

# THE MILITANT

INSIDE

N.Y. 9/11 event: how workers in battle transform themselves

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A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

VOL. 69/NO. 37

SEPT. 26, 2005

## Strikers resist Northwest 'offer' of deeper concessions

BY BETSY FARLEY

Union negotiators for the mechanics, cleaners, and custodians on strike against Northwest Airlines broke off talks September 11 after three days of negotiations. Blaming rising fuel prices, the airline bosses demanded even deeper concessions from the Aircraft Mechanics Fraternal Association (AMFA) than the unionists had rejected before going on strike. The new company "offer" would slash the number of mechanics to 1,080, eliminating nearly three-fourths of the 4,400 AMFA members on the company's payroll August 19, the day the strike began. The company is now demanding \$203 million in pay and job cuts, up from \$176 million when the workers walked out.

According to a September 11 strike update posted on the AMFA website, union negotiators agreed to accept the company's newly proposed cuts, but negotiations broke off over the amount of severance pay those losing their jobs would receive. Steve MacFarlane, assistant national director of AMFA, told union members in a September 10 hotline message, "We all know that at some point an agreement must be reached. We also know that any tentative agreement is going to be extreme by any measure."

Striker Jim Inman, a member of  
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## Staunch U.S. ally in Japan elected by landslide

BY MICHAEL ITALIE

Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi's Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) won a landslide victory September 11 in Japan's general election. Koizumi called the vote last month after the upper house of parliament killed his bill to privatize the post office. The election result makes likely the success of the privatization plan as well as new attacks on social programs like pensions and health care.

Koizumi's triumph will also accelerate the extension of an anti-working-class course abroad by Tokyo—a staunch ally of Washington in its "global war on terrorism." The Japanese rulers are boosting their navy and "missile defense" to confront China and north Korea.

The LDP won 296 seats in the 480-seat lower house of parliament. With the allied Komeito party, the LDP now controls the two-thirds majority it needs to override decisions in the upper house.

The big-business press welcomed Koizumi's victory as an opportunity to advance attacks on social programs. "The biggest issue that needs to be

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## Democrats, Republicans cover up responsibility for Gulf Coast disaster

Working people take own initiatives to confront social catastrophe

BY ARGIRIS MALAPANIS

Democratic and Republican government officials, from Louisiana to Washington, are blaming each other for the catastrophe along the Gulf Coast in order to cover up the responsibility of both parties for the social disaster they imposed on hundreds of thousands in the region.

At the same time, the U.S. rulers are taking advantage of the Gulf Coast disaster to further their efforts to legitimize the use of the U.S. military in domestic operations, including "law enforcement." In the latest factional finger-pointing among Democrats and Republicans, now focused on the response to Hurricane Katrina, politicians from both parties have pushed for making natural disasters and "civil disorder" a military matter for the federal government, not primarily a police matter.

Faced with inadequate or no government aid, working people affected by the storm have been taking initiatives to confront the social catastrophe themselves. This includes efforts to get jobs, rejecting being shipped from shelters out to sea on cruise ships, and helping neighbors during evacuation (see articles on this page

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Reuters/Rick Wilking

Working people outside the New Orleans Convention Center September 1 try to keep alive Dorothy Divic, 89. Lacking proper medical care, she died later that day.

## New Orleans: workers explain their resistance to evacuation by cops, troops

BY JOSÉ ARAVENA AND ANTHONY DUTROW

NEW ORLEANS—As *Militant* reporters arrived here September 10, several thousand residents, most

working people, remained in the hurricane-ravaged city. A number of residents interviewed said that, instead of receiving assistance, they

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## U.S. gov't snubs Cuba's offer to send doctors to Gulf Coast

BY SAM MANUEL

WASHINGTON—The White House has snubbed an offer by the Cuban government to send 1,586 doctors along with 36 tons of supplies to help provide badly need medical treatment in the Gulf region of Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana. The U.S. government has not responded to an aid offer from the Venezuelan government.

Immediately after Hurricane Katrina struck cities along the U.S. Gulf Coast the Cuban government offered to send medical aid, with doctors ready September 2 to leave to fly to the region at a moment's notice to provide free care to those most in need.

White House spokesman Scott Mc-

Clellan responded to the offer at a September 8 press briefing. He stated, "When it comes to Cuba, we have one message for Fidel Castro: He needs to offer the people of Cuba their freedom."

U.S. State Department spokesman Sean McCormack suggested that

Cuban doctors would not be needed because of the "robust response from the American medical community." He added that all options would be considered.

Florida Republican senator Melquias  
Continued on page 4

## 'Militant' launches subscription drive

BY PAUL PEDERSON

Building on the momentum of higher-than-usual sales of single copies in recent weeks, the *Militant* is launching an eight-week subscription drive, beginning September 17, to win 1,500 new readers. Over the last three weeks, supporters of Socialist Workers election campaigns and other partisans of the *Militant* sold thousands of copies of the paper to working people and youth attracted to its coverage of labor

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## Strikers at Boeing brace for long fight

BY DAVID ROSENFELD

SEATTLE, September 14—As the strike by 18,000 members of the International Association of Machinists entered its 13th day, the company and the union are bracing for a long fight.

"When union negotiators say the two sides were miles apart, they are correct," said Alan Mulally, chief executive of Boeing's aircraft division, in a statement to company managers.

On September 1, some 86 percent of workers voted to strike, rejecting Boeing's "final offer."

"They're sticking it to the young people, to workers just starting out," said Al Noble, a 64-year-old production worker. "I absolutely won't go along with that."

The aerospace giant wants to end retirement health benefits for new hires. The union is pushing for a substantial increase in pension payments and protection of health-care benefits.

Workers say they are more confident to fight because Boeing's profits tripled

last year compared to 2002, when the union accepted concessions.

Several Northwest Airlines mechanics on strike here are regularly visiting the Boeing picket lines. Boeing workers have also extended the hand of solidarity, joining pickets outside Northwest's airport hanger. Boeing engineers, members of the Society of Professional Engineering Employees, are walking the picket lines on their lunch hours and after work.

### Also Inside:

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Peabody extends contracts in western surface mines 5

# Nuclear technology is key to Iran's efforts to expand electrification

BY PAUL PEDERSON

One of the principal arguments the U.S. government has employed in its campaign to pressure the Iranian government to end the development of nuclear technology is that Iran, as an oil-rich country, has no need for nuclear power.

In the flood of articles on the subject in the big-business media, however, little is said about the most fundamental question involved: the efforts by the people of Iran to advance the country's economic and social development, which has been blocked by more than a century of imperialist oppression.

Iran is a semicolonial country. It is one of the vast majority of the world's nations that remains economically dominated by a small club of the world's imperialist states. Among semicolonial nations, Iran is relatively industrialized, yet there remains a vast gulf between the conditions faced by workers and farmers in Iran and those in the imperialist centers.

A quick comparison between Iran and France, an imperialist nation with a similar-sized population, is enough to illustrate some of the yawning disparities. France has 60 million inhabitants and Iran 68 million.

France is a major world producer of automobiles, aircraft, machine tools, pharmaceuticals, and other manufactured goods. Like other semicolonial countries, Iran's economy relies heavily on producing natural resources—oil—and agricultural products. France annually exports nearly \$350 billion in goods,

more than 10 times that of Iran.

France produces four times as much electrical power as Iran. France relies on 59 nuclear reactors to generate 75 percent of its power. (It is also a nuclear-armed power.)

At less than a third of the size of Iran, France has nearly 10 times more miles of paved roads and four times more railroads. It has four times more telephone connections.

Social indicators also show glaring disparities. Infant mortality in Iran—41 deaths per 1,000 live births—is nearly

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## Government workers in Tonga win strike



Militant/Terry Coggan

Some 800 Tongans and supporters march September 3 in Auckland, New Zealand, in solidarity with six-week strike by public workers in Tonga. The walkout ended two days later when the government agreed to wage raises of 60–80 percent.

## Killing of Kurds sparks protests in Iran

BY CINDY JAQUITH

Protests by Kurds in Iran broke out in early July and have continued in spite of police attacks. The antigovernment actions, sparked by the police killing of a Kurdish youth, have been fueled by the social conditions faced by this oppressed nationality.

There are some 5 million Kurds in Iran, about 7 percent of the population. They are concentrated in the northwestern part of the country. Iranian Kurds have historically suffered discrimination based on language, culture, and religion, as has the Kurdish population in Iraq, Turkey, Syria, and the former Soviet Union.

The conflicts began when Iranian police shot dead Shivan Qaderi in the city of Mahabad. Government officials claim they were pursuing the youth as

a criminal, but Kurdish organizations have identified him as a Kurdish rights activist. Protests spread to at least a dozen predominantly Kurdish cities. News of Qaderi's slaying was broadcast on Kurdish-language television from Iraq.

Estimates range from 17 to 30 Kurds killed in the protests in Mahabad, along with four to six Iranian security personnel. Hundreds were arrested. Several Kurdish activists were subsequently detained and two Kurdish-language newspapers in the city were shut down.

Alireza Jamshidi, a representative of the governor of Iranian Kurdistan, told the Iranian Student News Agency that in the city of Sanandaj a rally against police violence took place August 3, and that attacks were later carried out against government buildings. The police killed two protesters and arrested 142, of whom 100 were later released. Jamshidi also reported that markets and shops were entirely closed down in several cities on August 7.

Amin Sha'bani, a member of the *majles* (Iranian parliament) from Sanandaj, told the Mehr news agency in Iran that high unemployment among Kurdish youth was a factor in their joining the demonstrations. He noted that Kurds overwhelmingly belong to

the Sunni branch of Islam, but that the Iranian government cabinet has not included them, only Shiites. "This is not asking for ethnic quotas," he said, "but a Kurd can better understand the problems of the region inhabited by Kurds, and can make better decisions."

Iranian foreign ministry spokesperson Hamid Reza Asefi charged that the U.S. and British governments were intervening to inflame "separatist" protests. The Associated Press reported August 17 that Iranian state television announced the arrest of individuals accused of working with British intelligence services to incite disturbances in Khuzestan, an area of Iran populated by Arabs, another oppressed nationality. In late July government forces attacked demonstrators in the predominantly Arab-Iranian city of Ahvaz.

The response by Washington, which is waging a campaign to force the Iranian government to end its nuclear power program, has so far been muted. In an August 8 statement, the U.S. State Department said, "We call on the Iranian authorities to show restraint and to respect the peaceful exercise by the Iranian people of their democratic rights."

Ma'mud Shirvani contributed to this article.

## THE MILITANT

### Social disaster on U.S. Gulf Coast

The 'Militant' provides on-the-scene coverage on the social disaster unfolding in New Orleans and nearby Gulf Coast areas. Working people needing food, shelter, and clothing in that region face a class-biased and racist response from the U.S. rulers and their twin capitalist parties. Don't miss a single issue!



A National Guardsman blocks entry to road in New Orleans, September 6.

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CLIP AND MAIL TO THE MILITANT,  
306 W. 37TH ST., 10TH FLOOR NEW YORK, NY 10018.

## The Militant

VOL. 69/NO. 37

Closing news date: September 14, 2005

Editor and circulation director:

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Washington correspondent: Sam Manuel

Editorial volunteers: Arrin Hawkins, Martin Koppel, Luis Madrid, Paul Pederson, and Brian Williams.

Published weekly except for one week in January and June.

The Militant (ISSN 0026-3885), 306 W. 37th Street, 10th floor, New York, NY 10018. Telephone: (212) 244-4899; Fax (212) 244-4947.

E-mail: [TheMilitant@verizon.net](mailto:TheMilitant@verizon.net)

Website: [www.themilitant.com](http://www.themilitant.com)

Correspondence concerning subscriptions or changes of address should be addressed to the Militant, 306 W. 37th Street, 10th floor, New York, NY 10018.

Periodicals postage paid at New York, NY. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to the Militant, 306 W. 37th Street, 10th floor, New York, NY 10018.

Subscriptions: **United States:** for one-year subscription send \$35 to above address.

**Latin America, Caribbean:** for one-year subscription send \$65, drawn on a U.S. bank, to above address. By first class (airmail), send \$80.

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**Canada:** Send Canadian \$50 for one-year subscription to the Militant, 2238 Dundas St. West, Suite 201, Toronto, ON. Postal Code: M6R 3A9.

**United Kingdom:** £25 for one year by check or international money order made out to CL London, First Floor, 120 Bethnal Green (Entrance in Brick Lane), London, E2 6DG, England.

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# 'Militant' subscription drive

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struggles and its response to the social disaster on the Gulf Coast.

The campaign will be kicked off with a weeklong sales mobilization. Young Socialists and other youth will spearhead teams taking the paper to farmers along the Mississippi River affected by the social disaster in the wake of Hurricane Katrina, to working people along the Gulf Coast, as well as other areas.

Reports from just six cities—Chicago, Detroit, Miami, New York, San Francisco, and the Twin Cities—show sales of more than 800 *Militants* since the walkout by mechanics, cleaners, and custodians at Northwest began August 19. These have been sold at airports and labor rallies where the airline workers' fight was featured.

Campaigners in the Bay Area have sold more than 200 to airline workers. "We sold 19 copies yesterday at an entrance to the airport where most of the United Airlines ramp workers go to work," said Betsey Stone from San Francisco in a September 6 note. "Everyone had an opinion on the strike. Most supported it, pointing to the assaults the airline bosses have carried out against all airline workers."

SWP candidates have joined many of these teams. In addition to expanding *Militant* sales, their efforts have helped extend the reach of socialist campaigns among working people.

Using the front-page statement from the SWP national campaign in

response to the social disaster in the Gulf Coast region, Brian Williams reported sales of 25 copies of last week's *Militant* in an evening at the Borough of Manhattan Community College in New York. "Many students were drawn to the *Militant's* explanation of the class-biased and racist response by the U.S. rulers to the needs of working people affected by the disaster," said Williams. "Another attraction was the article on Cuba's offer to send 1,500 doctors. 'I'm from Cuba,' one student said. 'I heard about this. I want to get one of those papers.'"

Socialists in New York sold another 124 *Militants* at the September 10 Labor Day parade in the city, largely due to the paper's coverage of the Gulf Coast disaster.

## Australia Communist League campaign backs labor battles

The following is based on a September 6 press release by the election campaign of the Communist League in Australia.

The Communist League in Australia is presenting a working-class alternative to the Liberal, Labor, and other parties of capitalism in the September 17 by-elections for the state parliament in New South Wales (NSW). Supporters of Alasdair Macdonald, the Communist League candidate who is on the ballot in Marrickville, Sydney, have been campaigning among unionists in struggle and in working-class communities.

Macdonald, 24, is a meat worker



Militant/Barbara Bowman

Eric Simpson (right), Socialist Workers candidate for Miami City Commissioner, hits at capitalist parties' culpability for Gulf Coast disaster while campaigning September 3.

and member of the Australasian Meat Industry Employees Union as well as a member of the Young Socialists and the Communist League in Sydney.

"I am urging working people to join the Boeing workers' picket line in Newcastle and other actions to oppose the government's attacks on unions, wages, and working conditions," Macdonald said. "Under the state Labor government, health care, education, public transport, and other social services have been further eroded. The NSW state government has joined with the federal government's expansion of police powers under the banner of the 'war

on terror.' "Our campaign promotes solidarity with workers' struggles from the strike against Northwest Airlines in the United States to the public service workers' strike in Tonga."

Macdonald took part in the recent world youth festival in Caracas, Venezuela. There, "I was able to speak out against the Australian rulers' racist immigration policies," he said. "Our campaign opposes the arrests and deportations of immigrant workers, who strengthen the working class here."

He added, "I might be standing for state parliament in Marrickville, but our campaign platform starts with the world. Working people in Australia have nothing in common with the bosses and their government." He called for "the immediate, unconditional withdrawal of Australian and other imperialist armed forces from Iraq and Afghanistan," and for the removal of Australian police from Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands, and East Timor.

"We support forging an alliance of working people worldwide to fight to overthrow imperialist rule, bringing about a workers and farmers government in Australia," Macdonald said.

## Democrats, Republicans cover up responsibility for disaster

Continued from front page  
and centerspread).

Appearing on the September 4 ABC TV show "This Week," U.S. senator Mary Landrieu, a Democrat from Louisiana, said of President George Bush, "I might have to punch him—literally," if he or members of his administration made one more disparaging remark about the response by local authorities to Hurricane Katrina. Those officials include relatives of the senator, such as Louisiana lieutenant governor Mitch Landrieu, her brother, and father Moon Landrieu, former mayor of New Orleans and housing and urban development secretary under James Carter. The senator also blamed Bush for neglecting the New Orleans levees, and demanded that he stop using the disaster for "photo-ops."

Despite complaints by Louisiana and New Orleans Democrats of underfunding, however, the state of Louisiana had received \$2 billion over the last five years from the Bush administration for Army Corps of Engineers civil projects—more than any other state. Only a tiny portion of these funds were used to reinforce the levee system, however, which was not designed to withstand a storm with the force of Katrina.

Louisiana governor Kathleen Blanco has also accused the Bush administration of not moving fast enough to send troops to the state in Katrina's wake. The White House initially relied on National Guard troops sent to the region, now numbering 46,000, which are under the jurisdiction of state governors. According to the September 9 *Washington Post*, Blanco resisted a Bush administration effort to exert federal control over all local police and state National Guard units.

The Bush administration itself and

its backers are claiming that it could not deploy federal troops rapidly into a situation where they would have to enforce "law and order" against "looters" because the Posse Comitatus Act of 1878 forbids use of the military for domestic policing. The Gulf Coast disaster is now being used by both Democrats and Republicans to argue for greater use of troops within the United States.

An editorial in the September 12 *Army Times* argued that "civil order broke down so quickly" outside the New Orleans Superdome, where tens of thousands sought refuge, because National Guard troops on the scene did not have firearms until September 2, some 72 hours after the hurricane slammed into the area. "Setting up an immediate and armed demonstration of authority was essential to establishing conditions for rescue and relief operations," it said.

"The question raised by the Katrina fiasco," said an article in the September 9 *Wall Street Journal*, "is whether the threat from madmen and nature is now sufficiently huge in its potential horror and unacceptable loss that we should modify existing jurisdictional authority to give the Pentagon functional first-responder status."

By September 2, the Pentagon dispatched 27,000 troops to the Gulf Coast region and put their operations under the jurisdiction of the Northern Command, which was initiated under Clinton and established in Bush's first term to direct the use of U.S. troops inside the United States. On September 9, Bush named Vice Admiral Thad Allen of the Coast Guard to oversee relief efforts. Allen replaced Michael Brown, the head of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA),

in that responsibility. Three days later, Brown resigned from FEMA.

Given the revulsion by working people to initial acts of inhuman treatment by cops, military officials have been careful in shaping rules of engagement for troops on the scene. The soldiers are to use empty magazines in rifles during routine operations, cannot insert live rounds unless ordered, and have to aim to wound, rather than kill, when firing.

## New Zealand CL launches campaign

BY MICHAEL TUCKER  
AND FELICITY COGGAN

AUCKLAND, New Zealand—The Labour Party coalition government here, led by Prime Minister Helen Clark, is aiming for a third term in office. In a tight race, the conservative National Party is seeking a comeback under new leader Donald Brash. The parliamentary elections are set for September 17.

When Clark announced the election date in late July, she trumpeted her government's "principled decision" not to send combat troops as part of the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq and affirmed its commitment to maintain a ban on visits by nuclear-capable warships.

Four days earlier, cabinet minister Trevor Mallard made unsubstantiated allegations that the National Party's campaign was "being run by people who are based in the United States."

Patrick Brown, the Communist League candidate for the Maungakiekie electorate in Auckland, exposed this demagoguery at the August 13 launch of his campaign. "Appealing to anti-Americanism is part of Labour's pitch for votes from working people. It is a poison that diverts our attention from our actual enemy, the employing class here," Brown stated.

The Communist League is also standing Annalucia Vermunt, a meat worker, for the seat of Christchurch Central.

"There is no fundamental disagreement on either foreign or domestic policy between Labour and National, the twin parties of capitalist rule in New Zealand," Brown said.

The Clark government has 120 regular troops and 50 Special Air Service soldiers among the U.S.-led forces in Afghanistan. It is also part of the Proliferation Security Initiative, an imperialist piracy operation on the high seas organized by the Pentagon.

The two ruling parties have waged a war for votes. Labour has pledged to abolish interest payments on student loans for graduates who remain in New Zealand, and to give major tax cuts to families with children. In turn, National has pledged tax cuts across the board. Brash has pushed demagoguery targeting immigrants and Maori.

"The Communist League's campaign stands with workers fighting to organize trade unions and to use union power to defend themselves and other working people," Brown said at the campaign launch. He hailed the six-week general strike in Tonga from July 22 to September 4 for wage increases.

# U.S. snubs Cuba's offer

**Continued from front page**  
des Martinez, a Cuban-American, told the *Miami Herald* he was "grateful" for Cuba's offer and that if doctors are needed the aid should be accepted. According to Cuban press sources a group of Latino lawmakers has also urged acceptance of the Cuban aid offer.

"We are anxiously waiting, every moment, for a positive response," Dr. Jesus Satorre, a 33-year-old cardiologist, told the Associated Press. Satorre is part of the team of Cuban doctors waiting in Havana to aid the hurricane victims.

"It would be marvelous to be elbow-to-elbow with the American doctors, helping these people, saving lives for the love of humanity," he said. This would not be Satorre's first international mission. He helped an international team of doctors tackle a major cholera crisis in Guinea-Bissau in 2002.

"We want to help because we saw on television how difficult things are in New Orleans," Marcia Consuegra, a cardiologist who is also part of the team of Cuban doctors, told Reuters. She has been working in an area outside of Caracas, Venezuela.

The Cuban offer of aid has received widespread coverage, especially in Latin America, making it difficult for the U.S. administration to ignore. Excerpts of an address by Cuban president Fidel Castro to the doctors waiting to be deployed were carried on television broadcasts in Argentina and Nicaragua.

Havana announced it will form a standing contingent of medical specialists to aid any country following a catastrophe such as occurred in the

Gulf Coast. It will be formed September 19 in conjunction with this year's annual graduation of Cuban doctors.

Martinez also welcomed the offer by Venezuela's government to send \$1 million to the Red Cross and to ship 1 million barrels of oil above its normal monthly export to the United States.

Washington also rejected an offer from the Iranian government to send 20 million barrels of oil. The State Department's executive secretary, Harry Thomas Jr., said the offer was rejected because it is conditional on Washington lifting economic sanctions against Iran.



Getty Images/AFP/Adalberto Roque

**Cuban doctors in Havana listen to speech by Fidel Castro September 4. With backpacks of medicine, they are ready to fly to United States to aid those affected by Katrina.**

## Minnesota meat packers fight for contract

BY NELSON GONZALEZ

HECTOR, Minnesota—On August 13, after bosses refused to propose a pay rate, kill floor workers at Minnesota Beef in Buffalo Lake demanded a meeting with the owner and refused to enter the plant until he flew in from Chicago to meet with them.

When the owner didn't show at the beginning of the shift, workers organized a work stoppage that lasted six hours. The workers returned to the job only after the owner met with them and agreed to their central demands. These included creating a classification of the different knife jobs workers do, a pay scale for each classification, and paying each worker the hourly rate for the classification they are in.

Minnesota Beef workers, many of whom live here in the town of Hector near Buffalo Lake, won a union representation election over a year ago that brought in United Food and Commer-

cial Workers (UFCW) Local 789. Since then they have been fighting to win a contract in face of stalling tactics by the company and intimidation that has included the firing of some workers.

Miguel Olvera, a UFCW steward at Dakota Premium in St. Paul, Minnesota, and a leader of a sit-down strike a few years ago that brought Local 789 into that plant and won a contract there, has been fighting his termination by Dakota on trumped-up charges. He and a few other Dakota Premium workers came to Hector to meet Minnesota Beef workers and learn about their fight. "I heard about the stoppage and I wanted to know how you organized it and what you've been able to win from the company," Olvera told meat packers here. "This could help us back in our plant."

Jesus Riza, a union steward in the kill floor and a leader of the work stoppage at Minnesota Beef, said workers were fed up with the company's stalling

tactics.

"We had had enough," Riza said. "We have people who have been working three to four years making between \$8.75 and \$9.75 an hour and no increase, doing knife jobs that should be paid at a higher rate."

After an August 12 meeting when management refused to make an offer, the workers demanded the meeting with the owner.

"We told the company what we were planning to do," Riza said. "On Tuesday, when the owner didn't show we organized a soccer game outside the plant until he showed up."

Twenty out of the 30 workers on the kill floor participated in the stoppage. "A weakness was that none of the workers in the boning department joined us," Riza added. "But many of them, after seeing what we accomplished, told me they were ashamed at not joining us because it was for their benefit too. Many of them told me they would join us next time if we have to do this again."

In the contract talks under way workers have won promises from the company for increased vacation time, paid safety gloves, and holiday and funeral pay, Riza said. He added, however, that "we need an agreement that includes a raise in our hourly rate right now and a provision that after a qualifying period workers will get paid the top pay for the classification they are in."

"If they try to stall us again we'll go out, we are not afraid," Riza said. He also invited Dakota Premium workers to support whatever action meat packers here may have to take.

## Iran's effort to expand electrification

**Continued from page 2**

10 times higher than in France. One-fifth of Iran's population remains illiterate. Outside the urban areas the gap grows wider. In the 30,000 smallest villages, two-thirds of households lack electricity.

Iran's history has been marked by the struggle to break free from imperialist domination, which perpetuates this underdevelopment and profits from it. At the heart of this battle has been control of the country's national resources. The oil industry, long controlled by British imperialism, was nationalized in 1951 after a deep-going popular struggle. Even today, however, world oil trade and distribution is dominated by the imperialist oil monopolies.

Iran's efforts to develop its nuclear power industry is widely viewed by the Iranian people as a needed step in the struggle for economic development and independence from imperialist domination. Iran began developing a nuclear industry in the 1950s. The efforts by the government at the time, the U.S.-backed dictatorship of the shah, were encouraged by Washington.

After the shah's regime was toppled through a popular revolution in 1979, Washington and its imperialist allies responded with policies aimed at weakening or destroying what the Iranian masses had accomplished. The U.S. government imposed economic sanctions on Iran.

After the revolution, social condi-

tions—such as rural electrification—improved somewhat for workers and farmers, whose self-confidence and expectations increased. In the meantime, Iran's population has more than doubled.

An October 2003 op-ed column in the *International Herald Tribune* explains why the question of nuclear power has become more pressing. "With an annual growth of 6 percent to 8 percent in demand for electricity and a population estimated to reach 100

million by 2025, Iran cannot possibly rely exclusively on oil and gas," wrote three Iranian researchers. "The aging oil industry, denied substantial foreign investment largely because of American sanctions, has not been able even to reach the pre-revolution production level of 5.5 million barrels per day.... If this trend continues, Iran will become a net oil importer by 2010, a catastrophe for a country that relies on oil for 80 percent of its foreign currency and 45 percent of its annual budget."

## Labor support expands for Militant Fighting Fund

BY JOHN STUDER

PHILADELPHIA—Service Employees International Union Local 32BJ offered part of its information table for literature on the Militant Fighting Fund at the Labor Day event here. Union members picked up brochures and asked questions about the union fight at Co-Op. John Braxton, co-president of American Federation of Teachers Local 2026, endorsed and many others asked to get a follow-up call.

BY TAMAR ROSENFELD

MAGNA, Utah—Trade union locals set up booths at the annual AFL-CIO Labor Day picnic here. Tables put up by striking magnesium workers and the Co-Op miners got a lot of interest.

The Militant Fighting Fund table was also welcomed. Kent Anderson, president of Communications Workers of America Local 7704 in Salt Lake City, who helped organize solidarity activities with the Co-Op miners, endorsed. Warren Brodhead said he was grateful for the *Militant's* coverage. Brodhead, a Salt Lake City high school teacher and president of American Federation of Teachers Local 4430, also endorsed and made a contribution.

\* \* \*

Judge Dee Benson granted C.W. Mining's attorneys until September 30 to respond to all the defendant motions to dismiss the retaliatory lawsuit. The defendants will then have seven days to respond in writing once more before the judge sets a hearing date.

**Equality for all**—It was on September 2 that rap star Kayne West spoke out bluntly on racist media coverage in an NBC



Harry Ring

fund-raiser for the stricken flood victims. "I hate the way they portray us in the media. If you

see a Black family, it says they're looting. See a white family, it says they're looking for food," he said. That was broadcast live in the East and Midwest. Later, when the program was rebroadcast in the West, his comments were erased.

**Skin the poor, stuff the rich**—"In the largest criminal tax case ever, accounting titan KPMG admitted to running fraudulent tax shelters for rich clients and settled with

prosecutors for \$456 million. The scheme, which took place from 1996 to 2002, churned out \$11 billion in phony tax losses."—*USA Today*.

**Only a few openings for sweepers?**—In Springfield, Illinois, rights groups are protesting the hiring policy at the Abraham Lincoln museum and library. With a staff of 107 there are seven minorities.

**More crimes to cover up?**—

Last year, the government spent \$7.2 billion stamping 15.6 million documents as "top secret," "secret," or "confidential."

**Fighting 'terrorism'**—In England, cops expressed perfunctory regret for their treatment of a great-grandmother. Eileen Kearsy, 79, was routed out of bed at 4:00 a.m. and jailed for 13 hours. She said she was treated like a suspected terrorist—grilled, fingerprinted, and a DNA sample taken. Finally she

was released. She was arrested because two months ago, a complaint was made by a neighbor.

**At best**—"Students likely to stay in debt till 35"—Headline, *The Times*, London.

**Thought for the week**—Washington reports that the number of people living in poverty rose by 1.1 million to 37 million last year. It was the fourth consecutive year poverty has risen.

# Peabody extends western surface mine contracts

BY ALYSON KENNEDY

PRICE, Utah—With union contracts at Peabody Coal's western surface mines scheduled to expire September 1, the company agreed to a contract extension at United Mine Workers of America (UMWA)—organized facilities. These are the Seneca mine in Colorado, the Black Mesa and Kayenta mines in Arizona, and the Big Sky mine in Montana.

"Peabody agreed to extend the contract for two years with a small wage increase," said Marie Justice, president of UMWA Local 1620 at the Black Mesa mine. "But the Black Mesa and the Seneca mines are still slated to be closed on Dec. 31, 2005."

If the company's proposed mine closures go through, the only operating UMWA mine owned by Peabody Coal in the West will be the Kayenta mine. The Black Mesa and Kayenta mines are located next to each other on the Navajo Nation in northeastern Arizona. The Big Sky mine's surface operations in Montana have already been closed.

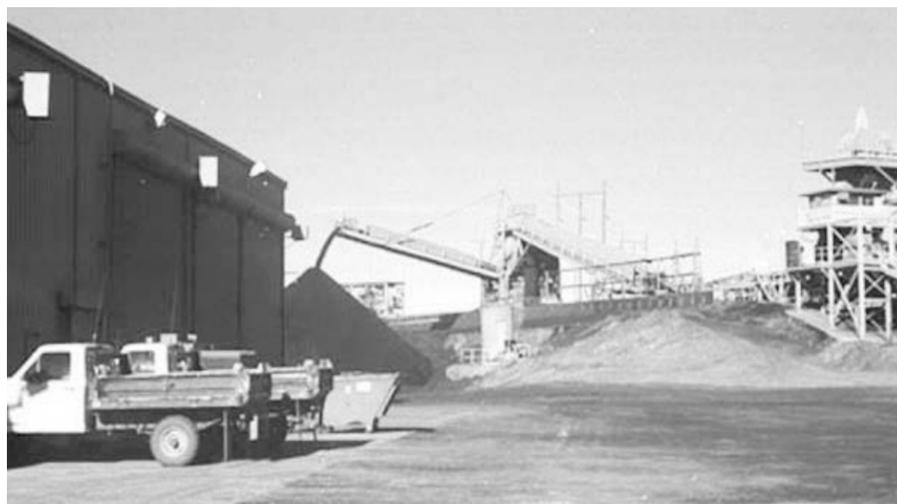
Lewis Yazzie, a member of UMWA Local 1924 at the Kayenta mine, said in a telephone interview that "staying

united is very important right now because we will soon be the last stronghold of the UMWA at Peabody-owned mines in the West."

Coal from the Black Mesa mine is pulverized and mixed with water to form a slurry that travels through a 273-mile pipeline to the Mohave generating station in Laughlin, Nevada. Southern California Edison, majority owner of the Mohave station, announced that the coal-fired power plant would be shut down December 31 for three to four years to install pollution control equipment.

The plant had been operating since 1971 with no pollution control equipment. In December 1999 a federal court issued a consent decree that mandated the Mohave power plant to dramatically reduce its sulfur dioxide emissions. In February 2002 the Environmental Protection Agency upheld these emissions reduction requirements. Since that time Southern California Edison (SCE) had taken no action to install the mandated pollution controls and is now organizing to shut down the Mohave plant.

"We are the victims of the event," said Marie Justice. "This is going to hurt a lot of families. SCE has stalled and so far there will be no extension of the



Militant/Laura Anderson

Peabody Coal's Black Mesa mine in Arizona, which is slated to be closed in December.

Dec. 31, 2005, deadline. Peabody has agreed to allow miners from the Black Mesa and Seneca mines to bid on jobs available at the Kayenta mine." That amounts to about 11 jobs right now, the union officer said. The 240 miners at the Black Mesa mine who will be thrown out of work will increase the ranks of the jobless on the Navajo Nation, where unemployment exceeds 50 percent.

The Seneca mine, near Hayden, Colorado, is one of the two mines in northwest Colorado organized by the

UMWA. The proposed closure of this mine will throw another 100 miners out of work. A few miners will remain to do reclamation work.

Peabody, the world's largest privately owned coal company, bought the Twentymile Coal Company in April 2004. Located a few miles from Seneca, Twentymile is nonunion. The mine, one of the most productive in the United States, plans to hire 80 more workers this year, increasing its workforce to 500.

## Northwest strike

Continued from front page

AMFA Local 33 at the Twin Cities, Minnesota, airport," said, "I thought the company's latest offer was junk. We went out for something better. We are going to keep fighting."

Two days after negotiations broke off, the United Auto Workers union announced a donation of \$880,000 to assist AMFA members on the picket lines. In Seattle, the strikers were invited to present their case to a September 8 International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) Local 19 meeting. "The local voted to contribute \$9,000 to help workers and their families continue the fight," said executive board member Jim Burns. ILWU member John Fisher reports that a dozen longshore workers joined the strikers the next morning for an expanded picket line at the Seattle-Tacoma Airport. "We have to treat this strike as our strike," Fisher said.

Northwest said it would begin to permanently replace the strikers on September 13. Only five of the thousands of striking mechanics in Minneapolis have crossed, the Associated Press reports.

Northwest declared bankruptcy September 14. The same day Delta Air Lines, the country's third-largest carrier, also filed for bankruptcy. Delta has asked pilots for a second round of wage and benefits cuts, on top of \$1 billion they gave up last year.

## 25, 50, AND 75 YEARS AGO



September 26, 1980

MIAMI—The Democratic and Republican parties alike are ignoring the needs of the Black community, Andrew Pulley charged during his two-day tour here. The Socialist Workers presidential candidate hit hard on the issues of jobs and police brutality as he spoke at a campus meeting, over a popular radio call-in show, and at a campaign rally.

Both Ronald Reagan and James Carter "support a 'law and order' that results in the murder of Blacks in the streets from one end of this country to another," Pulley told the campaign rally.

"From Birmingham to Boston, from Minneapolis to Miami, from Portland to Philadelphia, all the cops have to do is claim the comb in the bother's pocket looked like a gun. Or that he looked like he might be dangerous. Or that while the cops had the brother on the ground his gun accidentally went off."

This area has seen bitter confirmation of Pulley's words. Shortly before the socialist candidate arrived, a federal grand jury voted not to indict the Hialeah cop who killed Black youth Randy Heath one year ago.



September 26, 1955

The recent eight-day strike of the independent International Longshoreman's Association against the bi-state New York-New Jersey Waterfront Commission was an event of great symptomatic significance. It was a political strike against government interference in the unions.

The dock workers learned to rely more and more on their own solidarity in action on the picket line and less and less upon capitalist politicians, union bureaucrats and "impartial" priests and government arbitrators. This lesson was driven home over and over again. When the bi-state Waterfront Commission was established by law for the alleged purpose of abolishing "crime" on the waterfront, the longshoremen were suspicious. And with good reason.

From the beginning, crime and racketeering on the waterfront were part of the "system." Corrupt capitalist politicians, union labor skates and the shipping bosses were its main props. The dockers were its main victims.



October 1, 1930

The unemployment situation in this period of depression following the period of overproduction and crisis of American capitalism brings forth a problem of greater magnitude than the unemployment accompanying the classical crisis of capitalism in its growth stage.

Unemployment is the most pressing immediate problem of the American workers and every class conscious organization, reform group and the capitalist vanguard is vitally concerned with its solution; the working class with one aim and the capitalist class with the opposite aim.

The aim of the workers vanguard is to utilize this issue to strengthen the position of the working class and consolidate the ideological change taking place in the ranks of the workers. The aim of the capitalist class is to stem the tide, throw out enough crumbs to prevent this ideological crystallization and maintain their tottering equilibrium a little longer.

# How workers in battle transform themselves

## Working-class response to Gulf Coast disaster at center of New York event on 9/11

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

NEW YORK—More than 350 people attended a public meeting here on September 11 titled, “Four Years Later: Resisting U.S. Rulers’ Global Assault on Workers and Farmers.” It was sponsored by the Socialist Workers Party National Committee and Young Socialists.

SWP national secretary Jack Barnes opened the event by saluting the volunteers who helped put out a special issue of the *Militant* telling the truth about the social disaster unfolding along the Gulf Coast. He introduced Sam Manuel, the *Militant*’s Washington correspondent, who had spent a week with a reporting team in the Gulf Coast region.

Manuel described how thousands of lives were saved through the initiatives and collective activity by working people, who had been largely left to fend for themselves in the days leading up to Hurricane Katrina and in its aftermath. “They had to organize to protect themselves from the cops and the gangs, some of which have connections with the cops,” Manuel said. He reported that Debra Posey, a cook for the New Orleans school system, explained that “more families were separated by the so-called government-organized rescue than by the flood waters.”

“All these experiences drove home a lesson Frederick Engels, a cofounder with Karl Marx of the communist movement, taught us 150 years ago,” said Manuel. “The working class is a fighting class that will free itself.”

The meeting was called some time ago to coincide with the anniversary of 9/11, Barnes said. Now it had to take up the two-week anniversary of Katrina. The entire set of events that produced the social catastrophe imposed on the people of the Gulf Coast was prepared beforehand on the federal, state, and local government level by Democrats and Republicans, said Barnes. Under the Bush administration Louisiana received nearly \$2 billion over the past five years for Army Corps of Engineers civil works projects, more than any other state. Local government of-

ficials boasted about having the most ambitious flood-fighting plan, which included evacuation procedures for people with special needs—like those lacking cars and the elderly and ill—and pre-positioning food, water, and medicine at facilities like the Superdome.

These promises turned out to be lies, Barnes said. By 1998, Louisiana’s state government, run by Democrats, had a \$2 billion construction budget. But less than one-tenth of 1 percent, or \$1.98 million, was dedicated to New Orleans levee improvement. By contrast, \$22 million was spent that year to renovate a home for the Louisiana Supreme Court and other projects that demonstrate the typical corruption of a bourgeois government. At the same time, it was widely known that the levee system was designed to withstand no stronger than a Category 3 hurricane, while Katrina was a Category 4.

Government officials from New Orleans City Hall to the White House are responsible for the slaughter that took place, Barnes said. Only the initiatives of working people prevented the deaths of thousands more people.

Barnes used several examples to illustrate how normal it is under the profit system for capitalists to use such catastrophes to further enrich themselves. In a recent TV interview billionaire Donald Trump said he would build a giant hotel and tower in New Orleans. When reporters asked him what else he was doing to help, he said he had begun buying up as much beachfront property as people felt they had to sell. Barnes said this is the “normal bourgeois reaction” of the wealthy, who always seek to take advantage of death and destruction to augment their wealth.

“There are many New Orleanses,” said Barnes. Better-off neighborhoods have some electricity and running water already, but this is not the case in many working-class areas.

However, the centerpiece of what’s unfolding there is the beginning of the transformation of the working class from a class that becomes aware of its



Part of audience at September 11 meeting at New York University. Inset: Socialist Workers Party national secretary Jack Barnes addressing the gathering.

oppression to a class that becomes conscious of itself and organized by itself, said Barnes. This is what was demonstrated by the initiatives of working people in their neighborhoods, who got food and water to distribute to those in need and who helped evacuate many of those stranded.

Working people stand up and fight because they have no choice. In the process they can become a politically conscious, mobilized, and united class that can fight to overthrow capitalism and replace it with a society organized to meet human needs, not profits. This comes only as a by-product of struggle, he said, in introducing the next speaker.

Alyson Kennedy, a coal miner involved in the fight by Co-Op miners in Utah to win representation by the United Mine Workers of America, spoke about the significance of this two-year-long labor battle. “We learned that it’s our own actions that are decisive,” she said, adding that the bosses have failed to break the fighting spirit of these miners, a number of whom are now working in other mines in the area. Kennedy also described other struggles by working people, like the successful union-organizing fights by garment workers at Point Blank Body Armor in Florida and meat packers at Dakota Premium Foods in Minnesota. She also pointed to the “important contribution that class-conscious workers can make in extending solidarity to those on strike against Northwest Airlines and Boeing.”

### Sharpening conflict in Americas

Mary-Alice Waters, editor of the Marxist magazine *New Internationalist*, took note of the editorial titled “Playing Doctors” that appeared in the September 9 *Investor’s Business Daily*. The editorial charged that the Cuban government’s offer to send nearly 1,600 doctors to the ravaged Gulf Coast region “has nothing to do with delivering aid,” and that “Castro offers ‘free’ doctors to confuse the poor.”

Far from being confused, Waters said, most people in New Orleans would be grateful if Washington accepted Cuba’s offer to send doctors to the most difficult, isolated, and dangerous places.

This offer is part of Cuba’s internationalist record that shows what’s possible when working people have state power and a revolutionary leadership,

she said. There are 18,000 Cuban doctors and other medical personnel in Venezuela today. In addition, 100,000 Venezuelans will be traveling to Cuba this year for medical treatment to improve their eyesight.

The *Investor’s Business Daily* charges that Cuba’s “free doctors” are driving out Venezuela’s “real doctors.” “But the so-called real doctors won’t go near places where working people need real medical care,” said Waters.

In a recent tour in Latin America, U.S. defense secretary Donald Rumsfeld accused Cuba and Venezuela of “subversion” in the continent. Waters noted that a second defense official described Venezuelan president Hugo Chávez as “a guy who seemed like a comical figure a year ago [but] is turning into a real strategic menace.”

The stakes are high in the sharpening conflict in the Americas. Cuba and Venezuela are preparing to defend themselves from a military attack by the U.S. ruling class. While the political, economic, and military power of the capitalists in Venezuela has not been broken, she said, “the privileges and prerogatives of capital are being encroached upon as both sides prepare for class confrontations.”

Both Venezuela and Cuba are preparing for such a military conflict, first and foremost politically to prevent a war, by making it clear the cost of an attack by U.S. imperialism would be too high, she said. This was reflected at the world youth festival recently held in Caracas, said Waters, where the Cuban delegation led in rallying youth to fight imperialism, exemplified in its slogan “Cuba, Venezuela, one single flag.”

Annalucia Vermont, a meat packer and Communist League candidate for a seat of Christchurch Central in New Zealand, and Jacob Perasso, a member of United Food and Commercial Workers Local 789 and SWP candidate for mayor of St. Paul, Minnesota, described further the political success of the world youth festival.

Perasso said the Cuban and Venezuelan delegates were at the center of giving the festival an anti-imperialist focus. Prior to the festival, the Young Socialists sent a letter to festival organizers answering a challenge to this perspective by Stalinist forces

Continued on page 9

## SWP launches \$90,000 party-building fund

BY MICHAEL ITALIE

NEW YORK—At the September 11 public meeting here, “Four Years Later: Resisting U.S. Rulers’ Global Assault on Workers and Farmers” (see article above), the SWP launched a \$90,000 party building fund. Starting on that date and going through November 20, the 10-week drive will give the opportunity to party members and supporters to approach a wide range of new contributors as well as longtime backers of the Socialist Workers Party.

Bill Estrada, a member of the SWP National Committee and one of the leaders of the two-year-long fight by coal miners at the Co-Op mine in Huntington, Utah, to win representation by the United Mine Workers of America, solicited contributions at the New York event. “Every year the party needs a fund like this one to be able to respond to expanding political opportunities,” such as working peoples’ outrage at the unfolding social disaster in the Gulf Coast states and organizing solidarity with workers on strike at Northwest

airlines and Boeing, he said.

The bedrock of party finances is the weekly contributions by its members, Estrada noted. Another essential element is the monthly contributions by organized supporters of the communist movement. Annual fund drives are also needed to meet special needs.

“Your financial contributions today enable the party to be on a footing to cover the hot spots in the class struggle,” said Estrada, “to be able to sustain our political work from Venezuela to Europe to Cuba and beyond, at the same time as comrades in the branches put ourselves where the action is, in the working-class resistance of the trade union movement.”

Those present pledged or contributed nearly \$29,000. In coming issues the *Militant* will publish quotas supporters of the fund adopt in local areas as well as weekly progress charts. Checks or money orders should be made out to the SWP and sent to the party’s national office at 306 W. 37th St. 10th Floor, New York, NY 10018.

# Hurricane evacuees in Houston reject being shipped out to sea

BY AMANDA ULMAN

HOUSTON—Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) officials were forced to scuttle a plan to move some 4,000, mostly working people, currently housed in the Houston Astrodome and other shelters to cruise ships docked in Galveston, Texas.

City and county officials said they hoped to close the shelters at Reliant Park and the George R. Brown Convention Center by September 17, which currently house nearly 5,000 people.

FEMA chartered three cruise ships from Carnival—two to be docked in Galveston and one in Mobile, Alabama. They were to be crewed by Carnival employees for six months. Each ship that arrived in Galveston September 5 has a capacity to board 2,600 people.

“There is nothing that you can get done on a cruise ship out in the middle of the ocean when everything is going on here in the city,” stated Nathan Smith, 49, a maintenance engineer from New Orleans. “A lot of people were very uneasy and did not want to be put on a cruise ship because they thought that they would be denied access to benefits from agencies that could have helped them with housing, clothing, and basic necessities.” Marcunes Newels, 49, added, “And we’re tired of seeing water!” a sentiment echoed by many.

After a week of being cajoled by federal officials not one person agreed to board the ships. Officials say they never expected such resistance. By September 7 the offer was withdrawn.

Both FEMA and the Red Cross announced schemes to distribute debit cards to evacuees ostensibly to help people find their own housing. FEMA’s card was supposed to have a credit limit of \$2,000, while those issued by the Red Cross ranged from \$360 to \$1,600, depending on the size of the family the card was issued to.

People waited in mile-long lines September 9 to get a card. As the lines grew the police decided to lock down the shelters. The next day FEMA suspended the program, announcing they will instead offer checks or direct deposit.

With many apartments in Houston going for \$500–\$600 a month, the cards are barely enough to cover first month’s rent, deposit, and utilities. Meanwhile, those at the shelters are receiving little help to find jobs and establish themselves in the area. Eugene Stokes, 40, a hotel janitor, emphasized, “We’re not getting meaningful information. We have to find out everything from each other.”

Many workers turn to each other for help. Robert Gordon, 50, a contractor, found his family in Lafayette, Louisiana, after searching for them for nine days. As he was leaving the shelter, he turned to a worker he met to exchange numbers saying, “I’ll have a lot of work when I get there, I know I can get you work.”

Velma Mayeux explained, “I’m ready

## How cops obstructed evacuation



Getty Images/AFP/Mario Tama

New Orleans residents use a U.S. postal service truck to escape the deluge August 31, having loaded the wheelchair of an elderly man on top (above). Enroute they are stopped by police, forced at gunpoint to lie face down (left), and then ordered to continue on foot.



Reuters/Rick Wilking

to get out of [the shelter]. I want a home-cooked meal in my own home here in Houston.” All three of her children are attending public school here along with several thousand other students from the devastated Gulf Coast.

In a related development, the director of the University Interscholastic League, which oversees high school sports in

Texas, warned that Texas high school coaches scouring shelters in search of football standouts from Louisiana would be treated like “looters.” The director, Charles Breithaupt, said he had received several calls regarding aggressive recruitment by coaches, including contacting potential players at shelters.

## Shelters: shoddy conditions for evacuees

BY BRIAN TAYLOR

MOBILE, Alabama—In the second week since Hurricane Katrina ravaged the Gulf Coast, people forced to live in tents or in their cars are still trying to get into shelters. Yet given the deplorable conditions in these facilities, many of those already in them are trying to get out.

According to the *Atlanta Journal Constitution*, as of September 7, 182,000 people have made their way to 559 shelters across the United States.

There are between 15,000 and 25,000 evacuees in Alabama, the governor’s office reports. Some have found housing or shelters, but many are stuck in

cars or sleeping on park benches.

At Our Savior Lutheran Church here, which has been turned into a Red Cross shelter, signs are posted on the walls to call the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) for assistance. But “we have no access to phones here,” commented Robert Sneed, 43, a laid-off shipyard worker.

Glenda Cate, a nurse practitioner from North Carolina, is volunteering at the shelter for three weeks. She reported that FEMA officials came by two days earlier and said they would put two phone lines in, but have yet to return. “I let people use my cell after 9:00 p.m., when I have free minutes,”

she said.

A FEMA notice offering cash relief was put up on the wall today for the first time. This facility is in a better-off area in Mobile. It houses working people from various nationalities. At a shelter in the Black community, volunteer Denise Ervy, who is a retired school teacher, said no FEMA notice on vouchers had been posted.

Conditions at Our Savior Lutheran contrast sharply with a private special needs shelter organized by the First Baptist Church in Semmes for Fresenius Medical Care patients needing dialysis. Pastor Dave Abbott told the *Militant* that on the initiative of one of the church members, the sizable church with many rooms and facilities is now being put to use.

While making clear he was not seeking to criticize the government or any of the relief agencies, he explained to reporters that they were getting little help from the Red Cross or FEMA. “If you call and ask for something, it could be four to five days before you get it,” he said.

Patients in this shelter were brought in from hospitals throughout the Gulf Coast decimated by the hurricane. Many hospitals in affected areas have been partially or totally shut down.

In the New Orleans area alone, 24 of 27 hospitals have been closed and fully evacuated, Bloomberg News reports. Patients have been sent to hospitals across the region.

The bodies of more than 40 mostly elderly patients were located in the flooded-out Memorial Medical Center in New Orleans. Hospital officials claim they don’t know exactly how they died. At the inundated St. Rita’s Nursing Home just east of the city, 34 corpses were found. The owners were charged September 13 with negligent homicide.

## Workers displaced by Katrina seek union jobs

BY LAURA GARZA

MOBILE, Alabama—Workers in this region are sorting through obstacles to getting back to work and having an income again. Some of those most affected by the social dislocation in the wake of Hurricane Katrina and government inaction are looking to cleanup and reconstruction work as a source of decent jobs and wages.

Organizers for the Laborers’ International Union are seeking to defend hard-fought gains and sign up new members in the face of efforts by construction companies and their government hirelings to use the need for rapid reconstruction as a pretext to undermine union conditions. Washington has bypassed the normal bidding procedures for construction contracts and suspended the rule that contractors must pay prevailing wages.

The Laborers’ International Union has set up a table on the road leading to several hotels to let workers brought in by construction companies know they should be entitled to union-scale

wages. Bobby McKnight, a member of Laborers Local 366 in Sheffield, Alabama, said, “We want good paying jobs. This is a social issue, they should pay a decent wage, with health insurance.” The unionists said they want to let workers know they can join the union and push for better conditions.

Speaking with union members later at the Local 70 union hall, local business manager Chris Boykin said unionists had gone around to local shelters, laundromats, and other gathering places to post up and pass out bilingual flyers with information on filling out applications at the Laborers’ hall.

Laborers union members are paid \$17.82 an hour, and receive health and pension benefits. On the day *Militant* reporters visited the union hall, some 137 workers had applied for jobs.

Boykin said his local includes construction and shipyard workers in the region, and that they still had 600–800 retirees unaccounted for. Union members are making calls to track people down. Frank Curiel, a staffer from

Miami and a member of Local 515 based in Atlanta, said the union also represents some 2,500 poultry workers in central Mississippi “who have been without pay since the storm and still have no electricity or running water.” The union has organized collections to help workers in these situations.

Meanwhile some employers in major industries are pushing to get back up and running. Northrop Grumman, which employs about 12,000 workers in three Gulf Coast shipyards, has had about a fourth of its workforce cleaning up and projects resuming some production in the Pascagoula shipyard next week. But tens of thousands of workers continue to face hours of waiting in line to apply for food stamps, fill out aid applications, and obtain immediate relief. Some 400,000 applications had been filed for disaster aid as of September 9, but many people remain in areas where limited access to phones, gas, or internet connections hampers their ability to even find out about, much less apply for, needed aid.

# Cuban revolutionaries steeled in baptism of fire

Below are excerpts from Episodes of the Cuban Revolutionary War 1956–1958, one of Pathfinder's Books of the Month for September. The author, Ernesto Che Guevara, a leader of the Cuban Revolution, gives a firsthand account of the revolutionary war that toppled the U.S.-backed Batista dictatorship on Jan. 1, 1959. The victorious Cuban toilers soon formed a workers and farmers government and opened the way for the first socialist revolution in the Americas. This excerpt is taken from Guevara's account of the battle at Alegria del Pio in December 1956, soon after the rebels, led by Fidel Castro, had disembarked from the yacht Granma and launched the armed struggle against the dictatorship. Copyright ©1996 by Pathfinder Press. Reprinted by permission.



Council of State Office of Historical Affairs

Rebel Army led by Fidel Castro (in front) on the march in the Sierra Maestra

## BOOKS OF THE MONTH

BY ERNESTO CHE GUEVARA

Alegria de Pio is a place in Oriente province, Niquero municipality, near Cabo Cruz. There, on December 5, 1956, the dictatorship's forces took us by surprise.

We were exhausted from a trek not long so much as painful. We had land-

ed on December 2, at a place known as Las Coloradas beach. We had lost almost all our equipment, and with new boots we had trudged for endless hours through saltwater marshes. As a result, almost the entire troop was suffering from open blisters on their feet. But boots and fungus infections were not our only enemies. We had reached Cuba following a seven-day voyage across the Gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean Sea, without food, in a boat in poor condition, with almost everyone plagued by seasickness, unaccustomed to sea travel as we were. We had left the port of Tuxpan November 25, a day when a stiff northern gale was blowing and any navigation was impossible. All this had left its mark upon our troop made up of novices who had never seen combat.

The previous night we had passed through one of the cane fields of the Niquero sugar company, owned by Julio Lobo at the time. We had managed to satisfy our hunger and thirst by eating sugarcane, but due to our lack

of experience we had left a trail of cane peelings and bagasse all over the place. Not that the soldiers looking for us needed any trail to follow our steps, for it had been our guide—as we found out years later—who had betrayed us and brought them there. We had let him go the night before—an error we were to repeat several times during our long struggle until we learned that civilians whose backgrounds were unknown to us had to be closely watched in dangerous areas. We should never have permitted our false guide to leave.

By daybreak on December 5 hardly anyone could go a step further. On the verge of collapse, the men would walk a short distance and then beg for a long rest. Because of this, orders were given to halt at the edge of a cane field, in a thicket close to the dense woods. Most of us slept through the morning hours.

At noon we began to notice unusual signs of activity. Piper planes as well as other types of small army planes together with private aircraft began

to circle overhead. Some of our group went on peacefully cutting and eating sugarcane without realizing they were perfectly visible from the enemy planes, which were circling slowly at low altitudes. I was the troop physician at the time, and it was my duty to treat the blistered feet. I recall my last patient that morning: his name was Humberto Lamothe and it was to be his last day on earth.

Within seconds, a hail of bullets—at least that's the way it seemed to our sagging spirits during that baptism of fire—descended upon our eighty-two-man troop. My rifle was not one of the best; I had deliberately asked for it because I was in very poor physical condition due to an attack of asthma that had bothered me throughout our ocean voyage, and I did not want to be responsible for wasting a good weapon.

At that moment a comrade dropped a box of ammunition almost at my feet. I pointed to it, and he answered me with an anguished expression, which I remember perfectly, that seemed to say, "It's too late for ammunition boxes," and immediately went toward the cane field. (He was murdered by Batista's henchmen some time later.)

Perhaps this was the first time I was faced in real life with the dilemma of choosing between my devotion to medicine and my duty as a revolutionary soldier. There, at my feet, were a knapsack full of medicine and a box of ammunition. I couldn't possibly carry them both; they were too heavy. I picked up the box of ammunition, leaving the medicine, and started to cross the clearing, heading for the cane field.

This was our baptism of fire on December 5, 1956, on the outskirts of Niquero. Such was the beginning of forging what would become the Rebel Army.

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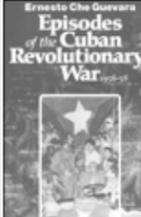
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# Defend Korea against imperialism

*We are using the editorial space this week to publish the message below sent to the Workers' Party of Korea September 9 by Jack Barnes, national secretary of the Socialist Workers Party, and Olympia Newton of the Young Socialists.*

On the occasion of the 57th anniversary of the founding of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the Socialist Workers Party and Young Socialists send this message in solidarity with the Korean people's continuing determination to win national sovereignty. Together with other revolutionary-minded working people and youth around the world, we steadfastly oppose imperialism's ongoing division of your nation. That brutal partition, imposed as a fruit of Washington's victory in World War II, remains one of the great continuing atrocities from the past century. At the same time, we recall and celebrate the victory over U.S. imperialism by the courageous people of Korea at the opening of the 1950s, a victory that prevented imperialism's occupation under the United Nations flag of the entire Korean peninsula.

Fifty-seven years after its founding, the DPRK continues to face unremitting hostility from this same imperialism. With utter disregard for the most elementary rights of national sovereignty, Washington is today seeking, under the cover of the so-called six-party talks, to prevent north Korea from developing nuclear technology to meet pressing energy needs for industry and agriculture. To the propertied rulers of the United States, it means nothing that it becomes more evident with each passing year that economic and social advancement in the countries long exploited and oppressed by imperialism—in Asia and the Pacific, Africa, the Mideast, and the Americas—cannot be met short of expanded use of all forms of energy production.

Imperialism has been for more than a century, and remains, the enemy of toiling humanity and the great-

est obstacle to human progress. Its brutality is highlighted today by the stark class reality of the massive social disaster unfolding in New Orleans and across the Gulf Coast of the United States.

Thousands of working people have died and others were left to die without medical attention, food, or water beyond what they themselves could organize to get. The reactions of the wealthy toward this calamity for our class range from callous indifference to racist contempt. They are concerned only with holding down their economic losses and minimizing knowledge about the death, hunger, dehydration, and spreading disease that their social system and its Democratic and Republican party spokespeople are solely responsible for.

The wealthiest, most powerful capitalist government in the world, with its dog-eat-dog class values, appeared helpless in face of this social catastrophe. Does the United States lack the resources? The technology? The expertise? No. What is lacking is a government of politically conscious, organized, mobilized, united and self-confident working people that places social needs above all else—a workers and farmers government. What is unfolding is a *capitalist* disaster, not a natural one—a massive social breakdown that is part of the accelerating crises, marked by spreading wars and political reaction, bred by the very workings of the imperialist world order itself.

On this anniversary, we celebrate together the just struggle of the Korean people against our common enemy. We reiterate our commitment to support the determined fight by working people and youth on both sides of the 38th parallel for the withdrawal of all imperialist armed forces from the seas surrounding Korea, armed to the teeth with nuclear weapons; for the removal of all U.S. troops from your country; and, in the process, for the restoration of a united and sovereign Korea.

## Staunch U.S. ally sweeps Japan's elections

**Continued from front page**

tackled for the time being is reform of pensions and other social reform systems," said *Yomiuri Shimbun*, Japan's largest daily. The Japanese rulers are also pushing for more use of temporary workers and removing restrictions on layoffs.

Koizumi has already called a special session of parliament September 21 to push for privatizing the post office, which Japanese also use as a bank. His plan is to begin in 2007 and be completed by 2017. With assets of \$3 trillion, the post office is the largest financial institution in the world and the main source of savings accounts, credit, and insurance for the population.

Attacks on the working class at home will be extended abroad. As an editorial in the September 13 *Wall Street Journal* put it, "Mr. Koizumi says he wants Japan to become a 'normal country,' economically, militarily, culturally, and in foreign policy." This includes accelerating the end of restrictions—imposed after Tokyo's defeat in World War II—on using Japanese armed forces abroad.

## How workers in battle transform themselves

**Continued from page 6**

in Europe, who proposed dedicating the last day of festival seminars to a celebration of the 60th anniversary of the "anti-fascist peoples' victory" at the end of World War II (see May 23, 2005, *Militant*), which would have blunted the gathering's focus on solidarity with Venezuela and Cuba. This event on World War II became a sideline, attended by a few hundred people, while some 12,000 were gathered elsewhere to hear Chávez speak on Venezuela's fight against imperialism.

Vermont pointed to the importance of the decision by festival organizers to facilitate participation of 2,000 delegates from Colombia by lowering their entry fee to \$1 per person. The move was part of efforts to make it harder for Washington to use Colombia as a staging ground for any attack on Venezuela.

Barnes said the transformation of the U.S. military will be accelerated in the Mideast and at home in response to the Gulf Coast crisis, and that the U.S. rulers' plans to fight the "war on terror" within U.S. borders

are aimed at countering consistent and determined resistance by working people in the United States. U.S. troops on the Gulf Coast are now under the control of the Northern Command, the branch of the U.S. military responsible for conducting military operations on U.S. soil. The Pentagon will now seek to establish greater authority for the use of troops under federal command in times of domestic crisis, said Barnes.

The SWP leader urged all those present to take advantage of the opportunities presented by this unique moment, reflected in the increased interest in the *Militant's* coverage and editorial stance on labor struggles like the mechanics' strike and the social disaster in the Gulf Coast. He encouraged everyone present to join in helping to extend the reach of the *Militant* and asked those who went to Caracas and other youth present to join the Young Socialists and the SWP and be part of the unfolding working-class struggles from within.

The event ended with an appeal for contributions to a party-building fund (see article on page 6).

# New Orleans

**Continued from front page**

faced abusive treatment by police and federal troops who tried to force them to leave after the government issued a mandatory evacuation order.

The city, still under a 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. curfew, has been largely deserted except for the massive police and military presence as well as firefighters, emergency medical service personnel, reporters, and convoys of electrical, telephone, and cable crews restoring services. Although the city is gradually being drained, big sections of it remain under water. City officials said September 13 that some neighborhoods—beginning with wealthier sections less affected by the storm, including the French Quarter and the central business district—will be reopened in coming days.

In Marigny, a section of New Orleans that did not suffer much flooding, Howard Allen and Adrian Thomas were among those who did not leave their homes. They helped rescue people who had been left to fend for themselves by the authorities.

"We used my pickup and took truckloads of people to the evacuation centers" at the Superdome and Convention Center, said Allen, a retired merchant marine and former member of the Seafarers International Union. He was helped by Thomas, a musician who plays in the French Quarter.

Allen said dozens of people in their neighborhood resisted the attempts by police and military to force them to abandon their homes and pets. They had heard of the brutal treatment meted out to working people in "shelters" such as the Superdome and to those who were flown to other states—often not told of their final destination—and separated from family members.

He explained that the police conducted house-to-house searches, harassing them day after day. "They kept coming back threatening us, claiming we were spreading disease," he said. A group of 70 neighbors stayed in a nearby church until the military and police patrols pressured them into leaving.

Residents in several nearby neighborhoods had been organizing together to take care of basic necessities. "Our groups have been systematically broken apart by the daily pressure from the cops and the military," Allen said. "They're trying to starve us out by not giving us food, water, or gasoline," he added. When they asked for food and water, the soldiers said they had been told not to give anything to those staying behind.

Thomas reported that despite all this, "by organizing ourselves we kept the city from shutting off the water for over a week. We had gas up to Sunday and telephone service until a week after the hurricane hit."

Their group organized one person to get a set of door keys to check up on the houses and feed the animals for those who were forced to leave.

*Militant* reporters also visited Avondale, on the other side of the Mississippi River. The working-class area, located near the shipyards, shows wind damage, with shingles peeled off and homes that lost part of their roofs.

Paul Antoine, a sandblaster-painter who worked at the Grand Island Shipyards, said his family initially went to Houston before the storm. Faced with price gouging by the hotel where they were staying, they soon ran out of money and returned to Avondale. "When I got back here, I had no electricity or phone," he said.

Bridget Antoine, a medical technician, reported that when they called the Federal Emergency Management Agency, a FEMA supervisor "told me to leave. I asked, where can I ask for help? He said, 'Just go to a shelter.'" Referring to the cops, she said, "They beat my cousin right here, because they said he did not want to get out of the street."

Paul Antoine said the police and soldiers "ride around in trucks, with some of them in the back, and point their guns at you. I'm in my house—you are not going to point your gun at me!"

Near the shipyards, a crew of three Bell South telephone workers were making repairs on a fiber optic line. One worker, who said they have been working 12 hours a day, noted that several of their co-workers lost their houses and were evacuated.

He expressed outrage at how insensitive some of the troops were to those being evacuated, many having spent days on rooftops without food or water. "There was one group waiting to be evacuated that included families. The troops just picked people at random, while people were pleading to stay together. All of them had guns as they were yelling, 'You, you, and you—go.'"