

THE MILITANT

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INSIDE

New record: nearly 7 million
in U.S. prison-probation system

—PAGE 10

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Democrats lead drive for increased police spying

Push 'homeland security' in factional move to win elections

BY MARTÍN KOPPEL
AND MICHAEL ITALIE

At their national convention in Boston, Democratic Party politicians made "homeland security" the central theme in nominating John Kerry as their presidential candidate. From Sen. Hillary Clinton to Kerry himself, they criticized the Bush administration for not doing enough to bolster the ability of the FBI and CIA to carry out domestic spying and to expand the use of the military inside the United States in the name of "fighting terrorism."

The Democrats have pushed the "national security" theme the hardest, in an increasingly factional attempt to inject some enthusiasm into their sagging campaign and gain an edge over the Republicans in the 2004 elections.

"I will and I can fight a more effective war on terror than President Bush is," Kerry told a crowd in Philadelphia on July 27.

Kerry called for extending the commission investigating the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon. He demanded that "we act now, not talk," to implement its proposals for expanded domestic spying operations, released in a July 22 report.

The Democratic contender, who often



AP/Laura Rauch

Boston cop searches passenger's bag on city subway July 26 during Democratic National Convention. Democrats are using "homeland defense" as a factional football in the election campaign.

waves a copy of the 9/11 commission's report during campaign speeches or interviews, criticized Bush for not immediately implementing its recommendations. He said the commission's work should continue another 18 months to monitor whether "we are doing enough, fast enough, to

strengthen our homeland security."

Kerry made a campaign appearance earlier that day at the U.S. naval base in Norfolk, Virginia, timed to coincide with the recent return of three aircraft carriers and 13,000 sailors from the Navy's "Sum-

Continued on Page 7

Socialist Workers close in on ballot drives in Washington, D.C., and Minnesota

BY SAM MANUEL

WASHINGTON, D.C.—"The response we have already gotten from working people here to our ballot effort gives us more confidence to strengthen our soapboxing,

other speaking engagements, media work, and overall campaigning as we organize simultaneously to get on the ballot in Minnesota, Nebraska, Delaware, and Wisconsin," said Arrin Hawkins, at a campaign rally

here July 24, the first day of petitioning in this city. After three days, more than 6,000 people had signed petitions to place the Socialist Workers slate—Róger Calero for president and Arrin Hawkins for vice president of the United States—on the ballot here.

"We are well on our way to collecting double the requirement," said Janice Lynn, a meat packer and organizer of the SWP campaign here. Election authorities require 3,500 signatures to place the presidential ticket on the ballot.

Over the same weekend, some 2,600 people signed petitions to put the SWP slate on the ballot in Minnesota, well over the requirement of 2,000 state residents (see article on page 6).

In New York, where SWP campaigners collected nearly 30,000 signatures in two weeks, a substantial effort is under way to do the necessary paperwork to prepare the petitions to be filed with the state by mid-August. At the same time, partisans of the socialist campaign there have stepped up literature distribution and other outreach work in working-class neighborhoods.

"These efforts are further steps toward gaining ballot status for the party in more states than we have been on since 1992," said Norton Sandler, SWP national campaign director. "In every case we are using the petitioning campaigns as launching pads for effective campaigning for

Continued on Page 6



Militant/Dan Fein

Willie Cotton, SWP candidate for U.S. Congress in 15th C.D., right, campaigns at New York's Harlem Bookfair. Campaigners got more than 100 signatures to put party slate on ballot and sold 40 books on revolutionary politics, and four subscriptions and 60 copies of the Militant.

NLRB holds hearing on union vote at Utah mine

BY RÓGER CALERO
AND JOEL BRITTON

PRICE, Utah—"C.W. Mining is an employer that is part of the Kingston Order Entities with 173 businesses," said Richard Rosenblatt, attorney for the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) on behalf of miners at the Co-Op mine near Huntington, fighting for representation by the UMWA.

"The evidence will show that many members who work in the mine are either children or grandchildren of supervisors, or children or grandchildren of the founding members of the Order," continued Rosenblatt. The attorney was presenting his opening statement at a fact-finding hearing of the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) held here July 20-21 in the Carbon County court complex.

Therefore, Rosenblatt argued, these family members have "a conflict of loyalty," and "lack a community of interest with outsiders" in the bargaining unit and must be "excluded" from the right to vote in a union election that the NLRB has mandated be held.

The hearing followed a decision by the government agency at the end of June that C.W. Mining had illegally fired the 75 miners last September for union activity. It ordered the company to offer uncondi-

Continued on Page 4

Rumsfeld and army chief say imperialist rulers 'don't need' a draft army

BY ARGIRIS MALAPANIS

In several recent interviews with the media, U.S. secretary of defense Donald Rumsfeld rebuffed once again liberal critics of the White House who are either claiming that the Bush administration is moving to reinstitute the draft or are themselves calling for its reintroduction.

In a July 26 Department of Defense "Special Briefing on U.S. Army Transformation," Gen. Peter Schoomaker, U.S. army chief of staff, made similar points.

"The fact is we don't need" a draft, Rumsfeld told Radio America July 22. "We are doing well with respect to recruiting and retention."

Edd Hendee of Radio America had asked Rumsfeld about allegations that "we're un-

Continued on Page 3

Also Inside:

Boston cops to subject subway riders to random searches 2

Deaths on the job on the rise in Alabama mines 5

Kerry backs Washington's economic war on Cuba, criticizes new restrictions on travel, cash remittances 7

Opponent of police brutality dies while in custody of Chicago cops 9

Boston cops to search subway riders

BY TED LEONARD

BOSTON—Dozens of protesters filled the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) board of directors meeting July 8 to speak out against a new security policy being initiated. The MBTA, the fifth largest transit system in the United States, carries over 1 million people a day on buses, subways, and commuter rail trains in the greater Boston area.

“As part of an effort to guard against terrorism,” the authority announced June 8, “MBTA police are developing a policy that would involve random checks of passengers’ bags. Both the FBI and the Department of Homeland Security have warned that terrorists might strike trains and buses in major U.S. cities using bombs concealed in bags or luggage.

“While it is the MBTA’s goal to have the policy in place prior to the Democratic National Convention, it’s important to note that MBTA Police are looking long-term.”

“Transit Watch, Update July 2004,” which is issued by the MBTA, said, “From now on: All MBTA customers will be subject to security inspections of any carry-on item.”

“We consider the policy misguided and dangerous,” Urszula Masny-Latos, executive director of the Massachusetts National Lawyers Guild (NLG), told the MBTA board of directors. “It is a serious assault on freedom and privacy of ordinary Americans. We all have a right to walk the streets without going through security checkpoints.”

“It will not be random, people from the Middle East will be targeted,” said Merrie Najimy, from the Massachusetts American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee.

Spokespeople for the MBTA have said you can refuse to be searched. But if you do, you will be asked to leave the station, and if you don’t, you will be arrested for trespassing.

“How do I get to work? How does my son get to school? I don’t have a choice,” said Khalida Samalis, coordinator of the Transit Riders Union (TRU).

More than a dozen people from TRU spoke at the board meeting. TRU has been active in the fight against fare increases and “racial profiling” by MBTA police.

“The Fourth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution and Article 14 of the Massachusetts Declaration of Rights protect

everyone against unreasonable searches,” says a flyer by the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU).

Rallies sponsored by the Safe and Free T Coalition, of about 50 people each, took place July 1 and July 13 at a downtown subway stop. Mock searches and leaflets explaining riders’ rights in case of searches were passed out at the actions. National Lawyers Guild members distributed a button saying “I do not consent to a search.”

Not everybody at the MBTA board meeting opposed the proposed searches. “We can’t depend on a wing and a prayer to keep us safe,” said Susan Howard, a member of the Transit Police Community Advisory Committee.

The search policy was not on the agenda of the board meeting and the members did not debate it. Under the manager’s report, MBTA general manager Michael Mulhern told the board earlier that day he had been called by Homeland Security to watch the press conference by the agency’s secretary Thomas Ridge. “Ridge said there was an increased risk of a terrorist attack and pointed to the upcoming Democratic Party convention in Boston and the Republican Party convention in New York,” Mulhern said. “The first political conventions since 9/11.”

Both the ACLU and NLG have said they will go to court to stop the searches. The policy has not been released to the public



Getty Images/William Plowman

Transit officer stands guard March 12 at a Boston subway station

in writing yet.

Besides the searches, the MBTA has announced that the Commuter Rail and subway platforms at North Station here will be closed during the July 26–29 Democratic convention. Riders on the Orange Line subway and buses that go on highways by the FleetCenter, where the convention is being held in downtown Boston, will not be permitted to carry onboard packages larger than “the size of a loaf of bread.”

City authorities have also announced major roads will be closed from 4:00 p.m. to 1:00 a.m. each day during the convention, including

a six-mile stretch of I-93 that snakes through downtown Boston past the FleetCenter.

“The searches are an attack on the rights of all working people,” said Laura Garza, Socialist Workers candidate for state representative in Massachusetts, during a planning meeting called by TRU to discuss responding to the proposed searches. “They are testing this assault in Boston. If they can get away with it they will expand it across the country.”

In May, the MBTA said it was going to begin stopping passengers for identification checks at various subway stops. Up till now, it has not implemented this plan.

Palestinian militant dies of heart attack in Philadelphia

BY RÓGER CALERO

NEW YORK—Palestinian militant Farouk Abdel-Muhti, 56, died July 21 in Philadelphia. He had just spoken at a meeting there at the Ethical Society as part of a panel on detentions and torture. Toward the end of the event, he collapsed of a heart attack. He was pronounced dead after being rushed to the hospital.

Family and friends of Abdel-Muhti held a memorial and prayer service at the Islamic Cultural Center in Manhattan July 24 to honor his contributions to the fight for Palestinian self-determination and social justice. About 150 people took part, including supporters of Abdel-Muhti’s fight against the U.S. government’s attempts to deport him. Many participants also knew him for



Militant/Argiris Malapanis

Farouk Abdel-Muhti, April 17, New York.

his work as an outspoken advocate of the Palestinian national liberation struggle and a defender of the Cuban Revolution.

Abdel-Muhti died just three months after being released from prison where he had been detained for two years without charges. He was arrested by immigration and FBI cops on April 26, 2002, who claimed they were acting on the basis of a 1995 government order to deport him. For 250 days he was held in solitary confinement. Jeff Fogel of the Center for Constitutional Rights, one of Abdel-Muhti’s attorneys, told the *Philadelphia Inquirer* that “He did not get his medication when he was transferred from jail to jail. We are looking into the possibility of a connection between his death and the conditions he endured.”

He won his freedom as the result of a public campaign waged by supporters of his right to work and live in the United States.

While his defenders were putting pressure on U.S. authorities to win his release, the Palestinian revolutionary remained active, organizing political activities with other prisoners and extending solidarity to others facing government victimization and workers fighting for dignity and better living conditions.

“While in detention he evolved to become a better fighter,” said Sharin Chiorazzo, a long-time friend of Abdel-Muhti, at the memorial meeting.

After his release, Abdel-Muhti continued to speak out in support of the struggle of the Palestinian people, and against U.S. government attacks on democratic rights.

Among those present at the memorial was Lynne Stewart, a New York attorney facing frame-up charges of “providing material support for terrorist activity.”

Stewart told those present how Abdel-Muhti spoke out and wrote messages from jail on her behalf. “When he got out of jail, one of the first meetings he attended was one in support of my case,” she said.

Many of Abdel-Muhti’s colleagues from WBAI radio, the local station of the Pacifica Radio network where he worked, were also present.

Abdel-Muhti was born in 1947 in the Ramallah district of what is now the Israeli-occupied West Bank, when it was still under British control. He left the West Bank before the 1967 takeover by Tel Aviv, living at various times in the U.S. and several countries in Latin America. He had lived here since the 1970s.

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Editor: ARGIRIS MALAPANIS
Business Manager: MICHAEL ITALIE
Washington Bureau Chief: SAM MANUEL
Editorial Staff: Róger Calero, Michael Italie, Martin Koppel, Sam Manuel, Doug Nelson, and Paul Pederson.

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Army ‘transformation’

Continued from front page

der size in our military, we can’t hold our numbers” and that “we may bring back the draft.”

“There have always been people in our country who favored the use of compulsion—the draft,” Rumsfeld responded. After stating that the ruling class doesn’t need a draft now, he added, “We have a military today of 1.4 million active and another 800-plus thousands in the Guard and Reserve. It comes to close to 2.5 million, if you include the Individual Ready Reserve [IRR].”

The IRR consists of reservists who have completed their training but have a military obligation remaining for a period, during which they can be called for active duty.

Rumsfeld said that about 125,000 U.S. soldiers are now in Iraq, forming the backbone of the imperialist occupation forces in that country. “Now, out of 2.5 million, that’s not a lot,” he added.

In a July 16 interview on WDUN radio, Martha Zoller asked: “Two of my sons were going to see a movie and somebody came up to them about ‘Fahrenheit 9/11’ and said you need to see this movie because Don Rumsfeld wants the draft. What is the status on our readiness and whether we would be considering a draft or not?”

The interviewer was referring to the so-called documentary film by Michael Moore, now used widely by liberals and middle-class radicals across the United States as an anti-Bush show to boost the Democratic Party campaign to elect John Kerry president in November.

“When I was a congressman in the 1960s, I was one of the first people in the country to put in legislation recommending that we go to an all-volunteer military,” Rumsfeld responded. “I’ve been an enthusiastic supporter of it since the early 1960s, the mid-1960s. The United States is not going back to the draft. There are a relatively small number of people who, for whatever reason...are recommending that we go to a draft, but the president is against the draft. And there is no need for the draft.”

In another interview the same day on the National Public Radio, Rumsfeld replied similarly to questions by Juan Williams, stating that the volunteer military “has worked brilliantly for our country.” He added, “To the extent we end up with some areas of concern, all we have to do is to turn the dials up and increase the incentives and reduce the disincentives. We can do that. We’re perfectly capable of doing it. There were a lot of inequities in a draft—in any draft. There certainly were inequities in the ones that existed back in the ’60s and ’70s.”

As a news item in the February 3 *American Forces Information Service*, a Department of Defense publication, put it, “Attracting and keeping quality people in the military is the highest priority” of the 2004 U.S. defense department budget. The Pentagon announced that military pay raises would average between 2 and 6.25 percent this year. In order to retain experienced personnel, it would give the highest raises to mid-level grades.

Liberal calls for the draft

Among those who have called for the reinstitution of the draft are some of the most liberal critics of the Bush administration. Representatives Charles Rangel of New York and John Conyers of Michigan, both Democrats, introduced legislation in early 2003 that would impose mandatory military or national service on men and women aged 18–26. If that bill had been passed, it would have brought back the draft with no exemptions for college or graduate students.

The two congressmen tried to paint their proposal as “antiwar,” introducing it as tens of thousands of people demonstrated on a number of occasions against the coming Anglo-American invasion of Iraq. They argued that by forcing the children of the well-to-do into uniform and “in harm’s way,” the measure would make politicians think twice about going to war. They also argued that the armed forces were becoming overstretched and needed an infusion of personnel.

“I believe that if we are going to send

our children to war the governing principle must be that of shared sacrifice,” Rangel wrote in an op-ed column published in the Dec. 31, 2002, *New York Times*. The congressman noted that “a disproportionate number of the poor and members of minority groups make up the enlisted ranks of the military, while the most privileged Americans are underrepresented or absent.”

Rangel did not mention, of course, that the conscript armies in Vietnam and other wars were made up overwhelmingly of working people and that the families of the upper middle class and the bourgeoisie found a myriad of ways to avoid the draft for their children. This class divide was reflected in 1967 figures showing that 31 percent of eligible Americans who were white were inducted into the military, compared to 67 percent of eligible Blacks.

The ruling class in the United States brought military conscription to a halt in 1973 as Washington was being defeated in Vietnam. Registration for the draft was terminated three years later. Democratic president James Carter reintroduced it in 1980. Following an initial period of widespread refusal to sign up, draft registration remains in place today.

‘Transformation’ of U.S. military

What is behind the often heated, but always patriotic and pro-imperialist, opposition to aspects of the White House military strategy by many liberals is what the Pentagon describes as the “transformation” of the U.S. armed forces. As the Bush administration has carried out widespread changes—including shutting down military bases, especially in Europe, and ending abruptly several arms programs to focus on more advanced weapons technology—it has aroused the ire of certain capitalist families whose profits have been affected by these shifts.

As Rumsfeld put it in a Jan. 31, 2002, speech at the War College in Washington, D.C., “During the Cold War, we faced a fairly predictable set of threats. We came to know a great deal about our adversary, because it was the same one for a long period.... But the Cold War is over. The Soviet Union is gone, and with it, the familiar security environment to which our nation had grown accustomed.” Washington no longer needs a “massive, heavy force designed to repel a Soviet tank invasion,” Rumsfeld said.

“Today our adversaries have changed,” he continued. Today “we need rapidly deployable, fully integrated joint forces capable of reaching distant theaters quickly and working with our air and sea forces to strike adversaries swiftly, successfully, and with devastating effect.”

The changes the U.S. defense secretary has described include repositioning U.S. forces away from Germany and elsewhere in Western Europe to the east and expanding the role of NATO worldwide. They also encompass giving a central role to Special Operations units, combining commands of various branches of the military, outsourcing jobs like running prisons and hospitals to nonmilitary entities in order to “turn every soldier into a rifleman” and focus on restoring the “warrior ethos” to all units, and enhancing the military’s volunteer character.

Rumsfeld returned to these themes in his latest public appearances.

“Our problem isn’t that we’re short on total numbers of people, it’s that our military needs to be adjusted to fit the 21st century and we’ve been in the process of doing that for the last two years,” he said in the July 22 interview with Radio America. “It takes some time.”

“We’re adjusting our force posture around the world—our bases, our forward operating sites, and our locations,” he continued. “We’re rebalancing the Guard and Reserve with the active force so that we have the right skill sets on active duty, so that we don’t have to call up certain skill sets from the Guard and Reserve too frequently because, clearly, those people consider themselves reservists and not full-time people. And to the extent you have to call them up because you don’t have those skills on active duty, it’s not a good thing. So we’re fixing all of that. I think that the progress that’s been made is so significant that we’re going to see over time that we’ve



Reuters

U.S. Marines participate in war games with Korean troops in south Korea in February. Washington is withdrawing its forces to positions outside the range of Pyongyang’s artillery. “A growing number of people in Washington feel that our troops in South Korea limit our ability to respond to a crisis with North Korea,” an official in the Bush administration told the *Washington Post*.

been able to reduce stress on the force in a rather significant way.”

Iraq war boosts transformation

In the July 26 press briefing at the Pentagon, U.S. army chief of staff Gen. Peter Schoomaker said that the U.S.-led war in Iraq, and Washington’s broader “war on terrorism,” has helped accelerate this strategic transformation of Washington’s military.

“This war, as unfortunate as war always is,” Schoomaker said, “provides momentum and focus and resources to transform that you might not have outside of this.”

He continued, “Now, I don’t want to understate...the huge management challenge here, and that is managing the convergence of the global war on terror and the transformation. But in fact, this convergence is very fortuitous.”

In his opening statement, Schoomaker said that “while we are engaged in combat operations in both Iraq and Afghanistan,” the U.S. rulers are “making some of the most significant changes in our army that we have made since World War II.”

The army chief outlined three of the main elements of this transformation.

“The first is that we are restructuring the force into modular formations,” he said. “We’re calling these the combat forces, brigade combat team, units of action. And this is a path on the transformation towards the eventual Future Combat System—units of action.”

At the same time, he added, “We are rebalancing our force between the active component of the Army, the active Army, the Army National Guard, and the Army Reserve.”

Finally, the general said, “We are stabilizing the force.”

Schoomaker went into some detail to explain these changes.

The U.S. Army will grow in the next few years by about 30,000 soldiers, he said, as part of this process. “There’s a difference in growing the Army and increasing the end strength,” he said, and this nuance is “the essence of the issue.”

Recruitment and retention in the Army is advancing toward more than 100 percent of its annual goal this year, the military chief said. The Army Reserve is having a similar success, he added. Only the National Guard is lagging toward 88 percent of its target, “but we remain cautiously optimistic that we will make our goal.”

The Army is planning to make more of the norm the calling to active duty of members of the Reserve and the Individual Ready Reserve (IRR). Approximately 5,700 soldiers from the IRR are being called to fill vacant positions in the reserve components, Schoomaker said, adding that “this is not unusual in time of war.” During the 1990–91 U.S.-led war on Iraq, “we mobilized 20,200 from the IRR.”

Gen. Steven Blum, chief of the National Guard Bureau, who spoke at the briefing along with Schoomaker, made it clear that it won’t be abnormal for National Guard troops to be sent abroad as well. “Make no mistake; the number one priority of the National Guard is to defend the homeland,” he said. “But also don’t make the mistake, defending the homeland doesn’t mean you only do it here.”

As Washington has moved into a period of virtually permanent war, the Pentagon tops are preparing employers and others to get used to the idea that a proportion of their workers serving in the various reserve forces will often be mobilized for combat or military support operations. This has been a feature of the Israeli armed forces for decades.

Schoomaker also said that as the navy and air force are trimming their numbers, the army is trying to shift that personnel into its ranks. “We are also developing initiatives like a new program called Blue to Green,” he stated. “While the navy and the air force are trying to reduce their manning...this will allow talented sailors and airmen who have specialties that we need, that want to continue on active duty, to transfer to the army.”

Redeployment in Korea

To make its armed forces around the world more effective, Washington is moving its military deployed in various parts of the globe to be closer to theaters of war and make it a more agile killing machine. One aspect of this repositioning that Schoomaker mentioned is Korea.

There are 37,000 U.S. soldiers in south Korea on 41 occupied U.S. military installations. According to an article in the July 25 *Washington Post*, 3,600 of these troops will be moved to Iraq in August. By October, the Pentagon will move most of its 216 troops away from in and around the Joint Security Area around Panmunjom, the village on the so-called Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) that separates the Korean peninsula. The U.S. military bases in south Korea are also to be consolidated to 23 from the current 41. Plans are underway for an overall reduction of U.S. forces there by almost a third by the end of 2005, the *Post* said.

The purpose of these changes is to free up troops for deployments elsewhere, as the remaining imperialist forces on the Korean peninsula are relocated about 75 miles south of the DMZ—putting them out of range of the north Korean artillery.

The *Post* quoted an unnamed senior Bush administration official saying, “A growing number of people in Washington feel that our troops in South Korea limit our ability to respond to a crisis with North Korea.”

This provides a glimpse of the kind of devastating bombardment through advanced weapons that U.S. imperialism is planning in case of a military conflict with the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK)—instead of fighting a land war against the DPRK’s army.

In the July 26 briefing, Schoomaker said that 8,000 U.S. soldiers in Korea have voluntarily extended their tours of duty there. He and other army generals present insisted that the volunteer character of the military is an aid to the ruling class now.

“Is it true,” a reporter asked the army officials at the briefing, “that...soldiers who are deployed are reenlisting sometimes at a higher rate than those that aren’t deployed?”

“That’s an absolute fact,” replied Blum. “We are a volunteer force, a recruited force. People that want to soldier, whether it’s in the active component, the Reserves or the National Guard.”

Utah coal miners fight for job safety

BY GUILLERMO ESQUIVEL
AND ANNE CARROLL

HUNTINGTON, Utah—After two weeks on the job, coal miners at the Co-Op mine here say they are fighting to improve safety conditions as part of their counteroffensive against the company's attempt to defeat their struggle to win union representation by the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA). The miners say they are working 12-hour rotating shifts and facing selective punishment for working by company rules that supervisors all of a sudden chalk up as "safety violations."

The National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) has mandated a union representation election be held at Co-Op later this summer, and had just held a hearing in nearby Price, Utah, to determine who will be eligible to vote (see front-page article).

Meanwhile, miners say they have decided to act collectively to enforce safety at the mine and defend themselves against any victimization by the company. Despite the long working hours, many miners met one day after work recently and organized a safety committee of representatives from the underground and surface crews, workers said.

The members of the safety committee attended a safety training class two days later at the UMWA hall in Price. Bob Butero, organizing director of UMWA Region IV,

organized the class. Butero based the class on the 1969 Mine Act and "A Guide to Miners' Rights and Responsibilities under the Federal Mine Safety and Health Act of 1977," copies of which were available in English and Spanish.

Under this 1977 law, coal miners in the United States at both union and nonunion mines have the right to elect their own representatives to accompany federal inspectors during visits at a mine to inspect safety. Miners also have the right to be informed and participate in enforcement and legal proceedings under the act, and to request and get a federal inspection of a mine where they have evidence there is an imminent danger.

"This is necessary for us," said Ricardo Chávez, a miner at Co-Op. "A safety committee made up of miners is for our own benefit and for our own defense. We are becoming more aware of our rights."

Butero reportedly described to the six Co-Op miners who attended the class an explosion at an underground coal mine in Farmington, West Virginia, in 1968 that killed over 100 miners. Soon after that



Militant/Pat Miller

Co-Op miners and supporters rally July 17 in front of Kingston family-owned business in Salt Lake City, Utah, to protest company war on unionists during first week back at work.

disastrous blast, and following protests by the miners union, the U.S. government passed the 1969 Mine Act, Butero said. That mine disaster was covered by national TV and was one of the things that led to a three-week strike by 40,000 coal miners and a march of 3,000 to the state capitol building in Charleston, West Virginia. The Coal Act was a more comprehensive and stringent measure than any previous legislation regarding the enforcement of safety in coal mines.

On March 9, 1976, one day after a federal inspector cited the Scotia Coal Company for three explosion-related safety violations, a blast killed 15 miners at the Scotia Coal mine in Kentucky. Two days later, eight more miners and three federal inspectors investigating the mine disaster were killed in another explosion.

Butero said that the 1977 Federal Mine Safety and Health amendment to the Coal Act was passed following this disaster. It strengthened and expanded the rights of miners and increased protection from retaliation by coal bosses for exercising the rights workers have under federal law to enforce safety. The 1977 law mandated federal inspectors to carry out four inspections per year of underground and surface mines. These "Triple A" inspections must be carried out through the entire mine. The act also set mandatory penalties for coal companies who violate safety laws.

Butero told the miners that they not only have a right to have one of their own representatives accompany a federal inspector during a safety investigation, but they can do it without that particular miner losing any pay if the inspection is done during working hours. The miners said that all their safety training by the Co-Op mine never instructed them on their rights under the 1977 act, which is required of all training courses.

The miners present at the class said they also learned that if a miner is ordered withdrawn from a mine for insufficient safety and health training, "The miner cannot be fired or otherwise discriminated against and must not suffer a loss of pay because of the withdrawal order," according to the 1977 act. One of the Co-Op miners who was part of the nine-and-a-half-month strike is facing company discrimination for this very reason, workers said. The miners asked the UMWA to file a complaint with the Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) demanding the reinstatement of this miner with full pay for the days he didn't work and payment of his training.

At the same time, the Co-Op bosses have continued their offensive against UMWA backers with more written warnings on safety. One boss recently issued five written notices to his crew, Co-Op miners reported. Two warnings were reportedly given to two UMWA supporters and the other three to relatives of the mine owners, the Kingstons. Miners said the latter was done only to paint a façade that the bosses don't discriminate.

"For so many years the bosses never talked about or cared so much about safety," said one of the miners who supports the UMWA and attended the class with Butero. "Why now?"

The miners said they will submit a list of names to MSHA and the company with their safety representatives and start taking charge of safety on the job in a more collective way.

About 20 Co-Op miners, many of whom were part of the strike, recently met with Alfonso Brito, a representative of the Mexican Consulate in Salt Lake City, Utah. He told the miners that the Mexican Consulate had been following the strike and noticed that the miners had remained united and strong.

NLRB holds hearing in Price on union vote

Continued from front page

tional reinstatement to all the dismissed employees, and decided to conduct a union representation election.

The Co-Op miners have been fighting for a union in order to better organize to press for safety on the job, and to get better wages and working conditions. Most production workers at Co-Op were paid between \$5.25 and \$7 an hour, while wages for underground coal miners in the United States average at least \$17 an hour.

The UMWA had filed a representation petition with the NLRB regional office in Denver in May, on behalf of the Co-Op coal miners after the large majority of the 75 dismissed miners signed up for the union. The UMWA took advantage of a legally required window in the so-called contract between C.W. Mining and the company "union," the International Association of United Workers Union (IAUWU), that the Co-Op miners have been working under.

NLRB officer Nancy Brandt heard arguments and received evidence from attorney Carl Kingston for the Co-Op bosses and Mark Hansen for the IAUWU, as well as Rosenblatt for the UMWA. The lawyers were given an August 4 deadline for submitting briefs to the NLRB regional director in Denver, who is expected to rule on who will be included in the bargaining unit at the Co-Op mine, and therefore would be eligible to vote in the representation election.

At the heart of the issues before the NLRB is whether members of the Kingston family employed at the mine should be allowed to vote.

The company submitted a list of approximately 100 Kingstons and others who are listed on the company's payroll as part-time or seasonal help. Some on the company's list also work full time alongside approximately four dozen miners who are mostly immigrants from Mexico.

Rosenblatt presented evidence and called on witnesses to support the UMWA argument that the relatives of the Kingston family employed in the mine derive benefits none of the other miners do and their direct connection to the owners of the mine represents a conflict of interest.

Former clan member testifies

Among the witnesses called by the UMWA were Ronald Barton, a criminal investigator for the Utah attorney general, who had put together a genealogy of the Kingston family, and LuAnn Kingston Cooper, who left the polygamous clan in

2000 to escape from an incestuous marriage. Their testimonies established that about 95 percent of the nonimmigrant C.W. Mining employees are related to the Kingstons. This reinforced the UMWA's argument on the overlap between most of those listed as employees on the company's payroll and stockholders and owners of the mine, as well as owners and managers of other Kingston-owned businesses.

The Kingston clan, also known as the Latter Day Church of Christ, and associated with the Davis County Co-operative, is estimated to include 1,200 members. The family has amassed a \$150 million business operation that includes pawn shops, restaurant supply stores, dairies, and mines throughout six western states. The Co-Op mine is reportedly one of its most profitable businesses.

In her testimony, LuAnn Kingston Cooper described the "service statements" and "card system" used instead of paychecks to compensate members of the clan employed in Kingston businesses. Under this setup, Cooper testified, most clan members are restricted to using their debit-type cards at Kingston-owned businesses. Cooper said she began working at the clan's main office in the 1990s at the age of 12. She also explained how at meetings every other Friday of the Davis County Co-operative group they were instructed to "be polite" but not to fraternize with the "outsiders," referring to non-members of the clan, after working hours.

Cooper described how members of the family get assigned to work in the mine. "They were told to go," she said. She cited as an example Robert Petersen, a young member of the clan who was told to work at Co-Op, started working there, but didn't like it and was not given a choice to work in any of the other Kingston businesses, according to Cooper. "They wouldn't let him work anywhere else," Cooper said. Petersen ended up cutting his ties with the family, she stated.

The company and company union attorneys presented witnesses who claimed that Kingston family members employed at the mine are hired like everyone else and are subject to the same policies and pay scales as other employees.

Evidence submitted by the UMWA to counter this argument included job applications filled out by Kingston clan members that were taken from the Co-Op personnel files, after being subpoenaed for the hearing. Every application had only the name of the individual and an address on it.

"We are here to provide additional sup-

port for the status of workers and members of the union," said Mark Hansen, the attorney representing the so-called IAUWU. Joining Hansen were Neven Bratt, who said he is the vice-president of the "international union," and Chris Grundvig, who described himself as the president of the IAUWU "local" at the Co-Op mine.

Grundvig claimed that the company outfit has more than 100 members—including supervisors, managerial, office, and clerical employees.

During cross-examination by Rosenblatt, Bratt testified that the other two officers of the IAUWU are Ronald and Vicky Mattingly. The current address listed for the IAUWU is the home of the couple. In answering the UMWA lawyer, Bratt said that the IAUWU officers had been elected at a convention held at Mattingly's home. He also admitted that the "international" has only one "local," the one at Co-Op.

Among the scores of relatives of the mine owners and founders of the Davis County Co-operative mentioned by Barton and Cooper during their testimony, were Chris Grundvig, Bratt, and attorney Hansen, who Cooper testified is a cousin of C.W. Mining attorney Carl Kingston.

Throughout much of the hearing, Hansen and Carl Kingston teamed up against Rosenblatt, raising one objection after another to his questions of witnesses. In virtually every case, the NLRB hearing officer allowed the UMWA attorney to proceed.

Soon after the hearing began, Hansen quit pretending there was a distinction between the pro-boss outfit and the company, and even asked for a recess in order to consult with Carl Kingston before continuing.

The NLRB regional director in Denver will rule on which of the Co-Op workers can vote in the union election. Those voting will reportedly have the option to choose to be represented by the UMWA, the company's IAUWU, or no union at all.

From the beginning of their fight for a union at Co-Op, miners have said the company outfit never represented them when they were victimized by the bosses.

At the hearing Rosenblatt said the UMWA reserved the right to challenge in the courts the legitimacy of the company union, which was recognized by the NLRB more than 20 years ago.

Bob Butero, organizing director of Region IV of the UMWA, told reporters that a decision could come two to three weeks after the August 4 deadline for attorneys from both sides to submit their briefs.

Pennsylvania striking nursing home workers picket company offices

BY MARTY RESSLER

OAKMONT, Pennsylvania—“Presbyterian is unfair! All we want is our fair share!” shouted nursing home workers striking Presbyterian SeniorCare in Washington, Pennsylvania. Organized by Service Employees International Union (SEIU) Local 1199P, the workers carried their fight July 17 to company headquarters here, 45 miles away from Washington.

More than 40 demonstrators marched and rallied in the rain in front of the Presbyterian SeniorCare facility and headquarters to demand the company raise staffing levels, provide health care and decent wages to the workers, and stop transporting workers from the nonunion Oakmont site to Washington to cross their picket lines.

Some 150 nurses, laundry and house-keeping workers, and drivers had walked out June 1 around these issues.

The unionists held a rally at the midpoint of the four-hour demonstration. Speakers included Clemmy Allen, of the Career Center of the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) in the area; a representative of the United Steelworkers of America (USWA); a nurse from the newly organized Beverly Healthcare-Oakmont; Father Jack O’Malley of the Allegheny County Central Labor Council; and strikers from the Grane nursing home in Johnstown.

“If health-care workers don’t have health care, it is in danger for everyone,” said Neal Bisno, Secretary-Treasurer of SEIU 1199P.

Striker Jennifer Chadwick described how much stronger the strikers are now. “Half of us didn’t even know each other before we started,” she said.

As the picketing continued, strikers Judy Briggs, Linda Nakutis, and Martha Seaman described an open negotiating session that took place July 15. Fifty strikers showed up, but the company representative declined even to enter the meeting room. Instead a federal mediator presented the company’s latest offer, which was that the workers return under the same contract, without the union security clause.

“This shows that Presbyterian is totally unserious about negotiating with us,” said Nakutis.

At the afternoon shift change, cars streamed out of the Oakmont facility. Most drivers were stone-faced, but a few honked or waved as picketers shouted: “What do we want? *UNION!*” and “No contract! No peace, no work!”

The Washington strikers were joined by a half dozen locked out workers from Grane Healthcare’s Laurelwood facility in Johnstown, Pennsylvania. After a one-day strike on July 7 to protest low staffing levels and the company’s benefits and wage offer, 58 workers were locked out. The company has since called back the certified nursing assistants. Twenty laundry, housekeeping, and dietary workers are still locked out, workers report.

At the end of the three-year contract offered by the company, said Carol Williams, a part-time laundry worker, “a



Militant/Marty Ressler

Members of Service Employees International Union Local 1199P on strike against Washington Presbyterian nursing home since June 1, picket on July 17 outside company headquarters in Oakmont, Pennsylvania.

single person would be paying more than \$200 a month for health insurance, and almost \$1,000 for a family.” Grane operates 10 nursing homes in southwestern Pennsylvania. According to the “Grane Healthcare Report” by District 1199P of the SEIU, none of the company’s facilities reached the state average of 3.9 hours of daily care per resident in 2002. To reach the state average, each facility would have to add an average of nearly 23 additional nurses and nurse aides on staff.

Williams and fellow laundry worker Hazel Shauils described “Grane Care,” the company’s term for its nursing care system. Each patient pays \$3,000 a month, which includes bed and food. If they require bathroom assistance, an additional \$300

is tacked on. Each ride to the doctor will cost \$40. Even a box of Kleenex will add \$5 to their bill.

Members of USWA Local 7139-05 at Allegheny Ludlum Washington Plate had an all-day plant gate collection July 2, and collected nearly \$1,300 for the SeniorCare strikers. Eight strikers joined the Steelworkers in collecting at six shift changes.

“The overwhelming response to the strikers was inspiring,” said Josephina Otero, a member of Local 7139-05. “Many Steelworkers who had been laid off for eight months gave especially generously, dropping \$20 bills into the bright yellow collection buckets.”

On July 14, Joyce Nichols, president of the Washington SEIU local, and three other strikers addressed the Washington/Greene County Central Labor Council meeting, which donated \$500.

In addition, Judy Briggs said, people come by all the time to honk, wave, or bring food donations. Some 130 of the original strikers remain solid on the picket line, after a couple dozen crossed in the early stage of the walkout. They’ve set their next solidarity rally in Washington, Pennsylvania, for July 31.

Josephina Otero contributed to this article.

Fatalities rise at coal mines in U.S. South

BY CLAY DENNISON

BIRMINGHAM, Alabama—United Mine Workers of America member Gary Wayne Keeton was killed April 22 while working by himself along a coal conveyor belt at the Jim Walter Resources No. 7 mine near Brookwood, Alabama. He is the eighth coal miner killed in the United States in 2004. According to a UMWA press release, the belt Keeton was working along started without warning. His body was found on a coal pile outside the mine, after being carried 9,000 feet through the mine on the conveyor system.

On May 11, 150 working and retired miners and family members from every union mine in Alabama picketed a meeting of Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) and Jim Walter Resources officials, to voice their anger about lax compliance with mine safety laws by state mine operators and lax enforcement by MSHA.

The meeting, at a restaurant in Hueytown, Alabama, was sponsored by the Holmes Safety Association. This is an organization started in 1916 that claims to promote cooperation by company, government, and labor groups to prevent mine fatalities and promote safety. The first mine safety laws with any real teeth, however, were not written until the 1970s in face of mass mobilizations by miners and strikes. The featured speaker at the dinner was MSHA Administrator Ray McKinney, a top agency official.

A month later, on June 16, Kenneth Battles was killed at the same mine. He is the 12th coal miner to be killed on the job this year. He was killed when he was crushed by a coal car in an underground coal bunker that he was hosing out. According to MSHA, the bunker operator was unaware of his location. As the coal bosses have cut the number of workers, it has become common for miners to work by themselves cleaning spilled coal along belt haulage areas.

The same day Battles was killed, Edwin Pennington, a 25-year-old miner, died when the mine roof fell on him in a Bell County Coal Corporation mine in Perry County, Kentucky, where he worked for an independent contractor. A few hours later, Eric Chaney, 26, lost his life in another roof collapse in a Dags Branch Coal Corporation mine in Pike County, Kentucky.

“Our Alabama miners have suffered through the tragic September 2001 explo-

sions at JWR No. 5 that killed 13 UMWA miners, and now these latest deaths,” said UMWA president Cecil Roberts in a press statement. “They have a lot of questions, and MSHA needs to start providing some real answers, not just lip service. This latest trend must be reversed—sooner, not later.”

Investigations by the UMWA and MSHA found that the company had been grossly negligent, failing to carry out basic safety measures that could have prevented

the buildup of explosive quantities of methane gas and coal dust that caused the September 2001 explosion. The union also faulted MSHA for lax enforcement of mine safety laws.

MSHA has not released a report on its investigation of Keeton’s death or of the five other miners killed since then.

Clay Dennison is a member of UMWA Local 2133.

Proposal to ban gay marriage stopped at U.S. Senate

BY DOUG NELSON

The Federal Marriage Amendment, a proposed amendment to the U.S. Constitution that would ban same-sex marriage, will not be brought to a vote in the U.S. Senate this month as its supporters had hoped. A motion to end debate on the proposal and proceed to a vote failed July 14. The 48-50 vote on the procedural motion fell 12 short of the 60 votes required.

Six Republican senators voted against the proposal and three Democrats voted in favor, but the vote was largely split along party lines with Republicans mostly favoring the amendment.

Had the amendment been placed on the floor of the Senate for a vote, it was likely to have been defeated because it requires a two-thirds majority—67 of the 100 votes—to pass, as well as a two-thirds majority in the House of Representatives, and three-quarters of the state legislatures.

U.S. president George W. Bush had proclaimed his support for such an amendment for the first time in a statement February 24—two weeks after the decision of San Francisco mayor Gavin Newsom to start issuing marriage licenses to gay couples in that city. “If we’re to prevent the meaning of marriage from being changed forever, our nation must enact a constitutional amendment to protect marriage in America,” Bush said. The president also made public appearances campaigning for the amendment’s passage leading up to the July 14 vote.

Bush’s stance, like that of the majority of Republicans in the Senate who spoke in favor of the Federal Marriage Amendment, was grandstanding for a proposal that had virtually no chance of success. It was well crafted to consolidate support among

conservative-minded voters who constitute an important part of the electoral base of the Republican Party. Since February, the president put forward no timetable and proposed no campaign to speed progress of the amendment. He began speaking in favor of it in early July as the Republican leadership was getting ready to push for a vote in the Senate with full knowledge it had no chance of success.

At the same time, the Bush administration has distanced itself from the “culture war” approach of the ultraright on this and other issues. Any amendment defining marriage, Bush said, should leave state legislatures “free to make their own choices in defining legal arrangements other than marriage”—a reference to civil unions. In 2000, Vermont was the first state to pass a law recognizing civil unions, giving same-sex couple access to state marriage benefits.

Most capitalist politicians do not favor amending the Constitution to include an antigay clause, reflecting the gains working people have made through the civil rights movement and the struggle for women’s liberation. Discrimination on the basis of race or sex is not acceptable by a majority in bourgeois public opinion today. Inroads have also been made against anti-gay discrimination.

While support for civil rights for gays and lesbians has grown in recent years, however, there doesn’t seem to have been the same change of attitude toward the question of gay marriage.

The Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA), signed into law by William Clinton in 1996, defines marriage as a “union only between a man and a woman.” The act passed with an overwhelming majorities of 85–14 in

the Senate and 342—67 in the House. The measure allows state governments to refuse to recognize same-sex marriages performed in other states. After its passage, 39 states passed laws modeled after it, joining four others that already had laws that prohibit the recognition of same-sex marriages.

The same year, the Senate also rejected a bill that would have banned employers from discriminating on the basis of sexual orientation.

Many senators, including Democratic presidential candidate John Kerry, have made it clear that their opposition to the Federal Marriage Amendment is not an endorsement of same-sex marriage. “Both John and I believe firmly and absolutely that marriage is between a man and a woman,” Kerry said, referring to his running mate John Edwards. “But we also believe that you don’t play with the constitution of the United States for political purposes and amend the Bill of Rights when you don’t need to.”

Currently, Massachusetts is the only state that has legalized gay marriage. The city of San Francisco has issued over 3,200 licenses to same-sex couples in defiance of California law. Only the states of California, Hawaii, New Jersey, and Vermont have laws that give some benefits to same-sex couples. In five states, including California and Vermont, politicians have introduced legislation that would permit same-sex couples to marry.

Three states—Alaska, Nebraska, and Nevada—have bans on gay marriage written into their constitutions. Seven other states have referendums on this year’s ballot to include similar amendments to their state constitutions.

SWP certified on Iowa ballot, confronts Mississippi challenge

Funds needed for socialists' ballot efforts

BY NORTON SANDLER

CHICAGO—As the *Militant* goes to press, the focus of the Socialist Workers 2004 ballot effort has shifted to Nebraska from Minnesota and Washington, D.C.—where campaigners made great strides toward getting on the ballot the party's slate of Róger Calero for president and Arrin Hawkins for vice president of the United States. Campaigners in Nebraska began on July 28 a drive to collect some 5,000 signatures to put the party's presidential slate on the state ballot.

The rapid collection of all pledges to the SWP Campaign Appeal is urgently needed to support the Nebraska ballot effort and the one that will follow shortly afterward in Wisconsin, and to step up the visibility and reach of the socialist campaign across the U.S.

A total of \$52,300 has been pledged to the fund, with \$29,305 collected to date.

A ballot effort like the one started in Nebraska takes considerable funds to complete. The state of Nebraska requires 2,500 signatures to qualify a presidential ticket for its state ballot. Campaigners there plan to collect double that number while passing out thousands of campaign flyers in both English and Spanish. The volunteers will concentrate their efforts initially in the Omaha and Lincoln areas. Campaign supporters in that state are organizing to house and feed campaigners and to pay for

transportation around the area and the production of substantial quantities of campaign literature. Everyone's help, however, is badly needed to make this a success.

The deadline for the fund appeal is August 1—only four days after this issue goes to press.

There are still many potential campaign backers who have not been approached who will be interested in the response SWP campaigners are receiving on the streets (see articles on this page on Washington, D.C., and Minnesota ballot drives). We can organize at the same time to collect all the outstanding pledges from supporters who have promised donations but have not paid yet.

In the Midwest, the SWP is targeting ballot status in Iowa, Nebraska, Minnesota, and Wisconsin, where the resistance of meat packers to the bosses offensive has been centered for the past six years. The socialist campaign presents workers and farmers with a clear alternative to the twin parties of capitalism, the Democrats and Republicans, who back up the employers drive to cut wages and worsen working conditions.

The SWP campaign filed nearly 3,000 signatures in Iowa on July 27 to place the presidential ticket on that state's ballot and for Edwin Fruit, the SWP candidate for U.S. Senate there. SWP vice-presidential candidate Arrin Hawkins joined Fruit at a Des Moines press conference to announce the filing of the



Militant/Joe Swanson

SWP vice-presidential candidate Arrin Hawkins (left) and Iowa senatorial candidate Edwin Fruit (right) file nearly 3,000 signatures at the Iowa Board of Elections in Des Moines July 27 to put the socialist ticket on the ballot.

petitions. Hours later the state certified the SWP slate with ballot status.

Funds are also needed to organize efforts to beat back challenges to the socialists' ballot campaigns by state authorities that use undemocratic state laws and arbitrary rulings to keep any working-class alternative off the ballot.

In May and June, supporters of the socialist campaign collected more than 2,100 signatures in Mississippi for the party's presidential ticket to be placed on that state's ballot. The total collected was more than double the state requirement of 1,000 signatures, and campaign organizers quickly sent the signatures to the various county clerks around the state for verification.

Nearly half the signatures were collected in Jackson, which is located in Hinds County. County election officials

are now claiming that less than 30 percent of those who signed the petitions are registered voters.

"We doubt that this count is accurate," said Róger Calero. "A team of campaign organizers is in Jackson now reviewing the count by the county clerk's office to see if workers, farmers, and students who signed for the SWP presidential candidates are having their signatures tossed out in a discriminatory fashion. They will also meet with those interested in the campaign, collecting additional signatures, and preparing the way for a tour there by Arrin Hawkins that will begin on July 31." (See below.)

To send a contribution write your check to the Socialist Workers National Campaign Committee and send it to P.O. Box 42651, Philadelphia, PA 19101. You can contact the national center of the socialist campaign at miamiswp@bellsouth.net

SWP petitions in Minnesota

BY JACOB PERASSO

ST. PAUL, Minnesota—Thirty campaigners hit the streets here the July 24–25 weekend and collected 2,600 signatures—enough to put the SWP presidential ticket of Róger Calero and Arrin Hawkins on the ballot in Minnesota. Organizers had set a goal of 2,400 signatures for the drive, to exceed the 2,000 required by the state for ballot status.

"A lot of people decided to sign our petitions after finding out about the party's demand for a massive public works program to create jobs at union scale and meet pressing social needs," said Jenny Johnson-Blanchard, one of several Young Socialists that participated in the campaign. The effort was marked by the participation of young people campaigning for the socialist alternative for the first time. "I was surprised by how many young people were willing to sign for the campaign," added Johnson-Blanchard.

One location where campaigners got a lot of friendly responses and signatures was the Como Park Zoo. Campaigners also put forward a working-class perspective at a 70th anniversary commemoration of the 1934 Teamster strikes titled "One day in July," in downtown Minneapolis on July 24.

Campaign volunteers targeted shopping areas in St. Paul and West St. Paul in the workers district where the SWP campaign has its headquarters. Many workers had heard of Róger Calero's fight against efforts by the U.S. government to deport him and of the battles to win a union contract

at Dakota Premium Foods slaughterhouse, which Calero had been a part of.

On Saturday evening, more than 40 campaign supporters packed the Minnesota SWP campaign office and Militant Labor Forum hall in West St. Paul for a program titled "The 1934 Minneapolis Teamster Rebellion: Lessons for Workers Today." Mario Octavio, a leader of the fight to organize United Food and Commercial Workers Local 789 at Dakota Premium Foods, spoke on the type of leadership and effort it takes to win a union organizing drive and to continue to defend the interests of workers over the course of years.

One weakness, campaigners said, was the fact they did not have a Spanish-language flyer during the weekend, even though they campaigned in areas with many Latino workers. On the first day of petitioning they also did not have the most up-to-date flyer for the SWP presidential slate. Organizers said they will use campaigning in the days ahead to overcome these shortcomings.

Socialists close in on ballot drive in D.C.

Continued from front page
the Socialist Workers slate."

"That's all I need to hear, I'll sign for them," said Ernest Brooks. He was among the 200 people who signed the petition at a shopping center in the southeast section of Washington, D.C., after being told of the Socialist Workers' support for union organizing. Brooks is a warehouse worker and drives a forklift. "We could use a union," he said. "The company wants us to drive the forklifts, help load trucks, pack boxes, and anything else they need done. We don't get any extra pay for it either." Brooks also bought a copy of the *Militant* to read the coverage of the fight by coal miners in Utah to be represented by the United Mine Workers of America.

"I'm down for that," said Charles Matthews, a construction worker. He and others signed the petition while waiting at a busy bus stop in the U Street commercial district. Matthews currently works as a laborer but attends classes sponsored by the Iron Workers union to become a welder. "Without the union I wouldn't have this opportunity to get a better job," he said.

As We Go to Press....

...SWP campaigner Arlene Rubinstein reported by phone a victory in the effort to put the socialist campaign on the state ballot in Mississippi. Here's what she told the *Militant*:

"A team of three—myself, Susan LaMont, and Janine Dukes—arrived at the Hinds County clerk's office in Jackson, Mississippi, this morning. The socialist campaign had submitted 843 signatures to that office and they validated only 231. That was far short of the validation rate we had seen throughout Mississippi and across the country. We were concerned there might be a question of disenfranchisement of workers, farmers, students, youth, and others—many of whom are Black—who signed the SWP petitions here, where we got an excellent response from working people. We requested from the clerk's office that we be able to review the petitions. They agreed.

"After a quick review this morning, we found 50 signatures that were valid—what was in the petition was identical with the

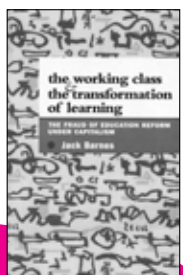
information in the county's computerized voter registration rolls. These signatures had not been counted. Overall, we found 204 signatures that had been invalidated for no good reason, like one letter in a name misspelled. And that was not after an exhaustive review; it took us only two hours to uncover these facts.

"We immediately requested to meet with Barbara Dunn, the circuit clerk of Hinds County. She agreed and we laid out what we had found. She made a phone call to consult with someone, and rapidly agreed that we were right. She said she had no intention of disenfranchising voters.

"Dunn issued a letter certifying 435 signatures from Hinds County. That put us over the top in Mississippi. We now have 1,026 valid signatures certified by the clerks of various counties, with a few counties still counting. The legal requirement is 1,000. Our next step is to submit all these signatures to the secretary of state for ballot certification. Working people scored a small victory here today."

The Working Class and the Transformation of Learning

The Fraud of Education Reform Under Capitalism



by Jack Barnes
"Until society is reorganized so that education is a human activity from the time we are very young until the time we die, there will be no education worthy of working creating humanity." \$3

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More police spying

Continued from front page

mer Pulse” global military exercises.

Before a flag-waving Navy crowd and with the *USS Wisconsin* as a backdrop, Kerry proposed doubling the number of U.S. Special Forces. Accusing the Bush administration of having left U.S. forces overstretched in Iraq and around the world, he said that as president he would expand active-duty troops by 40,000 and add more psychological operations agents to the army. He would also double the number of clandestine CIA agents abroad and establish a cabinet-level director of national intelligence to make U.S. spy operations more effective.

In choreographed appearances leading up to his arrival at the convention in Boston, Kerry was introduced by former military officers as a tested military man who had fought in Vietnam and was ready to become “our next commander-in-chief.” His campaign announced that 12 retired generals and admirals were endorsing his campaign, including Gen. John Shalikashvili, former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, who addressed the convention.

At the convention, a string of Democratic Party figures—from former presidents James Carter and William Clinton to ex-Vermont governor Howard Dean—highlighted Kerry’s credentials as someone who will “fight terrorism” and “make America stronger at home and respected once more in the world,” as Sen. Edward Kennedy put it in hailing him as a “war hero.”

“We need to secure our borders, our rail lines, and our ports as well as our chemical and nuclear plants,” said Sen. Hillary Clinton in a speech on the opening day of the convention. “We need to make sure that homeland security is a priority.”

The speeches by a spectrum of Democratic politicians were a reminder that Democratic support for a “homeland defense” operation goes back to the Clinton administration, which first established a North American command in charge of deploying U.S. troops on U.S. soil.

The increasingly shrill and flag-waving

efforts by the Democrats to use the homeland security question as a factional football against the Bush administration take place as it becomes clear that the Kerry candidacy, unable to distinguish itself from the policies of the Republicans in the White House, has not gained much advantage over Bush. Not even the announcement of Sen. John Edwards as running mate has given a bounce to the Kerry campaign.

SEIU head: better off if Kerry loses

Despite the scripted hoopla, the Democratic gala, more of an infomercial than a political convention, has been a bust in TV ratings. The viewing audience on opening night was 10 percent less than it was on the first day of the convention four years ago. In 2000, barely 15 percent of TV households watched the Democratic and Republican conventions.

In face of this dismal picture, the president of the largest AFL-CIO union, Andrew Stern of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), said in an interview with the *Washington Post* that the emperor has no clothes.

Stern said both the Democratic Party and the labor movement are “in a deep crisis” and devoid of new ideas. “It is a hollow party,” he said, adding that “if John Kerry becomes president, it hurts” chances of reforming the Democrats and the union movement, and that both might be better off in the long run if Sen. John F. Kerry loses the election, the *Washington Post* reported in its July 27 issue.

The union president, a committed Democrat, bitterly complained that Kerry and his party “have declined to address what he calls ‘the Wal-Mart economy,’” the *Post* said, referring to the unsustainably low wages and short hours of many workers.

AFL-CIO president John Sweeney, himself a former president of the SEIU, sought to patch up the official happy face. He replied that Stern’s attitude is “not justified” and hailed “the unity and solidarity” of Democratic support for Kerry.

rization to travel for those who are “fully hosted,” that is, those whose expenses are fully paid by groups in Cuba.

The White House measures sparked immediate demonstrations and other protests by Cuban-Americans in Florida and New Jersey, including among those who oppose the Cuban government. The restrictions on the right to travel and to send remittances have generated particular outrage. Some 150,000 Cuban-Americans have been traveling every year to visit family on the island, often bringing cash and gifts with them.

In a statement issued June 5, a few weeks after Bush’s announcement, Kerry stated that he advocated measures “that will hasten the end of the Castro regime as soon as possible.” While he has differences with Bush over how to do so, he noted, “Let me be clear—I do not support lifting the embargo or recognizing Castro’s dictatorial regime.” The way to bring down the Cuban government, he said, is “to work with the international community to increase political and diplomatic pressure on the Castro regime,” and not to implement extraterritorial aspects of the embargo-tightening Helms-Burton law that would “further strain relations with Canada and our European allies.”

Kerry said some of the White House’s measures were counterproductive to Washington’s goal of overthrowing the Cuban government and would hurt ordinary Cubans. Allowing Cuban-Americans to send money remittances to Cuba is a “powerful tool” to promote small businesses in Cuba, he argued.

The Democratic candidate said he favored “principled travel” to Cuba instead of barring most travel. U.S. residents traveling to Cuba could help “communicate American [read: capitalist] ideals to Cubans.” As part of that approach, he was for allowing the sale of food and medicine to “strengthen the



Getty Images/Erik Lesser

A customs agent fingerprints and photographs a visitor from Brazil at Atlanta airport, January 5. The 9/11 commission report reflects bipartisan support for increased use of “antiterror” databases, “watchlists,” and “no-fly” lists of travelers.

Adding to the increasingly coarse and despairing tone of the Democratic campaign, Kerry’s wife, Teresa Heinz Kerry, attacked the Republicans for “un-American traits that are coming into some of our politics.” Asked by a reporter what she meant by “un-American,” she denied using the term and told him to “shove it.” Hillary Clinton applauded the heiress of the billionaire Heinz family, saying, “You go, girl!”

And at a literary gathering of liberals on the day the convention opened, Robert F. Kennedy Jr., an environmentalist and son of the late senator, asserted that Bush was “put into office by the largest polluters” and that “regime change” is needed because his administration’s policies amount to “fascism.” The crowd cheered raucously.

9/11 report pushes domestic spying

Democratic politicians have been using the report by the 9/11 Commission as ammunition for their campaign around “homeland security.” The report proposes strengthening the FBI, CIA, immigration cops, and other political police agencies for increased domestic spying and disruption

operations, as well as expanding use of the military inside the United States.

The report was presented unanimously by a commission of five Democrats and five Republicans. It was chaired by Republican Thomas Kean, a former governor of New Jersey, and Democrat Lee Hamilton, a former Congressman from Indiana.

Many of the capitalist politicians who testified at the hearings over a period of 16 months argued that because of “intelligence failures” the Bush administration was unable to prevent the September 2001 attacks. Democrats insisted that the Republican administration was so focused on preparing the U.S.-led assault on Iraq that it was diverted from targeting al-Qaeda, and that a Democratic White House would be more effective in using the political police to “fight terrorism.”

Bush welcomed the report for identifying “even more steps we can take to better defend America.”

The report calls for the establishment of a National Counterterrorism Center headed by a National Intelligence Director. Such an “intelligence czar,” located in the executive office of the president, would help centralize the U.S. police and spy agencies to collaborate more effectively and carry out measures that have largely already been put in motion.

The report proposes more effective screening of people at the border and steps to set “standards” for the issuance of driver’s licenses. It calls for improving the use of government “watch lists” and “no-fly lists,” which have been used to bar people from flying without explanation or charges against them.

In criticizing the commission’s recommendation for an “intelligence czar,” acting CIA director John McLaughlin said, “The intelligence community of today is not the intelligence community of 9/11.” Today, McLaughlin said, according to the July 19 *Washington Post*, “100 people do nothing but prepare watch lists of potentially dangerous terrorists.”

The report also calls for strengthening the use of the North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD) into domestic “antiterrorism” operations. NORAD, which is responsible for deploying fighter aircraft within the United States and Canada, is now part of the Northern Command, which was established by the Clinton administration.

Kerry backs U.S. economic war on Cuba, criticizes new limits on travel, remittances

BY MARTÍN KOPPEL

Democratic presidential candidate John Kerry has issued statements affirming his support for the four-decade-long U.S. economic war aimed at overthrowing the revolutionary government of Cuba.

Kerry also said recent White House measures that sharply limit remittances by Cuban-Americans to relatives on the island and that restrict family visits to Cuba would hurt ordinary Cubans and undermine U.S. efforts to remove the government there. These two measures have sparked protests in Florida by Cuban-Americans.

On July 7 the U.S. House of Representatives voted 221-194 against the White House’s restrictions on gift parcels sent by Cuban-Americans to their relatives. It left in place other sanctions that went into effect June 30. It is not certain, however, that this amendment will remain in the final bill that would have to be negotiated with the Senate, which would be necessary to prohibit the Commerce Department from enforcing the regulation that is still in effect.

Under the sanctions that President George Bush announced May 6, family visits to the island are limited to one 14-day trip every three years, instead of once a year, and there are no exceptions for humanitarian reasons. Expenses for a family visit are limited to \$50 a day. Cash remittances to relatives in Cuba are limited to immediate family members, and relatives who are members of the Cuban Communist Party are prohibited from receiving any.

In addition, only one gift parcel a month can be sent by U.S. relatives to a household in Cuba—and only to immediate family. Only food, medicine, medical supplies, and vitamins can be included in such shipments; clothing, soap, toothpaste, and other items are prohibited.

The new rules also eliminate the autho-

foundation of freedom and democracy.”

Pushing one of his major campaign themes, Kerry insisted that the resources spent on enforcing the U.S. ban on travel to Cuba should be devoted to a more important priority, the “fight against terrorism.” He said that “under the Bush administration, far more manpower at the Treasury is dedicated to enforcing the Cuban travel ban than to tracking down terrorist financing.”

On July 7, the U.S. House of Representatives, in a bipartisan vote, rejected the restrictions on Cuban-Americans sending parcels to relatives back home. One of the sponsors of the initiative was Republican congressman Jeff Flake of Arizona. The White House prohibition “has angered a significant sliver of the Cuban-American population,” the *New Republic* noted in an article published in its July 15 issue. The Senate has not yet discussed its version of the bill.

In another aspect of the imperialist offensive against Cuba, U.S. officials have been smearing Havana with the accusation that the government encourages “sex tourism” and the sexual exploitation of children in order to attract hard currency. “The regime of Fidel Castro has turned Cuba into a major destination for sex tourism,” Bush told a conference on human trafficking. He said overthrowing the Cuban government was necessary “to hasten the day when no Cuban child is exploited to finance a failed revolution.” He offered not a single fact for his charge that there is trafficking of children in Cuba.

Not to be outdone, Kerry responded to Bush’s speech by having one of his allies, Democratic senator William Nelson of Florida, hold a conference call with reporters on the same subject. Nelson said Bush had waited too long to submit an international protocol against trafficking to the Senate.

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by Larry Seigle

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Morals are product of class-divided society

Below is an excerpt from *Their Moral and Ours: The Class Foundations of Moral Practice*, one of Pathfinder's books of the month for July. The book features two articles written by Leon Trotsky, a central leader of the Russian Revolution. Written on the eve of World War II, Trotsky defends revolutionary morality in face of attacks by liberal critics, Stalinist falsifiers, and disheartened intellectual defectors from Marxism. The book includes a response to Trotsky by John Dewey, an exponent of pragmatist philosophy and a standard-bearer of American liberalism. It also includes an essay answering Dewey by George Novack, noted Marxist and leader of the Socialist Workers Party. Copyright © 1969 by Pathfinder Press. Reprinted by permission.

BOOKS OF THE MONTH

BY LEON TROTSKY

A revolutionary Marxist cannot begin to approach his historical mission without having broken morally from bourgeois public opinion and its agencies in the proletariat. For this, moral courage of a different caliber is required from that of opening wide one's mouth at meetings and yelling "Down with Hitler!" "Down with Franco!" It is precisely this resolute, completely thought-out, inflexible rupture of the Bolsheviks from conservative moral philosophy not only of the big but of the petty bourgeoisie that mortally terrorizes democratic phrasemongers, drawing-room prophets, and lobbying heroes.



Ricky Ray Rector (left) was executed in Arkansas in 1992 despite history of mental illness. Then-governor William Clinton signed his death warrant. The capitalist rulers use state-sanctioned murder and other means to defend their profit system.

From this derive their complaints about the "amoralism" of the Bolsheviks.

Their identification of bourgeois morals with morals "in general" can best of all, perhaps, be verified at the extreme left wing of the petty bourgeoisie, precisely in the centrist parties of the so-called London Bureau.¹ Since this organization "recognizes" the program of proletarian revolution, our disagreements with it seem, at first glance, secondary. Actually their "recognition" is valueless because it does not bind them to anything. They "recognize" the proletarian revolution as the Kantians recognized the categorical imperative, that is, as a holy principle but not applicable to daily life. In the sphere of practical politics they unite with the worst enemies of the revolution (reformists and Stalinists) for the struggle against us. All their thinking is permeated with duplicity and falsehood. If the centrists, according to a general rule, do not raise themselves to imposing crimes it is only because they forever remain in the byways of politics: they are, so to speak, petty pickpockets of history. For this reason they consider themselves called upon to regenerate the workers' movement with a new morality.

At the extreme left wing of this "left" fraternity stands a small and politically completely insignificant grouping of German emigres who publish the paper *Neuer Weg* (The New Road). Let us bend down

lower and listen to these "revolutionary" indicters of Bolshevik amoralism. In a tone of ambiguous pseudopraise the *Neuer Weg* proclaims that the Bolsheviks are distinguished advantageously from other parties by their absence of hypocrisy—they openly declare what others quietly apply in fact, that is, the principle "the end justifies the means." But according to the convictions of *Neuer Weg* such a "bourgeois" precept is incompatible with a "healthy socialist movement." "Lying and worse are not permissible means of struggle, as Lenin still considered them." The word "still" evidently signifies that Lenin did not succeed in overcoming his delusions only because he failed to live until the discovery of *The New Road*.

In the formula, "lying and worse," "worse" evidently signifies violence, murder, and so on, since under equal conditions violence is worse than lying, and murder—the most extreme form of violence. We thus come to the conclusion that lying, violence, murder, are incompatible with a "healthy socialist movement." What, however, is our relation to revolution? Civil war is the most severe of all forms of war. It is unthinkable not only without violence against tertiary figures but, under contemporary technique, without killing old men, old women, and children. Must one be reminded of Spain? The only possible answer of the "friends" of Republican Spain sounds like this: Civil

war is better than fascist slavery. But this completely correct answer merely signifies that the *end* (democracy or socialism) justifies, under certain conditions, such *means* as violence and murder. Not to speak about lies! Without lies war would be as unimaginable as a machine without oil. In order to safeguard even the session of the Cortes (February 1, 1938) from fascist bombs, the Barcelona government several times deliberately deceived journalists and their own population. Could it have acted in any other way? Whoever accepts the end: victory over Franco, must accept the means: civil war with its wake of horrors and crimes.

Nevertheless, lying and violence "in themselves" warrant condemnation? Of course, even as does the class society which generates them. A society without social contradictions will naturally be a society without lies and violence. However there is no way of building a bridge to that society save by revolutionary, that is, violent means. The revolution itself is a product of class society and of necessity bears its traits. From the point of view of "eternal truths" revolution is of course "antimoral." But this merely means that idealist morality is counterrevolutionary, that is, in the service of the exploiters.

"Civil war," the philosopher caught unawares will perhaps respond, "is however a sad exception. But in peaceful times a healthy socialist movement should manage without violence and lying." Such an answer however represents nothing less than a pathetic evasion. There is no impervious demarcation between "peaceful" class struggle and revolution. Every strike embodies in an unexpanded form all the elements of civil war. Each side strives to impress the opponent with an exaggerated picture of its resoluteness to struggle and its material resources. Through their press, agents, and spies the capitalists labor to frighten and demoralize the strikers. From their side, the workers' pickets, where persuasion does not avail, are compelled to resort to force. Thus "lying and worse" are an inseparable part of the class struggle even in the most elementary form.

1. The London Bureau was an international grouping of centrist organizations set up in 1932 at initiative of Norwegian Labor Party and British Independent Labour Party; opposed call for Fourth International.

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Free speech, they ever hear of it?—“Boise, Idaho—The Idaho National Guard wants its soldiers to mention several themes,



including support for the war in Iraq, when they speak to reporters. A story in the newsletter of the 116th Brigade Combat Team

says soldiers can speak on other issues. But it suggests statements of pride in service, support for the stabilization of Iraq and appreciation of their families. The unit will leave for Iraq this fall.”—*USA Today*, July 15.

Sounds pretty good—According to the news, San Francisco-based Catholic Healthcare West, which operates 41 hospitals in California, Nevada, and Arizona, has offered a three-year contract proposal to 4,000 members of the California Nurses Association. A union spokesperson said the contract would give registered nurses

wage increases ranging from 18 to 29 percent. Compulsory overtime would be barred and pensions and other benefits improved. Union members were slated to vote on the proposed pact.

Seeing eye dog left behind?—Denver cops responded to a call that a woman was being assaulted by her spouse. One cop burst into a bedroom and shot a man dead. It was the uncle of the suspect. An invalid, he was in bed watching TV and drinking a can of soda. The cop said he thought it was a gun.

Sort of a tranquilizer—A *New*

York Times study found a spreading police use of Taser guns. (A supplement to guns, not a substitute.) The Tasers shoot electrified disabling barbs. In the past three years, at least 50 people have been killed, not stunned, by the weapon. In the month of June alone, six people were killed.

And there’s a blood shortage?—An estimated 44 million people in the U.S. have no medical insurance. And the uninsured get soaked more than those with insurance. One article described the case of a fellow, uninsured, who was hospitalized for 17 days.

He was billed for \$116,000. With a lawyer, the family got it reduced to \$20,000—provided they keep it mum. (They didn’t.)

But nobody lies—“Factual problems noted in Powell’s UN speech,” “British spy agencies erred, report says”—Recent news headlines.

How’s your pulse?—In Merseyside, England, a plan is under way to recruit medical staff to patrol hospital wards in police uniform as “special constables” to combat “crime.” The plan is regarded as an initial one.

Anti-cop brutality fighter dies at hands of Chicago cops

BY ERNEST MAILHOT
AND MAURICE WILLIAMS

CHICAGO—Several dozen people held a vigil here June 26 protesting the death of May Molina, a Puerto Rican who was active in the struggle against police brutality here, who died while in police custody last month. Molina passed away after the cops refused to allow her to receive treatment and medicine prescribed for her illness.

Molina was a co-founder of Families of the Wrongfully Convicted and was well known in Chicago for her activity against cop violence and abuse. For the past 10 years she had fought for the freedom of her son, Salvador Ortiz, who was framed up by the cops and sentenced to 47 years behind bars.

On May 24 the cops raided Molina’s apartment. Claiming to have found packets of heroin, they arrested her and another son, Michael Ortiz. Molina was wheelchair bound, had high blood pressure, diabetes, asthma, and a thyroid condition. Despite her health problems, the cops jailed Molina without her wheelchair and any of her medicine. Two days later she died.

During Molina’s detention the police refused repeated attempts by family members to deliver medicine to the ill woman. The cops also denied the request of Molina’s attorney that she be taken to the hospital. “The police were notified that she needed medicine,” said Molina’s lawyer Jerry Bischoff. “The family told the police. It was obvious that she was ill, but the police refused.”

The cops released Michael Ortiz from jail June 16 after a judge declared that the samples seized from his apartment were not illegal drugs. The substance taken were crystals used to make candles.

During Ortiz’s 23 days of imprisonment, the cops refused to allow him medicine for his enlarged heart. He was unable to pay the \$125,000 bail, so the cops kept him in jail, refusing to allow him to attend his mother’s funeral.

At a press conference the day after being released Ortiz spoke about his anger

and his commitment to win justice for his mother. “I have to carry out my mom’s legacy because there are many corrupt cops,” he said.

“I hope no other human being goes through what I went through. Being unable to say the last goodbye to my mom,” Ortiz stated at the vigil on June 26.

“It is outrageous that they denied May Molina medical care and her medicine,” Andy Thayer, a member of the Anti-Gay-Bashing Network said at the event. “I hold the police department and the mayor of Chicago responsible for her death.”

Present at the vigil were Michael Ortiz, who had been released from jail one week earlier; other relatives; members of Families of the Wrongfully Convicted; the group Comitè Exigimos Justicia (We Demand Justice Committee); and the Socialist Workers Party and Young Socialists.

SWP candidate for U.S. Senate in Illinois Maurice Williams, who joined the vigil, stated, “My campaign supports the fight for justice for May Molina and call for jailing the cops responsible for her death.”

Mary Johnson, a longtime community activist and opponent of the death penalty told *Militant* reporters, “The cops harassment of May Molina has been going on for some time. Their policy of not giving people their medicine is absurd.”

Johnson is a co-founder with Molina of Families of the Wrongfully Convicted and is fighting to win freedom for her son who was railroaded to prison. Referring to the acknowledgment by the cops that they found no drugs in the arrest of Molina and her son, Johnson asked, “How do they compensate people who have been disrespected and dragged from their homes? What can they do for the humiliation, pain, and suffering people have to endure?”

“May Molina was always being harassed by the police but she kept fighting for her son,” said Anabel Perez. “The police raided her house last year but no formal charges were filed.”

Perez, who is fighting the frame-up

conviction of her son Jaime Hauad, has taken on more leadership responsibilities in Families of the Wrongfully Convicted after Molina’s death. She said the group plans to hold a vigil on the 26th of each month to commemorate Molina’s commitment to the struggle against police brutality.

“This is not just May’s cause,” Perez added. “This happens to a whole lot more people. Many families are brutalized by the police but they don’t let others know. If families let their neighbors and others know about what the cops did we can unite and stop them.”

In a related development, for the first time since the 1980s, a Chicago cop was formally charged June 3 with official misconduct and battery. The police officer, Bryan Vander Mey, was videotaped along with several other cops punching and kicking people they had dragged from a van April 17, 2003. Vander Mey was indicted one week before he was formally charged and has been fired, pending a police board hearing.



Anti-cop brutality fighter May Molina. Her son, Salvador, was victim of police frame-up. Molina died in Chicago jail after cops denied her medication.

— 25 AND 50 YEARS AGO —



August 10, 1979

Every year on the 26th of July Cubans commemorate the anniversary of a 1953 assault on the Moncada Garrison by a group of anti-Batista fighters led by Fidel Castro.

[This year] the rally’s guests of honor were twenty-six young Sandinista commanders, both men and women, who had led various fronts in the offensive that toppled Somoza.

Castro’s entire speech dealt with Nicaragua. He explained some of the similarities and differences between the Cuban and Nicaraguan revolutionary struggles. And he pledged that the people of Cuba would do whatever was necessary to help overcome the U.S.-backed dictator’s devastation of Nicaragua.

Castro explained that U.S. imperialism is politically weaker and more isolated today than it was twenty years ago at the time of the Cuban revolution. He pointed to the tremendous growth of anti-interventionist sentiment in Latin America today reflected in the Organization of American States refusal to go along with the United States proposal for a military force to intervene in Nicaragua.

“For the first time we can mention the name of the OAS without epithets, because for the first time—the first time in its history—the OAS has been the site of a real act of insubordination on the part of the Latin American states.” The OAS vote was rightly hailed as a great victory

for the people of our America.



August 9, 1954

DETROIT—Dodge Local 3 of the CIO United Auto Workers, whose 10,000 members went out on strike on July 16 and stayed out on strike for a full week until ordered back to work by the International, has voted overwhelmingly to authorize a new strike if their grievances are not adjusted, it was learned yesterday.

Coming only eight days after their strike was called off, by orders from above, the strike vote testifies to the Dodge workers’ determination to defend their jobs and working conditions by militant action. This time the International, seeing the workers’ angry mood, offered no objections to Local 3’s strike authorization and even expressed support for it.

The Dodge strike, which idled 45,000 Chrysler workers—and halted all auto production in the Chrysler empire for a week—began with a walkout at Dodge Main. It was provoked by management efforts to introduce more speedup.

Two workers in the trim department were disciplined for failing to keep up with new production standards and holding up the assembly line. Other workers in the department were so incensed by the high-handed action that they walked off the job for the rest of the day.

U.S. gov’t uses heat-detecting drones to patrol border with Mexico

BY RÓGER CALERO

The Department of Homeland Security has begun using two unmanned drones to patrol the Arizona-Mexico border.

Equipped with thermal detection and night-vision equipment, the two Hermes 450 Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) flew their first missions June 25 to patrol what the Department of Homeland Security says is the busiest crossing point along the 2,000-mile border with Mexico.

The two drones are part of a \$10 billion operation begun last March. It includes six new prosecutors, an additional 260 border cops, a temporary detention facility, four new helicopters—on top of the already 11-helicopter fleet operating there—and 20 more Humvee military vehicles..

Similar types of unmanned aircraft have been used by the U.S. military and the CIA in Afghanistan and Yemen, for surveillance, and, in several instances, to assassinate Washington’s opponents in these countries. The Israeli armed forces also use the Hermes 450 to patrol Israel’s borders.

In addition to stepping up the patrol of

streets, railways, and waterways, the police and the military have expanded their presence in the skies, using fighter and surveillance aircraft over U.S. cities.

The increased militarization of the border, along with factory raids and deportations in cities in that area, are forcing workers to cross through more remote, desert locations. This has resulted in record numbers of deaths of immigrant workers trying to cross from Mexico into the United States.

So far this year 17 people have been reported dead of heat-related suffocation in the Arizona desert.

“It’s like throwing an infant in a pool and then jumping in and saving it. You act like the hero in a situation you created,” said Kat Rodriguez of the Human Rights Coalition of Arizona. The Border Patrol agency reported it has carried out 330,000 arrests since October 1 along the Arizona border.

The Department of Homeland Security announced that it also plans to begin flying drones in the northern states and in Puerto Rico.

It's not *who* you're against, but *what* you're for! Vote Socialist Workers in 2004!

Socialists have been campaigning with this slogan among working people and youth across the United States. Its aptness is illustrated by the choreographed, and boring, spectacle of the national convention of the Democratic Party, one of the twin parties of U.S. imperialism.

Millions of working people see little difference between the Democratic and Republican presidential candidates. They are right about that. The Democrats have pulled out all the stops to convince people that their man, John Kerry, can do better than George Bush in bolstering “homeland defense” and “fighting terrorism” worldwide to “defend America.” Those are code words that capitalist politicians use to rationalize the assault by the employers and their government on the wages, working conditions, and living standards—as well as basic rights—of workers and farmers at home, along with the drive to extend U.S. imperialist domination abroad through the dollar and the sword.

The shrill tone of the Democratic campaign that was evident in Boston—the anti-Bush rhetoric, sometimes coarsely personalized, and the increasingly desperate attempt to top the White House as patriotic, antiterrorist warriors—is a reaction to the drooping appeal of the Kerry-Edwards ticket. One indication of this is the recent statement by Andrew Stern, president of the Service Employees International Union, that the labor movement might be better off in the long run if Kerry loses the election.

Competing to out-do Bush over who will more effectively fight the “war on terrorism” is a losing proposition, as opinion polls indicate, since the incumbent has the advantage of a solid four-year record of doing just that. The calls by Kerry-Edwards and Co. for “better intelligence” and increased federal police spying should send a chill down the spine of any worker, farmer, or young person who is engaged in resisting the bosses’ offensive or opposing government policies.

Working people have already lived through the stepped-up dragnets and trampling on the rights of the accused and convicted carried out under Bush with bipartisan support. This course was initiated with the “homeland defense” measures of the Clinton years. After Boston, many would have good reason to wonder how well they would survive under a Kerry term.

Middle-class radical groups, including virtually all those calling themselves “socialists,” have been energetically trying to hitch workers onto the faltering Kerry-Edwards bandwagon of American imperialism. Supporters of “independent” candidate Ralph Nader can be seen on the streets of many cities gathering signatures for his uninspiring campaign, whose sole purpose is to meekly nudge the Democratic Party in a slightly more liberal direction.

This year there is only one working-class alternative to the two parties of imperialist war, economic depression, and racist oppression—the Socialist Workers Party slate. We urge you to support the SWP campaign, which does not end in November. Help distribute campaign flyers and other revolutionary literature to your friends, co-workers, neighbors, and relatives. Join with other campaigners in soapboxing on street corners. Arrange speaking engagements and media coverage for the SWP candidates.

The wording of the Socialist Workers campaign slogan mentioned above is carefully chosen. It urges working people not to take as their framework *who* they are against. That is the axis of the “Anyone But Bush” pro-Democratic Party campaign. Liberals and middle-class radicals, wedded to the Democrats, are asking people to “dump Bush.” Yes, we should be glad to help push Bush out in November. But not in order to push in a Kerry and an Edwards.

The pro-Kerry campaign, like the Bush reelection effort and all other capitalist election campaigns in the United States, focuses on the individual. “Vote for the man, not the party!” This individualism is a characteristic of bourgeois politics in the United States, citadel of the profit system, and serves as a safety valve for the U.S. rulers. It is tied to pragmatism, the philosophy of American capitalism.

The SWP campaign starts from the objective reality that there are two Americas—that of the bosses and that of working people—and from what advances the interests of the toiling majority.

The Socialist Workers campaign banner does not say, “It’s not *what* you are against.” Class-conscious workers are against many things: they oppose the death penalty, anti-immigrant raids and deportations, racist and sexist discrimination, imperialist war, and class exploitation.

What defines one’s political stance, however, is not simply what you are against but above all what you stand and fight *for*.

The SWP campaign supports workers’ right to organize unions and defends the labor movement from the unceasing offensive by the employers and their parties. It supports the efforts of the power-poor semicolonial countries to acquire and develop the energy sources necessary to expand electrification, a prerequisite for economic and social advances. It calls for exposing the drive by Washington and its allies to prevent the nations oppressed by imperialism from developing the sources of energy they need—including nuclear power—to bring much of humanity out of darkness.

The socialists call for the immediate, unconditional withdrawal of U.S. and other imperialist troops from Iraq, Afghanistan, Yugoslavia, Korea, Haiti, Colombia, and Guantánamo Bay, Cuba. They propose a massive public works program to meet pressing social needs and put millions to work, at union scale. They advocate full cost-of-living protection for all wages and benefits to deal with the scourge of inflation, and a halt to farm foreclosures. They campaign for maintaining and extending affirmative action in employment, education, and housing. They say: abortion is a woman’s right to choose! And they call for an end to Washington’s economic war on Cuba and keeping U.S. hands off Venezuela.

Socialist workers explain their aim is to join with others to lead the working class and its allies in a revolutionary struggle to take power out of the hands of the exploiters, replace the capitalist regime with a workers and farmers government, overthrow the system of wage slavery, and join the worldwide struggle for socialism.

To those who are repelled by the twin parties of capitalism, we say: join in campaigning for the Socialist Workers candidates in 2004!

New record: nearly 7 million in U.S. prison-probation system

BY DOUG NELSON

The number of people on probation, parole, or serving time in U.S. prisons and jails continues to grow steadily. It reached a record high of nearly 6.9 million in 2003—some 3.2 percent of the adult population of the United States, according to a report released July 25 by the federal government’s Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS).

“The correctional population of 6,889,800 includes people incarcerated in prisons and jails as well as those on probation and parole,” the agency reported. Of that figure, 2,078,570 adults were locked up in federal and state prisons and local jails. “And as of December 31, 2003,” the BJS reported, “4,073,987 adults were on probation—a period of supervision in the community following a conviction—and 774,588 on parole—a period of conditional supervised release following a prison term.”

This “correctional population increased by 130,700 since 2002. Some 57,600 of that jump was to the prison and jail population, the rest were on probation or parole.

“From July 1, 2002, to June 30, 2003, the number of state and federal prisoners grew by more than 2.9 percent, the largest increase in four years,” the BJS reported in a May 27 press release. “During the same period, the local jail population increased by 3.9 percent.” The fastest growing section of the prison population is the federal prison system with an average annual growth rate since 1995 of 8 percent.

The increase in the past year is still proportionally smaller than most of the annual increases during the administration of William Clinton. Under Clinton’s watch,

from 1993–2000, the total “correctional population” ballooned by almost 1.6 million, at an average annual rate of 225,000.

The number of those on parole in the United States, 774,588, grew by 3.1 percent in 2003—“almost double the average annual growth of 1.7 percent since 1995,” according to the BJS. Five states—North Dakota, Alabama, Kentucky, New Hampshire, and New Mexico—had increases of over 20 percent.

Workers and farmers who are Black and Latino comprised a disproportionate percentage of those locked up or under state supervision.

Some 12 percent of all Black males in their twenties were in jails or prisons as of June 30, 2003, according to the agency. Of the male Latino population in that age group, 3.7 percent were locked up, compared to 1.6 percent of white males in their twenties. Sixty-eight percent of those locked up were classified by the prison agency as “members of racial or ethnic minority groups.”

Of those on parole, 13 percent were women, 41 percent were Black, and 18 percent were Latino, the agency reported.

The booming business of private imprisonment continued to expand last year, but at a lower rate than the overall growth of the prison population. The number of inmates held in private prisons—6.5 percent of the total in 2003—increased by 1.3 percent last year. Texas, Oklahoma, and Tennessee now hold half of their inmates in private prisons.

Canada vote reflects blows to Ottawa by Washington

BY CAMILO CATALÁN
AND MICHEL PRAIRIE

TORONTO, Ontario—The Canadian national elections at the end of June reflected the battering the ruling class here has taken by Washington, which has punished Ottawa over the last two years for refusing to join the U.S.-led “coalition of the willing” in Iraq.

Out of the blows they suffered by their stronger imperialist competitors to the south—largely over trade, especially in lumber and beef—the Canadian rulers emerged weakened, which was registered in the elections.

At the same time, the crisis of the ruling class did not translate into a strengthening of the labor movement, which has been in decline for some time. The employers and their government—from the federal to the provincial levels—have remained on the offensive against working people.

On June 28, a minority Liberal government was elected in Canada after a short five-week campaign.

As the Toronto *Globe and Mail* put it three days before the election, Canada’s ruling rich came out of what they had initially anticipated as a Liberal landslide with “a deeply fractured Parliament” along regional and national lines—a further step in a process initiated more than a decade ago under the impact of the world capitalist crisis, which has accelerated recently under the blows of Washington.

With 36.7 percent of the votes cast, the incumbent Liberal Party headed by Paul Martin won 135 of the 308 seats in the federal parliament—more than half of them in Ontario.

The Conservative Party led by Stephen Harper got 99 deputies and 29.6 percent of the vote, most of them in the western provinces. The party retained its status as official opposition in Ottawa.

The Bloc Quebecois won 54 seats in parliament, all in Quebec. While the Bloc received only 12.4 percent of the vote across Canada, it scooped up nearly 50 percent of the ballots cast in Quebec.

Quebecois constitute an oppressed nationality in Canada based on their language, French. The sharp rise of votes for the Bloc coincides with the highest support for Quebec independence since the 1995 referendum on sovereignty for the province. According to two recent polls, about 50 percent of Quebecois back independence now.

The social-democratic New Democratic Party headed by Jack Layton got 19 seats in the federal parliament, and 15.7 percent of the vote nationwide, a 7 percent increase.

Polls had anticipated the election of a minority government from the beginning of the campaign, with a several-week neck-and-neck race between the Liberals and the Conservatives. In the final days before the election, there was a shift in Ontario toward the Liberals. This was the result of a successful effort by the governing party to exploit statements by Conservative candidates against abortion rights and gay rights, and for bringing back the death penalty.

In fact, the Conservative Party got a smaller portion of the vote in these elections than the combined total of its two predecessors in the 2000 election, the Canadian Alliance and the Progressive Conservative Party. This was further confirmation of a conjunctural shift to the left in bourgeois politics.

The election campaign was characterized by demagogic pledges from all parties, including the Conservatives, to inject millions of dollars into the health care and education systems that they themselves had decimated; a high level of patriotic Canadian and anti-American nationalism; and a coarsening of bourgeois politics and increased Quebec-bashing.

One feature of the election was the level of abstention—nearly 40 percent—the highest in any federal election since the establishment of Canada in 1867 and the continuation of a decades-long trend.

Strikingly, none of the main parties running for office addressed the real question at the heart of the rulers’ crisis—their political and economic conflict with their main imperialist rival and partner to the south, Washington.

In fact, there was a convergence during the election campaign among all parties toward supporting the Liberal government’s decision to not send troops to Iraq last year. In the case of the Conservatives, this was a marked shift from their stance at the time of the war.

There was no working-class voice in these elections. The officialdom of the Canadian Labor Congress quietly called on its members to vote NDP.

A “socialist” imperialist party, the NDP led a campaign to put pressure on the Liberals from the left of the bourgeois political spectrum, centered on the perspective of joining a coalition government with the Liberals. This dream of the NDP leaders was not realized, since the party won fewer seats in federal parliament than they were anticipating.

Scotland fishermen

Continued from back page

with fish conservation,” said Ritchie.

Malcolm MacDonald challenged the accuracy of the reported destruction of fish stocks. “There’s more fish out there than there has ever been,” he said. “We recently landed 110 boxes, including 50 boxes of big mature fish.” Fishing campaigners feel that they were doing their bit towards fish conservation and that the government has let them down. “Skippers have spent thousands of pounds on larger mesh nets to conserve stock, and we still got ‘screwed,’” Malcolm MacDonald said. Fishermen in northeastern Scotland had been observing a five-year conservation plan, he said, which had resulted in a 25 percent rise in cod stocks over three years. “Fishing people are never asked, I’ve never seen a scientist in 40 years,” said John Buchan, a retired Peterhead skipper with 40 years on the boats. “We don’t want decommissioning, we want to fish. You get the value of the boat, but then what? Fishing is all we know.”

Fishermen in fisheries in western Scotland are also feeling the pinch. The Rockall fishery was closed for haddock and black scabbard fishing to Scottish fishermen in June, when they exhausted their quota of just 500 tons. Scottish Fishermen’s Federation chief executive Hamish Morrison said, “The trouble is that there is absolutely no remote connection between the quota that was set and hard survey evidence... The only survey information was from last September and it was rather positive, showing an improving stock position.” He added, “The only survey evidence was Russian survey evidence and the Russian scientist who should have come to the ICES [International Committee for the Exploration of the Sea] meeting to discuss it was not invited.” The fishermen vowed to continue their fight to have the fishing grounds reopened.

Cutbacks mean rising fatalities

In another twist to the problems facing the fishermen, the annual report of the Marine Accident Investigation Branch (MAIB) highlighted the effects of dropping income on safety. The report revealed that 11 fishermen were lost last year, presumed drowned at sea, with 10 of them in Scottish waters. During the same period, 27 UK commercial fishing vessels sank. The report said that lack of money for necessary maintenance, and crew cutting to cut labor costs, are the main reasons for these figures.

Stephen Meyer, chief marine accident investigator of MAIB, reportedly said that

the report does not show the full extent of the problem. “We are aware that some accidents do go unreported,” he said.

“London’s not interested in Scottish fishermen,” said Buchan, reflecting a widespread view in the fishing communities here. A number of working fishermen said they resent the contempt that Westminster has treated them with, with English ministers laughing off their protests and publicly dressing down a Scottish government fisheries minister when he proposed he lead the UK delegation to the EU negotiations.

Sixty percent of the white fish caught in UK waters is landed in Scotland. The bourgeois Scottish National Party has been quick to tap into this, to exploit genuine nationalist sentiment. A leaflet this party circulated prior to the June elections for EU parliament, said, “We need to return powers over fisheries from Brussels and London to Scotland, so that we can build a viable and sustainable Scottish fishing industry.” Also seeking to draw fishermen in Scotland away from seeking allies among exploited producers across Europe, the Conservative Party has sought to hijack their cause, using it to rationalize its protectionist and anti-EU program. Edward Brocklebank, the Conservative Party fisheries spokesperson for Scotland, claimed July 6 that the problem is that EU funding is all going to Irish fishermen. Leading up to the recent EU elections, Conservative leader Michael Howard traveled to Fraserburgh for a photo shoot with leaders of the Cod Crusaders.

The Cod Crusaders have been campaigning against the devastating effects on the fishing communities since November 2002. Their activity indicates that, while welcoming support from diverse quarters, they refuse to be drawn into openly reactionary schemes that cut them off from fellow producers in nearby countries. The group has participated in flotillas of fishing boats from Scotland and England sailing up the Forth and Tyne estuaries. Fishermen from across the UK also participated in a Europe-wide protest in the Belgian port of Antwerp, highlighting how small fishermen across Europe are facing devastation.

“We’ve spoken at public meetings all over Scotland, from the Shetlands to Edinburgh,” said Carol MacDonald. “In the Shetlands, 300 people came to the meeting. We’re going over to Ireland to meet campaigners over there, having been invited by the magazine *The Irish Skipper*.”

Peter Clifford contributed to this article.



Getty Images/Chris Furlong

Scottish fishermen haul in their catch, March 3, some 70 miles off the north coast of Scotland. Their livelihoods are being devastated by fishing quotas.

—MILITANT LABOR FORUMS—

CALIFORNIA

Los Angeles

Why Washington Used Nuclear Weapons against Japan: 59th Anniversary of that Atrocity Speaker: Chris Remple, Socialist Workers Party. Fri., Aug. 6, 7:30 p.m. 4229 S. Central Ave. Tel: (323) 233-9372

NEW YORK

Manhattan

Why Democrats Are Leading Drive for ‘Homeland Security’; Working People are Target of Police Spying and Disruption. Fri., Aug. 6. Speaker: Michael Italie, *Militant* staff writer. Dinner, 7 p.m.; program, 8 p.m. **Support Workers’ Right to Organize Unions** Fri., Aug. 13. Dinner, 7 p.m.; program, 8 p.m. *Both events held at: 307 W. 36th St., 10th floor (use north elevators). Suggested donation: \$5 for dinner, \$5 for program. Tel: (212) 629-6649.*

TEXAS

Houston

Celebrate the Grand Opening of the New Center in Houston for the Socialist Workers Party 2004 Campaign, Pathfinder Books, and the Militant Labor Forum Speaker: Tom Leonard, longtime leader of the Socialist Workers Party and retired merchant seaman. Sat., Aug. 14. Reception and dinner, 6 p.m.; program, 7:30 p.m. 4800 W. 34th St., suite C-51A. Tel: (713) 869-6550.

UTAH

Price

Hiroshima and Nagasaki August 1945: Behind the U.S. Atom Bombing of Japan. Fri., Aug. 6, 7:30 p.m. **2 Billion People in the World Have No Electricity—Support the Right of Semi-Colonial Countries to Expand Electrification** Fri., Aug. 13, 7:30 p.m. *Both events held at the Militant Labor Forum Hall, 11 West Main, Room 103. Suggested donation: \$5. Tel: (435) 613-1091.*

CANADA

Montreal

Celebrate the Opening of Pathfinder Books and the Militant Labor Forum Hall. Speaker: Sébastien Désnautels, *Militant* reporter at Alcoa strike; others. Sat., Aug. 7. Program, 4 p.m.; Dinner and party at 6:30 p.m. 6955 Boulevard St. Michel (corner of Bélanger). Suggested donation: \$5 for program, \$10 for dinner. Tel: (514) 284-7369.

UNITED KINGDOM

London

Kurdish Fight for Self-Determination and the Ongoing Occupation of Iraq Speaker: Paul Davies. Fri., Aug. 6, Buffet dinner 6 p.m. Program 7 p.m. *Pathfinder Books, 47 The Cut, London Suggested donation: £3 for dinner, £3 for program. Tel: (020) 7261-1354.*

—LETTERS—

Nuclear power I

Your July 6 editorial, “The war over electricity,” states that nuclear power “produces the greatest amount of energy with the least use of resources and the smallest output of atmospheric pollution.” The editorial does not mention the biggest problem associated with nuclear plants: the long-term storage or disposal of wastes. The spent fuel rods and other by-products of plant operations remain radioactive for thousands of years and must be isolated from contact with humans and the environment. No safe and effective way of doing this has been found. The operation of nuclear plants also poses the risk of catastrophic core accidents and meltdowns, as occurred at Three Mile Island, Pennsylvania, and Chernobyl, Ukraine.

*Jim Sarsgard
by e-mail*

Nuclear power II

In your reply to a letter about nuclear power [July 27 *Militant*], the editors state that a stance on nuclear power is “a political, not a technical matter.” It is one thing to defend any Third World country’s right to develop whatever energy source it deems necessary. It is quite another to pretend you, yourself, are not making that decision without basing it on some technical criteria. “But we don’t

believe that harnessing the atom for productive purposes is impossible” must be based on some kind of “technical” criteria, not political; or are you suggesting that the class struggle can overcome even problems of physics.

You make another assertion based on “technical” criteria when you state: “And the use of coal or oil—not to mention solar or wind—is not the solution to meeting the needs of humanity.” On what do you base that assertion if not on “technical” criteria? Perhaps those sources do not represent a solution to future energy needs, but we will never be able to find any safe alternative source of energy without a major social change in the world.

Starting with that assertion does not prevent you from defending the right of the Third World to solve their problem in whatever form they choose. It is your stance that is counterposing the two questions. Starting with the world, you can point out that as long as imperialism dominates the world, all technology threatens to be a double edged sword against humanity and that the solution to the energy needs of humanity will only be solved by the defeat of imperialism. That is just a fact. In the meantime, the Third World countries have every right to develop whatever technology they deem necessary.

I grew up when atomic energy

was thought to provide us with atomic cars, dishwashers, etc. and that is the time during which those books by Cannon, Novack, and Hansen were written about the promise of nuclear power. Since then, we have had Three Mile Island, Chernobyl, and the WIPP site.

Perhaps you are right that, under socialism, atomic power will turn out to be the most feasible means to solve humanities energy needs, but that will not be just a “political” question.

*Allan Cox
Albuquerque, New Mexico*

Venezuela coverage

Hello! My name is Kimura Naoko. I live in Osaka, Japan. I sometimes read the *Militant* to find out about the Venezuelan Revolution. I am interested in the articles about Cuban doctors, etc. So I translated them into Japanese and introduced them to my friends.

By the way, may I ask you some questions? I am translating the article “75,000 Venezuelan peasants win land titles” [see April 20, 2004, *Militant*.] Does the Yauca nation have only six members (Jubir Yauca and his brothers)? I think it may be because of persecution. But my husband said it might be unlikely.

Does the fact that “last October the struggle had stalled” mean “The Yauca’s petitions to INTi

had fallen on deaf ears”? Is INTi anti-Chávez?

Moreover, the article says, “Until the year 2000, about 1,000 big landowners controlled 85 percent of land under cultivation—a total of 75 million acres.” It adds, “In 2001 the national government announced the nationalization of another 75 million acres of idle but arable land and promised to distribute it to peasants.”

Is it true that 85 percent of land under cultivation is idle and will the government nationalize it? Most of landowners let their lands idle? I think it is too large. I know next to nothing about Venezuelan agriculture and its statistics. Will you give me more of a particular account?

Many thanks.
*Kimura Naoko
Osaka, Japan*

Editor’s reply: Many thanks from the *Militant* for your work in translating these articles into Japanese. In response to your questions, the Yauca indigenous nation has only six remaining members, according to interviews with two of the surviving six brothers by our reporters visiting Venezuela. Most native people in that country, as in many countries throughout the Americas, were exterminated by the Spanish and other colonialists. The statement that the Yaucas struggle to reclaim

their land had stalled meant that it was not getting anywhere for a period of time. INTi, the National Land Institute, is pro-government; it was set up by the administration of President Hugo Chávez. But as in many government institutions, conflicting class interests are often represented, and the big landowners still have the upper hand since the capitalist class continues to control the means of production and thus remains in power. On the land question, what the article said is that about 1,000 big landowners owned 75 million acres of land that was being cultivated, which was 85 percent of all of Venezuela’s land under cultivation at the time. The government promised to nationalize and distribute to landless peasants *an additional* 75 million acres of land, which had been largely idle. Some of that additional land was owned by capitalist landlords and another portion belonged to the state or had simply no settled owner, especially in the Amazon and other remote areas.

—Argiris Malapanis

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

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

Quebec steelworkers strike Alcoa

BY SÉBASTIEN DÉSAUTELS

BÉCANCOUR, Quebec—On July 7, the 810 workers at Aluminum de Bécancour (ABI), members of the Steelworkers Local 9700, went on strike against Alcoa. The evening before they had rejected by 88 percent the latest company offer, the second time they had done so in a week.

The company provoked the walkout around two major issues. Alcoa—which owns 75 per cent of ABI, while the remaining 25 per cent is owned by Alcan—has been trying to restructure the plant to be able to move workers around disregarding seniority and job classifications. The company also wants to contract out work normally done by unionized workers. Positions vacated by retiring workers are not being filled.

Guy, a production worker in the plant for 18 years, summed up the consequences of the restructuring this way: “If we let the subcontracting go by like that we’ll find ourselves with 200 unionized workers instead of 800,” he said. “They don’t replace those retiring.”

Guy Desrosiers, another production worker, added, “The fundamental reason we’re on strike is that they want to transform this plant into a low-wage plant. I am among the youngest. I feel threatened by their new policies. Those who leave will be replaced by low-wage earners.”

The union had tried other pressure tactics in face of the company’s policies. Before the strike there were 4,000 outstanding grievances.

“We had a collective agreement, but they didn’t respect it,” Jean Frechette told *Militant* reporters.

The other major issue concerns control of the pension plan. The union is demanding parity control and respect of an agreement made in 2000 that the company cannot stop paying into the fund if there is a surplus. Also the union wants to continue adjusting the payments to the cost of living. In addition to rejecting these demands, the company said it intends to drop the retirement bonus, which is equal to two weeks of wages for every year of service.

“When they play around with my pension, I don’t agree,” said Jean Rouleau, on the picket line.

Richard Marcoux, while explaining he was four years from reaching retirement, added, “It’s a bit normal that we want a parity committee on pensions. The company hears you but they don’t listen.”

The plant here, with a production capacity of 400,000 tons of aluminum a year, ac-



Guy Desrosiers

Members of Steelworkers Local 9700 went on strike July 8 in Bécancour, Quebec, against Alcoa’s attacks on seniority, pensions, and contracting out work.

counts for 7 percent of Alcoa’s total output. The company is using 100 managers to maintain production. Starting July 9, Alcoa announced the closure of one of three lines and said this would mean the elimination of 300 union jobs. Because of the procedures involved in the refining of aluminum, once a line is closed it takes several months and millions of dollars to restart it.

Clément Masse, the president of the union local, said July 10 that he and other members of the negotiating committee had just spent several hours on the picket lines discussing this attack. The strikers

said that whatever happens, no one will be abandoned, even if not all of the 800 are called back.

Two weeks later, the company shut down a second line, leaving only one line in operation, with the goal of producing one-third of its previous capacity.

“Unions in Quebec have a tradition of solidarity” Masse said. There are several locals of the Steelworkers who are discussing concrete measures to support the strike, he added. The Alcan workers in the Saguenay-Lac St. Jean region extended their solidarity. The unionists at Baie

Pretoria may allow U.S. military to train its troops

BY T.J. FIGUEROA

JOHANNESBURG, South Africa—Pretoria is considering a U.S. government proposal to train and equip 2,000 South African soldiers. The first public news of this development broke July 17, when outgoing U.S. ambassador to South Africa Cameron Hume told Reuters, “We are talking with the South African government about helping to train and equip two additional battalions to expand the number of forces they have

available for peacekeeping.” He suggested such an agreement was imminent. Officials from South Africa’s defense ministry refused to comment on the report. Hume made the remarks while observing “Operation Medflag.” This was a joint U.S.-South African military medical services exercise in Limpopo province, involving hundreds of air force personnel and military medics from both countries.

The South African government has

deployed about 1,400 troops to Burundi and a similar number in the Democratic Republic of the Congo as part of international “peacekeeping” operations in Africa’s volatile Great Lakes region. “These operations are expensive, so this kind of help is significant,” said one unnamed South African military official, according to Reuters.

“I think if you asked the South African military they would say they were very stretched,” Hume told reporters. “We are talking about a modest but not insignificant increase in their capacities....material and training.” He also suggested that there could soon be a resumption of arms sales between the two governments.

A July 19 report carried by the South African Press Association stated, “A source familiar with the talks [said] the U.S. has spent the last eight years attracting South Africa’s interest to their African Contingency Operations Training and Assistance (Acota) program. Acota is a U.S. State Department-coordinated program that works with African states to improve peace support operations and humanitarian assistance capabilities.” Governments that have taken part in this program include those of Benin, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Mali, Malawi, and Senegal.

Pretoria has expanded its military cooperation with Washington in recent years, including in joint operations.

While cloaking its goals in humanitarian rhetoric, Washington increasingly sees Africa as a theatre for military operations. This is part and parcel of U.S. government efforts to replace Paris as a dominant power on the continent—particularly in the former colonies of francophone West Africa.

U.S. officials have also identified Africa as a place where Washington will wage operations against “terrorist” groups such as al-Qaeda. Part of this strategy involves securing “forward operating locations” without setting up permanent bases. Washington also plans to use proxy forces to defend its interests when this is deemed expedient.

Scotland fishermen devastated by ‘conservation’ rules

BY HUGH ROBERTSON

ABERDEEN, Scotland—Fishermen and their families in Scotland are fighting the devastating effects on their livelihoods of measures by London supposedly to “conserve fish stocks,” which are outlined in European Union rules. These steps include cutting the number of days fishermen are allowed to work each month and reducing the quotas for their catch.

Two years ago there were 300–400 dedicated white fish boats in the United Kingdom, fishermen say. Now there are barely 120. Only 15 white fish boats remain in Fraserburgh, which has had the largest fishing fleet in Scotland. Twenty-nine boats were “decommissioned” there over the last year. Decommissioning is the term for scrapping a fishing boat to remove it from active duty, in return for a European Union payout. In response to these measures, the “Cod Crusaders,” based in Fraserburgh on the northeastern coast of Scotland, have launched a campaign that has gained a growing hearing.

In an interview with *Militant* reporters, Carol MacDonald, a leader of the campaign, described the effects of the government measures on her family. “My husband, Malcolm, is only allowed to fish for 15 days every month; before he’d be out for 25–27 days every month,” she said. “He’s paid by the

catch so his income has dropped by £12,000 to £10,500 per year” (£1=\$1.83).

When the proposals for slashing the allowed fishing time were first put forward in November 2002, skippers were to be permitted only nine days per month. The extra six days were a “concession” in return for decommissioning 200 boats. Malcolm MacDonald said fishermen should be compensated for the days they are not allowed to work. “We should get compensation for lost wages,” he said. “How can we be prevented from working for two weeks in a month and cover our bills?”

Carol MacDonald referred to the effects on the town, with a population of 13,000. “Sixty percent of the population of Fraserburgh is in fishing related jobs,” she said. The crisis is affecting factory fish processors differentially. “Large processors can make up any shortfall from British boats with foreign imports, mainly from the Faeroe Islands and China,” she stated. Small processors have gone out of business. A relief skipper from Peterhead told *Militant* reporters last year, “Two years ago you could get £60–£80 for a box of small haddock, now you get £10–£15.”

Morag Ritchie, another leader of the Cod Crusaders, whose husband is the owner of two boats with total crew of 12, and is skipper of one of them, commented on the

financial position such small producers find themselves in. “Both boats are mortgaged to the banks, one recently broke down and a £220,000 loan was needed for a new engine, gearbox, and drive shaft,” he said. “In good times the banks always want you to take out loans to modernize your gear. When things get bad, they come knocking on the door for their money. One boat that was decommissioned was two-and-a-half years old. The banks forced the skipper to decommission, as he was £430,000 in debt.”

Capitalists profit, fishermen get shaft

The documentary film *Gutted*, shown by the BBC June 16, said that in recent years 60 percent of the Scottish fishing fleet has been eliminated, and out of the £40 million paid out for decommissioning 80 percent went straight to the banks to cover outstanding debts. In any case, Carol MacDonald said, “When boats are decommissioned the crew members get nothing, only the skipper/owners receive payments.”

Other fishermen also noted that the measures have nothing to do with conserving fish stocks and that their effect is to fatten the pockets of bankers and other capitalists, while devastating the livelihoods of small fishermen and workers on fishing boats.

“Decommissioning has got nothing to do

Continued on Page 11