing to even negotiate with the union for more than a year, Blue Diamond suddenly announced last May that it had signed a contract with the “Justus Employees Association.” The contract with the scab union did not include a safety committee with the power to shut the mine. But it did include a no-strike clause.

The UMWA appealed to the National Labor Relations Board, charging that the company had set up and continues to dominate the JEA.

Before the hearing [on the UMWA charges], strikers will mark the first anniversary of the brutal state police assault here. On October 17, 1977, more than 100 people were arrested and several seriously injured when cops attacked a mobilization of strikers and supporters who were demanding that Blue Diamond stop running scabs.



### October 19, 1953

Aided and abetted by the capitalist-controlled press, the courts, the National Labor Relations Board and the city cops, the red-baiting owners of Hearn department stores [in New York] have done everything they could to break the strike their employees started last May 14.

All this did not bring one cry of protest from the major party candidates [for mayor], although they were in public office and could have used their influence to aid the strikers.

Halley, candidate of the Liberal Party, likewise ignored the plight of the strikers, although he held the powerful post of President of the City Council.

Wagner, President of the Borough of Manhattan, and now Tammany’s choice for mayor, didn’t raise his voice until he began shopping around for votes.

You would think it would take too much gall for one of the major party candidates to crawl to the Hearn strikers for votes. But Wagner has done just that.

In a letter to the strikers, he winds up saying, “...and I want to assure you I will do anything I can to have the situation settled.” This is after two injunctions have already been served on the strikers, one banning mass picketing and the other limiting pickets to three at each entrance.

The strikers do not seem to be impressed by Wagner’s campaign promises. One worker writing to the union paper quotes a friend: “At election time politicians’ promises aren’t worth a tinker’s damn. I don’t remember reading nothing about Wagner speaking up on the Hearn strike before this.” To this observation of his friend, the workers says he replied: “So what! I don’t remember reading nothing about Halley on the Hearn strike either.”



# Nationalize the energy industry!

The *Militant* turns over its editorial space this week to publish the following statement released October 4 by Joel Britton, Socialist Workers candidate for governor in the October 7 special recall election in California.

The tripling of automobile registration fees in California, which began this week, is blamed on a government budget crisis that follows the earlier electrical blackouts, soaring energy and fuel prices, and massive payouts by capitalist politicians to the powerful energy monopolies and the state’s bondholders that resulted from the “energy crisis” in 2000–2001. The profit gouging is accompanied by the energy magnates’ callous disregard for the safety of workers, endangering life and limb on the job while threatening the health and environment of the surrounding communities.

Only the Socialist Workers Party campaign is putting forward solutions that confront the real problem at its root—the private ownership by a handful of super-rich capitalists of the energy and power industries, a vital resource for society as a whole.

In response to the capitalist rulers’ moves to put their economic and governmental budget crises on the backs of working people—with the devastating effects it has had on millions throughout this state—the labor movement needs to demand the nationalization of the energy and power companies, to take them out of private hands and run them as public utilities under workers control for the benefit of the majority.

We must demand that these energy trusts open their books. Working people have a right to know the “business secrets” of these powerful monopolies, to expose the behind-the-scenes deals and swindles, and to get a real picture of the share of the national income that is pocketed by the individual capitalists who own them.

When the energy monopoly Enron went belly-up last year, a hint of these “business secrets” was revealed. At a time when the rates that working people were paying for electricity in California were tripling, that company hid away an additional \$1.5 billion in profits squeezed out of working people. One executive told the *New York Times* that the company “made such an incredible amount of money that we didn’t want to recognize it all in earnings. We were supposed to make \$500 million in a quarter and we were doing it in a day.”

Making public the machinations of exploitation, robbery, and fraud that these private owners hide under the veil of “business secrecy” is a necessary step to confront the shortages, breakdowns, and periodic crises caused by the deepening capitalist economic crisis.

When the bosses cry “bankruptcy”—as the energy companies Pacific Gas and Electric and Southern California Edison have done—the capitalist politicians bail them out and demand that working people “sacrifice” to save the company. The current Democratic Party administration and all of its predecessors, whether Republican or Democratic, start with the interests of the wealthy owners, taking steps that defend their profits and property.

Working people should reject the demands for more “regulation” of these monopolists—measures designed not to benefit the majority but to protect the profit prerogatives of the wealthy families that control the power companies.

What is needed is workers control of the energy and power industries—both to open the capitalists’ books and gain knowledge about everything big business and its government hide from us, as well as to control all conditions on the job. Workers must have veto power over safety and health questions, the pace of work, and how each job is organized. This means guaranteeing safe conditions on the job and reducing work hours to a sustainable level, as

well as regard for the health and welfare of the neighboring communities.

In face of the crisis caused by the profit system, working people should say, “We can run this enterprise better than you.” This is our answer to the squandering of human labor and periodic crises that are the result of the anarchy of the capitalist system and the naked pursuit of profits.

## Reject bond system swindle

The Socialist Workers Party campaign also rejects the state-organized swindle of the bond system. For a handful of the wealthiest families in the United States, the California energy crisis has been a bonanza. Sacramento sold billions of dollars in high-interest state bonds to wealthy individuals for hundreds of thousands of dollars apiece. Bonds issued by the state of California to pay the energy monopolies in 2000 and 2001 totaled \$11.25 billion. An additional \$6.4 billion in profit is being collected in the form of interest payments on those bonds—more than a dollar of profit for every two dollars invested!

This is what lies behind the capitalists’ so-called budget crisis. Instead of touching the billions streaming from the state coffers into the accounts of the wealthy bondholders, the representatives of big capital in both the Democratic and Republican parties are seeking to balance their budget on the backs of working people—aiming the axe at social services and infrastructure and pushing to increase taxes and all kinds of fees on working people. The Socialist Workers campaign rejects all of these assaults on the living standards of working people.

This is the employers’ budget crisis, not ours. We demand: Not one more penny to these wealthy profiteers!

In the coming years, as working people through our trade unions fight to defend ourselves against the bosses’ attacks on our wages and on the hours and conditions of work that we face, we must also demand that the power and energy industries be taken out of private hands, exposing the true debits and credits of capitalist society in the process. We will develop confidence in the capacities of working people to run not only these individual enterprises but the whole of society.

Some one-third of the world’s population—2 billion of the earth’s inhabitants—is without access to modern electricity. This glaring inequality is the direct result of the plunder and dividing up of the world’s resources and labor by the billionaire ruling families in a handful of superwealthy countries.

To begin to address this and strengthen the unity and fighting capacity of working people throughout the world, the Socialist Workers campaign calls for the immediate cancellation of the immoral and unpayable Third World debt. Through these unending debt payments to the banks based in Washington, London, Paris, Berlin, and Tokyo, this powerful handful of families extracts super-profits from the exploitation and oppression of toilers the world over.

If we fight to carry out measures such as these, working people can begin to address the effects of the sharpening crisis that capitalism is producing worldwide. We will also have to learn to defend ourselves and our unions from assaults by the hired goons and fascist gangs of the capitalists, who historically have shown that they will viciously resist the inroads made by working people into their prerogative to run society.

Along this road we will gain consciousness of and confidence in our own capacities to control our destiny—without the bosses. This is the road toward a fight for power, for establishing a workers and farmers government that will begin not with the profits of the tiny super-rich minority, but with the interests of the vast, toiling majority.

# In act of war, Israeli jets bomb Syria

## Continued from front page

in which 19 people were killed, to escalate its offensive against Palestinians in the occupied territories of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The Palestinian organization Islamic Jihad claimed responsibility for the suicide attack.

The Israeli jets destroyed buildings and injured several people at Ain Saheb, 10 miles outside the Syrian capital of Damascus. Israeli officials claim that Islamic Jihad and Hamas, another Palestinian organization, use the area as a training camp—a charge denied by Syrian spokespeople, who said Ain Saheb is a civilian facility for Palestinians.

“Syria has been warned more than once by the United States that it should close all the facilities of the Islamic Jihad,” said Israeli government spokesman Avi Pazner October 5. “Apparently it has not done so. And it is our policy after what happened yesterday to go after Islamic Jihad wherever they are.”

Israeli military officers released a statement claiming that Syria “gives cover in its territory and capital to the terror organizations that act against Israeli citizens.” They added, “Iran is funding and directing the organizations.”

The bombing attack received the tacit support of U.S. government officials, who condemned the Syrian government as a backer of “terrorism.” After speaking with Israeli prime minister Ariel Sharon, U.S. president George Bush

said, “I made it very clear to the prime minister that Israel’s got a right to defend herself, that Israel must not feel constrained in terms of defense of the homeland.”

Following the attack, Syrian officials sought to line up diplomatic condemnation of the action at the United Nations Security Council. The resolution they presented condemned “the military aggression carried out by Israel against the sovereignty and territory of the Syrian Arab Republic on 5 October 2003.”

U.S. officials opposed the resolution. “The United States believes that Syria is on the wrong side of the war on terrorism,” said Washington’s UN ambassador John Negroponte on October 5. “We believe it is in Syria’s interest, and in the broader interest of Middle East peace, for Syria to stop harboring and supporting the groups that perpetrate acts such as the one that occurred yesterday.”

Washington has stepped up its pressure on both Syria and Iran to abandon weapons programs and halt funding and support to Palestinian organizations. In Damascus following the U.S. occupation of Iraq, U.S. secretary of state Colin Powell demanded that Syria clamp down on several Palestinian organizations with offices in the Syrian capital. Although the government says these facilities have been closed, Washington and Tel Aviv assert that representatives of Islamic Jihad and other groups continue to function.

# Imperialism, highest stage of capitalism

BY SAM MANUEL

In the October 6 letters column, reader Ken Berg wrote, “I am an electrician and have been a union man for years. I find your web site interesting, but I notice you use the term imperialist quite frequently. In order that I might better understand the articles, please let me know what you mean when you use this term. Do you use it as a general term, or does it have a specific meaning?”

This letter deserves a reply because the question Berg poses is at the heart of understanding the political reality facing humanity today.

In its popular sense, imperialism—based on the word “empire”—refers to a dominant power that exaggerates its contribution to human culture and ideas in order to rationalize marching off to dominate the world. Rome and its legions are one example. Washington—the self-declared

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## REPLY TO A READER

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“indispensable nation”—and its main rivals *are* imperialist in that broad, popular sense, but it’s the more specific Marxist definition that the *Militant* makes use of.

Imperialism in the modern sense is a system in which financial and industrial monopolies dominate the economy and a handful of major powers contest with each other for control over the planet’s resources. It was described in detail by V. I. Lenin, the central leader of the October 1917 Russian Revolution, in his pamphlet *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*.

In this booklet, written in 1916, Lenin laid bare the origin and economic workings of imperialism as a stage of development of the capitalist system. Using data compiled by bourgeois economists of his day, he pointed to its five defining features.

First, he wrote, imperialism’s origins lay in the enormous growth of industry and the rapid concentration of production in larger and larger enterprises. Democratic and Republican politicians alike sing the miracles of “free enterprise.” But the lawful workings of capitalism long ago transformed “free competition”—a feature of capitalism in its infancy—into its opposite, with the advent of large cartels and trusts. Such associations, Lenin wrote, “divide the markets among themselves. They fix the quantity of goods to be produced. They fix prices. They divide the profits among the various enterprises.”

Second, a similar process occurred in banking, as smaller banks were swallowed up by the emergence of larger and larger banking monopolies. Lenin gave many examples. In one, nine German banks held 83 percent of the bank capital in the country by 1909.

These large banks become more and more intertwined with the large industrial monopolies to form finance capital. “A personal link-up, so to speak, is established,” Lenin wrote, “between the banks and the biggest industrial and commercial enterprises, the merging of one with the another through the acquisition of shares, through the appointment of bank directors to the Supervisory Boards (or Boards of Directors) of industrial enterprises and vice versa.”

Third, the development of finance capital in a handful of the advanced capitalist countries led to the accumulation of an enormous “superabundance” of capital. This abundance results from the fact that under capitalism such surpluses can never be used to raise the standard of living of those who work in the factories and on the land, because to do so would cut into the profits of the capitalists. Instead, it is exported for investments to exploit “underdeveloped” markets abroad. Lenin explained that in these markets “profits are usually high, for capital is scarce, the price of land is relatively low, wages are low, raw materials are cheap.”

This growth of surplus capital accelerates the development of a class of bondholders and rentiers who take no part in production, are professional idlers, and live by clipping stock market coupons.

Fourth, the imperialist epoch has been marked by the formation of international capitalist monopolies that divided the world among themselves. Between 1907 and 1911, for example, the two “Great Powers” in the electrical industry—General Electric Co. in the United States and A.E.G. in Germany—reached an agreement that gave GE the United States and Canada and A.E.G. most of Europe, including Turkey and the Balkans. Similar arrangements were reached in international steel and oil markets, along with shipping and railways.

Fifth, Lenin described how the strongest capitalist powers completed the division of the whole world among them—that is, “the colonial policy of the capitalist countries has completed the seizure of the unoccupied territories on our planet. For the first time the world is completely divided up, so that in the future *only* redivision is possible,” Lenin wrote.

This drive by the strongest imperialist powers to redi-vide the world’s resources in their favor led to World Wars I and II, just as it led to the two assaults on Iraq headed by Washington over the past decade. The drive to war as the inevitable consequence of imperialist decay will be one of the subjects of a second installment of this reply.



# Bolivians: no sale of gas for imperialist profit

BY RÓGER CALERO

Tens of thousands of trade unionists organized by the Bolivian Workers Federation (COB), backed by peasants, students, and small merchants, launched a general strike September 29, demanding the resignation of the increasingly unpopular president, Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada.

The wave of protests that has shaken Bolivia since mid-September is fueled by government austerity moves, layoffs, workers' declining wages, and farmers' inability to make a living.

A rallying point of the protests is opposition to the government's plan to allow foreign energy monopolies to export the country's abundant natural gas supplies at huge profits for the companies but few benefits for working people. Popular opposition to the project is magnified by the plans to ship the gas through a region in Chile that historically has been claimed by Bolivia as an outlet to the sea.

Many businesses were shut down in La Paz, the capital, and schools and universities were closed the first day of the walkout. Tens of thousands of street vendors and university students marched in the streets, calling on Sánchez de Lozada to resign.

Similar mobilizations took place in other cities. On October 1 hundreds of miners paralyzed production in the southern provinces of Oruro and Potosí. Peasant organizations and farm workers have also joined the protests.

The proposed plan to allow three foreign companies—British Gas, Repsol-YPF of Spain, and Pan American Energy—to export natural gas through a pipeline in neighboring Chile has become a lightning rod for the anger at the regime.

Bolivia nationalized many of its natural resources, including oil and gas, in the wake of the 1952 revolution, which brought to power a bourgeois nationalist regime. In the 1990s the government began to open up the country more rapidly to imperialist penetration, accelerating the privatization of state-owned industries. The oil and gas company YPFB is in the process of being sold off.

U.S. and European energy giants launched exploration efforts at a furious pace in the mid-1990s, leading to large discoveries. Bolivia's natural gas reserves, concentrated in the southeast region around Santa Cruz, are now estimated at 55 billion cubic meters, the second-largest in Latin America after Venezuela.

Imperialist corporations envision turning Bolivia into a giant energy-exporting hub. One project is the construction of a gas pipeline to the Pacific coast of South America that the energy companies could ship to California as a "solution" to the energy crisis while raking in superprofits.

Bolivian government and business figures have sought to win support for the \$5 billion project with claims that turning over the gas project to the imperialist companies will bring Bolivia \$300 million a year in royalties, or 18 percent of the estimated total profits.

This giveaway has infuriated many Bolivians, who have seen layoffs but few benefits

from the sell-off of YPFB.

"We already sold our railways, our airline, our oil, our electricity, and the government said that privatization would make us all better off for it," retired brewery worker Reynaldo Perdello told the *Washington Post*.

Two-thirds of Bolivia's 8.3 million inhabitants live below the official poverty line. Under austerity plans dictated by the International Monetary Fund, the government laid off public employees, cut civil service wages by 12 percent, and raised utility rates.

Coca farmers are also angry at a U.S.-backed drive to wipe out their coca crops without providing an alternative source of income. The average income of small farmers, mostly Indians, is \$37 a month.

Adding insult to injury, the Sánchez de Lozada government has accepted the imperialist investors' proposal to build the gas pipeline to the Chilean port of Patillos. An alternative route through Peru would be more costly to the investors.

This issue touches a nerve in Bolivia. In a British-instigated war in 1879, Bolivia lost part of its territory, including its only port, to Chile. Restoring Bolivia's outlet to the sea has been a historic demand, not only of that nation but also of the working-class vanguard in Latin America.

"Our fathers and grandfathers died to protect that land," said Felipe Quispe, a leader of the Federation of Bolivian Peasants and member of Congress representing the Movement toward Socialism (MAS). "The gas belongs to Bolivia," he said.

## Workers in Venezuela occupy plants

Continued from Page 7

union, the Metalworkers Union, left the premises, Salas and Padilla said, once they got wind of what most workers were planning. Workers elected the Conflict Committee to replace the union structure that collapsed.

"The occupation of this factory is a defensive action," said Salas. "We are defending our right to a job, to be able to feed our families."

Other workers expressed similar opinions. "There is more unemployment because of the bosses," said José Luis Garmendia, who used to work in the company warehouse. "We didn't take over the factory because we are Chavistas. It's a chance for most of us to fight for jobs."

Unlike the owners of the Industrial de Perfumes plant and other factories, Pietri never tried to declare bankruptcy. He did try to evict workers in order to get the machinery and raw materials out of the premises, Padilla said. In August a local court issued an eviction order and police were dispatched to carry it out. The cops were confronted with a mobilization of hundreds of workers from other factories and nearby working-class neighborhoods that came to the defense of the CNV workers. As a result, Padilla said, the police backed off and the Conflict Committee succeeded in getting the judge to suspend



Left, workers and peasants rally September 29 against sale of gas reserves outside La Paz, Bolivia's capital. Right, graffiti in La Paz reads, "The gas is not for sale."

The protests were largely initiated by Evo Morales, a leader of the Indian coca farmers, who as the candidate of the MAS was the runner-up in last year's presidential elections. Morales is seen by many working people as a spokesperson of Bolivia's indigenous population, in contrast with Sánchez de Lozada, a millionaire businessman who personifies the largely white political establishment.

This is the second time the Sánchez de Lozada government has confronted protests on this scale. Less than eight months ago thousands of workers and peasants erupted in protests against the government's proposal to impose a new direct tax on wages. Police

killed 32 protesters and wounded 200.

Landless peasants organized by the Movement of Landless Peasants (MST) have occupied land and blocked highways to press their demand for promised land and aid.

On October 1 at least one peasant was wounded and three MST members arrested in Collana, 30 miles outside the capital, when soldiers attacked their blockade with rubber bullets and live ammunition. Two weeks earlier troops killed five peasants in an assault on another blockade near the town of Warisata, some 70 miles northeast of La Paz. The peasants were demanding land and tractors.

the eviction order.

Since then, water and electricity have been cut off by the utility companies. The foundry where the plant obtained its raw materials, also owned by Pietri, has been shut down by the company. "So even if we wanted to, we couldn't start production," Padilla said.

Salas said workers are afraid the police would raid the plant to evict them by force if they try to enter the factory and get the machinery going. "We would leave if the boss paid us back wages and if we had a guarantee that he wouldn't restart without a union contract," he stated. "There is no anarchy here. We comply with the law." Workers have set up tents and a commissary to organize guard duty. They have also obtained a school bus where they sleep.

Antonio Betancourt, president of the Conflict Committee, said during the October 1 demonstration at Miraflores that CNV workers adopted the demand for nationalization as their last resort. "A few weeks ago, the company shut down its offices and took down its web site," he stated. "Asking the government to expropriate the plant is the only thing we can do."

Betancourt, Padilla, Salas, and other workers said it's not clear how long they can sustain the occupation. From the initial 80 workers who took over the plant, 67 remain active in the occupation. They receive no unemployment insurance. In the absence of support from the Metalworkers Union, they can only rely on donations from nearby communities to survive.

### Settlements reached in many conflicts

Under these conditions, workers have reached settlements with the bosses in many plants occupied under similar circumstances.

In some cases, workers seem to have made some gains. At the Pepsi-Cola plant in Villa de Cura, Aragua state, 350 workers took over the bottling facility for two months after the company demanded deep concessions from the union as a condition to continue operations. After workers threatened to shut down the other two Pepsi plants in the country and the company's entire distribution operation, the bosses agreed to rehire the entire workforce and reopen the plant in November as long as the union dropped the demand for nationalization.

"We had to do that," said Luis Hernández, who works in that plant and had come to the Miraflores action along with a few dozen of his coworkers to show solidarity with the other embattled workers. "The time is not ripe to demand nationalization

of industry."

In other companies workers have agreed to concessions to get part of the operation going again. Venepal, the largest paper company in Venezuela, used to employ 6,000 workers. Since late last year the company has been shut down. In the spring hundreds of workers occupied the Venepal complex near Morón, in Carabobo state. The union joined with others to pressure the government to nationalize the company.

Hundreds of these workers were scheduled to come to Miraflores for the October 1 rally. In a meeting between the company, the bank financing Venepal, and union officials at the end of September, however, an agreement was reached to end the occupation. According to Arvilio Vidalgo, a union representative at Venepal, the bankers proposed to "capitalize" the company's debt, meaning the bank will become Venepal's principle shareholder, while the union agreed to drop the demands for nationalization and for getting workers' back pay. Production restarted at this plant the first week of October with a small portion of the workforce, about 400 workers, with additional hiring down the road "as sales improve," Vidalgo said.

Vidalgo said that steep unemployment, inflation, and other bad economic conditions were a factor in reaching this decision at Venepal.

Joblessness in Venezuela, according to official statistics, now exceeds 18 percent. Imports declined by 51 percent between January and July of this year. Inflation has dropped slightly since last year, but is still hovering at 21 percent. And the country's gross domestic product is expected to decline by 10 or 11 percent by the end of 2003.

It appears that under the grinding impact of the economic crisis and in the absence of class-struggle leadership in the labor movement, the earlier momentum toward plant takeovers by workers is winding down for now.

Despite this, many workers are showing their determination to resist and are linking their struggles for economic demands to the broader fight to prevent the Venezuelan bourgeoisie from toppling the Chávez government.

As Carmen Rosa González put it, "We don't know if we'll win this battle" at Industrial de Perfumes. "Here, most of us support the president. But the war is not about Chávez. It's a war against the workers, against the poor. The wealthy have been accustomed to get their way all the time. Now it's not quite that way. We'll stick it out."

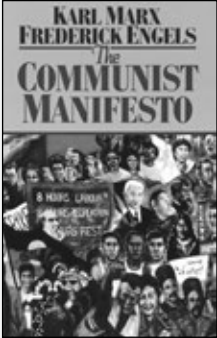
### Recommended reading

#### Imperialism's March Toward Fascism and War

The social devastation and financial panic, the coarsening of politics and the politics of resentment, the cop brutality and acts of imperialist aggression sharpening around us—all are the product of lawful forces unleashed by capitalism. \$14.00

#### The Communist Manifesto

Karl Marx and Frederick Engels



At the end of 1847 two young revolutionists joined with veteran worker cadres from several countries to form the first modern communist organization. Its founding manifesto, drafted by Marx and Engels, declared that its program was derived not from "sectarian principles" but "from actual relations springing from an existing class struggle, from a historical movement going on under our very eyes." \$3.95

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# Farmers in UK protest low milk prices

BY JONATHAN SILBERMAN

HANWORTH, London—For four hours on the night of October 1, not a single tanker went in or out of the giant Dairy Crest milk processing plant in Hanworth, Southwest London, in the face of a peaceful blockade by 50 farmers.

The Hanworth protest was one of seven that day called by Farmers for Action (FFA) at Dairy Crest manufacturing and distribution sites across the country. The FFA has initiated a number of actions over recent days and weeks to protest low milk prices received by farmers.

“This week we have escalated up to going out all day and most of the night,” said FFA chair David Handley, according to *Farmer Interactive*. “On Sunday night alone we had 1,000 farmers out at various sites.” The National Farmers Union (NFU), the NFU Scotland, and the NFU Wales were also involved in the protests. As many as 200 farmers joined the peaceful blockade of Dairy Crest’s Aspatria factory near Carlisle, just south of the Scottish border.

“We’ve targeted Dairy Crest because the company refuses to pass back to the producers the 2 ppl (pence per liter) increase in milk prices agreed to by the main supermarkets,” FFA Hampshire coordinator Bruce Horn said to the *Militant* at the Hanworth protest (100 pence = £1= US\$1.66). “The supermarkets agreed on a £200 per [metric] ton increase on cheese, which is equivalent to the 2 ppl increase on liquid milk. Dairy Crest offered 3/4p on cheese and nothing on liquid.”

The protests had been effective, said Horn. “Last night the main Dairy Crest distribution center in Nuneaton was closed. Tonight there are protests across the country.”

Farm gate milk prices have fallen below production costs, said Youleite Parkes. She and her husband Peter, the FFA coordinator for Surrey, are dairy farmers in Reigate, about 30 miles south of London. “The average farm gate milk price is 17.5 ppl,” Yuleite Parkes said. “Because nearly all of our production is premium milk destined for London, we get 19 ppl. Further north, production is more weighted to cheese and the price is less, as low as 15 ppl for some. But we all need at least 21 ppl to cover costs and more to allow investment.”

“Peter and I started farming five years ago when we took over from the in-laws.

They used to get 25–28 ppl.” However, in the period since the government ended the Milk Marketing Board, she said, “the processors negotiate directly with the farmers’ co-ops and forced down the price. With the price collapse in recent years many farmers are being driven into debt or off the land altogether. We have to protest. The moment we stop protesting they’ll drive down the price even further.”

In 1995 farmers received 47 percent of the liquid milk price, but by 2000 this had fallen to 35 percent. Some have tried to compensate by increasing the size of their herd. But the consequence for most is mounting debt, said Will Hamilton, who has a herd of 60–70 Friesian cows and has participated in many such protests. Big capitalist processors like Dairy Crest and the supermarket chains scrape off the cream. The company’s profit for the year ending March 31 was £76.8 million, a 4 percent increase over last year. The Tesco supermarket chain, whose stores sell milk for about 50 ppl, grossed more than £1 billion over the year in 2002, a 14 percent jump in pre-tax profits.

*Farmers’ Weekly* editor Stephen Howe told the BBC, “Farmers are getting 16.5p to 17p per litre and they are selling milk to the supermarkets at that—which means a markup of 206 percent by the time it reaches the supermarket shelves.”

Meanwhile, more and more dairy farmers are being forced off their land. At 32,000, the total number in the United Kingdom is about 50 percent of what it was a decade ago. The number in England fell



Militant/Jonathan Silberman

**Farmers blockade milk processing plant in Hanworth, London, October 1.**

from 22,793 in 1990 to 14,342 at the end of last year. In Scotland total dairy farms have declined by 40 percent to 1,500 in the last five years, according to Alex Wilson, the FFA coordinator for Scotland.

Depression conditions in dairy farming are driving an increasing number to protest and to join Farmers for Action. “The FFA had a stand at the recent national dairy farmers show in Stoneleigh, Warwickshire, and dozens signed up,” Bruce Horn said. Not all those who turned out for the Hanworth protest were dairy farmers, however. A few like Bruce Horn himself are beef and arable producers. Nikki Edwards is a game farmer. “I’m here because farmers

have to stick together,” she said. “Today it’s the dairy farmers who are at the sharp end. Tomorrow it could be us.”

## Blockade in Scotland

BY PAMELA HOLMES

LIVINGSTON, Scotland—Container trucks lined the approach road as up to 200 farmers assembled at the entrance to Tesco supermarket’s distribution depot here October 3. This reporter counted 18 or more such trucks at the FFA protest.

One farmer said, “We’re here to encourage Tesco to go to Dairy Crest. They’re saying [an increase of] 0.8 ppl but 2p is what we need to cover costs. The supermarkets blame the processors but Dairy Crest says it’s the supermarkets that are reneging on the 2p agreement. Twenty ppl is the minimum we need, 22 pence is what we deserve.”

“I milk 160 cows and produce 1.3 million liters of milk per annum,” said a farmer from Dumfriesshire. He and a wage worker labor “12 hours a day, 7 days a week,” he said. “I’m expecting we’ll get a 1 ppl increase, that is, £13,000. But I use 50 tons of fertilizer. Last year it cost £95 per ton, this year it costs £125—that’s a £1,500 increase. I use 300 tons of cow feed. With this summer’s drought in Europe, the price has gone up £25 per ton—that’s a £7,500 increase.”

Less than an hour into the blockade, Alex Wilson, the FFA representative for Scotland, reported that Tesco managers had agreed to talk to their counterparts at Dairy Crest.

# ‘Back Leonard Peltier’s fight for parole’

BY JOE SWANSON

DES MOINES, Iowa—“We need a lot of support,” said Delaney Bruce, co-coordinator of the Leonard Peltier Defense Committee. She was explaining the latest developments in the fight to free Native American leader Leonard Peltier, who has been locked up in a federal prison on frame-up charges for 27 years.

In a September 24 phone interview from the defense committee’s offices in Lawrence, Kansas, Bruce reported that five days earlier Peltier’s attorneys had asked the 10th Circuit Court of Appeals

to grant him a parole hearing.

That day, more than 200 rallied outside the courthouse in Denver demanding that Peltier be granted parole. The defense committee does not expect the court to rule on the request for a parole hearing for a number of months.

According to Bruce, Peltier has been eligible for parole since 1986. Despite having a prison record with no problems, he has now been incarcerated for more than 11 years beyond the length of time established as the “norm” by the U.S. Parole Commission in connection with the offenses of

which he is accused, she said.

Peltier, a member of the Anishinabe-Lakota nation and a leader of the American Indian Movement (AIM), is in prison on false charges of killing two FBI agents in a 1975 shoot-out at the Pine Ridge reservation in South Dakota.

Bruce noted that supporters of the campaign to free Peltier had asked President William Clinton to grant him a pardon at the end of 2000 before he left office. Some 500 FBI agents and relatives organized a high-profile protest outside the White House, demanding that Peltier’s request be turned down. She said that Clinton did not deny the request for parole but simply ignored it, which defenders of Peltier did not learn until President George Bush was inaugurated.

She reported that, to her knowledge, no journalist has been allowed to visit Peltier at the Leavenworth, Kansas, federal prison since his bid for clemency.

In a phone interview, Barry Bachrach, Peltier’s lead attorney, explained that at Peltier’s 1976 trial the FBI provided only three documents to the defense and has always claimed that these were all that existed.

Over the years, his defense campaign has acquired, through the Freedom of Information Act, another 12,000 documents. Those documents, he said, demonstrate that the FBI withheld crucial evidence that was not presented at the trial.

Bachrach said that the FBI has hidden behind the guise of “national security interests,” withholding thousands of additional documents that the defense committee is demanding.

Bruce said the defense committee is asking people to get involved in the campaign. “We want to join with others on campuses to reach youth through forums for support,” she said.

The Leonard Peltier Defense Committee has support groups in 27 states and eight European countries.

For more information contact the Leonard Peltier Defense Committee, P.O. Box 583, Lawrence, KS 66044-0583. Tel: (785) 842-5774. Fax: (785) 842-5796. E-mail: info@leonardpeltier.org

# New Zealand rest home workers strike

BY RUTH GREEN

WELLINGTON, New Zealand—Some 300 workers at 15 rest homes in the lower North Island walked off the job for several hours September 5 to protest their employer’s pay offer of 2.25 percent.

Summing up the mood of workers at a rally and march held in Wellington during the walkout, Judy McFadyen said in an interview that she was on strike because “I think we are worth more than 2 percent.”

The strikers are employed by Presbyterian Support Central (PSC). Half the workers at PSC rest homes belong to either the Service and Food Workers Union (SFWU) or the New Zealand Nurses Organisation. For nine months now, the unions have been trying to negotiate a new contract. Prior to the strike an initial 5 percent pay claim by the unions had been reduced to 3.5 percent.

In Wellington, around 50 workers gathered outside the employer’s office with placards backing their demands. They marched through the downtown area handing out leaflets to passersby that explained why they were taking strike action. Petitions signed by workers, patients, and other supporters were delivered to PSC bosses, who came outside the organization’s office to receive them. They were greeted by the strikers chanting, “Give us what we deserve!”

For most workers at the Wellington pro-



Militant/Ruth Green

**Workers rally September 5 during strike at 15 nursing homes in Wellington, New Zealand, against 2.25 percent pay offer by Presbyterian Support Central.**

test this was their first strike. Union organizer Alastair Duncan said this was the first time there had been strike action against PSC in 15 years. While the employer has rest homes around the country, workers in other regions are on separate contracts. Duncan said it “draws heavily on public money” to fund its operations. The union leaflet distributed by the strikers explains, “The government has given our bosses a 6 percent funding increase but PSC is offer-

ing us just 2.25 percent.” The leaflet points out that most workers earn less than NZ\$12 an hour (NZ\$1 = \$0.57).

Striker Nerald Davey said she was on strike because “I just thought they treated us really unfairly. We do all the work and they can’t even give us 5 percent.” She added, “we are on a low income anyway.” Davey explained that PSC had bought four more rest homes in the last year “with our money.”