

THE MILITANT

INSIDE

**California prison locks down
Cuban militant and fellow inmates**

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DEC. 21, 2004

On eve of union vote, Utah miners fight firings of UMWAs supporters

Press campaign to expose job safety violations by Co-Op bosses

BY PAT MILLER

PRICE, Utah—In the face of company harassment, firings, and attempts to intimidate supporters of the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA), 21 Co-Op miners gathered at the UMWA hall here December 5. Miners told the press they planned to respond to the company attacks and prepare for the December 16 union representation election. A day earlier, UMWAs retirees and Co-Op miners met at the union hall to organize to visit every worker at the Huntington, Utah, coal mine who is eligible to vote prior to the election.

“The company would like to blame this fight on a few ‘troublemakers,’ and to have us believe that is the problem,” said Co-Op miner Berthila León. “But we’re fighting for the union because it is what we all believe in. We are fighting to make the conditions in this mine better for everyone.”

The determination of these miners to establish representation by the UMWA remains strong. Co-Op miners said that those who took part in the December 5 meeting represent nearly two-thirds of the 36 miners who are eligible to vote in the union election.

Co-Op miners have been locked in a

Blast kills 23 coal miners in Kazakhstan mine



Reuters/Valery Kaliev

The Shakhhtinskaya coal mine (above) in Kazakhstan, a former Soviet republic in central Asia, was scene of massive explosion that killed 23 miners December 5. (See article on page 4.)

14-month battle with the mine owner, C.W. Mining, to win UMWA representation. Miners say that C.W. Mining has imposed on them an outfit run by the bosses called the International Association of United Workers Union (IAUWU). This “union” works with the company to discipline workers and maintain super-exploitive conditions at the mine. Most workers at Co-Op are paid \$5.50 to \$7 an hour, while wages for underground coal miners across the United States average

at least \$17 per hour.

Workers say they have documented numerous unsafe practices at the mine. These include lack of safety equipment, dangerously long cuts of coal past supported roof, and jobs such as roof bolting done on a piece-rate basis. At a November 29 press conference in front of the Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) offices in Price, Co-Op miners exposed the company’s

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In Canada visit, Bush pushes ‘missile shield’

BY MICHEL PRAIRIE AND NATALIE STAKE-DOUCET

TORONTO—“In short, George Bush came to tell the Canadian government: you didn’t follow me in Iraq, so be it, but don’t make the same mistake with the antimissile shield.”

This is how Vincent Marissal, a top columnist for the Montreal-based *La Presse*, summarized the recent visit by the U.S. president to Canada. Marissal’s opinion column—headlined “The Antimissile Boomerang”—in the December 3 issue of the French-language daily was one of many such comments in the Canadian press.

Bush came to Canada for two days, from November 30 to December 1. It was his first official trip abroad since his re-election in November. The visit was touted in the media here as “fence-mending.”

The previous Liberal government headed by Jean Chrétien refused to send Canadian troops to participate in the U.S. war against Iraq on the grounds that the assault hadn’t received the blessing of the United Nations. In response, Washington punished Ottawa. It imposed trade sanctions against Canadian products, especially softwood lumber and cattle beef.

The resulting blows were deeply felt by capitalists here, since 85 percent of all Canadian exports go to the United States. Canada’s rulers hoped that Bush’s visit would be an opening to at least soften the

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Ukraine: Pro-Moscow camp loses ground

BY MICHAEL ITALIE

Pro-Moscow forces in Ukraine are losing ground. The country’s supreme court voided the results of the November 21 presidential elections and a new vote has been set for December 26. Hundreds of thousands of protesters in Kiev backing opposition candidate Viktor Yushchenko remained in the streets and continued to blockade government buildings until a December 8

agreement was reached in parliament by the contending forces.

The political crisis broke over widespread allegations of fraud in the elections. Ukraine’s electoral council had announced November 24 that Prime Minister Viktor Yanukovich—favored by the Kremlin—won the republic’s presidency by nearly 50 percent of the vote. Mass demonstrations

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Failure of attack on U.S. consulate shows Saudi rulers’ progress in ‘war on terror’

BY PAUL PEDERSON

Saudi commandos quickly killed or captured all of the assailants who attacked the U.S. consulate in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, on December 6. A group claiming ties to Osama bin Laden and his group al-Qaeda subsequently took responsibility for the assault. The incident highlighted the progress Washington has made in its efforts to press the Saudi monarchy to crack down on such groups and other bourgeois opponents of both the House of Saud and U.S. imperialism.

Of the five men who assaulted the consulate, four were killed following a hostage standoff, according to the Saudi ministry of interior. Four maintenance workers and drivers in the embassy’s motor pool and one local security guard were killed—none of them Americans. The one remaining assailant was wounded and captured.

“They held us hostage for an hour, an hour and a half. We were in two groups of about four and eight,” Muaffa Jilan

Ibrahim, a Yemeni maintenance worker, told Reuters. “They told the security forces in front of us: ‘We have hostages. If you approach, we will shoot.’ They put us in front of them as human shields. The security forces stormed in and there was an exchange of fire.”

This is the first assault on an embassy in Saudi Arabia over the past two years was the successful attack in May on a compound housing oil company employees. Four gunmen carried out that attack, leaving 22 of the compound’s residents dead. Three of the four assailants escaped literally under the noses of Saudi police.

A high point of the al-Qaeda campaign in Saudi Arabia over the past two years was the successful attack in May on a compound housing oil company employees. Four gunmen carried out that attack, leaving 22 of the compound’s residents dead. Three of the four assailants escaped literally under the noses of Saudi police.

The May attack was an embarrassment for the Saudi ruling class, which has been

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Bipartisan deal reached on bill strengthening U.S. gov’t spying

BY MICHAEL ITALIE

With support from the White House and bipartisan backing in the House and Senate, the U.S. Congress passed a bill December 8 to strengthen and centralize the work of U.S. spy agencies. H.R.10 increases the powers of the FBI and other political police agencies to spy on and harass anyone Washington may target as a “terrorist.” It also calls for beefing up the number of border patrol cops and customs agents.

A previous version of the bill had stalled two weeks earlier when key Republicans in the House of Representatives refused to give their support to a version of the legislation that had passed in the Senate. The bill was stopped in its tracks when Duncan Hunter, a Republican congressman who heads the House Armed Services Committee, and others opposed it “because they said it could reduce military control over battlefield intelligence,” as an article in the November 21 *Washington Post* put it.

Hunter and other conservative Republicans signed onto the bill when a provision was included to make clear that the new Director of National Intelligence would not be able to “abrogate the statutory responsibilities” of the Pentagon. At a December 6

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Pursuing Baathists, Washington increases forces in Iraq to 150,000

BY SAM MANUEL

The Pentagon announced December 1 that the number of U.S. troops in Iraq will be increased by 12,000 by the end of the year, bringing the total to 150,000. U.S. military commanders say their main objective is to keep pursuing Baathist forces following their defeat in Fallujah. The military also said that evidence from Fallujah and elsewhere is providing information on the connections of the former regime of Saddam Hussein with wealthy Sunni landowners and businessmen who are now financing armed attacks on U.S. and Iraqi troops.

South of Baghdad, in the area known as the Triangle of Death, the U.S. military announced the end of Operation Plymouth Rock but has continued raids to hunt down and kill or capture Baathists.

The 850-strong British Black Watch regiment, which took part in this operation, returned to its main base in Basra in southern Iraq on December 4 in preparation for going

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Colombian government pardons death squads

BY SAM MANUEL

In a November 25 ceremony, Colombian government officials presided over the demobilization of the so-called Banana Bloc militia, a unit of the rightist death squads that act as an extralegal extension of the Colombian military.

The unit operates in the banana-growing north of the country. Such squads, organized and financed by wealthy landowners and businessmen, have been responsible for the deaths of thousands of unionists, peasants, and other civilians. The government has failed to prosecute most of those involved in the killings.

The demobilization of the rightist unit is part of the overall course of the government of President Alvaro Uribe, which is seeking to crush antigovernment guerrilla organizations that operate in large parts of the Colombian countryside. The government wants to reach an agreement with the ultrarightist terror groups that would lead to disarming some while effectively granting amnesty to their leaders for their brutal actions.

During a brief stopover in Cartagena, Colombia, on November 22, on his return from regional “free trade” talks in Chile, U.S. president George Bush made a demonstrative show of support for the Uribe government. “This man’s plan is working,” Bush said, adding that he would press the U.S. Congress to add more to the billions it has already given the regime since 2000.

Bogotá is the largest recipient of U.S. military aid outside the Middle East.

Some 450 members of the Banana Bloc turned in assault rifles, mortars, and other weapons in a soccer stadium in the town of Turbo, near the Panamanian border.

The Banana Bloc is part of the 15,000-strong United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC), the main ultrarightist military organization, which along with the army has been used by Colombia’s ruling landlords and capitalists in a 40-year-long war with the country’s main guerrilla groups, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and the National Liberation Army (ELN). The paramilitary groups have been involved in the deaths of thousands of trade unionists in this South American country—2,100 since 1991.

Washington has indicted and is seeking

the extradition of at least 10 leaders of the death squads on drug-trafficking charges. On November 24, Colombia’s Supreme Court approved the extradition of Salvatore Mancuso, a high-ranking leader of the rightist AUC. Mancuso was so unconcerned about the extradition order that he even made an appearance at the government’s disarmament ceremony for the Banana Bloc. “Today, we offer a major gesture, which will lead to the re-incorporation of combatants of the Self-Defense Forces into civilian life,” he told reporters. Mancuso holds a government-issued “safe-conduct” pass that shields him from arrest.

The Uribe administration has expressed concern over the moves by a group of legislators in the Colombian congress to enact a law that would call for jail terms of at least eight years for the top AUC leaders. While the law would include some judicial benefits for the rightist thugs, the government opposes the measure because it would also require leaders of the death squads to ensure the full dismantling their forces, provide information on its members, assist with investigations, and pay reparations to their victims, the *Financial Times* reported.

In sharp contrast to the leniency shown toward the death squads, the Uribe government has launched “Plan Patriota” (Patriot Plan), the largest counterinsurgency offensive against the FARC in many years.

On December 3 the Uribe administration said it would release 23 imprisoned members of FARC in order to get the guerrilla group to free Colombian and U.S. hostages being held in its camps. The FARC did not immediately respond. Last month, the



Reuters/José Miguel Gómez

Members of United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia brandish assault weapons during training. This is one of the country’s rightist death squads, misnamed as “paramilitary” groups. It is led by former Colombian army scout Carlos Castaño.

FARC rejected a government offer to release 50 guerrillas in exchange for 22 Colombian politicians, 34 soldiers and cops, and three U.S. military “contractors,” according to the December 3 *New York Times*. The FARC has insisted that the government grant it two demilitarized zones in rural areas before prisoner swap discussions take place, a demand the government has rejected.

The U.S. government has sent \$3.3 billion to the Colombian regime since 2000 under Plan Colombia. The program, initiated by the Clinton White House, was expanded by the Bush administration into the 2002 Andean Regional Initiative. Under the cover of fighting “terrorism” and drug trafficking, Washington has used Plan Colombia to step up its military intervention throughout the region in anticipation of sharper resistance by workers and farmers to the economic

and social catastrophe that is gripping Latin America.

On October 9 the U.S. Congress voted to double the cap on Washington’s military presence in Colombia to back the regime’s counterinsurgency war. The number of U.S. soldiers who could be stationed in Colombia was raised from 400 to 800. In addition, the number of “private contractors” the Pentagon is allowed to hire for military operations in the country was raised from 400 to 600.

On November 30 the Colombian congress approved an amendment to the country’s constitution that would allow Uribe to run for re-election in 2006. Colombia’s Supreme Court is expected to approve the amendment’s legality. The move has the tacit support of the U.S. government, which regards the Uribe government as its closest ally in Latin America.

U.S. prison holding Cuban militant ‘locked down’

BY MICHAEL ITALIE

Gerardo Hernández, one of five Cuban revolutionaries locked up in U.S. prisons on frame-up charges, is among the more than 600 inmates at the Victorville federal penitentiary in Adelanto, California, who have been held in lockdown since early November.

Tightened restrictions on those in the maximum security prison include a prohibi-

tion on leaving their cells, a ban on visits, no phone calls, and no hot meals. The lockdown has been in place since November 1 and prison authorities have given no indication of when they will end their crackdown.

The lockdown is apparently a typically arbitrary action by the federal jailers that has been imposed on all the prisoners at the facility, not just Hernández. “I don’t think they have targeted Gerardo,” said Alicia Jrapko, a representative of the National Committee to Free the Five, in a December 3 phone interview from San Francisco.

Jrapko said Hernández continues to write letters to the committee every week and remains in good spirits.

He recently wrote his wife, Adriana Pérez, about the conditions he faces. “I can’t talk to you because I’m still kept in lockdown. I don’t know how long this will take, but don’t worry about it. Everything’s fine,” he said in his letter, quoted in the December 1 issue of the Cuban paper *Juventud Rebelde*.

Hernández, along with Fernando González, René González, Antonio Guerrero, and Ramón Labañino—known as the Cuban Five—are Cuban revolutionaries serving prison terms of between 15 years and, in the case of Hernández, a double life

sentence based on a frame-up and conviction in June 2001 in a federal court.

Hernández and his four comrades were in the United States on an internationalist mission to defend the Cuban Revolution from U.S.-backed assaults. They were gathering information on the activities of counterrevolutionary Cuban-American groups based in Florida that have a history of launching violent attacks on Cuba from U.S. soil. These outfits have operated with training, funding, and other resources from the U.S. government.

These attacks are part of Washington’s more than 45 years of cold—and sometimes hot—war on Cuba. Since workers and farmers took political power there in 1959, the U.S. rulers have viewed the Cuban Revolution as a threat to their interests because of the example it continues to set for working people throughout Latin America and around the world.

The five Cubans were arrested in 1998. Unable to prove any illegal acts by the five, U.S. prosecutors pushed through convictions on a series of conspiracy charges, including conspiracy to act as an unregistered agent of a foreign power and to

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THE MILITANT

Abortion: A woman’s right to choose!

The ‘Militant’ regularly covers the struggles for a woman’s right to control her own body—from the march of a million women and their supporters last April in Washington, D.C., to the conference on women’s rights and demonstration of 20,000 in Mendoza, Argentina, in October.

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Red Cross: U.S. treatment of Guantánamo prisoners ‘tantamount to torture’

BY MICHAEL ITALIE

A report from the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has charged the U.S. government with treating so-called enemy combatants held at Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, in a manner “tantamount to torture,” according to media reports.

ICRC and government officials would neither confirm nor deny the content of the report by the Red Cross, based on an investigation this June, citing their “bilateral agreements on confidentiality.”

“The report of the June visit said investigators had found a system devised to break the will of the prisoners at Guantánamo,” reported the November 30 *New York Times*, “and make them wholly dependent on their interrogators through ‘humiliating acts, solitary confinement, temperature extremes, use of forced positions.’ Investigators said that the methods used were increasingly ‘more refined and repressive’ than learned about on previous visits.” The *Times* said it recently obtained a memorandum, based on the report, that quotes from it in detail and lists its major findings.

Washington holds 550 men from 42 countries at its naval base in Guantána-

mo—territory occupied by U.S. imperialism against the will of the Cuban people. It uses the designation “enemy combatant” to describe those it holds there to justify denying them legal rights, including those accorded to prisoners of war under the Geneva Conventions. The prisoners have been held at Camp Delta since early 2002. Many were captured by the U.S. military during the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan in October 2001.

The brutality—physical and psychological—mirror the degrading of prisoners by U.S. personnel at the Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq and in the prison system inside the United States.

“The construction of such a system” in Guantánamo, said the ICRC report, “whose stated purpose is the production of intelligence, cannot be considered other than an intentional system of cruel, unusual, and degrading treatment and a form of torture.”

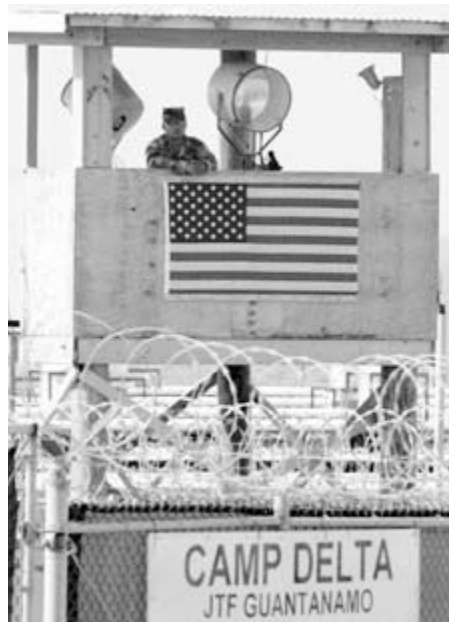
Medical files of those detained were “literally open” to the jailers about to question their captives, and cases of mental illness were found to be caused by prolonged solitary confinement. The ICRC report found that the “apparent integration of access to

medical care within the system of coercion” resulted in prisoners refusing to cooperate with doctors as a result of the assistance to their jailers and torturers the medical personnel provided.

“One regular procedure was making uncooperative prisoners strip to their underwear, having them sit in a chair while shackled hand and foot to a bolt in the floor, and forcing them to endure strobe lights and loud rock and rap music played through two close loudspeakers, while the air-conditioning was turned up to maximum levels,” U.S. military personnel told the *Times* in October.

Media accounts of the ICRC report say there were frequent prisoner complaints of female jailers baiting their captives with sexual overtures. This backs up the testimony of prisoners who have been released who say they were sexually harassed at Guantánamo. U.S. authorities acknowledge that one female interrogator was disciplined for removing her blouse during questioning.

The Pentagon rejects all charges of abuse at Guantánamo. The commander of the Guantánamo prison, Brig. Gen. Jay Hood, told reporters, “We take everything the Red



Getty Images/Mark Wilson

Guard at Guantánamo’s Camp Delta

Cross gives us and study it very carefully,” and that he agrees “with some things and disagrees with others.”

“The United States operates a safe, humane and professional detention operation at Guantánamo that is providing valuable information in the war on terrorism,” a Defense Department statement said, and carries out “sensitivity training” to ensure the jailers “understand the procedures for protecting the rights and dignity of detainees.”

In March 2002, however, government lawyers announced that the president was not bound by either the Convention Against Torture or a federal anti-torture statute because of his broad authority to “protect the nation from terrorism.”

The government has taken this argument to its logical conclusion in a case in federal court of Guantánamo prisoners requesting their release because they are being held solely on the basis of evidence obtained through torture. Government attorney Brian Boyle said December 2 that the challenges to detention should be thrown out because the prisoners “have no constitutional rights in this court,” the Associated Press reported.

If “enemy combatant” review tribunals “determine that evidence of questionable provenance were reliable, nothing in the due process clause (of the Constitution) prohibits them from relying on it,” Boyle told the court. He added, “I don’t think anything remotely like torture has occurred at Guantánamo.”

The Pentagon set up the review tribunals after a June 28 Supreme Court ruling that the prisoners at Guantánamo have the right to use the U.S. courts to challenge the charges against them. Most had been held for two years or more without charges against them or access to attorneys or visits by relatives. AP reports that these tribunals have so far reviewed the cases of 440 Guantánamo prisoners, and released one.

Rumsfeld offers Latin American governments more U.S. investments for military cooperation

BY PAUL PEDERSON

At a recent summit of defense ministers from the Americas, U.S. defense secretary Donald Rumsfeld emphasized the carrot over the big stick. His message: governments that cooperate with Washington in carrying out its strategic objectives in the region and worldwide will receive preferential economic treatment.

The 6th Defense Ministerial of the Americas involved military chiefs from every country in the Western Hemisphere except for Cuba. It took place November 17–19 in Quito, Ecuador. The meeting’s main theme was the continued expansion of U.S. military involvement in the region and the potential economic rewards that can follow closer “security cooperation” with U.S. imperialism.

Rumsfeld pressed for greater flexibility for U.S. forces and their allies in operating across borders. “There are ungoverned areas and the borders between countries have been used and they’re being used effectively against civil society,” he said. “No country,” Rumsfeld added, “can deal with these problems alone because these problems are not problems that are located and contained within national boundaries.”

“An obvious example is maritime security and cooperation,” he said, referring to the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI). The White House is spearheading the PSI to give Washington and its allies the power to board any ship on the high seas that they deem is suspect of carrying cargo that can lead to the “proliferation” of so-called weapons of mass destruction

In November the governments of Chile, Argentina, Mexico, Panama and 16 other countries participated in a U.S.-led military exercise in the Caribbean aimed at establishing new “rapid consent procedures” under which Washington and its allies carry out these high-seas operations.

In the meeting, U.S. government representatives also pointed to other examples of cooperation with U.S. forces in the region, including in the triple border region of Argentina, Paraguay, and Brazil; the increased U.S. spying and military operations supposedly aimed at combating “narcoterrorism” in Colombia, Peru, Bolivia, and Ecuador; joint spying and patrols of South American airspace by Washington, Colombia, and Brazil; and joint U.S., Chilean, and Panamanian government operations at the Panama Canal allegedly aimed at preventing “terrorist” attacks.

Washington also highlighted the potential economic advantages for regimes in the region that cooperate with U.S. imperialism. The Defense Department worked with the Council of the Americas—a U.S.-based big-business grouping that focuses on expanding the penetration of finance capital into Latin America—to prepare a report

for the meeting titled, “Fostering Regional Development by Securing the Hemispheric Investment Climate.”

The report asserted that “the greatest threat to democracy itself is the lack of hope citizens increasingly have that their lives will actually improve.” It postulated that opening Latin America wide to foreign investment by lowering trade barriers, along with an aggressive approach to transforming the region’s military and police forces to work more closely with Washington’s, is the road to economic stability. “Some nations like Chile are much stronger than others because they have stuck to a model of open market democracy,” the report asserted.

“Regional governments must rethink the role of standing militaries in the 21st century,” the report concluded. “The United States is obligated to ensure the full implementation of its own technical transfer regulations and laws. If different militaries are expected to work together to address cross-border threats, they must have access to similar technology and equipment to coordinate their efforts.”

In its coverage of the Quito summit, the *Washington Post* pointed to Colombia as one of the “examples of effective U.S. and Latin American cooperation on security.”

“In the late 1990s,” the *Post* said, “some human rights activists resisted U.S. engage-

ment with abusive and corrupt military and police forces in Colombia. Had Washington listened, those forces today would be, at the very least, five years behind in their level of professionalism and effectiveness.”

According to the *Post*, Rumsfeld’s trip to Nicaragua and El Salvador prior to the Quito conference “sent a clear message to the region: Washington doesn’t forget those who cooperate on matters of security.”

At a national commando school in El Salvador, Rumsfeld awarded the bronze star to six Salvadoran soldiers who defended an ambushed convoy that was carrying officials of the U.S. occupation regime in Iraq in March. San Salvador, with 380 Special Forces soldiers in Iraq, is the only government in the Americas besides Washington with troops in Iraq. Nicaragua, the Dominican Republic, and Honduras all had detachments there earlier but have since pulled out.

Rumsfeld visited Nicaragua to press the government of President Enrique Bolaños to continue carrying out U.S. demands that it destroy a key component of the country’s strategic anti-aircraft defenses. Managua has agreed to demolish 2,000 surface-to-air missiles used to defend the country from airborne assaults by the U.S.-organized *contras* that attacked Nicaragua after a revolutionary government came to power in 1979.

Vietnam, China face steep U.S. tariffs on shrimp

BY DOUG NELSON

The U.S. Commerce Department has reaffirmed its imposition of protectionist tariffs against shrimp imports from China and Vietnam. The measures, part of the aggressive policies used by Washington and other imperialist powers against nations in the semicolonial world, are expected to have a particularly devastating impact on Vietnam, which is heavily reliant on shrimp exports as a source of income.

The Commerce Department justified its position with the claim that companies from China and Vietnam are “dumping” shrimp on the U.S. market—that is, selling goods at artificially low prices in order to capture market share.

On November 30, U.S. trade officials announced their “final determination” ratifying a July 6 decision to impose tariffs on shrimp imports from these two countries. They maintained the 113 percent tariff placed on shrimp from China, but lowered the tax on Vietnamese shrimp from 93 to 26 percent.

Washington’s protectionist moves will have a substantial effect on these industries in these two countries. Fish farming is Vietnam’s second-largest export product, and about half of its seafood exports go to the United States.

Before the suit, China and Vietnam together supplied about half the shrimp imported into the United States. According to Alabama’s *Mobile Register*, this share has since declined by more than 60 percent.

Penalizing state-run industries in those two workers states, a separate, lower rate was set for companies that “demonstrated an absence of government control from their export activities.” A tariff of 55 percent was set for 35 such companies in China, and one Chinese company was exempt. Thirty-two Vietnamese companies were slapped with tariffs of “only” 4–5 percent.

The U.S. International Trade Commission is scheduled to make a final determination in January. If it agrees with the decision of the Commerce Department it will issue an antidumping duty order and instruct U.S. Customs to collect cash deposits on shrimp imports.

The case was initiated when the Ad Hoc Shrimp Trade Action Committee—a boat owners and shrimp processors group from Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Texas—filed antidumping petitions with the International Trade Commission and the Department of Commerce in December last year. The petitions claimed that shrimp imports from Brazil, China, Ecuador, India,

Thailand, and Vietnam cost U.S. companies \$2.4 billion.

The Louisiana state government has contributed hundreds of thousands of dollars to help cover legal expenses for the effort.

Exporters from these countries have captured a greater share of the U.S. shrimp market in the last few years. The petitions cited statistics from the U.S. Census Bureau stating that import volumes from these six countries rose by about 70 percent between 2000 and 2002, while import prices declined about 28 percent. According to *Mobile Register*, they provide about 75 percent of the shrimp consumed in the United States.

The U.S. shrimp fishing companies claim this has caused a decline in prices they receive on the domestic market by 45 percent. But consumer prices for shrimp have risen, not declined, during the same period, which has meant higher profits for U.S. distributors.

Chinese imports have been a major target of “antidumping” duties by Washington. In addition to the decision on shrimp, the U.S. Commerce Department announced three other “final determinations” of dumping in November: against crepe paper products from China, violet pigment from India and China, and wooden furniture from China.

Utah miners’ struggle

Continued from front page
safety record and anti-union practices (see box on this page).

Co-Op miners said December 5 they had designated two miners as safety representatives—one underground and one surface miner. Workers will report safety violations or problems to them.

The next morning, the Co-Op bosses held a meeting with both the midnight and day shift miners. Miners said that superintendent Kenny Defa told them, “We know you formed a safety committee.” Defa claimed that according to company policy miners may be disciplined, up to and including being fired, if they report a safety problem to MSHA before reporting it to the company.

After the meeting, head maintenance foreman Cyril Jackson pulled aside Bill Estrada, a leader of the UMWA organizing effort, and gave him a disciplinary “occurrence” because he was part of the delegation of Co-Op miners to the MSHA office on November 29. Miners can get occurrences for various “infractions,” including attendance. A miner can be fired for too many occurrences.

Co-Op miners and their supporters are fighting the bosses’ threats to carry out mass firings of UMWA backers one week before the scheduled union election.

In a November 30 letter to B. Allan Benson, director of the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) Region 17, Bishop George Niederauer of the Catholic diocese of Salt Lake City, said, “It is my understanding from members of my staff that C.W. Mining managers at the Bear Canyon Mine near Huntington, Utah, have apparently violated the July 1, 2004, settlement between C.W. Mining and the National Labor Relations Board.

“The violations include threats of firing, new and arbitrary production standards, claims that foreign-born miners do not have proper documentation as well as one incident of shoving.

“I respectfully request that you investigate these complaints before the scheduled December 16 election date for union representatives.”

Company fires more workers

Two days later, the company took another step, acting on its threats to fire union supporters. On December 2 the bosses fired Alyson Kennedy, one of the leaders of the fight for UMWA representation at Co-Op.

Following weeks of harassment, Kennedy filed criminal charges with the Emery County Police on November 28 against Co-Op mine foreman Kevin Petersen, who forcefully shoved her in the foremen’s office. Four days later, Kennedy said she was called into the company office where her immediate supervisor, Cyril Jackson, and mine manager Charles Reynolds informed her she was suspended for three days with intent to fire.

Kennedy, a miner with nearly a decade of underground experience, was told she was working at only 20 percent of the expected level of performance. Kennedy said she was asked to sign off on her discharge papers, which she refused to do.

“We are not being intimidated by the company’s actions,” Kennedy told the

press. “The miners meeting on December 5 was one of the most well attended, coming right after another firing and just a few days before the company is threatening mass firings at the mine.”

On December 7, Ricardo Chávez, another leader of the Co-Op miners, was ordered by his boss, Kevin Petersen, to go home two hours prior to the end of his shift. The next morning he was not allowed to work and given three days’ suspension with intent to discharge for allegedly breaking a company safety rule.

Chávez said he had been instructed by crew leader Chelsey Petersen, Kevin Petersen’s daughter, to shovel some coal spillage by a conveyor belt. Chávez works on the surface in the tippie where the coal is sorted and loaded onto coal trucks.

Immediately after he went to the belt and began working, Chávez said, he was spotted by the mine superintendent and an MSHA inspector who said he was not wearing a safety harness.

“The company wants to use this to challenge my vote in the December 16 election,” said Chávez. “They know that we will vote for the UMWA.”

On November 22, mine manager Charles Reynolds gave out individual letters to many of the foreign-born miners at Co-Op. “Federal case law requires an employer to verify the legal working status of any employee that it reasonably suspects may be working illegally,” the letters say. “You must provide C.W. Mining Co., on or before December 9, 2004, valid documentation showing your eligibility to work. Failure to provide such documentation will result in your termination. We must verify that any social security number you provide to us is valid.”

After receiving these letters, the miners pointed out that their status is the same as when the company hired them and worked them for years at minimum wages and under abysmal working conditions at the mine. Miners said the attempt to demand immigration documentation one week before scheduled elections is not even a thinly disguised attempt to dissuade the miners from supporting the UMWA.

“We have to fight to push them back on this,” said Kennedy, referring to the latest

STATEMENT FROM BILL ESTRADA AT NEWS CONFERENCE IN PRICE, UTAH, NOVEMBER 29 ON BEHALF OF DELEGATION OF CO-OP MINERS

We miners at the Co-Op mine are here today to ask the Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) to immediately order C.W. Mining to stop unsafe mining practices at their Bear Canyon Mine near Huntington. These unsafe practices include illegal 55 foot cuts where 40 foot cuts are the maximum allowed by law, not having readily available to miners a roof control plan for the #4 mine as required by law, and exposure to diesel exhaust in the outside shop due to inadequate ventilation.

Immediately following this news conference we will submit our complaints to the MSHA officials. The stakes for miners in enforcing safety protections are high in the face of the coal mining bosses’ drive for greater and greater productivity and profits. Just last week a miner was critically injured by a roof fall at the Dugout mine. We are expressing our solidarity with this brother miner and his family.

In the face of the Co-Op miners winning our jobs back after being illegally fired in September last year, winning a back pay ruling, and winning on our demand that members of the Kingston family be excluded from voting in the upcoming representation election (all decisions of the National Labor Relations Board - NLRB), C.W. Mining managers have been threatening mass firings of Co-Op miners. They are using new and arbitrary production standards as well as claims that foreign-born miners don’t have proper documentation. Furthermore, last week one Co-Op supervisor physically shoved one miner



Co-Op miners and their supporters enter Mine Safety and Health Administration office November 29 following news conference to present charges of safety violations by Co-Op bosses.

and threatened one other. (A report and witness statements have been filed with the Emery County Sheriff and we are demanding that the supervisor be charged for this attack). These actions by C.W. Mining are a direct violation of the July 1, 2004 National Labor Relations Board settlement that prohibits discharge, harassment, and threats against workers for union activity.

This morning a petition signed by nearly three dozen miners is being filed with the National Labor Relations Board demanding sanctions against C.W. Mining for these violations.

We have the right to choose the United Mine Workers of America as our union. We call on all working people, trade unionists, religious and social justice groups as well as immigrant rights advocates to support us against the desperate attacks by C.W. Mining that have failed to block our fight for union representation, safer working conditions, and dignity on the job.

firings and the bosses’ threat to follow up with firings of other union supporters. “There is no indication that the bosses are backing off of the December 9 threat. And we do know that what they are threatening is illegal. Supporters of our fight are speaking

out and organizing against it.”

The NLRB ruled in July that C.W. Mining fired 75 Co-Op miners illegally on Sept. 22, 2003, and ordered the company to take back all workers the bosses locked out for

Continued on Page 5

Coal mine accident in Utah caused by bosses’ speed-up

BY PAT MILLER

PRICE, Utah—Coal bosses throughout the western United States are increasing production to profit from the rising demand for coal and higher coal prices. This profit drive by the coal barons is putting miners’ lives at risk, as a recent accident at the Arch Minerals Dugout Canyon coal mine here illustrates.

The boom that coal companies are trying to take advantage of today was featured in the business section of the November 20 *New York Times*. “Energy companies in the United States have announced plans to build more coal-fired power plants in the last 12 months than they did in the last 12 years,” said the article titled “Fuel of the Future? Some say coal.” More than 100 coal-fueled power plants are vying for permits to

operate—the largest such increase since the 1970s, according to the *Times*. The projected investment for all of these projects is more than \$100 billion.

More power plants means more mines opening or reopening, and more miners being hired. In the Price area, the center of underground coal mining in the western United States, two idled mines have reopened this year and two more are projected to open in 2005. As a result of the long drought in coal mine hiring, which stretched through the 1980s and ’90s, coal companies throughout the West and the rest of the country are scrambling for experienced miners, and rushing to train new miners.

Many coal companies are now working around the clock, seven days a week. This massive push for production and the diminishing percentage of experienced miners is a cause for growing concern among many miners that an already dangerous occupation is becoming more and more perilous.

At the Dugout mine near here, owned by Arch Coal, a serious roof fall accident occurred November 22. Experienced miner Pat Dirks suffered multiple broken ribs, and back, face, and pelvis injuries. As is common in many mine accidents, the bosses and the government blamed the miner for putting himself in harm’s way. According to workers at the Dugout mine, the Mine Safety and Health Administration report on the accident cites Dirks for working past the last row of roof bolts in the mining section. The MSHA report also cites the two workers who rushed to his aid and removed a massive rock from him for not placing jack stands in the area before helping him.

In a meeting with Co-Op miners on November 29, who were protesting lax safety enforcement at the mine where they work in Huntington, Utah, MSHA officials reiterated their stance that the accident at Dugout was the miner’s fault, and they claimed the company had no responsibility. The government officials do not even acknowledge that the company’s production push is having

anything to do with the accident.

This stance by the MSHA flies in the face of reality. Arch Coal maintains a bonus program designed to force miners to work injured and under great pressure to meet high production goals. Under the program, failure to meet production standards results in the automatic loss of a large amount of the bonus. For each worker injured on the job 20 percent more is deducted from the bonus of everyone. Under this program, workers say they labor injured rather than report an accident and be “responsible” for their co-workers losing bonus money.

The Co-Op miners, through their struggles on the job for safe working conditions and the fight for a union at the mine, are setting an example for miners throughout this area for why workers need to organize themselves to improve safety. “The stakes for miners in enforcing safety protections are high in the face of the coal mining bosses’ drive for greater and greater productivity and profits,” said Bill Estrada, one of the leaders of the union-organizing effort at the Co-Op mine, in a November 29 statement to the press (see box on this page).

The Co-Op miners sent a card to Dirks following the accident to express their solidarity with him and his family. The card, signed by more than 30 present and former Co-Op miners, read in part, “We know that the coal companies are always pushing so hard for production and that is what causes accidents. Coal miners have to depend on ourselves for safer mines. Get well soon.”

**Twenty Years Since
Wilberg Mine Disaster**
Sunday, December 19, 4 p.m.
Emery High School
975 N. Center Street, Castle Dale, Utah
Speakers include: Cecil Roberts, UMWA president; Jim Matheson, Congressman; and others
Sponsored by UMWA District 22
For more information call (435) 637-2037

23 die in Kazakhstan mine blast

BY DOUG NELSON

A methane-gas explosion ripped through a coal mine in the Central Asian republic of Kazakhstan December 5, killing 23 miners.

The blast occurred in one of the mine’s tunnels 165 feet under ground as the night shift crew arrived for work at 3 a.m. Sunday morning.

Although collapsed rock initially trapped some of the miners, the survivors were evacuated by late Sunday morning, said Zhanibek Sadykanov, a spokesman for the administration in the region. Of the 64 survivors, three were injured, one of whom remains in serious condition, Sadykanov said.

Gazeta, an internet newspaper in Kazakhstan, reported that the explosion at the Shakhtinskaya mine was caused by a sudden, large discharge of methane gas.

The mine, located near the city of Karaganda, belongs to Kazakhstan’s steel giant Ispat-Karmet, which is part of LNM Holding NV, owned by Indian-born, London-

based magnate Lakshmi Mittal.

This year, at least eight other people have died in mining accidents in the central industrial region of Karaganda, where the mine is located.

According to various news reports, mine explosions causing heavy casualties are less common in the former Soviet republic of Kazakhstan than they are in Russia and Ukraine.

About 4,000 people have died in Ukrainian mines since the republic declared independence from the Soviet Union in 1991, the Bloomberg news service reported July 22.

In Russia, an explosion following a buildup of methane gas occurred last April in the Siberian Taizhina pit killing 47 of the 53 miners working underground at the time. According to the Independent Coal Miners’ Union, 68 workers were killed on the job in Russian mines in 2002, and 98 in 2001.

In the United States, the Mine Safety and Health Administration’s website reports 49 mine deaths so far this year.

SWP files for ballot spot in L.A. mayoral race

BY FRANK FORRESTAL

LOS ANGELES—The Socialist Workers Party has launched its campaign for mayor of Los Angeles, running Wendy Lyons for the post. Lyons, 59, is a kill-floor worker at the Farmer John meatpacking company and a member United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) Local 770.

Twenty five supporters of the SWP mayoral campaign here hit the streets November 27–30 to collect signatures to put Lyons on the ballot. On December 2, campaign supporters filed 915 signatures at the city clerk’s election division offices in downtown Los Angeles.

Two days later, the city clerk claimed that only 459 of those signatures were valid. SWP campaigners collected additional signatures and filed a supplemental petition to meet the requirement of 500 valid signatures.

Lyons joined the socialist movement in the 1960s, and has actively participated in the civil rights movement, the fight against the war in Vietnam, and the movement that won decriminalization of abortion. Lyons has campaigned against Washington’s war in Iraq and is a

defender of the Cuban Revolution.

While petitioning, Lyons found interest in the fact that the socialist campaign champions the need of workers to organize unions and strengthen those that already exist. Key to moving forward, Lyons told the *Militant*, “is strengthening the unions, especially by unifying ourselves at the workplace, on the shop floor, against the profit drive of the bosses, and organize them where they don’t already exist. We need to fight the bosses’ attacks, their speed-up, the worsening conditions both on and off the job that all workers face.”

Lyons also said that workers must act on the political plane, not just on the economic front. Workers need to build a labor party, based on the unions, that fights in the interests of workers and farmers 365 days a year and is independent of the capitalist class and its parties—whether Democrat, Republican, Libertarian, or Green, she said.

At the shift change at the Farmer John meatpacking plant on November 30, about 30 meat packers signed the nominating petition to put Lyons on the ballot. Norma and Norberto Martínez, two SWP campaign supporters, joined Lyons outside the plant to



Militant/Nick Castle

Wendy Lyons (left), Socialist Workers Party candidate for mayor of Los Angeles, petitions November 28 outside store in south central L.A. in effort to gain ballot status.

collect signatures and pass out leaflets about the campaign. Their 26-year-old son, Gonzalo Martínez, was shot 34 times by Downey police officers on Feb. 15, 2002. The family has organized several protests since then to demand justice for the killing of their son.

Two of Lyons’ co-workers also helped

circulate the petition, one joining a team in a working-class neighborhood and the other signing up friends and relatives.

Campaign supporters received a good response in the Black community, where the majority of signatures were gathered. One of the signers was a Black GI, who said he agreed with the call of the SWP campaign to get U.S. troops out of Iraq. He also signed up for an introductory subscription to the *Militant*.

At one of the shopping centers in a working-class district near the campaign headquarters, workers from Save-on, a drugstore chain, signed the petition. They reported that the UFCW has taken steps to begin organizing their workplace. Socialist campaigners got a similar response from grocery workers who had been on strike earlier in the year at Albertsons, a large supermarket chain. The long strike was settled last spring, and the approved contract contained deep union-weakening concessions.

Many students at Los Angeles Trade Tech, a college in downtown Los Angeles, eagerly signed up. Most of the students also work part-time and full-time jobs while going to school. One student invited Lyons to come and speak before her class. Two others bought copies of the Pathfinder pamphlet *The Working Class and the Transformation of Learning; The Fraud of Education Reform under Capitalism*.

“I will be talking to people and encourage them to support the campaign,” said Luz Cepeda, after hearing Lyons speak at a recent Militant Labor Forum here. Cepeda, a UFCW shop steward, also works on the kill floor at Farmer John.

Along with campaign supporters, Lyons protested her exclusion from a mayoral debate on December 2, which took place at the Museum of Tolerance. Only five of the candidates—all from the Democratic Party—were allowed in the debate.

Co-Op miners fight anti-union firings

Continued from Page 4

nearly 10 months because of union activity. Based on this ruling, the company made an unconditional offer to all the strikers to return to work. The settlement, signed by C.W. Mining and the UMWA, specifically states that C.W. Mining “will not threaten to attend meetings or bring immigration officials to meetings where you are engaged in union or other concerted activity.” It says that C.W. Mining will “not discharge, give oral or written warnings to, suspend, or otherwise discriminate against you because you engage in concerted... or other activity on behalf of the United Mine Workers of America.”

On December 2, the UMWA filed a petition with the NLRB urging the board to impose sanctions on C.W. Mining for its unlawful practices leading up to the scheduled December 16 union certification vote. The UMWA brief states: “The Employer has imposed onerous work conditions on, and largely isolated from other workers, the most well-known proponents of the UMWA organizing effort; wrongfully discharged at least one employee in retaliation for his concerted activity; and demanded that its full-time bargaining unit employees provide social security cards or other documents to establish they are legally authorized to work in this country, threatening them with discharge if they do not immediately produce such documentation—all to discourage the employees’ support for and activities on behalf of the UMWA.”

The union is demanding that the NLRB impose injunctive relief to halt further company attacks on workers at Co-Op so the election can go forward according to the earlier rulings of the labor board. Immigration lawyers have volunteered to work with the union to help turn back the illegal moves being taken by the company by threatening mass firings on December 9.

At the December 4 meeting at the UMWA hall in Price, retired miners pledged to join UMWA supporters at Co-Op to visit miners’ homes and solidify backing for the union. Of the six UMWA retirees who attended, five speak English and Spanish. The majority of the Co-Op miners were born in Mexico.

The miners said they are discussing with fellow workers why safety in the mines is one of the important reasons for voting UMWA. “The retired miners can help explain what it is like to work with a union,” said one of the Co-Op miners, “and what it means to have the right to control safety at work, to have a safety committee with our representatives on it.”

Mine owners challenge NLRB rulings

Meanwhile, the Kingstons, the capitalist family that owns the Co-Op Mine, made good on their pledge to challenge the workers’ right to vote for a union at their mine. On November 30, two days before the deadline, C.W. Mining attorney Carl Kingston and IAUWU lawyer Mark Hansen filed separate

briefs challenging the November 18 NLRB decision that no Kingston family member or other management personnel would be eligible to vote in the union election.

Both briefs challenged the core of the NLRB decision. The board ruled November 18 that “employees of C.W. Mining Company’s Co-Op Mine, who are related by blood or marriage to past or present members of the Davis County Cooperative Society, Inc. (a Kingston-family association), are excluded from the appropriate unit for the purposes of collective bargaining.”

These individuals, the board said, should be excluded from the voting because “they owe a strong allegiance to that organization and its leaders exercise control over members, as well as the employer... and lack the same economic interests as other employees and that they participate in an alternative economic system.”

Not a single officer of the company-run IAUWU—Chris Grundvig, president; Dana Jenkins, vice president; and Warren Pratt, secretary—is eligible to vote. The overwhelming majority of the 70 employees claimed by both the company and the IAUWU as dues-paying members of the IAUWU were also ruled ineligible to vote.

The C.W. Mining appeal states that the NLRB decision, “which excludes a majority of the work force that the parties stipulated would and historically has made up

the bargaining unit, is prejudicial to those excluded and is also prejudicial to those supporters of the incumbent union who are not excluded, as well as to the Employer, who has bargained in good faith with the incumbent union for over 20 years. The Decision turns on its head, the objective of the National Labor Relations Act, whose purpose is to enfranchise workers and allow them the right to exercise the right to determine their bargaining agent.”

Co-Op miners said they are urging everyone in the labor movement and others who support their union-organizing fight to write, call, or send a fax to MSHA and the NLRB to protest the unsafe conditions workers there are being forced to toil under and the moves by the company to harass, intimidate, and fire UMWA supporters at the mine. They are also urging that letters protesting the threat of the December 9 mass firings be faxed to mine manager Charles Reynolds.

Contact MSHA at 215 E. Main St., Price, Utah 84501; Tel: (435) 637-3051.

Letters to the labor board should be sent to NLRB Region 27 Director B. Allan Benson at 600 17th Street, 7th floor—North Tower, Denver, Colorado 80202-5433; Tel: (303) 844-3551; Fax: (303) 844-6249.

Letters to C.W. Mining can be faxed to Co-Op mine manager Charles Reynolds at (435) 687-5724.

One week, \$10,000 to go on Militant Fighting Fund

BY SAM MANUEL

One week before the December 15 deadline, just over \$20,000 has been collected for the Militant Fighting Fund. This leaves about \$10,000 to reach the goal.

Given the momentum built over the last week, the \$30,000 target can be surpassed. Pledges now exceed the goal by nearly \$1,600.

The fund was launched October 31 to help the *Militant* defend itself against a harassment lawsuit filed by the Kingstons, the owners of the Co-Op mine in Utah. Some readers have decided to contribute based on the *Militant’s* consistent coverage and support for this union-organizing fight.

“I’ve followed your coverage of the Co-Op mine struggle in Utah since its inception and find it entirely proper,” said Michael Ellsworth from Denver in a note he sent along with his donation. “If outfits like C.W. Mining are allowed to amass fiefdoms on western lands rich with unexploited coal deposits workers will all pay the price. I’d like to add my penny weight to the scale and see it tilt to a full blown victory in defense of your reporting.”

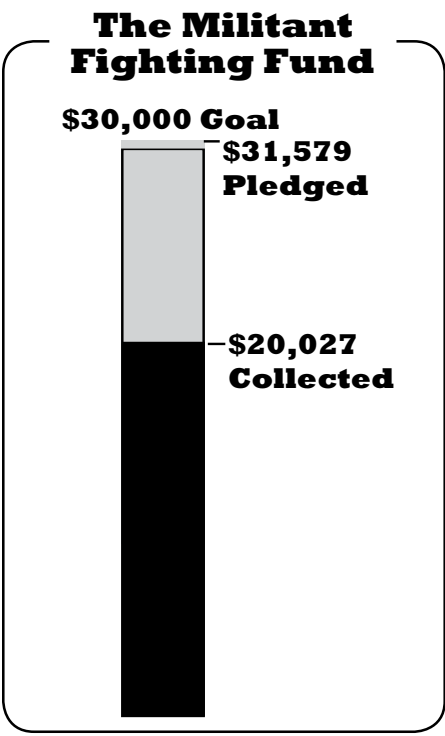
“I recognize the threat posed by the Kingstons’ harassment lawsuit and I have found that the *Militant* is far and away the best labor paper and the best radical paper,” said Loren Meyer from Montana, in letter that accompanied a fund contribution.

Partisans of the *Militant* in many cities have taken extra steps to ensure the goal is met in full and on time—mailing fundraising letters, setting goals for contributions in their areas, holding public events, and calling *Militant* readers in their cities. Distributors in New York said they have \$8,525 in pledges towards their goal of \$9,000, with more than half collected. They sent a fund appeal to 300 *Militant* readers and they are following up the letter with phone calls inviting people to a December 10 public forum on the fight to organize western coal and on raising money for the fund. Distributors in Birmingham, Alabama, have \$1,000 in pledges towards their goal of \$1,200 and are also holding a public event for the fund on the same date.

Distributors in 13 cities have set their own quotas that now total \$27,600. In many cases, pledges have surpassed these local goals. In Los Angeles, for example, distributors raised their goal to \$3,500 after pledges exceeded their initial target of \$3,000.

The *Militant* is among 120 defendants—including the UMWA, 17 current and former Co-Op miners, the Catholic Church in Utah, and the two main dailies in the state—in the lawsuit. These individuals and organizations are cited on allegations of “unlawful labor practices” and “defamation” of the Co-Op bosses. The fund will cover initial legal fees and costs for organizing a public defense

campaign. Contributions should be made out to the *Militant*, earmarked “Militant Fighting Fund,” and sent to: The Militant, 306 W. 37th Street, 10th floor, New York, N.Y. 10018.



More U.S. troops in Iraq

Continued from front page
home. According to the BBC, another battalion is on stand-by to replace these troops at the request of the U.S. military.

Two days earlier, Italy’s new foreign minister Gianfranco Fini said that Italian troops would remain in Iraq until they are no longer needed. On December 6, Japan’s defense minister Yoshinori Ohno returned from Iraq where he visited Japanese soldiers. Reports in the media indicated that Ohno’s visit was a prelude to Tokyo extending its troop deployment in Iraq beyond December 14, when they were scheduled to depart.

The U.S. Department of Defense said the increased number of troops in Iraq is needed to maximize stability in the country prior to elections currently scheduled for January 30. This will be the largest U.S. troop level in Iraq since an estimated 170,000 invaded the country in March 2003. Gen. Richard Myers, chairman of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, said the additional troops are necessary to “capitalize” on the take-over of Fallujah. His deputy director of operations added that the additional troops would “keep insurgents on the run... keep the pressure on.”

Wealthy Sunnis finance ‘insurgency’

The U.S. military said it uncovered a treasure trove of information in Fallujah about Baathists in their strongholds south of Baghdad, according to the French Press Agency. The information in documents and on computer files includes names of Baathist leaders and sources of financing, cellphone numbers, and names of family members of “foreign fighters” who were to be compensated in case of their deaths in battle.

Using that information, U.S. forces said they had captured 204 Baathists and uncovered 11 arms caches during Operation Plymouth Rock. According to the *New York Times*, one focus of U.S. operations in the area is the wealthy, landowning Janabi and Kargouli families that profited from close ties to the Hussein regime. Munitions factories, weapons research facilities, and battlefield testing grounds were reportedly located on their lands. The regions they controlled were recruiting grounds for Hussein’s elite Republican Guard.

A leading member of one of these fami-

lies, Abdullah al-Janabi, headed Fallujah’s main mosque and was effectively the leader of the Baathist forces in the city, according to the U.S. military. He escaped capture during the U.S. assault, along with Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, the Jordanian leader of Tahwid and Jihad. The latter is a group that has claimed responsibility for numerous bombings of Iraqi civilian and military targets and kidnappings and beheadings of hostages.

U.S. intelligence officers say that Mehdi al-Janabi, Abdullah’s brother, leads Baathist forces in Yusufiya, one of the towns in the “Triangle of Death.” Another of the Janabi brothers has been reportedly identified as a Baathist “financier” and is currently imprisoned in the Abu Ghraib jail.

Attacks on U.S. troops and forces of the Iraqi interim government continue to be centered in the Baathist strongholds in the majority Sunni regions to the south and north of Baghdad, and the Sunni Arab sections of the northern cities of Mosul and Kirkuk. According to media accounts, fighting is concentrated in four to six provinces, while most of Iraq’s 18 provinces remain relatively calm.

An article in the December 8 *Washington Post* said that Baathist leaders who have found sanctuary in Syria are channeling funds and other support to their people inside Iraq for armed attacks. “Based on information gathered during the recent fighting in Fallujah, Baghdad, and elsewhere in the Sunni Triangle,” the article said, “a handful of senior Iraqi Baathists operating in Syria are collecting money from private sources in Saudi Arabia and Europe and turning it over to the insurgency.... A U.S. military summary of operations in Fallujah noted recently that troops discovered a global positioning signal receiver in a bomb factory in the western part of the city that ‘contained waypoints originating in western Syria.’”

The U.S. government recently gave a list of those officials to Damascus, demanding they be arrested or expelled, the *Post* said. The Syrian government has denied that it is harboring any of these individuals.

Tight grip on Fallujah

The U.S. military maintains a tight grip on Fallujah, where it faced some of the



AFP/Getty Images/Odd Andersen

U.S. Marine in Yusufiah, central Iraq, December 6, as students return home from school. U.S. troops have conducted numerous raids in area known as “Triangle of Death.”

deadliest fighting in years, according to a December 2 report by the *Army Times*. The article said that 71 U.S. troops were killed there in November, significantly more than the previously reported figure of 51 deaths. The number of U.S. soldiers wounded was 623, also higher than the initial report of 425. According to the U.S. military, an estimated 1,500 Iraqis were killed and 1,200 captured in that battle.

Given the extent of the city’s devastation—with hundreds of buildings destroyed, most power lines downed, many roads punctured by bomb crates, and the water and sewage system damaged—U.S. forces occupying the city are not in a rush to allow civilians to return to Fallujah. The U.S. military is also taking time to sift through everything it has found in the organizing centers of Baathist resistance.

The U.S. military recently ordered the Iraqi Red Crescent (IRC) to leave the city, according to a December 6 report by ABC TV. The relief agency said it distributed food, water, and blankets to around 1,500 people. The U.S. military would interrogate military-age males who came to the IRC for aid and tested them for signs of gunpowder, according to the French Press Agency. The International Organization for Migration estimates that 210,600 of the city’s 250,000 residents fled before the U.S.-led assault. Many are currently staying

in make-shift shelters in neighboring towns and villages as night-time temperatures head towards freezing.

About 1,500 people demonstrated in the nearby village of Habaniya demanding they be allowed to return to their homes in Fallujah, reported Al-Jazeera TV on December 5. During the protest, the broadcast said, fliers were distributed in the name of Jaish Muhammad (Muhammad’s Army). The group’s leader, Moayed Ahmed Yassin, was captured in the assault on the city. Iraq’s interior minister has said that Yassin was a member of Hussein’s Republican Guard.

The December 5 *Boston Globe* said that the U.S. military is discussing a range of plans for when and how residents could return to Fallujah. The plans include corralling people into a “processing center” outside the city to compile a database of identities, including DNA and retina scans. Residents would be required to wear badges with their addresses at all times. Busses would ferry people around in the city. Cars, often used in bombing attacks, would be banned. All men would be required to work in military-style battalions in construction, waterworks, or clearing rubble.

Lt. Col. Dave Bellon, intelligence officer for the Marine unit expected to be based in downtown Fallujah, said previous attempts to win the trust of Iraqis telegraphed weakness. Questions like “What are your needs? What are your emotional needs?” are wrong, Bellon said. “All this Oprah [stuff]. They want to figure out who the dominant tribe is and say, ‘I’m with you.’ We need to be the benevolent, dominant tribe.”

Tokyo, Rome firm in U.S.-led coalition

In the middle of the offensive against Baathist forces, imperialist powers and most other governments in the U.S.-led “coalition of the willing” have indicated their commitment to keep their troops in Iraq for an indefinite period.

“We need to guarantee stability,” said Italian foreign minister Gianfranco Fini in a December 3 interview, explaining that Rome’s troops will stay in Iraq as long as needed. His remarks echoed statements that Italy’s prime minister, Silvio Berlusconi, made in November. Rome has 3,500 troops, based in the southern Iraqi city of Nasiriyah. This is the third-largest contingent in Iraq behind London’s 9,000 soldiers.

The government of south Korea is increasing its troop strength in Iraq to 3,600, according to the *Washington Times*, which would displace the Italian contingent as the third largest. At the end of November, Seoul decided to extend its troop deployment in northern Iraq for another year.

Japanese defense minister Yoshinori Ohno gave a positive assessment of the performance of Tokyo’s 550 troops, stationed in the southern city of Samawah. According to the *Financial Times*, Japanese prime minister Junichiro Koizumi is expected to bypass the Diet, Japan’s parliament, and seek cabinet approval to extend the deployment of Japanese troops. Replacement troops bound for Iraq are already on their way for a three-month tour of duty, reported the *New York Times*. Japanese troops had not been sent abroad since the end of World War II. The Japanese rulers are using the deployment in Iraq to strengthen their ability to use their military more effectively around the world.

Aside from U.S. troops, about 26,000

Continued on Page 11

Pro-Moscow forces lose ground in Ukraine

Continued from front page
backing Yushchenko—who is favored by Washington and its imperialist allies—began in Kiev, followed by counterprotests in Donetsk and eastern sections of Ukraine, where Yanukovich has his base of support.

A deal between the two candidates that helped pave the way for new elections was approved in parliament by a vote of 402 to 21. Pro-Moscow forces and others in parliament had sought a reduction in the powers of the presidency, in exchange for a shakeup in the leadership in the national electoral council, demanded by Yushchenko and his allies. President Leonid Kuchma immediately signed the bill into law, and pro-Yushchenko forces called for an end to the blockade of government buildings.

Washington and other imperialist powers have promoted the street protests in favor of Yushchenko. An editorial comment in the December 6 *Financial Times* of London, for example, crowed that “the orange revolt has empowered the nation” and that the supreme court decision to annul the election results and order a rerun “is a dramatic victory for democracy...liberty is growing by the day.” The editors of the *Times* and other big-business papers expect a Ukraine under Yushchenko to be more subservient to imperialist interests and offer more investment opportunities than the current regime.

At the same time, however, opposition in the European Union to Ukraine entering the EU is universal. “Brussels is already anticipating huge difficulties in absorbing Romania,” notes New York University professor Tony Judt in an Op-ed column in the December 5 *New York Times*. Romania is the least developed of the present candidate members to the EU, but is “less than half the size of Ukraine and much better off,” Judt says. The average monthly income in Ukraine is \$95.

The two contending candidates in Ukraine

come from the privileged bureaucratic caste that ruled the republic when it was part of the former Soviet Union. Yanukovich was an official in the coal industry in the eastern region and Yushchenko in the state banking system. They each served terms as prime minister during the presidency of Kuchma, who directed the regime in Kiev toward closer collaboration with Washington and other imperialist powers, while maintaining firm ties with Moscow.

The Russian government is trying to prevent the establishment of regimes in former Soviet republics on its borders that are more subservient to Washington and other imperialist powers. Substantial economic and military ties with Russia make Ukraine more important to Moscow than other former Soviet republics—from the Baltic Sea to the Caucasus.

Ukraine is dependent on Russia for 85 percent of its energy supplies, for example, and is a major transit route for Russia’s oil and natural gas exports. Ukraine generated nearly 18 percent of the Soviet Union’s gross national product—it is rich in iron ore and coal—and supplied much of the USSR’s heavy industry. The Black Sea port of Sevastopol is home to Russia’s southern naval fleet, and under an accord with Kiev, Moscow may station up to 25,000 troops at Sevastopol and its other bases on the Black Sea. (For more details see “Behind conflict in Ukraine” in last week’s *Militant*.)

Russia’s president Vladimir Putin, who along with Kuchma supported Yanukovich during the election campaign, ridiculed the idea of rerunning the election between the two candidates. On Russian state television December 2, Putin said, “What happens then? Will there have to be third, a fourth, a 25th round until one of the sides obtains the necessary result?”

The following day the Ukrainian supreme court annulled the November 21 elections,

based on what the court described as election law violations by pro-Yanukovich forces.

As the Kiev protests gathered momentum and imperialist pressure mounted over claims of electoral fraud, outgoing Ukrainian president Leonid Kuchma and his allies sought a way out of the crisis without relinquishing power. Kuchma agreed to a deal in which much of the power of the presidency would be turned over to parliament, in exchange for changing personnel at the electoral council. The council then announced a new run-off election between the two contenders for the presidency would be held December 26.

Following this setback, Putin charged Washington with seeking a “dictatorship of international affairs.” Russian’s Itar-Tass news agency quoted the Russian president saying, “Even if a dictatorship is wrapped up in a beautiful package of pseudo-democratic phraseology, it will not be in a position to solve systematic problems.”

“I am certain that the Supreme Court’s decision is a violation of the Ukrainian constitution, and that it was taken under pressure from the street. I have no other choice but to run again,” said Yanukovich.

The deal between the two competing wings of the ruling bureaucracy collapsed December 4. When pro-Yushchenko members of parliament argued that constitutional changes to presidential powers should only be discussed following the elections, the Socialist and Communist parties sided with pro-government forces in refusing to vote for bills to change election law and the composition of the electoral council.

Unable to resolve the conflict, parliament announced a 10-day adjournment. Four days later the overwhelming majority of deputies agreed to simultaneously institute the changes to the electoral law and constitutional limits to the powers of the president.

Bush's Canada visit

Continued from front page

impact of some of these blows. Many in ruling circles also aimed to promote their usefulness for the imperialist system as international “peacekeepers” and “democracy brokers.”

These hopes didn't pan out.

No wiggle room for Canada's rulers

Despite all the smiling, witty jokes, and backslapping between Bush and Canadian prime minister Paul Martin, no headway was made toward resolving the trade disputes over lumber and beef.

In May 2002 the U.S. Department of Commerce imposed a 29 percent duty on softwood lumber from Canada, charging that the Canadian government was unfairly subsidizing logging operations. A year later, Washington banned imports of all Canadian beef cattle after one Alberta cow tested positive for “mad cow” disease. The latter step was part of Washington's response to Ottawa's refusal to send troops to Iraq as part of the U.S.-led “coalition of the willing.”

These knockdowns have cost Canadian capitalists billions of dollars. Big business has made sure workers bear the brunt of the crisis. Workers in the wood and meat-packing industries have been hit by tens of thousands of layoffs across the country. Thousands of farmers have also been badly affected.

At the end of the first day of his visit, Bush announced that proposals to lift the ban on live cattle will continue to be “examined” by U.S. authorities, a process that could go to late April or early May.

In a nationally televised speech in Halifax, Nova Scotia, on December 1, Bush caught the Canadian rulers off-guard with Washington's demand that Canada come under the U.S. umbrella of so-called ballistic missile defense. After praising existing military cooperation between the two governments, Bush said: “I hope we'll also move forward on ballistic missile defense cooperation to protect the next generation of Canadians and Americans from the threats we know will arise.” Washington is building a land-, air-, and sea-based system

designed to shoot down incoming missiles. It already has components in Alaska. Its eventual deployment would give Washington nuclear first strike capacity.

This was a surprise to the Martin government. In the days leading up to the visit, Canadian officials had said they had assurances from their U.S. counterparts that Bush would make no such request, since this is a controversial issue in Canadian politics. For the U.S. rulers, however, the antiballistic missile shield is a key component of the current transformation of their world military machine. It is aimed, above all, at restoring Washington's ability to use its massive nuclear arsenal to blackmail governments such as Iran and north Korea in the semicolonial world.

Canada's rulers are divided over the issue.

On the one hand, they feel they have no choice but to join the Anti-Ballistic Missile System. As Defense Minister William Graham recently put it, “On continental defense matters, we should be really accommodating of the Americans and work with them as closely as we possibly can... Given the potential for negative consequences... I think we should do it.”

On the other, they know that such a move would ultimately put the Canadian military under U.S. command and undermine Ottawa's aspirations at playing some seemingly “independent” role as a minor imperialist power in the world.

A vocal minority of Liberal Party members in parliament oppose the U.S. project. In addition, the Liberals were forced to form a minority government after getting barely 37 percent in the last federal elections in June. For these reasons, the Martin government has avoided up to now taking a clear stance on backing the missile shield, while moving in that direction.

Last August, Ottawa signed an agreement with Washington expanding the decades-long North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD) military pact between the two countries from air surveillance to detection of incoming missiles. Both governments have signed agreements increasing the militarization



Reuters/Paul Darrow

December 1 anti-Bush protest in Halifax, Nova Scotia, had Canadian nationalist character. Demonstrators aimed their fire solely at Washington with slogans like “Canadians will not fight!”; “Canada Knows Better”; and “Imperial United States of America.”

of the U.S.-Canada border. These include the “Smart Borders” initiative allowing U.S. customs officers to inspect trucks on the Canadian side of the border.

The Conservative Party, the official opposition in the national parliament, supports joining missile defense. The social-democratic New Democratic Party and the pro-Quebec sovereignty Bloc Quebecois oppose it. Opinion polls indicate that a majority of the population currently rejects the U.S. initiative.

In this context, Bush publicly urging the Canadian government to join the Anti-Ballistic Missile System came as a warning that Ottawa should get its act together and lead the necessary political battle around the issue.

Towards a new ‘Canadian doctrine’?

“Canada's leadership is helping to build a better world,” Bush said in Halifax. It was a theme that ran through his speech. He praised Ottawa's military participation over the last decade in imperialist interventions in Bosnia, Kosova, Haiti, Afghanistan, the Mid-

dle East, Cyprus, Sudan, and the Congo.

“Just two weeks ago,” Bush continued, “NATO countries showed their esteem for your military by electing General Ray Henault as Chairman of NATO's Military Committee.”

Over the last several months, and especially in recent weeks, the Martin government has taken several initiatives and issued statements aimed at defining what some observers have dubbed a new “Canadian doctrine.” Like a number of other imperialist powers, Canadian rulers have come to accept that the only future for their military is as a specialized partner of the transformed U.S. war machine.

Under this “new doctrine,” Ottawa aims to play a more aggressive role in rebuilding so-called democratic institutions in what imperialists call “failed nations” and give more open support to imperialist interventions to “stabilize” these countries. As Martin put it May 10 in a speech in Montreal, “Failed states more often than not require military intervention in order to ensure stability.”

This represents a marked shift from Ottawa's previous specialty as imperialist “peacekeeper” under the banner of the United Nations for over half a century.

In the two weeks leading up to Bush's visit, Martin promoted his new doctrine in widely publicized trips to Haiti, Chile, Brazil, Burkina Faso, and Sudan.

In the same period, government officials repeatedly offered Canada's “expertise” in monitoring elections in Palestine, Ukraine, and Iraq.

Anti-Bush, pro-Canada protests

A number of demonstrations were organized to coincide with the visit by Bush. The largest one took place in Ottawa, drawing 6,000 to 10,000 people, according to estimates by the police and organizers. An action in Halifax drew 4,000. Smaller protests took place in various other cities. The turn out was much smaller than what organizers had anticipated.

While the actions opposed what organizers called the “Bush Agenda”—the war in Iraq and Anti-Ballistic Missile System—protesters remained silent about Ottawa's imperialist interventions abroad and the rulers' offensive at home against workers and farmers.

Bhopal: Thousands march on 20th anniversary of U.S. chemical plant leak that killed over 13,000

BY MICHAEL ITALIE

Thousands of protesters took to the streets of Bhopal in central India to mark the 20th anniversary of the chemical disaster at a Union Carbide pesticide plant that killed nearly 3,000 people Dec. 3, 1984. The residents of the city were killed by a 40-ton leak of poisonous methyl isocyanate gas from an underground storage tank.

When the gas erupted, the city became a human river of blinded and suffocating people. Many died in their tracks, while others were crushed by the crowds trying to escape the deadly fumes.

Press coverage at the time of the catastrophe reported “crops of turnips and other vegetables withered and covered with a fine white film. Dead and grotesquely bloated water buffalos lay in the fields and atop one another in pens; pools of water were discolored by the drifting poisonous cloud.”

At least 10,000 people have died since the catastrophe from gas-related illnesses such as lung cancer, kidney failure, and liver disease. The health of more than 500,000 has been effected.

Marchers made their way through the main streets of Bhopal before holding a public meeting outside the abandoned plant, the Associated Press reported. “We will burn effigies of Union Carbide and Dow Chemical to voice our protest. These two companies have betrayed the victims of Bhopal,” said Rashida Bee, who heads a group of women survivors of the disaster. “Lethal chemicals are still lying around at the plant, some in the open. Every time it rains these poisonous chemicals are leaked into the soil, affecting groundwater resources in the area.”

U.S. chemical giant Union Carbide agreed to a \$470 million settlement with the Indian government in 1989. The



AFP/Getty Images/Emmanuel Dunand

Thousands march December 2 in Bhopal, India, on 20th anniversary of spill at Union Carbide pesticide plant that killed over 13,000 people and left a half-million injured.

company was then bought up by Dow Chemical in 2001. To this day the owners accept no responsibility for the deadly gas leak, claiming “only an employee with the appropriate skills and knowledge of the site could have tampered with the tank.” Media commentators at the time arrogantly asserted that the problem was Indian “management culture” and a low level of technical competence on the part of Indian workers.

To bolster this argument, Union Carbide asserted in 1984 that its plant in Institute, West Virginia, was of the same design as the Bhopal plant and has never had a major accident. That is false. As a front-page edi-

torial in the Dec. 21, 1984, *Militant* pointed out, “In 1954, the entire town of Institute had to be evacuated because a gas tanker blew up at Union Carbide's plant. In 1978 more than 100 Union Carbide workers were sent to the hospital when they were exposed to a chemical leak at the plant.”

Union leaders at the Bhopal plant at the time of the disaster charged the company with “total apathy and negligence.” They said they had warned the company many times that working conditions in the plant had to be improved. The bosses ignored the warnings of the Indian workers, as they have many of the safety demands of workers at their U.S. plants.

Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism

by V.I. Lenin

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1936: How workers resisted fascists in Barcelona

Below is an excerpt from *Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Spain*, one of Pathfinder's Books of the Month for December. It describes the revolutionary response of workers and peasants in Spain to meet the fascist uprising led by Gen. Francisco Franco, who took command of the Spanish military garrison in occupied Morocco on July 17, 1936. Beginning in Barcelona, workers set up barricades and stormed military barracks, often winning over the soldiers. The revolutionary potential of the workers and peasants, however, was sapped by the counterrevolutionary policies of

BOOKS OF THE MONTH

the Stalinist leadership of the Communist Party of Spain and the refusal of the anarchist and centrist forces to lead the working class and peasant masses to establish a government of the exploited majority. Copyright © 1936 by Pathfinder Press. Reprinted by permission.

BY FELIX MORROW

The Barcelona proletariat prevented the capitulation of the republic to the fas-



Workers mobilize in Spain in 1936 to fight fascist forces led by Gen. Francisco Franco. Misleadership by Stalinists, anarchists, centrists led to defeat of Spanish revolution.

cists. On July 19, almost barehanded, they stormed the first barracks successfully. By 2 P.M. the next day they were masters of Barcelona.

It was not accidental that the honor of initiating the armed struggle against fascism belongs to the Barcelona proletariat. Chief seaport and industrial center of Spain, concentrating in it and the surrounding industrial towns of Catalonia nearly half the industrial proletariat of Spain, Barcelona has always been the revolutionary vanguard. The parliamentary reformism of the socialist-led UGT had never found a foothold there. The united socialist and Stalinist parties (the PSUC) had fewer members on July 19 than the POUM. The workers were almost wholly organized in the CNT, whose suffering and persecution under both the monarchy and republic had imbued its masses with a militant anti-capitalist tradition, although its anarchist philosophy gave it no systematic direction. But, before this philosophy was to reveal its tragic inadequacy, the CNT reached historic heights in its successful struggle against the forces of General Goded.

As in Madrid, the Catalan government refused to arm the workers. CNT and POUM emissaries, demanding arms, were smilingly informed they could pick up those dropped by wounded Assault Guards.

But CNT and POUM workers during the afternoon of the 18th were raiding sporting goods stores for rifles, construction jobs for sticks of dynamite, fascist homes for concealed weapons. With the aid of a few friendly Assault Guards, they had seized a few racks of government rifles. (The revolutionary workers had painstakingly gathered a few guns and pistols since 1934.) That—and as many autos as they could find—was all the workers had when, at five o'clock on the morning of the 19th, the fascist officers began to lead detachments from the barracks.

Isolated engagements before paving-stone barricades led to a general engagement in the afternoon. And here political weapons more than made up for the superior armament of the fascists. Heroic workers stepped forward from the lines to call upon the soldiers to learn why they were shooting down their fellow toilers. They fell under rifle and machine-gun fire, but others took their place. Here and there a soldier began shooting wide. Soon bolder ones turned on their officers. Some nameless military genius—perhaps he died then—seized the moment and the mass of workers abandoned their prone positions and surged forward. The first barracks were taken. General Goded was captured that afternoon. With arms from the arsenals the workers cleaned up Barcelona.

Within a few days, all Catalonia was in their hands.

Simultaneously the Madrid proletariat was mobilizing. The left socialists distributed their scant store of arms, saved from October, 1934. Barricades went up on key streets and around the Montaña barracks. Workers' groups were looking for reactionary leaders. At dawn of the 19th the first militia patrols took their places. At midnight the first shots were exchanged with the barracks. But it was not until the next day, when the great news came from Barcelona, that the barracks were stormed.

Valencia, too, was soon saved from the fascists. Refused arms by the governor appointed by Azaña, the workers prepared to face the troops with barricades, cobblestones and kitchen knives—until their comrades within the garrison shot the officers and gave arms to the workers.

The Asturian miners, fighters of the Commune of October, 1934, outfitted a column of five thousand dynamiters for a march on Madrid. It arrived there on the 20th, just after the barracks had been taken, and took up guard duty in the streets.

In Málaga, strategic port opposite Morocco, the ingenious workers, unarmed at first, had surrounded the reactionary garrison with a wall of gasoline-fired houses and barricades.

In a word, without so much as by-your-leave to the government, the proletariat had begun a war to the death against the fascists. The initiative had passed out of the hands of the republican bourgeoisie.

Most of the army was with the fascists. It must be confronted by a new army. Every workers' organization proceeded to organize militia regiments, equip them, and send them to the front. The government had no direct contact with the workers' militia. The organizations presented their requisitions and payrolls to the government, which handed over supplies and funds which the organizations distributed to the militias. Such officers as remained in the Loyalist camp were assigned as "technicians" to the militias. Their military proposals were transmitted to the militiamen through the worker officers. Those Civil and Assault Guards still adhering to the government soon disappeared from the streets. In the prevailing atmosphere the government was compelled to send them to the front. Their police duties were taken over by worker-police and militiamen.

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Here's a campaign promise— The temporary Iraq regime says it will help to rebuild Fallujah, the city ravaged by U.S. bombs. The



Harry Ring

officials said they're planning massive compensation to rebuild the thousands of homes reduced to rubble. They also alleged they're preparing to care for the 300,000 refugees who fled the carnage.

Slow's the word—Managers of the Pennsylvania Turnpike are struggling to replace 2,000 striking toll collectors plus maintenance and office workers. They're fighting for better job security, back wages, and improved benefits. The Turnpike managers said "many" drivers are providing exact change to speed things up. Guess they don't have 2,000 managers.

Crisis of overproduction?—In the recent elections, Los Angeles county voters rejected an amendment to hike the sales tax. It was sponsored by sheriff Lee Bacca to put more deputies and cops on the street. Since then it was disclosed that to cut costs in the past two and

a half years, a tad under 120,000 inmates were released early from the overcrowded California jails, some after a day or two. Here's an alternative solution: Slash the number of arrests by mass layoffs of cops.

Merely free enterprise—A Barbourville, Kentucky, jail worker pleaded guilty to helping inmates escape by selling them saw blades.

In Scotland, a costly puff—Folks who smoke in public places will be hit with fines ranging in the thousands of dollars. Operators of public places failing to strictly enforce the ban will also face similar punishment.

Cold capitalism—Rhode Island utilities say up to 400 homes in the state will not have gas or electricity service this winter.

Hooking the child—We try to avoid numbers except the essential and awesome. Here are some that are awesome. Peddlers of children's items find it a good investment to invest \$15 million a year for direct mail and other advertising for children—some still in diapers. A list broker on one website claims to have a children's list of 20 million. A list of 1,000 for \$70.

That's what it's all about—"Cash registers are ringing in the season"—News headline.

Note to creationists—"Developing a contraceptive for men may involve promoting an immune reaction to a protein that is produced in the male reproductive system. The method worked on male monkeys and could one day complement condoms and vasectomies."—News item.

Your help, please—In good part, this column depends on clippings from readers. But since turkey time, the mail has fallen off. You can help turn it around. Send items to: Great Society, Pathfinder Books, 4229 S. Central Ave., Los Angeles, CA 90011. Or, e-mail: Thegreatsociety@sbcglobal.net

Saharawis step up protests against Moroccan occupation

BY PAUL PEDERSON

In recent months a number of protests have been organized by Saharawis living in southern Morocco and Moroccan-occupied Western Sahara. These protests, against the daily abuses suffered by Saharawis and others under the rule of Morocco's monarchy, have been fueled by the refusal of the Moroccan king to proceed with a referendum on independence for this northwest African nation.

The people of Western Sahara have long fought for their national independence, first against Spanish colonial rule, and today against the Moroccan regime's occupation troops.

On November 19, about 90 Saharawi students began a sit-in in a central square in the town of Assa, southern Morocco, according to a report sent to the *Militant* by the protest's organizers. The students are demanding jobs and an end to the repressive "security policies" of the Moroccan regime. Over the next several days, large marches in solidarity with the students were held through the town, as the Moroccan army sent a detachment of hundreds of soldiers in a show of force. The provincial governor threatened to take "serious measures" if the students didn't halt the protest, the organizers reported.

In an act of solidarity with the students in Assa, students and graduates reportedly protested November 21 in three towns inside occupied Western Sahara, demanding jobs and the right to travel to southern Moroccan towns for schooling.

Assa is about 75 miles north of the border of Western Sahara. It has a large Saharawi population, and is home to a well-known Saharawi independence fighter, Ali Salem

Tamek. Tamek was released from his third stint in Morocco's dungeons last January. After a broad campaign by his defenders, including public demonstrations, Tamek recently won the right to a passport to travel out of the country, which had previously been denied by the Moroccan authorities.

On September 22 a large demonstration took place in Assa marking the fifth anniversary of a 1999 rebellion that was repressed bloodily by the Moroccan authorities. According to Afrol, a Norwegian-based press agency that provides news on Africa, some 3,000 people joined the march holding signs with slogans saying "Hey king! Hey donkey! The Sahara is for the rebels!" and "We asked for freedom—They sent us more police agents."

On the same day, protests occurred in the Western Saharan cities of Smara and El Aaiun, the capital.

Saharawis and others inside Morocco who engage in protests have suffered brutal government repression under a spate of laws designed to preserve the autocratic government. Over the last several years, however, the regime has come under pressure from Washington, which is seeking to supplant Paris's influence in that country, to institute "democratic" reforms in order to clean up its image and increase stability there.

In January a number of Saharawi prisoners were released along with other opponents of the monarch—including a prominent Moroccan editor who was arrested for publishing an interview supporting independence for Western Sahara. In June, the Moroccan government agreed to allow exchanges between Saharawis in the refugee camps and the occupied territories, many seeing family for the first time since the mid-1970s.



Unemployed Saharawi university students demonstrate for jobs and against repressive laws November 19, in Assa, southern Morocco.

While dozens of political prisoners remain in Moroccan jails and acts of protest still meet with repression, these modest openings have increased the political space and confidence among Saharawis living under Moroccan occupation to advance their struggle and to establish broader connections with the rebels in the refugee camps.

A Reuters reporter noted in an October 28 dispatch from the occupied territories, "The simple fact is that Sahrawi dreams of independence have not faded. Both in Laayoune [El Aaiun] and in the far-off refugee camps, there is talk of taking up arms again for what everyone calls The Cause."

— 25 AND 50 YEARS AGO —



December 23, 1979

The eyes of the world are on Iran. Watching television and reading the daily papers here in the United States you would have to conclude the Iranian people have gone crazy. They are portrayed as mobs of religious fanatics under the spell of what the New York *Daily News* calls the "Holy Madman."

But the picture being presented to the American people is false. To understand what is happening in Iran, you have to imagine how the workers of Europe would have felt about any government that shielded Hitler after World War II.

Consider what the people of Iran went through to free themselves of the shah.

During the six month of August 1978 to February 1979, waves of mass protest engulfed Iran. Millions came out in demonstration after demonstration, strike after strike.

Unarmed demonstrators stood up to tanks, machine guns, and even helicopter gunships. Tens of thousands were mowed down. But in the end the power of the masses was stronger than the shah's secret police and torture chambers, stronger than his massive army and its U.S.-supplied arsenal.

The old regime finally crumbled under the blows of a mass uprising, as decisive sections of the ranks of the armed forces joined the side of the people.

The top priority of all those in this country and around the world who support the aspirations of the Iranian people must be to expose Washington's lies about Iran and to campaign against Carter's ominous preparations for war.



December 20, 1954

LONDON, Dec. 7—Under the banner of a witch hunt against Trotskyists, the right-wing leadership has begun a purge among the rank-and-file of the British Labor Party. Its aim is to remove the most advanced of left-wing forces—the supporters of Socialist Outlook, left-wing weekly banned by the leadership which suspended publication early in October.

At its last meeting, the National Executive Committee of the Labor Party expelled six Labor Party members, three of whom are members of the Management committee of the Labor Publishing Society, which published *Socialist Outlook*. These three are also labor councilors.

Further expulsions have evidently been planned. To carry out this purge, right-wing members of the N.E.C. have set up a new purge machinery—a committee of enquiry consisting of two right-wing leaders plus two paid officials of the party. The committee has operated behind the backs of the party and was denounced by Nov. 26 *Tribune*, the Bevanite weekly.

In his weekly column, the editor of the *Tribune* acidly commented on the activities of Miss Alice Bacon M.P., witch-hunter in chief, who was "chairman of the traveling tribunal searching out Trotskyites in the constituency Labor Parties." Miss Bacon is notorious as a loyal supporter of Herbert Morrison, the right-wing machine politician. She heralded the witch hunt against Trotskyism in her speech at the last Labor Party Conference, when she defended the ban on *Socialist Outlook* on behalf of the Labor Party N.E.C.

UK farmers resist milk price cuts, intimidation by milk distributors

BY PETE CLIFFORD

GRANGEMOUTH, Scotland—Seventy farmers from across Scotland blockaded the ASDA supermarket distribution center here November 28 to protest recent cuts in the price of milk they sell to distribution companies. For several hours the farmers' action prevented ASDA trucks from leaving the depot to make their deliveries.

"We're here to press our case on the price cuts and also because we won't be bullied," said one of the protesters. The farmers were acting in defiance of legal threats made by ASDA after a round of pickets throughout England November 18 (see "UK farmers protest price cuts from milk distributor" in December 7 *Militant*). According to the *Financial Times*, ASDA wrote November 19 to members of Farmers for Action (FFA), which has spearheaded the protests, indicating it would seek an injunction to stop the pickets as well as sue the group for legal costs and compensation.

Many who joined the latest protest were further angered by ASDA having put a banner outside the depot reading: "0.50 pence increase in the bag—ASDA doing its bit for British farming." ASDA, which is owned by Wal-Mart, the world's largest retailer, has recently cut from three to one its distribution suppliers. Following this step, ASDA's remaining supplier, a milk processor company called Arla, imposed a 0.50 pence a liter cut on farmers, except to those whose

milk goes exclusively to ASDA.

Responding to ASDA's claim that it was trying to help farmers, David Handley, spokesman for FFA, said, "There's an impression given that supermarkets are looking after the farmer and the consumer, but it's a myth. They are profiteering on the backs of both of us."

"We only get 17p a liter," said John Cummings, a Stranraer dairy farmer, "yet it sells in the supermarket for 50p." Commenting on the legal threats, Cummings said, "We want to warn ASDA that we won't go away. We can't afford not to fight."

In fact, the price cuts for dairy farmers are devastating many. Government figures reveal farmers receive between 17.13p and 19.37p a liter of milk. To break even, however, farmers need on average 20p, and as high as 23p if unpaid family labor is taken into account. According to the *Financial Times*, over the 12 months leading up to October, 1,072 dairy farmers left the industry in England and Wales—6 percent of the producers, or almost three a day.

Following the price cuts, Robert Wisemen Dairies, the chief rival to ASDA's supplier Arla, also cut its price to farmers by 0.5p a liter on December 1.

Responding to this move, FFA's Handley said the cut was indefensible and could lead to further action against Wiseman and its main customer, the supermarket chain Tesco.

Free the Cuban Five!

The conditions faced by Gerardo Hernández and the other four Cuban revolutionaries serving draconian sentences in U.S. prisons say as much about the degrading nature of the prison system in the United States as they do about Washington’s hatred for the Cuban Revolution. The lockdown imposed by the authorities at the Victorville maximum security prison in Adelanto, California, to where Hernández was recently transferred, spotlights the dehumanizing character of U.S. prisons.

Although the lockdown at Victorville does not appear to target Hernández alone, it is no accident that he was transferred to this new penitentiary four months ago. Prison authorities made sure to place him under the strictest conditions of incarceration because he is one of the Cuban Five.

The five men—Gerardo Hernández, René González, Ramón Labañino, Antonio Guerrero, and Fernando González—have been locked up for six years on frame-up charges of conspiracy to commit espionage for the government of Cuba and, in the case of Gerardo, conspiracy to commit murder. Washington uses these smears to turn the truth on its head and present the Cuban Revolution as a danger to U.S. “security.”

In fact, the five revolutionaries were in the United States on an internationalist mission to defend the sovereignty of their country and the Cuban Revolution. They were gathering information on the activities of counterrevolutionary groups in Florida that have carried out violent attacks on Cuba from U.S. soil. Washington allows these groups to operate with impunity, often granting them funding, training, and other forms of aid.

Because the U.S. government could not prove that Hernández and his comrades committed any illegal acts, or find any “secret” documents in their possession, it framed them up on phony “conspiracy” charges. The five were handed sentences ranging from 15 years to a double life term, which Hernández received.

Hell-bent on breaking their will as revolutionary fighters, Washington has separated the men in five prisons thousands of miles apart from each other, subjected them to solitary confinement, and denied

visas to family members who have tried to travel from Cuba to visit them.

All five men are examples of revolutionaries who have devoted their lives, not only to the defense of Cuba, but to the worldwide fight for national liberation and socialism. Prior to coming to the U.S., three of the five carried out missions of international solidarity in Angola. There, tens of thousands of Cuban volunteers fought shoulder to shoulder with Angolan freedom fighters and helped crush the invasion of that African country by the South African apartheid regime in the 1970s and ’80s.

Behind prison walls the last six years, the Cuban Five have also conducted themselves as exemplary revolutionists with a keen interest in the U.S. class struggle. They have been passing on to fellow inmates revolutionary literature they get their hands on and study. They have received messages of support from and extended their solidarity to workers involved in union-organizing and other struggles in the United States. A year ago, René González wrote a letter to the *Progressive* magazine responding to the anti-Cuba “Statement Protesting Repression in Cuba” signed by Noam Chomsky, Howard Zinn, Cornell West, and others (see Oct. 6, 2003, *Militant*).

The U.S. rulers’ fear of workers’ resistance to their system of war, racism, class exploitation, and imperialist domination drives them to devise more and more brutal methods to try to strip working people of our humanity. The torture Washington has meted out to its captives from Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, to Abu Ghraib in Iraq mirrors the lockdowns, solitary confinement, and physical abuse spread throughout the prison system inside the United States.

The Cuban Five demonstrate the kind of tenacity and discipline needed to take on this barbarous, profit-driven system and win.

Working people should demand:

End the lockdown at the Victorville prison!

Grant visas to the relatives of the five to visit their loved ones in jail!

Throw out the frame-up convictions! Free the Cuban Five!

Cuban militant in prison lockdown

Continued from Page 3

commit espionage. Hernández was handed the harshest sentence—two consecutive life terms—based on those charges plus the allegation of conspiracy to commit murder.

Aiming to isolate them from supporters and each other, U.S. officials have placed the five men in separate jails across the country. On Feb. 28, 2003, all five were thrown into solitary confinement by order of the Department of Justice, which argued that the support they were receiving and the limited visits they were allowed posed a “national security risk.” They were released from the “hole” a month later

Saudi Arabia: attack on U.S. consulate

Continued from front page

trying to burnish its image with Washington by taking action against radical “Islamic” groups.

Washington has been pressing the Saudi rulers to crack down on al-Qaeda and similar groups that have a base of support in the kingdom, including among a section of the royal family. At the same time, Washington has demanded that Riyadh shut down Islamic religious schools that it says foment the campaign of armed attacks.

While the bulk of the recent attacks have been aimed at citizens of the United States, Britain, and other imperialist powers, the ultimate goal of these groups is to replace the monarchy in Riyadh with an “Islamic state” that will exercise control over the holy city of Mecca. The ruling House of Saud has long relied on its imperialist protectors to shield it from opposition, including al-Qaeda, whose central figure, Osama bin Laden, is a member of the Saudi aristocracy.

In the spring of 2003, the Pentagon removed all but 400 of the 5,000 troops it had stationed in Saudi Arabia. Washington’s clear message was that the survival of the House of Saud depended on purging its ranks of sympathizers with anti-American groups and joining Washington unstintingly in the “war on terror.”

Since then, voices within the Saudi ruling class have argued for this course. In a June 1 editorial in the Saudi daily *al Watan*, Prince Bandar bin Sultan, the Saudi ambassador to the United States and an influential figure in the Saudi ruling family, called for a “jihad” against terrorism. “If we deal [with them] hesitantly, in hope that [the terrorists] are Muslim youths who have been misled...in hope that they will come to their senses,” he argued, “we

following an international protest campaign.

In March of this year, the five appealed their convictions at a hearing in Miami of the 11th Circuit Court of Appeals, which has yet to rule.

The U.S. government continues to maintain its inhumane refusal to grant visas to Adriana Pérez and to Olga Salanueva, the wife of René González, to come to the United States from Cuba to visit their husbands. Washington claims the entry of Salanueva and Pérez to this country to visit their jailed husbands, whom they have not seen in six years, would be a threat to U.S. “national security.”

will lose this war...and enter a dark world whose end only Allah knows.”

“Enough blaming others when the reason lies within our own ranks! Enough demagoguery at this critical stage in our history!” Bandar continued, in a clear reference to the anti-U.S. posture often adopted by the Saudi rulers. “We must...kill those who spread corruption in the land.... If we do not declare a general mobilization—we will lose this war on terrorism.”

There is evidence that Riyadh is following Bandar’s advice. According to the *Christian Science Monitor*, since May “at least three successive leaders of Al Qaeda inside the country have been killed. Last June, Prince Turki al-Faisal, former head of Saudi intelligence and the current ambassador in London, told Jane’s Intelligence Review that Al Qaeda was severely disrupted inside the country. ‘Only one Al Qaeda cell remains operational,’ he said. ‘Even now, it’s in the process of being dismantled.’”

One year ago, the Saudi government published a list of 26 top al-Qaeda operatives in the country. Since that time, 17 of the 26 have been captured or killed. According to al-Faisal, Saudi forces have arrested about 1,000 people in the course of this crackdown. “It’s clear al-Qaeda has been losing,” Abdelaziz al-Qassim, a cleric in Riyadh, told the *Financial Times*. “By striking a target that’s even better protected than the royals’ palaces it’s trying to improve its image.”

U.S. president George Bush gave a press conference in Washington the day of the attack alongside Iraqi interim president Ghazi Al-Yawar. Bush thanked the Saudi government “for responding as quickly as they did.”

Bill boosts U.S. spying

Continued from front page

press conference announcing his support for the bill, Hunter emphasized that under the new version “the chain of command” on the battlefield would stay as is.

Media reports indicated that U.S. president George Bush, who had given lukewarm support for the earlier version, had pressed to get the latest compromise passed in order to move on to his plans to “reform” Social Security and the tax code. Bush promised to sign the bill into law.

The bill approved December 8 was drafted largely as a result of the conclusions of the 9/11 bipartisan commission hearings that were held earlier this year. Democrats, in particular, used the hearings to paint themselves as the foremost champions of “homeland defense” and advance their charges that “intelligence failures” under the Bush administration were the reason the government was unable to prevent the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon. The Democratic Party widely used such charges to boost John Kerry’s unsuccessful presidential bid.

“There’s a lot in this bill that hasn’t been much talked about that I hope will receive attention in the days ahead,” said Senator Joseph Lieberman, a Democrat from Connecticut, at a December 7 press conference kicked off by Sen. Susan Collins, Republican from Maine. The two are the main sponsors of the bill. “We do substantial work in improving our border security, our transportation security, information sharing [between spy agencies and police], standardized drivers’ licenses, which will help eliminate fraud from the identification process.”

H.R. 10 creates a Director of National Intelligence (DNI) and National Counterterrorism Center to centralize spying operations. The DNI will have the authority to set priorities for the CIA and 14 other spy agencies, including several at the Department of Defense.

Immigrants are a special target of Washington’s “war on terrorism.” The new law includes several measures aimed at workers emigrating to the United States. In each of the next five years there will be an increase of 2,000 border patrol cops and 800 customs agents. To accommodate the expected increase in working people arrested by the beefed-up border patrol, the bill provides for an additional 8,000 spots each year to incarcerate those picked up as “terrorists” or for alleged immigration law violations.

Under provisions of the bill, citizens may be stripped of their citizenship and deported from the United States if they are deemed to have received “military-type” training by a “terrorist” group. It also expands the definition of “material support” to make it easier to prosecute individuals charged with aiding “terrorists.”

The bill will also require sharing of information between federal, state, and local police forces, as well as private cops. In the December 7 Collins/Lieberman press conference, Sen. Robert Graham of Florida said that “secrecy is for losers” in explaining why he supported reclassification of materials to increase collaboration between spy and cop agencies.

Fake ‘Civil Liberties Board’

To answer those who criticize the bill for its expansion of government wiretapping authority and other restrictions on democratic rights, the sponsors of the bill included a provision to establish a Privacy and Civil Liberties Board to review government policies and practices on these issues. The American Civil Liberties Union said in a statement that the board “risks becoming the proverbial fox guarding the hen house—the board would be appointed by the president, serve at his pleasure and have no subpoena power.”

Bush pressed for quick passage of H.R. 10 in a December 6 letter to Congress, in order to “achieve the unity of purpose needed to win the global war on terrorism.” He aimed to win the backing of Republicans who opposed the earlier version by insisting that the bill “respects the chain of command within departments and agencies, including the Department of Defense, so as to ensure that all of the warfighters’ needs will be met.”

Lieberman made the same point at his press conference the following day. “This bill preserves total Defense Department control over tactical military intelligence, the kind that warfighters must depend on.”

Hunter, who opposed the earlier version of the bill, was convinced that the new wording included “statutory direction to the president to write regulations on an ongoing basis that respect the chain of command.”

The passage of this legislation complements the U.S. rulers’ efforts to reorganize the U.S. military posture worldwide toward smaller, more agile, and more lethal brigades that can move quickly around the globe using bases closer to the theaters of conflict. Washington has been shifting the focus of its spy operations to direct infiltration of adversaries and real-time battlefield intelligence—like what U.S. troops used in their recent assault on Fallujah, where they called in air strikes and artillery bombardment as they pinpointed the positions of Baathist forces during battle.

For the U.S. rulers this also requires a transferring of paramilitary operations from the CIA to the Pentagon.

“These days, the military is up to its eyeballs in covert operations, and the Green Berets, the SEALs, and Delta Force are very good indeed,” said Jack Kelly in a *Pittsburgh Gazette* column titled, “Spies should spy, fighters should fight.” In fact, he said, because of the step-up in Special Forces operations, Washington should consider giving the Defense Department more spying responsibilities. “The military is both a much larger producer and consumer of intelligence than ever before, and the war on terror has blurred what we once thought were bright lines separating war fighting, intelligence, and law enforcement.” The Pentagon currently controls roughly 80 percent of the \$40 billion budget for U.S. government spying operations.

The sponsors of the bill dropped from the final version a number of measures that target immigrants. These included a ban on the use of *matricula* consular cards—such as those issued by the Mexican government—for use as identification, and a federal prohibition of issuing drivers’ licenses to undocumented workers, which is currently allowed in 11 states.

Senator Collins described these proposals as “poison pills” that had to be discarded to assure the bill’s passage.

“Border security and immigration reform are vital components to our homeland security efforts, so why are they not included in this legislation?” Rep. James Sensenbrenner asked December 6. The Republican from Wisconsin who heads the House Judiciary Committee opposed the original bill and the new version because of the removal of these provisions that would have further undermined the rights of immigrant workers.

At her press conference next day, Collins expressed her agreement with Sensenbrenner. She argued, however, that controversy over the measures he demanded might have killed the bill. “I think the president had it right,” she said, that Congress should return to this “and consider these issues in the context of an overhaul of our immigration laws. And I look forward to working with Mr. Sensenbrenner on such legislation next year.”

Ohio Steelworkers strike as boss tears up contract

BY TONY LANE
AND HELEN MEYERS

HANNIBAL, Ohio—“They pretty much forced us out. We’ve been under contract extensions since August 2003,” said Ormet aluminum worker Jim Bradley.

Bradley is a member of United Steelworkers of America (USWA). He is one of 1,300 members of USWA locals 5724 and 5760 who struck Ormet’s aluminum pot line and rolling mill here November 23. The walkout started as Ormet, which filed for bankruptcy protection in January, decided to tear up its labor contracts after getting approval from a court. The USWA locals had voted to strike if Ormet did not delay the court hearing seeking approval of its reorganization plan—which would freeze pension benefits, make workers pay monthly health-care premiums of \$90, change work rules, and increase retirees health-care payments.

The USWA said it wanted the hearing delayed so the court could rule on the union’s motion to consider bids to purchase the two plants. “We made an offer to the company but they wouldn’t look at it,” said Ronnie Blatt, grievance chair for Local 5724. The union’s reorganization plan included cutting 220 jobs at the plants.

Strikers told the *Militant* that the company said it planned to shut down the pot line in 90 days and the rolling mill in 120 days. “If they are going to shut it down, we might as well stop it now,” one worker told the *Militant*.

“We don’t want to be ordered by the government, or Ormet,” to accept a contract, another USWA member added.

Any closing of the plant would have a big impact locally. Unemployment in the

surrounding Monroe County has already reached 9.9 percent, compared to 5.1 percent across the country.

The Martin’s Ferry *Times Leader* reported that Ormet’s creditor is Matlin-Patterson Global Opportunities II, which it said possesses “an investment fund of over \$2 billion, invests solely in bankrupt, or distressed, companies in the interest of high returns.” The article noted that this firm will stand to gain handsomely from the current high price of alumina, the product that aluminum is made from. “Matlin-Patterson realized Ormet’s potential for profit and bought its debt for cheap in the expectation of returns,” the *Times Leader* added. Aluminum is selling for nearly 90 cents per pound compared to 76 cents a year ago.

Workers at these plants have been through a number of contract battles. A four-month strike in 1986 ended with workers making concessions. A lengthy contract fight in 1999 and 2000 ended with new hires starting at 80 percent of the original pay scale and with job combinations. Strikers said the workforce has shrunk while production has multiplied. At the same time their wages have shrunk under the impact of inflation.

“I’ve been here 25 years and I’m getting \$1.23 more an hour than when I started,” said one worker on the picket line.

“We’ve had an average of a 3 cents per year raise since 1986,” said Chuck Raber.

Local cops have made two waves of arrests of strikers charging 17 people with breaking court injunctions limiting the number of pickets. The first came as workers gathered after hearing that scabs were entering the



Militant/Tony Lane

Steelworkers picket Ormet aluminum company December 3 in Hannibal, Ohio.

plant. A large contingent of cops arrived, including from surrounding counties.

Tom Bauer told the *Militant* that the arrests only occurred as the majority of workers had moved away from the plant entrance. Workers were held for two days before being released. More than 100 members of the USWA and others picketed

outside the sheriff’s office seeking freedom for those arrested.

The strikers are getting support from other workers involved in labor disputes. A packed USWA informational meeting on December 3 heard solidarity greetings from striking Presby nursing home workers in Washington, Pennsylvania.

Washington ups number of U.S. troops in Iraq

Continued from Page 6

soldiers are part of the U.S.-led forces in Iraq now.

According to a December 3 Associated Press report, 74 British troops have been killed in Iraq since the 2003 invasion. They include five members of the Black Watch regiment who died during the unit’s recent deployment in Baghdad. Italian troops have suffered 19 deaths. No casualties among Japanese soldiers have been reported so far.

January 30 election

Meanwhile, wealthy leaders of Shiite-led political parties and groups throughout the country are gearing up for national elections set for January 30, when a 275-member National Assembly is to be chosen. Shiites constitute roughly 60 percent of Iraq’s population and were repressed by the Sunni-led Hussein government. Sunnis are about one third of the population.

Shiite-led parties have rejected postponing the elections. They have organized an unprecedented mobilization in mosques, community centers, and schools in support of the elections, the *New York Times* reported, making a delay difficult if not impossible. Banners urging people to vote hang from the streets in majority Shiite cities, organizers speak in schools and prayers leaders in Shiite mosques declaring that support for the elections is a “religious and national duty.”

U.S. president George Bush and U.S. ambassador to Iraq John Negroponte have said the elections should go ahead as scheduled.

A committee appointed by Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, the leading Shiite cleric in Iraq, has selected a bloc of 240 candidates for the elections. Iraqis will vote for blocs or coalitions of candidates, not individuals. Included in the Sistani-backed bloc is Muqtada al-Sadr, whose militia fought U.S. troops in April and again in August from his stronghold in Najaf and Sadr City, a Baghdad district.

A Shiite cleric recently drove through the streets of al-Amel, a southern Baghdad district, carrying a loudspeaker and mocking those who had scrawled anti-election slogans on walls in the neighborhood, reported the December 6 *Financial Times*. “Let those who wrote this show their faces, if they are men,” he reportedly said. Two dozen armed supporters followed the cleric’s motorcade on foot, painting over graffiti that threatened to “cut off the heads of voters.” The *Financial Times* reported that two weeks earlier a delegation of Shiites from Basra calling themselves the “Brigades of Anger” asked al-Sistani for permission to take reprisals in Latifiyah against Sunnis suspected of killing Shiites.

Leaders of the Sunni-led Iraqi Islamic Party now threaten that the armed conflict could escalate if the elections are not postponed until order can be restored in the Sunni areas. Speaking in a building that once housed Baathist offices, Yousef Ghabdan, a leader of the party, said, “Many experts have warned of a civil war after the elections, and certainly this could happen.” The Iraqi Islamic Party is the largest Sunni-led party. It quit the interim government in November

to protest the assault on Fallujah.

At the same time, leaders of the two largest Kurdish parties have threatened to boycott the national elections unless Kurdish control is restored in Kirkuk, an oil-rich city in northern Iraq, according to the *Christian Science Monitor*. Decades ago, Kurds were brutally expelled from the city and its surrounding province under an “Arabization” campaign by the Hussein regime. The Kurds have asked that the election for the provincial council be postponed until Kurds are again a decisive majority.

In the past few months thousands of Kurds have “virtually” returned to Kirkuk by changing their voter registration from the place where they actually live to the northern city. In neighborhoods throughout Kirkuk and its vicinity new homes are being built—all of them belonging to Kurds. Outside the city, about 7,000 Kurds live in tents waiting to see if they will be given land and housing as reparations for their earlier expulsion.

Kurds say Kirkuk is part of Iraqi Kurdistan, an area in the country’s northeastern part. Kurdistan—spanning the borders of Iraq, Iran, Turkey, Armenia, and Syria—is inhabited by an estimated 25 million Kurds. The wealthy Arab rulers of Iraq—Shiite and Sunni—fear the national aspirations of the Kurdish people, as do the rulers in Turkey, Iran, and Syria. Given the close collaboration of Kurdish forces with Washington over the last decade, however, a federated Iraq with a large measure of autonomy for the Kurdish areas is not an unrealistic prospect.

— MILITANT LABOR FORUMS —

CALIFORNIA

Los Angeles

Report-back from Guadalajara Book Fair Speaker: Betsey Stone. Fri., Dec. 17. Dinner, 6:30 p.m.; program, 7:30 p.m. 4229 South Central Ave., Donation requested. Tel: (323) 233-9372

COLORADO

Craig

The fight for health and safety on the job Fri., Dec. 17; Dinner, 6:30 p.m.; program, 7:30 p.m. 11 W. Victory Way #205. Tel: (970) 824-6380

NEW YORK

Manhattan

U.S. imperialist intervention in the Americas and the class struggle in Mexico Speaker: Andrés Pérez, just returned from Guadalajara book fair. Fri., Dec. 17. Dinner 7 p.m.; program, 8 p.m. 307 W. 36th St., 10th floor (off 8th Ave., take north set of elevators). Donation: \$5 dinner/\$5 program. Tel: (212) 629-6649

UNITED KINGDOM

Edinburgh

The Jewish Question Speaker: Caroline Bellamy. Fri., Dec. 17, 7:30 p.m. 3 Grosvenor St., 1st fl. Tel: (0131) 226-2756

— LETTERS —

British Labour Party

What happened to the character of the British Labour Party?

I would appreciate a clarification of the stance expressed by Jonathan Silberman in the November 30 *Militant* on the character of the British Labour Party.

He writes that the “Communist League in the UK won’t be calling for a Labour vote at the next general election” because it would not signify a class vote.

I would like to know what changes have occurred in the Labour Party since 1997 when the CL in the UK urged workers to cast a class vote on Labour in areas where the CL ran no candidates. Silberman explained this stance in the May 12 and June 23 issues of the

Militant that year.

What qualitative change has Labour gone through? Are other social democratic parties in Europe going through similar changes? What is the difference between Labour and the social democratic parties in Germany, Denmark, or Sweden—parties also based on the unions?

Kristoffer Schultz
Stockholm, Sweden

On electrification

I can’t agree with an aspect of the campaign wrap-up editorial in the November 16 *Militant*. In explaining the SWP candidates’ support for the right of semicolonial countries to acquire the sources of energy they need, including nuclear energy

(which I wholeheartedly support), the editorial says that energy is “a prerequisite for political and economic advances for working people in the colonial world.” *Webster’s* dictionary defines prerequisite as “required beforehand, especially as a necessary condition for something following.” In other words, without electrification there can be no political or economic advances for working people in the colonial world. While this might apply in the economic sphere, my reading of the *Militant*, *New Internationalist*, and Pathfinder books over the years argues that significant political advances for our class can be won in “backward” countries with very limited electrification.

Leaving aside the three greatest

political advances for our class over the 20th century (the Russian, Chinese, and Cuban revolutions), significant political advances for working people have been won in more recent decades prior to widespread electrification. The defeat of U.S. imperialism in Vietnam, the triumph of workers and farmers governments in Nicaragua and Grenada, the overthrow of the butcher of Tehran and his monarchy, the defeat of apartheid, and the triumph of the Burkinabe revolution all seem to contradict the cited phrase in the editorial. Perhaps there have been political and economic changes in the past 15 years which suggest that future political victories in the colonial world are unlikely or even impossible prior to widespread

electrification. I don’t see them.

Maybe “prerequisite” isn’t the right term to use in this context. I don’t think that “without electrification, no political victories are possible” is the message the *Militant* wants to give to the Polisario Front and the people of Western Sahara, for example.

Gary Boyers,
Hamtramck, Michigan

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

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

Aborigines protest new death in custody

Palm Island residents face crackdown by Australian cops after explosion of anger

BY RON POULSEN

SYDNEY, Australia—Anger in the Aboriginal settlement on Palm Island off the northeast Australian coast boiled over after a government report exonerated cops over the death of an arrested Aboriginal man. Aborigines face rising rates of imprisonment and a disproportionately higher number of deaths in police custody.

Cameron Doomadgee, 36, died in a police cell shortly after being arrested November 19 for drunkenness. Angry residents burnt down the police buildings on the island November 26. The capitalist press headlined the eruption of anger as a “riot.” The state government in Queensland, run by the Labor Party, unleashed a massive police dragnet of the island.

Palm Island has a population of about 4,000, mainly Aborigines. The island was used for much of the last century as an internment camp for indigenous people forcibly removed from traditional lands across northern Australia.

Public meetings were held during the week after Doomadgee was found dead. He had been locked up an hour earlier for “causing a public nuisance.” The “findings” of an interim autopsy that absolved the cops of any wrongdoing detonated the explosion.

A post-mortem examination showed Doomadgee had four broken ribs and died from a punctured lung and ruptured spleen and liver. The government report backed the cops’ claim that a scuffle took place and Doomadgee fell accidentally, and that there was “no evidence” that his injuries had “resulted from a direct use of force.”

Two Aboriginal men in nearby cells at the time gave statements that they saw Doomadgee being punched and beaten by senior sergeant Chris Hurley. On November 23, four days after Doomadgee died, Hurley was removed from the island “for his own protection.”

Up to 300 residents vented their anger on the courthouse, police station, and barracks. They pelted the buildings with stones and then set them on fire, reducing them to smoking ruins. Eighteen local cops fled to the hospital and later left the island claiming to be “in fear of their lives.” Two cops were reportedly injured.

Queensland police counterattacked. Over that night and the next day, 80 armed cops, including the tactical response group, were flown in from nearby Townsville. The state school was taken over as their barracks and headquarters.

Tony Koch reported November 29 in *The Australian* how police “in full armour... burst into homes, held guns on people and forced children and women to lie face-down on the floor while they searched” for young Aboriginal residents on their list of supposed “ringleaders of the riot.” By daylight the next day, 12 men had been arrested.

Koch described “war-like scenes of vehicle loads of armed police” with “full gear—riot shields, balaclavas and helmets with face-masks, Glock pistol at the hip and a shotgun or semi-automatic rifle... arresting unarmed and unresisting Aborigines” and summarily “shipping them off to the mainland” without any due legal process.

Palm Island community leaders have complained about the heavy cop presence. The state government has floated the idea of stationing more police permanently on the island.

Queensland Labor premier Peter Beattie subsequently appealed for calm. He told reporters that the “community leaders of Palm Island have got to take charge and act responsibly to restore some order.” He blamed their “failure in leadership” for the events but made no mention of the long record of dispossession, institutionalized racism, and cop brutality under successive state governments.

Cops claimed “Redfern rioters” were among those involved in the Palm Island events. Last February a nine-hour pitched



Image from Channel Seven News TV, Brisbane

Heavily-armed Australian cops rounded up dozens of Palm Island residents following November 26 protest over government whitewash of cop killing of an Aboriginal man.

battle took place between Aboriginal protesters and riot police in Redfern, Sydney, over the killing by cops of Aboriginal youth TJ Hickey. A coroners’ court finding subsequently cleared the cops of any wrongdoing.

The Palm Island settlement became a government reserve for Aborigines in 1918 as the site offered the authorities a “natural prison” for indigenous people driven from their ancestral lands by the colonial frontier war of the 1800s. People from different clans and language groups were thrown together in what became a decades-long internment camp.

Racial segregation akin to South Africa’s apartheid system was institutionalized. Lit-

tle or no education or health services were provided. Impoverished social conditions prevailed, and the Aboriginal inhabitants were denied basic civil rights until the 1970s. Only in 1984 did control pass over to an Aboriginal Council.

According to Senator Aden Ridgeway of the Australian Democrats, the only Aborigine in Parliament, “Indigenous people in this country are 15 times more likely to be imprisoned than anyone else... Last year, 75 percent of deaths in custody of prisoners who were detained for no more than public order offences were indigenous Australians.” He denounced what he called “major race relations problems that are escalating.”

Puerto Rico: striking water workers turn down gov’t authority’s ‘final offer,’ continue strike

BY LAURA GARZA

BOSTON—As a strike by some 4,500 water workers in Puerto Rico entered its 60th day, their union, the Independent Authentic Union (UIA), announced it would not accept the “final offer” management tried to force upon the strikers. Puerto Rican Water and Sewer Authority (AAA) representatives walked out of a negotiating session December 1, stating they had made their final offer and would not participate in any further talks.

Leading up to the talks, the strikers had organized a series of mobilizations to press their demands, while the authorities ratcheted up the use of police force against the workers.

The water workers walked out October 4, for the first time since 1974, to demand higher wages and oppose other measures by the state-run authority. AAA is demanding the union turn over control of workers’ health insurance to a private company and cut the number of full-time UIA representatives and their time spent on union business.

On November 23 striking workers from throughout the island, visible in their green union shirts, traveled to Puerto Rico’s capital San Juan. It was a large show of force as they marched, picketed, and demonstrated at several major intersections in the city, slowing down the regular flow of traffic. Cops attacked workers from Mayagüez and Bayamón who had gathered at one thoroughfare, the Baldorioty de Castro expressway. A group of cops on motorcycles injured one worker in the head. Then a “Tactical Operations Unit” arrived and drove the workers out of the street and up against a wall, injuring several severely enough to be sent to the hospital.

The mobilizations that day ended in a

march and car caravan that proceeded on Fernández Juncos Avenue.

While negotiations proceeded, newspapers claimed agreements on major sections of the contract had been hammered out between UIA and management. These allegedly included a reorganization of the union-run health plan that would involve electing a new board of directors for the plan and having an administrator not affiliated with the union.

The health insurance plan for the water workers has been paid for by the company but administered by the union. After a government audit claimed the union had mismanaged the funds, AAA stopped payments to the union-run plan and contracted the Triple-S private health insurance company to replace it. Strikers said this company has a history of offering generous coverage to attract new customers and then reducing benefits down the road. Many workers said that union control of the medical plan makes it harder for management to raise deductibles in the future.

The government has used the corruption charges against UIA to launch a grand jury investigation of nine union leaders, raid the union offices with FBI and IRS agents, raid the homes of union leaders, and threaten the possible arrest and indictment of UIA officers. The big-business press has kept up a steady flow of articles charging workers with committing sabotage and publicizing a chorus of calls by politicians and others urging the workers to go back to work, with the promise that a contract would eventually be worked out.

Now Puerto Rico’s governor, Sila Calderon, has added her voice to claim AAA’s last offer is “final and firm.” She urged workers to accept it and head back to work, saying they will have a better holiday if they do.

About 50 Aborigines and supporters rallied outside the north Queensland court in Townsville, November 29, as 18 people appeared over charges of rioting on Palm Island. A placard read: “Police Service: Murderers and Liars.” One protester told ABC News: “Racism is rife in the judicial system—the police, the bloody judges, the lawyers, everything—and the governments.”

In Brisbane, the Queensland capital, about 50 members of the indigenous community, including relatives of those arrested at Palm Island, met to plan future protests, including a December 11 national day of action. “The situation is getting worse,” said Aboriginal activist Sam Watson. “The system is hardening about Aboriginal people. Police officers use their shields and their blue uniforms as devices to bash, terrorize and kill Aboriginal people.”

Murrandoo Yanner, an activist for Black rights and a cousin of Cameron Doomadgee, was quoted in the December 1 *Australian* saying: “I don’t condone violence, but Black fellows are sick of violence being perpetrated against them by police and it all gets swept under the carpet.”

In the wake of the Palm Island events, another racist attack in southwestern Queensland on November 27 got national coverage.

A landowner and his son tied a noose around a Black teenager’s neck and dragged him through a river, then stripped him naked, bound his hands, and dragged him up the embankment. The youth suffered head and neck injuries. Another Black youth was tied to a tree and forced to watch. The men, 44 and 23 years old, claimed the two young people had been attempting to steal from their property. Aboriginal elder and Goolburri Regional Council chairman Bertie Button described the 45 minutes of sadistic torture as “Ku Klux Klan-style stuff.”

The government authority’s last offer included a bonus of \$1,800, if workers return on the job.

Upon learning that the bosses had ended the talks with the union December 1, workers marched over to La Fortaleza, the governor’s mansion, where she was appearing for a ceremony to light the holiday decorations. They interrupted the festivities with union chants.

The bosses now say they will implement their final offer, beginning with whoever returns to work.

Before management left the table, the union and the bosses had not reached agreement on the number of full-time union delegates allowed, whether a previously existing clause in the contract that allowed workers some right to take job actions without being immediately fired would be maintained, or on a guarantee of no reprisals against strikers. No agreement had been reached on the proposed wages either.

The Water and Sewer Authority management has pleaded poverty, saying AAA is running on a \$200 million deficit and cannot give any substantial raises.

“Over six and half years they are offering a raise... that amounts to \$61.54 a month,” said UIA president Héctor René Lugo, “something we are not going to accept.”

Puerto Rico: Independence is a necessity
by **Rafael Cancel Miranda**
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