

# THE MILITANT

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A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

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## Over 2,000 at memorial for W. Virginia miners

*Facts show bosses' greed killed workers*

BY TONY LANE  
AND MARTY RESSLER

BUCKHANNON, West Virginia—Some 2,300 people attended a January 15 memorial meeting here on the West Virginia Wesleyan College campus for the 12 who died in the Sago Mine explosion. One survivor, Randal McCloy Jr., 26, remains hospitalized in Morgantown in serious condition.

The “Service of Honor, Hope, and Healing” celebrated the lives of these men. The gathering filled the Wesley Chapel and an overflow crowd of 500 watched the event on a big-screen television in the college gym.

Meanwhile, facts continue to emerge showing that the bosses’ drive for profit, and the resulting disregard for safety, led to the miners’ deaths.

Among those at the event was Chuck Knisell of Westover, West Virginia, who used to work

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### N.Y. home health-care workers demand living wage



Militant/Robin Mace

BY MICHAEL ITALIE

NEW YORK—Nearly 1,000 home health aide workers and their supporters demonstrated in Harlem here January 16 to demand “a living wage” and to mark the Martin Luther King Day holiday. “I make only \$6.75 an hour, and I’ve been doing this work for 19 years,”

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## Longshore locals back labor defense case

BY PAUL MAILHOT

SALT LAKE CITY—“It’s time for unions and all labor to step forward and stand strong together to stop attacks like the C.W. Mining Company’s harassment lawsuit,” said John Fisher, a member of the executive board of International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) Local 19 in Seattle. The local voted unanimously at its January 12 meeting to endorse the Militant Fighting Fund and to contribute \$1,000 to help defend the *Militant* against this retaliatory suit.

This is the kind of support for labor rights and for the right of newspapers to print the workers’ side of the story that partisans of the *Militant* are gaining leading up to a January 25 court hearing on the C.W. Mining lawsuit. The owners of the Co-Op Mine near Huntington, Utah, have sued the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA), 16 miners there who have fought for UMWA representation, other supporters of the coal miners, and the *Militant* and two Salt Lake City daily newspapers on charges of defamation and unfair labor practices.

ILWU Local 19 has helped win soli-

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## Coal miners begin to renew their ‘Militant’ subscriptions

BY ARGIRIS MALAPANIS

“We have two six-month renewals so far from a UMWA retiree and the Fivecoats, who have supported the Co-Op miners fight for a union here,” said Alyson Kennedy from Price, Utah, in a January 17 note about the start of the *Militant*’s sub renewal campaign the day before in the western coalfields. “Tomorrow we’ll pick up another renewal. We have gone through the lists of subscribers and have figured out whose subs are up and when they are up.”

The campaign, which lasts through February 20, aims to increase the *Militant*’s long-term readership by winning at least 500 of the 3,200 people who subscribed last fall to renew their subs.

“We are also planning another sub renewal team in the coal mining areas of the Navajo Nation and Farmington, New Mexico,” Kennedy continued.

Coal miners and other working people have been eager to buy the paper the last two weeks.

“Sales the last week in Price, Utah; Farmington, New Mexico; and Kayenta

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## U.S., EU gov’ts prepare sanctions against Iran

BY CINDY JAQUITH

PITTSBURGH—In a victory for Washington, the foreign ministers of Germany, Britain, and France announced January 12 that they now favor referring Iran to the United Nations Security Council, following Tehran’s resumption of a nuclear research program.

Representatives of these three members of the European Union (EU) and Washington met with government officials from China and Russia four days later in London to pressure Moscow and Beijing—both UN Security Council members with veto power—to go along. At that meeting, Chinese and Russian officials agreed that an emergency session of the UN’s International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) could be called to take up Iran’s case. The special IAEA meeting has now been set for February 2. According to the Associated Press, EU officials are now

drafting a resolution for that gathering to refer Tehran to the UN Security Council for possible sanctions.

Since late 2003 the EU Three have been pressing Tehran to give up its research and development of nuclear fuel for its energy plants because the same process can be used to produce material for nuclear weapons. In November 2004 Tehran agreed to temporarily freeze uranium enrichment, when threatened by Paris, Berlin, and London with Security Council action.

German foreign minister Frank Steinmeier said January 12 that talks between the three European powers and Tehran are at a “dead end.”

“Iran is ready to resume the research activities,” Iranian foreign ministry spokesman Hamid Asefi stated. “It is our right as [much as] other members of the Nonproliferation Treaty. Iran

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## Working people in New Orleans resist eviction effort by City Hall



AP/Ben Margot

Carolyn Parker, a resident of New Orleans’s Lower Ninth Ward, speaks out at January 11 hearing against City Hall plans that would force thousands of working people to abandon their homes. “I don’t think it’s right that you take our properties,” she said. “Over my dead body.”

BY SAM MANUEL

NEW ORLEANS, January 16—Working people here took advantage of recent activities to express their determination to not be driven out of the city. From a jam-packed meeting at City Hall to the annual Martin Luther King Day march today in the predominantly Black and working-class section of the Lower Ninth Ward, they vowed to defy a proposal to impose a four-month moratorium on rebuilding their neighborhoods.

In an effort to assuage that anger, the mayor and members of the city council have distanced themselves from the proposal, which was put forward by a panel appointed by the mayor.

Most of the city was flooded for

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## World Bank freezes Chad’s oil assets abroad

BY MARTÍN KOPPEL

The World Bank announced January 12 that it had taken punitive action against Chad by freezing a London-based Citibank account that holds most of the West African nation’s oil income. The previous week World Bank president Paul Wolfowitz suspended a \$124 million loan to Chad.

Officials of the imperialist financial institution said they were punishing Chad for passing a law that gives the government more access to revenues from an oil pipeline operated by ExxonMobil. Marco Mantovanelli of the

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# FBI charges university employees in Miami with spying for Cuba

BY DEBORAH LIATOS  
AND ERIC SIMPSON

MIAMI—U.S. federal prosecutors have charged two Florida International University (FIU) employees with failing to register with federal authorities as agents of the government of Cuba. Carlos Alvarez, 61, an FIU professor, and his wife Elsa Alvarez, 55, a counselor at the university, were arrested by FBI agents January 6. They are being held at the Federal Detention Center here without bail. The indictment was handed down at a January 9 hearing.

The government alleges in the indictment that the Alvarezes “served as agents of the DI [Cuban intelligence] and its predecessor agencies by gathering information within the United States on matters of interest to the Cuban government, informing on anti-Castro individuals and groups and other elements of the Cuban exile community in South Florida, and carrying out other operational directives.” Each is charged with one count of acting as an agent of “the Republic of Cuba, without providing prior notification to the Attorney General, in violation of Title 18” of the U.S. Code.

If convicted, the two could each face up to 10 years in jail and a maximum fine of a quarter million dollars. An arraignment is set for January 19.

The indictments have generated sensational headlines across the country. The media have largely reported as fact the allegations by government attorneys. “The Alvarez case: Fidel’s loyal lackeys,” was the headline of an editorial in the January 12 *Pittsburgh Tribune-Review*, for example.

Attorney Steven Chaykin, who represents Carlos Alvarez, said the reputations of two academics were being destroyed by a “McCarthy-like hysteria,” fueled by government misstatements. “The presumption of innocence has disappeared,” Chaykin told the *Miami Herald*.

According to various news reports, between 30 and 80 friends and colleagues showed up at the courthouse January 9 to support the couple.

“There are serious and troubling questions about these charges—their timing and their purpose,” said Chaykin. FBI agents and federal prosecutors are accusing the couple with transmitting information about Miami’s exile community and groups such as the Cuban American National Foundation and Brothers to the Rescue. They also charge that they provided Cuban officials with the identity of an FBI employee.

According to the Mexico City daily *La Jornada*, Chaykin said, “Both agreed to be interrogated (by FBI agents) and in the end the government released them.” The *Miami Herald* reported that each of the two spoke to FBI agents last June and July.

U.S. assistant attorney Brian Frazier alleges that Carlos Alvarez had “spied

## Morocco sentences 14 independence fighters to prison terms in occupied Western Sahara

After being held without charges for months in the overcrowded cell in the Black Prison in El Aaiun pictured here, 14 independence fighters in Western Sahara were sentenced in a kangaroo court December 14 to up to three years in prison for helping lead pro-independence rallies in the Moroccan-occupied northwest African country. They were charged with belonging to an illegal organization, gathering on the streets without permission, damaging public property, and assaulting police.

Among those convicted were prominent independence leaders, including Ali Salem Tamek, Aminatou Haider, Brahim Noumria, Mohamed Elmoutaoukil, Lidri Elhoucine, Larbi Messaoud, and Hmad Hammad. According to the Sahara Press Service, pro-independence demonstrations have continued in the Western Saharan cities of El Aaiun, Dakhla, and Assa.

—BRIAN TAYLOR



for Cuba” since 1977 and Elsa Alvarez since 1982, and claims that the couple’s travels to Cuba on U.S. government-authorized educational trips were a “pretext to do other things.” Federal prosecutors claim that Alvarez used his trips to Cuba to trade information with “Fidel Castro’s intelligence agents.”

Chaykin told *La Jornada* that since the FBI is not charging the Alvarezes with revealing secret or delicate information, “it remains to be seen if someone can be characterized as an ‘agent’ if all they do is exchange public information, and if so, then it becomes a case against the freedom of speech.”

## U.S. gov’t tries to bar amicus briefs from Cuban 5 appeal

BY DEBORAH LIATOS

MIAMI—The U.S. attorney’s office is seeking to block national legal groups from filing amicus briefs in the government’s appeal of the reversal of convictions against the Cuban Five.

Five Cuban revolutionaries—Ge-

rardo Hernández, Fernando González, René González, Antonio Guerrero, and Ramón Labañino—won a victory last August when a three-judge panel of a federal appeals court threw out their convictions on frame-up charges by the government, which included “conspiracy to commit espionage” for Havana, among others. The court ordered a new trial be held, on the basis they did not receive a fair trial in Miami.

The federal government appealed the ruling, asking the full 11th Circuit Court of Appeals based in Atlanta to review the case and reverse the three-judge panel ruling. The full court agreed to the review.

Washington’s latest efforts to reinstate the convictions of the five come as oral arguments are scheduled for

February before the 11th Circuit Court of Appeals. In late December the U.S. attorney’s office in Miami filed a motion seeking to block the 11th Circuit’s acceptance of two amicus briefs filed by state and national legal organizations that oppose the government’s position.

The briefs were filed by the National Lawyers Guild, National Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers, National Association of Federal Public Defenders, and the Florida Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers. “As distinguished criminal defense organizations, amici offer to assist the court by presenting the cases most pertinent to the fair treatment of unpopular defendants,” said Ricardo Bascuas, a University of Miami law professor, who authored one of the amicus briefs.

## THE MILITANT

### Imperialist powers hands off Iran!

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Research at Nantaz uranium enrichment facility near Tehran has restarted.

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# World Bank freezes Chad’s oil revenues

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World Bank’s Africa department said the new legislation was a “default on the loan agreement.” The accord obligated the government to devote a designated amount of its oil income to “poverty reduction.”

“This is totally unjustified,” said Chadian finance minister Abbas Mahamat Tolli in a January 13 statement, adding, “It is unacceptable that a nation should have its access blocked to revenues generated by the sale of its own natural resources.”

In 2000 the World Bank agreed to loan Chad \$39 million to help finance a \$3.7 billion oil pipeline operated by a consortium of ExxonMobil, ChevronTexaco, and the Malaysian state oil company Petronas. The pipeline runs from the Doba oilfields in southern Chad to the port of Kribi in Cameroon, in the Gulf of Guinea.

The condition for the loan was that Chad deposit all its royalty payments for the pipeline from the oil corpora-

tions in a Citibank escrow account in London, and that the bulk of these funds be spent on “reducing poverty.” This included 10 percent to be set aside in a “future generations fund.” An “oversight committee” including “nongovernmental organizations” has been charged with approving the spending. Only 15 percent of the oil revenue has been allowed to go to the nation’s general treasury.

The World Bank’s sanctions came after the government of Chad adopted a law ending the “future generations fund.” President Idriss Déby denounced the bank’s actions as an attack on the country’s sovereignty. He said the government wants access to some of the money for its overall needs, BBC News reported.

In a December 16 editorial titled “Breaking the Oil Curse,” the *New York Times* lectured, “Chad was supposed to be the exception in the tragic history of striking oil in poor countries, where oil has fomented corruption, eroded gov-

ernmental institutions, undermined the development of a middle class, cut jobs, and led to wars.” Referring to the deliberations by Chad’s National Assembly on the proposed law, the editorial called on the World Bank to “reconsider whether it should continue to make oil loans in countries where governments are corrupt and citizens have no real powers.”

The big-business media and liberal advocacy groups have repeated this “oil curse” theme in relation to other African countries as well, from Nigeria to Equatorial Guinea. Blaming poverty on government corruption in semicolonial nations, they appeal to imperialist regimes and the oil monopolies to enforce “transparency” and “accountability” to make African governments report how



Oil pipeline from Chad through Cameroon to Gulf of Guinea

they use their oil income. One unnamed member of a “nongovernmental organization” in Chad was even quoted in the French liberal daily *Libération* as saying that “this country is not yet ready to use its oil money.”

Few of these commentators, however, report how much of the oil wealth is pocketed by the imperialist oil companies.

Since large-scale oil production began in Chad in 2003, some 134 million barrels of crude oil have been exported and Chad has earned \$399 million in gross direct revenues, the Reuters news agency reported January 13.

But the contract with the oil companies gives Chad barely 12.5 percent of total revenues, Agence France-Presse reported. Most of the rest ends up in the coffers of ExxonMobil and the other two oil conglomerates. ExxonMobil reported nearly \$10 billion in overall profits for the third quarter of 2005, the largest in U.S. corporate history. Royal Dutch Shell took in a tad less, \$9 billion.

In contrast, most of Chad’s 9 million citizens earn an average of less than \$1 a day. In that former French colony, life expectancy is less than 45 years, and one in five children dies before the age of five. In Cameroon, the other supposed beneficiary of the oil pipeline, there are only seven doctors for every 100,000 people. Life expectancy is 51 years and infant mortality is 68 per 1,000 live births. Cameroon, previously colonized by Germany, France, and Britain, has a population of 16 million.

The oil income statistics don’t tell the whole story. Chad and Cameroon must devote part of those funds to pay back loans with interest to the World Bank and other foreign creditors that financed the pipeline project. Chad has a total foreign debt of \$1.1 billion, while Cameroon owes the imperialist bankers \$8.4 billion.

In addition, the pipeline has jeopardized the livelihood of many working people along the way. Farmers in the Doba region of Chad say they were denied access to their land or compensation, according to BBC News. In Cameroon, fishermen in the coastal town of Kribi, where the pipeline ends, say a reef was destroyed during the construction of an offshore oil facility.

“These people only cared about their pipeline and the money they will make from it, they cared little about us,” Agathe Mbeki, a fish seller in Kribi’s market, told Reuters. “They destroyed the rock that shielded the water in which fish used to breed. They promised to replace it, but have done nothing.” The oil consortium promised compensation, but people in Kribi said it provided only 70 nets for 2,000 fishermen.

# Imperialist powers press for sanctions against Iran

Continued from front page

should not be exempted.... We are doing research and development according to the agency’s regulations as well as NPT’s [Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty’s]. We believe the western countries should not seek [a] double standard in this respect. The activities will be under supervision of the agency, therefore there is nothing to be worried about.”

In the presence of inspectors from the IAEA, the Iranian government removed UN seals from equipment at the nuclear plant at Natanz, the center of Iran’s uranium enrichment program. According to the *New York Times*, the IAEA later released a statement saying that “Iranian officials told inspectors that they plan to start up a small-scale centrifuge and do research in which uranium gas would be introduced. Centrifuges produce a cascade of reactions that enrich uranium to levels at which it can be used for reactors or, if enriched to a far higher

level, for weapons.” Under the NPT, which Tehran has signed, the imperialist powers in Washington, London, and Paris, as well as Moscow and Beijing, are allowed to have nuclear weapons, but other nations are barred from acquiring them. The Israeli government, however, which is known to have a nuclear arsenal, has been permitted by the imperialists to acquire whatever nuclear technology it wishes and has never signed the NPT.

The treaty also subjects governments—primarily those of semicolonial countries—to a range of requirements, including regular reports and inspections of their nuclear research and energy facilities. None of the activities Iran is known to be pursuing are outlawed under the accord.

The U.S. government has consistently accused Iran of developing nuclear power in order to build atomic bombs. Tehran has denied this, stating it needs nuclear power to develop the

country and noting that semicolonial countries are being denied equal access to energy.

Condoleezza Rice, U.S. secretary of state, supported the ministers’ action and their call for the IAEA to meet quickly to discuss Iran. If referred to the Security Council, she continued, there was a “menu of possibilities.”

The governments of the United States, Russia, China, France, and Britain hold the five permanent seats on the UN Security Council. Until recently it was expected Russia and China would oppose bringing Iran before the Security Council. However, an intense campaign by the imperialist powers has begun to bring both Moscow and Beijing into line. Russia and China joined the three EU members and the United States in sending their own protest notes to Tehran.

Ekho Moskvyy radio quoted Russian foreign minister Sergei Lavrov saying the latest moves by Iran, a big energy partner of Russia, posed an acute problem. “Constant statement(s) by the Iranian leadership concerning Israel aggravate the situation further,” he continued. “All this adds arguments for those who believe that Iran can be dealt with only through the U.N. Security Council.”

“Our priority is not our bilateral relations and investment in Iran or our benefits from trade with Iran. Under current circumstances our ultimate task is not to allow the breach of (the) nonproliferation system,” he was quoted as saying.

Interfax quoted Lavrov as calling on Iran to resume its moratorium on uranium enrichment. “In the absence of such a decision, we will find it very difficult to continue our efforts,” Lavrov added, referring to Moscow’s support to Iran.

The Bush administration said in late December it had imposed sanctions on nine foreign companies for selling Iran hardware or ingredients for “weapons of mass destruction.” These included six Chinese firms, two from India, and one from Austria.

The sanctions, which will last one year, were imposed under the Iran Nonproliferation Act approved by Congress five years ago. The named companies are barred from doing business with the U.S. government or from buying high-tech U.S. products.

## Pakistan: thousands protest U.S. air strike



U.S. forces bombed a remote village near the Pakistan/Afghanistan frontier January 13, killing at least 18. The bombing, the second attack in a week inside Pakistani territory, drew protests—a mobilization of 5,000 in Karachi (above), and rallies of hundreds in other cities. The U.S. military claimed al-Qaeda second-in-command Ayman al-Zawahiri was the target of the attack, which was reportedly carried out by pilotless Predator drones. But he was not among the victims, which included several young children. Since the 2001 invasion of Afghanistan, U.S. forces, with the approval and aid of the Pakistani military and intelligence agencies, have carried out a wide-ranging war on both sides of the border targeting supporters of the former Afghan regime of the Taliban and their allies.

—PAUL PEDERSON



# ‘Many drivers want Teamsters’

## Independent truckers in Miami discuss organizing

BY DEBORAH LIATOS

MIAMI—“There are many truck drivers who want the Teamsters union,” said Jesús Pérez, a truck driver for 19 years.

He was referring to the effort by the Teamsters union here, which began last fall, to organize the 1,700 independent truckers who haul containers from the Port of Miami, Port of Everglades, and local rail yards. The union opened a hiring hall at the Teamsters Local 769 offices Sept. 17, 2005, as part of a national campaign that union officers said was aimed at organizing independent truckers and other drivers in the \$80 billion container shipping industry across the East Coast.

According to the Teamsters, the fall organizing drive here did not succeed by the end of the peak season since the union did not sign up the majority of the 1,700 drivers in the area, but union organizers said the Teamsters are committed to the fight to organize drivers to get respect and a better income.

“The situation has not gotten better,” Pérez said. “I work 70–80 hours a week. Eighty percent of the companies at the Port of Miami provide no benefits. There are a lot of delays. We wait three to four hours for a container. At best two hours. They pay by the trip, not by the hour. Nineteen years ago wages were better, if you take into account prices. I used to work 40–50 hours a week. I never worked as many hours as now.”

Sandro Lerro has been driving since 1994 and worked as a driver/organizer for the Teamsters during its fall organizing campaign here. “We still face the same conditions. They have raised the rates a bit,” he said, referring to the hourly fee the companies pay to the truck drivers. “But the Port of Miami is still a mess. We still wait three to four hours. It is faster in New Jersey.”

Port drivers in the United States are

usually the newest immigrants in their community, according to the Teamsters. In Oakland, California, most port drivers are East Indian. In Houston and Los Angeles the majority of drivers are Central American and Mexican. In Detroit they are mostly from the Middle East. Here, for the most part, port drivers are from Cuba. New immigrants are attracted to hauling port containers since there are few requirements to get the job—mostly a license and \$4,000–\$10,000 to purchase a used truck. The average owner-operator at the ports has no health insurance, no pension, no paid vacations or holidays, and after expenses grosses between \$7 and \$8 per hour.

Rising fuel costs and stricter government security regulations that have lengthened unpaid waiting time to get into the ports in recent years have worsened conditions for the drivers and created a more fertile ground for union organizing.

Since port drivers are classified as independent owner-operators, not employees, they are not covered by the National Labor Relations Act or state labor laws and can be sued for taking collective action or have their leases terminated for protesting unjust treatment.

That’s why, Lerro told *the Militant* last October, Miami truck drivers who have an independent contractor lease agreement with the carriers had to quit their jobs last fall in order to join the Teamsters union as employee owner-operators. As members of the Teamsters they can protest and strike legally.

“Many people are depending on the Teamsters,” Angel Leiva, a truck driver since 1995, said in another interview. “The situation is the same or worse than before. We continue to fight to find a way forward.”

Ruth Robinett contributed to this article.

## Communist League candidate in Canada: Withdraw Ottawa’s troops from Afghanistan!



Militant/John Steele

TORONTO—Addressing students at Ryerson University January 16, Michel Prairie (speaking), Communist League candidate in the Toronto-Centre riding (electoral district) for Canada’s federal parliament, demanded the “immediate and unconditional withdrawal of Canadian troops from Afghanistan.”

Canada’s minister of defense, William Graham, the Liberal Party candidate in the riding, was absent but sent a letter to the meeting that was read on his behalf. The letter reminded the students of the government’s decision not to send troops to Iraq as part of the U.S.-led “coalition of the willing,” but did not mention Ottawa’s current military intervention in Afghanistan. Candidates of the Conservative Party, New Democratic Party, Marxist Leninists, Green Party, and Communist Party also participated.

The previous day, Ottawa’s military intervention was thrust into the campaign for the January 23 elections with the killing of the senior Canadian diplomat in Afghanistan and the wounding of three Canadian soldiers in Kandahar by a “suicide bomber.” There are 650 Canadian troops in Afghanistan as part of the U.S. and NATO occupation forces, with 2,000 more on the way. “Our participation in the mission in Kandahar is essentially establishing peace and security,” claimed Prime Minister Paul Martin in a statement on the death of the Canadian diplomat.

In response to a question from a student about Canadian police who are training the police force in Haiti, Prairie countered the lie of Ottawa’s so-called international peace-keeping role in the Caribbean nation. He pointed out the rightist government of that country came to power after the country’s elected president, Jean Bertrand Aristide, was forced into exile in 2004 after an uprising by ultrarightist forces aided by Washington and Ottawa. Prairie called for withdrawing Ottawa’s cops from Haiti and an end “to Canada’s efforts to prop up imperialist domination of that country.”

Through January 22, statements by Prairie and other Communist League candidates, Beverly Bernardo in Parkdale–High Park and John Steele in Eglington–Lawrence, can be found at [www.rogerstelevision.com](http://www.rogerstelevision.com) (click “Toronto,” then “on the ballot,” and the riding.)

—JOHN STEELE

# Longshoremen locals in the U.S. endorse Militant Fighting Fund

Continued from front page  
darity with the Co-Op miners in the Pacific Northwest, organizing tours of the miners in the area and sending delega-

tions to Utah. “We can’t depend on the government, the courts, or the NLRB [National Labor Relations Board] to protect workers’ rights,” Fisher said.

## ‘Militant’ sub renewal campaign

Continued from front page  
and Window Rock, Arizona, totaled 125 copies and one subscription,” wrote Frank Forrestal from Kearny, Arizona. He was part of a team of *Militant* readers who sold the paper at mine portals and door-to-door in the region.

At the McKinley mine in New Mexico 25 coal miners of the 300 there bought last week’s issue. “One of the miners who has been reading the paper for months, stopped by to say that he, and especially his wife, liked the *Militant*,” Forrestal said.

“At one shift change at the Crown II mine in Virden, Illinois, on January 14, we sold 21 copies,” wrote Kevin Dwire from Des Moines, Iowa. The mine is organized by United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) Local 1969. He added that one miner who had subscribed a week earlier donated \$20 to the Militant Fighting Fund (see front-page article).

“The Sago Mine disaster and the response by supporters of the *Militant* is having an impact among workers in

New York,” said Dave Prince. “About 40 people attended the Friday night Militant Labor Forum here on January 13. During the discussion, Bill Hovland spoke. He described how he worked in the early 1980s for a year and a half on the same crew at another West Virginia mine with one of the miners killed at Sago, and talked about the conditions there. He told me later that this worker was one of the miners who walked out when Bill was fired, and helped win his job back. The forum had an impact on a doorman in the area, a member of Service Employees International Union Local 32BJ who has become a regular forum participant over the last couple of months. He has a subscription to the *Militant*, and has sold five subs to people he knows and works with.”

These reports are a good omen for winning many sub renewals. Reports like these, along with sub renewals sold, are needed at the *Militant* each week by Tuesday nights. All readers are welcome to join the effort (contact the *Militant* or see directory of distributors on page 8).

“It takes solidarity.”

International Longshoremen’s Association Local 21 president James Eli in Beaumont, Texas, told supporters of the *Militant* the local had decided to support the Militant Fighting Fund and contribute \$500. The local’s action followed a presentation to a union meeting attended by 40 members. Many of the longshoremen had been following the story of the Sago Mine disaster and were eager to side with a labor fight closely tied to the struggle for the UMWA and safety in the mines.

From Miami, Robin Schuler, president of Service Employees International

Union Local 11, endorsed the Militant Fighting Fund and contributed \$250. Marleine Bastien, executive director of Haitian Women of Miami, Andre Balash, secretary-treasurer of the UNITE HERE union Local 355, and Juvais Harrington, Miami-Dade NAACP president, also endorsed.

The Mississippi Immigrants Rights Alliance also voted unanimously at its monthly statewide meeting to endorse.

Betsy Farley from Seattle, Tony Dutrow from Houston, Eric Simpson from Miami, and Susan LaMont from Birmingham contributed to this article.

## —MILITANT LABOR FORUMS—

### CALIFORNIA

#### San Francisco

China: From the 1949 Revolution to Today. Speaker: Elizabeth Stone, Socialist Workers Party. Fri., Jan. 27, 7:30 p.m. 3926 Mission St. Tel: 415-584-2135.

### NEW YORK

#### Manhattan

Abortion Is a Woman’s Right to Choose! Fri., Jan. 27. Dinner, 7:00 p.m.; program, 8:00 p.m. 307 W. 36th St. 10th Floor (near 8th Ave.; north elevators). Tel: (212) 629-6649.

### UTAH

#### Price

Defend Labor Rights—Defeat the Co-Op Bosses Harassment Lawsuit. A panel discus-

sion. Sat., Jan. 28, 7:30 p.m. 80 West Main St. #207. Tel: 435-613-1091.

### NEW ZEALAND

#### Christchurch

Bridging the Gap between the Toilers of the World. Sat., Jan. 28, 5:00 p.m. 287 Selwyn St., Spreydon. Tel: (03) 365-6055.

## —CALENDAR—

### FLORIDA

#### Miami

March for the Release of Father Gerard Jean-Juste. Sat., Jan 28, 12 noon at the Torch of Friendship. For more information call (305) 582-4846 or [www.FreeJeanJuste.com](http://www.FreeJeanJuste.com)



## — ON THE PICKET LINE —

### **Northwest asks court to void union contracts**

With the strike by the Aircraft Mechanics Fraternal Association against Northwest Airlines now in its fifth month, the company is asking a bankruptcy court judge on January 17 to approve breaking its contracts with unions representing pilots, flight attendants, and ground workers. Northwest, which filed for bankruptcy protection in September, is demanding \$750 million in concessions from these unions.

The Professional Flight Attendants Association, which has 9,600 members at Northwest, has threatened to strike if its contract is voided.

—Brian Williams

### **Construction workers in Australia win back pay**

SYDNEY, Australia—Twenty workers employed by D3 General Contracting won back wages, holiday pay, and severance pay from Northpac Constructions at the end of November. The unionists,

members of the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union (CFMEU), lost their jobs in mid-October and had not been paid since early that month when D3 General Contracting went bankrupt. CFMEU members picketed several Northpac sites, winning widespread solidarity for their fight and forcing the company to back down. Most of these workers who had been employed by Northpac were Maoris from New Zealand.

—Bob Aiken

### **Auto workers locked out in India**

Workers struck the Toyota Kirloskar plant in Bidadi, India, January 6 to protest the suspension of three workers for supposed acts of misconduct. The next day, 300–400 workers blocked the access road to the factory, demanding the suspension be dropped. The bosses retaliated, locking workers out January 8. About 1,550 of the factory's 2,350 workers are in the union.

—BRIAN TAYLOR



## Cintas-funded lawsuit aims to crush unionization efforts

BY MAGGIE TROWE

BOSTON—Cintas, the largest uniform supplier in North America, is backing a class-action lawsuit by some of its employees against UNITE HERE, the union of garment, textile, laundry, and hotel workers that has been carrying out an effort to

organize the company's workers for several years.

Cintas has 351 plants in North America and employs more than 30,000 workers. A spokesperson for the law firm Spector Gadon & Rosen said more than 1,000 Cintas employees will be part of the suit against the union,

which was initiated in June 2004 by employees at the company's Emmaus, Pennsylvania, plant. The suit also targets the union's president, Bruce Raynor, and the Teamsters union, which organizes Cintas drivers.

The lawsuit claims that union organizers violated the Driver's Privacy Protection Act of 1994, which prohibits most disclosure and use of personal information obtained through motor vehicle records, when they allegedly took down workers' license plate numbers to find their home addresses. A U.S. district judge granted class-action status to the case last June and said workers could receive \$2,500 each in damages for each time the union used motor vehicle records to make home visits or mail materials, potentially adding up to tens of millions of dollars in fines for the union.

Many workers support the unionizing effort and blame the company for the lawsuit. Eleuteria Mazon, 54, a sewing machine operator at the Cintas plant in Schaumburg, Illinois, told the *Wall Street Journal* that the company attached flyers to workers' paychecks encouraging workers to call a toll-free number to join the lawsuit and posted it on the company bulletin board. "In my plant there are no people against

the union. There are a lot of people who are afraid to support the union because of the retaliation that the company may have against them," Mazon said.

Marick Masters, a professor of business administration at the University of Pittsburgh, told the *Journal* the lawsuit will have a "very chilling effect" on workers' willingness to support the organizing drive at Cintas.

Cintas has acquired more than 200 companies, many of which had union workforces at the time they were bought. But only a few hundred of these workers are represented by unions today.

In 2003 about 2,400 Cintas drivers filed a lawsuit demanding compensation for overtime worked without pay.

A fact sheet posted on the union's website reports that "the General Counsel of the National Labor Relations Board has charged Cintas with illegally firing and disciplining union supporters, threatening workers with plant closures and unlawful interrogations, among dozens of other charges." It also reports sex and race discrimination complaints from Cintas workers.

Cintas made \$300.5 million in profit last year, up 10.4 percent from the previous year. Many production workers at Cintas make \$7–\$9 per hour, the union website reports.

## Two local elected officials challenge Pennsylvania's 'loyalty oath'

BY JAY RESSLER

PITTSBURGH—Two recently elected local officials in Pennsylvania, one in Mercer County and the other in Cumberland County, have refused to sign the state's "loyalty oath," signed into law in 1951 during the McCarthyite witch-hunt and designed to intimidate union militants, Black rights fighters, and others from participating in politics.

Both officials won as write-ins and were only asked to sign the pledge they are not a "subversive person" after their election.

Alan Kennedy-Shaffer, a political science senior at Yale University, was elected as minority inspector of elections for Upper Allen's First Precinct in Cumberland County last November. He told the press he refused to sign the oath when asked December 6 because it was a "throwback" to the McCarthy years. After initially insisting he must sign the pledge to serve his term, on December 20 county officials told Kennedy-Shaffer they would not challenge him if he did not comply. "It sounds like a victory," he said.

Gerald Massey, a retired university professor, was elected to the Stoneboro City Council in November. Mercer County officials then told him he could not serve his two-year term if he didn't sign the "anti-subversive" pledge. Massey argued the law was voided in 1975 by then-state Attorney General Robert Kane. After public outcry, including articles favorable to the councilman-elect's case in *The Sentinel*, a central Pennsylvania newspaper, Mercer county officials announced December 28 Massey could be sworn in without signing the loyalty oath.

The Socialist Workers Party candidate for mayor of Pittsburgh, Jay Ressler, had successfully challenged the same loyalty oath last July. Allegheny County officials accepted Ressler's nominating petitions and placed him on the ballot after he crossed out the section requiring him to "swear... I am not a subversive person" as defined in the 1951 Pennsylvania Loyalty Act.

A letter by the SWP's attorney to the

board of elections at the time pointed out that the loyalty oath "is clearly unconstitutional under the [1974] decision of the United States Supreme Court in *Communist Party of Indiana v. Whitcomb*." It continued, "In 1975, the State Attorney General issued a formal opinion stating that, on the basis of the *Whitcomb* case, the loyalty oath for State employees, which is identical to the Candidate's Affidavit, is unconstitutional and should not be enforced."

Brian McDonald, a spokesperson for the Pennsylvania Department of State in Harrisburg, told the *Militant* at the time that the Allegheny County's decision did not necessarily set a precedent for other county or statewide offices. "We'll cross that bridge when we come to it," he said.

## — 25, 50, AND 75 YEARS AGO —



January 30, 1981

WASHINGTON, D.C.—The largest Black rights demonstration in nearly two decades took place here January 15, demanding that Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s birthday be declared a national holiday.

A huge, militant crowd of more than 100,000 people, the overwhelming majority Black, rallied at the Washington Monument to honor the slain civil rights leader. Thousands more demonstrated in cities throughout the country.

Not since the 1963 march on Washington, led by King, has there been such a national outpouring of the Black community.

Braving the cold, singing and chanting despite slush and snow, tens of thousands of demonstrators marched from the Capitol grounds to the rally site.

The mood was festive but determined. Determined that civil rights gains, won by the movement King helped lead, will not be taken away by Reagan or by racist terrorists like the Ku Klux Klan.



January 30, 1956

NEW YORK, Jan. 25—After prolonged delay, plans appear to be getting under way to launch the long-heralded Civil Rights Mobilization in Washington, D.C. In Grand Rapids a conference Jan. 20–22 of Michigan locals of the United Auto Workers called for mass labor participation in the mobilization which will be sponsored by the AFL-CIO, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, and 49 other national organizations.

The Washington mobilization was originally pointed to by CIO President Walter Reuther last October. After that nothing but months of silence came from top labor and Negro circles about the mobilization. Speculation was that sections of the leadership feared a mobilization might get out of hand and became a mass March on Washington, which would greatly embarrass or possibly force a break between the labor and Negro voters and the Northern Democratic leaders who have taken a pledge not to get tough with the Southern wing of their party.



January 15, 1931

The American working-class faces the year 1931 with heavy losses behind it and with long, hard and militant struggles in front of it, if it is to resist successfully the savage onslaught against it in the future. In one of the country's foremost bourgeois economic reviews, we read:

"We estimate that the current rate of annual income of all workers, exclusive of those in agriculture and Federal employ, is approximately 35 billion dollars, as compared with a peak rate in 1929 of about 44.6 billion. This represents a decline of 9.6 billion, or 21.5 per cent."

With the fall in the purchasing power of the masses, the economic crisis continues to deepen. According to the bourgeois statisticians, business has dropped about 30 percent "below normal." Despite all of Hoover's optimism, despite the promise of the politicians and the mockery of the "buy now" campaigns, sales have descended to new lows.



# Memorial for W. Virginia miners

**Continued from front page**

at the Sago Mine and knew many of those who died after the January 2 blast. A member of United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) Local 2300 at the Cumberland Mine in Waynesburg, Pennsylvania, he told the *Dominion Post*, “I wanted to come down here and show these guys the (UMWA) are there for them. We’re all miners. We’re all in this together.”

A busload of UMWA members from the Blacksville mine arrived for the memorial, as did carloads of union miners from Loveridge and the Robinson Run mines in West Virginia, and from the Cumberland Mine. Families of some of the 13 miners killed in the 2001 accident at Jim Walters Resources #5 mine in Brookwood, Alabama, were also present. UMWA president Cecil Roberts and other district and international officials attended the ceremony.

In addition to local pastors, speakers included family members of three of those who were killed—Tom Anderson, Jerry Groves, and Terry Helms. West Virginia governor Joseph Manchin promised to “find the cause...of this tragedy.”

Federal and state authorities, however, have done little to enforce safety regulations. In the last two years, the Sago Mine recorded an injury rate nearly three times the national average. Of the 208 safety violations for which the mine was cited last year, 17 of the most serious resulted in fines by the Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) of just \$1,221. Only \$981 has been paid, the Louisville *Courier-Journal* reported January 12.

In response to growing pressure to produce facts about safety inspections at the mine, on January 10 MSHA took the unusual step of posting information on the 17 most serious Sago Mine citations on its web site. The agency has

come under criticism for its past policy of withholding factual information while an investigation is under way, and limiting what is made public afterward.

One document about these safety violations records an MSHA inspector writing, “The operator has shown a high degree of negligence for the health and safety of the miners that work at this coal mine by allowing the conditions to exist.”

MSHA “is going to make everything look and smell like a rose garden,” Dave Blevins, whose father died in the Alabama explosion, told *Newsday*. If they “would have listened to us and other miners in Alabama, Sago would not have happened.”

“What we need is stricter law enforcement,” Gene Roman, a coal miner at the 84 Mine in Pennsylvania and a member of UMWA Local 1197, told the *Militant*. “We tell MSHA about conditions in the mine, and they say, there’s nothing we can do about it.”

“In a union mine you have safety rights,” said Brian Braham, a member of UMWA Local 1248. “Now is the time to organize.”

The seals to block off the section of the Sago Mine where the explosion took place were made of Omega Block, a dense fiberglass foam material that is

lighter and cheaper than cement blocks. MSHA reported that these seals “were completely destroyed—blown out toward the surface.” Tim Baker, a UMWA spokesperson, said the union has always opposed such materials for mine seals. “Those blocks cannot withstand the pressure,” he stated.

Bennett Hatfield, the CEO of International Coal Group, which owns the Sago Mine, told the media that if miners had had wireless communication devices it would have been possible to direct them to a safe way out. A wired phone was the only method of communication at Sago, and it was destroyed in the blast. His statement highlights the fact that mine bosses have left communication and navigation systems largely unchanged for years in spite of advances in technology. “Miners are using 20-year old technology—it’s been that long,” Dennis O’Dell, UMWA administrator for health and safety, told the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*.

On January 13 the *Charleston Gazette* reported that newly released state mine permit records indicate that there are at least four natural gas wells near the Sago Mine, including one that appears to be adjacent to its sealed area. Three of the wells are actively producing gas.

Members of the state Board of Coal



UMWA members attend memorial

Mine Health and Safety told a January 12 meeting of the body, reports the *Gazette*, that “at Sago, natural gas could have leaked from the nearby wells’ steel pipes, or seeped into abandoned mine workings that were sealed off from the working mine sections.”

In a phone interview, Darrell Gillespie, who has worked as a roof bolter in union mines in the southern part of the state, noted, “West Virginia laws require oil or natural gas drilling to be at least 1,000 feet from coal mines. There could have been cracks.”

*Tony Lane is a coal miner in southwestern Pennsylvania. Brian Williams contributed to this article.*

## More U.S. miners killed in roof falls

**BY JAY RESSLER**

PITTSBURGH—Cornelius Yates, a 44-year-old coal miner, was killed by a roof fall at the Maverick LLC Mine #1 near Pikesville, Kentucky, on January 10, a week after the Sago Mine disaster in West Virginia. Yates was a roof bolter. He was killed after a huge rock dropped out of the roof, trapping him under the canopy of a bolting machine.

The Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) had cited the mine for 114 safety violations since November 2004.

Roof bolters secure the roof of a mine with reinforced steel pins after extraction of coal.

“Coal mining fatalities drop to record low,” was the headline of an article in the December 31 edition of the *Ob-*

*server-Reporter.com*, referring to the 22 deaths on the job in U.S. coal mines last year.

As the recent disasters in West Virginia and Kentucky show, however, the mine bosses’ profit drive may be reversing such a “trend.” Yates’s death brought the toll in U.S. coal mines to 13 in the first 10 days of this year. Of particular note is an increase in fatal roof falls, a product of speedup as bosses push workers to take short cuts. Nine of the 22 coal mine deaths last year were caused by roof falls, or 41 percent. Roof falls the preceding five years resulted in an average of 4.4 deaths annually, or about 13 percent.

In 2005, four coal miners died in Pennsylvania mines, an increase over the preceding decade. Of these, two were underground miners, both employed by Rosebud Mining, Inc., which operates 10 deep mines in the west-central part of the state. None of Rosebud’s mines are unionized.

The latest Pennsylvania death occurred on December 12 when Eric Hill, 30, an operator of the continuous miner machine, was killed by a rock fall at Rosebud’s Logansport Mine. Boyd Beer, Jr., 26, a roof bolter operator, was also killed by a roof fall at Rosebud’s Tracy Lynne mine last June.

After completing its initial investigation, the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), which is responsible for overseeing deep mine safety, suspended the mining certificates of three foremen and one worker at the Logansport mine, ordered the company to stop mining, and told Rosebud officials to prepare a new roof control plan.

*Jay Ressler is an underground coal miner in Greene County, Pennsylvania, and a member of United Mine Workers of America Local 1248.*

## Gold and copper mine owners in West Papua dump toxic wastes, fund Indonesian troops

**BY PATRICK BROWN**

AUCKLAND, New Zealand—U.S. mining company Freeport-McMoRan Copper and Gold, the owner of the world’s largest gold mine at Grasberg in West Papua, faces protests over its dumping of toxic mining wastes there. West Papua, the western half of the island of New Guinea, is the site of an ongoing struggle for independence from Indonesia.

Freeport-McMoRan’s highly profitable mine sits atop huge reserves of copper and gold. Waste from the operation pours into the nearby Otomina River, flooding some 90 square miles of wetlands. “Almost all the fish have disappeared,” noted the *New York Times* on December 30, citing an Indonesian government study.

The *Jakarta Post* reports that officials have pleaded with the company to construct pipes or provide an alternative to the present system. In a January 9 editorial, the *Times* noted that Freeport-McMoRan was one of several mining companies under pressure from local governments, which point out that such practices “would never be tolerated in America.”

Leftover rock from the mine covers

three square miles and in some places is 900 feet deep, according to the company’s own figures. Scientists say green water in springs in the nearby Lorentz National Park show that chemicals in the rock may already have leaked into the water system.

Before the mine was developed in the early 1960s the area was home to a few hundred people from the Amungme, Kamoro, and other tribes. Now nearby Timika is a city of 100,000 people, including 18,000 miners and other Freeport-McMoRan employees.

The mine owners’ assault on the environment has been one target of protests in the three decades since work was begun on the mine, which officially opened in 1981. In March 1996 thousands rallied in the streets of Timika to demand some share in the wealth being carved out of their lands.

Freeport-McMoRan says in response it has hired more West Papua residents and allocated 1 percent of revenue to meet social needs. Amungme spokesperson Thom Beanal, who supports West Papuan independence, told *Times* reporters that the resulting construction has primarily benefited the company’s operations.

Company records show that from 1998 through 2004 Freeport-McMoRan gave \$20 million to Indonesian military and police officers—part of an “intricate web of political and military ties that have helped shield Freeport-McMoRan from [pressures] to clean up their practices,” the *Times* reported.

Tom Benedetti of the West Papua Action Network in Canada reports that 50,000 Indonesian troops, including police and marines, are stationed in West Papua today. In addition to protecting the mining operations, they are there to block the movement for independence. Despite the island’s natural wealth, more than 40 percent of the population lives below the official poverty line.

In Papua New Guinea, the other half of the island of New Guinea, similar controversies have swirled around the Ok Tedi copper and gold mine. The owner, Australian-based BHP mining company, has faced protests over the annual release of tens of millions of tons of liquid and rock wastes into the Fly River. Last year company officials admitted that sulphide-bearing wastes are leaving patches of dead vegetation the size of football fields along the river banks.



# Cuba's response to 1975 apartheid army assault on Angola

We reprint below excerpts from the conclusion of an article that appeared in the Oct. 31, 2005, issue of the Cuban daily *Granma* under the headline "Operation Carlota Is Born." Excerpts from the first section of the article appeared in the Jan. 23, 2006, *Militant*.

The first part dealt with initial contacts Cuban revolutionaries made with the Peoples Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA), the organization that led the struggle for independence from Portuguese colonial domination, won in 1975. The excerpts below cover the events that unfolded after independence, as forces of the racist South African apartheid regime invaded and sought to crush the independence movement. They were aided in this by two pro-imperialist groups in Angola: the CIA-sponsored National Front for the Liberation of Angola (FNLA) and the Portugal-backed National Union for the Total Integration of Angola (UNITA).

This is part of a series of articles and documents the *Militant* has been publishing to mark the 30th anniversary of Cuba's internationalist response to Angola's request for help in defeating the invading armed forces of South Africa's apartheid regime.

Translation, subtitles, material in brackets, and footnotes are by the *Militant*.

## BY MARÍA JULIA MAYORAL

During a new stage of the struggle that began in 1975, when the Alvor Agreement [which codified Angola's independence from Portugal in 1975] was blatantly violated by the FNLA and UNITA—led, financed, trained, and armed by the CIA, South Africa, and Zaire—the MPLA urgently requested Cuba's military collaboration.

First Commander [Raúl] Díaz Argüelles, then head of the MINFAR's 10th Command, took on that responsibility....

The MPLA had proposed through Díaz Argüelles that they needed about 100 instructors in order to contribute to preparing FAPLA units (People's Armed Forces for the Liberation of Angola).

The plan suggested by Cuba included the organization, training, and arming of some 50 FAPLA units (infantry battalions and artillery batteries), in four military schools that would be created: the Centers for Revolutionary Instruction (CIR) in Dalatando, east of Luanda; Cabinda, in the country's north; Sauro, in the northeast region; and one located in southern Benguela....

Our country had decided to offer the MPLA almost five times as many instructors than asked for. "If we were going to send our men, we had to send enough to carry out the mission and defend themselves, because a group that was too small would have been destroyed," attested Jorge Risquet....

The four schools went into operation in mid-October of 1975, headed by Cuban officials. Commanders Romárico Sotomayor García and Eustaquio Nodarse Bonet and First Commander Ulises Estrada Reyes led the first three, and the fourth center, with more instructors and extra weapons—given Cabinda's isolation from the rest of Angola's territory—was under the leadership of Commander Ramón Espinosa Martín.



Granma

Cuban artillery troops fighting South African and mercenary forces in Angola

As the Cuban instructors began arriving, the political/military situation in Angola was becoming increasingly complex. The Portuguese governor was there, with an army that was becoming smaller and smaller as it returned home. Those troops were carrying out their duty of guarding the borders; Zairian units were penetrating the country from the north and advancing silently without the Portuguese authorities preventing that violation.

South African interference was also on the rise. First they sent a detachment to Calueque and Ruacaná—15 kilometers inside Angolan territory [1 kilometer = .62 miles]—with the pretext of protecting the hydroelectric complex facilities on the Cunene River that provided energy to Namibia.

This provoked a weak diplomatic protest from the Portuguese government, but nothing more.... Finally, on October 14, the Zulu Column penetrated without the governor lifting a finger. The Portuguese forces in Moçamedes (a company of paratroopers and a ship) abandoned the post under orders from the South African invaders. Luanda was being increasingly threatened both from the north and from the south. It was quite clear that there was a conspiracy by the imperialist powers to prevent independence. In this aggression, "The United States was in the lead, flanked by Zaire and South Africa. England and France took up the rear. This was the coalition that was forming in the summer of 1975 behind UNITA and the FNLA."<sup>1</sup>

Between November 2 and 3 in Catengue, Cuban military instructors and their Angolan students at the CIR located south of Benguela tried to stop the advance of a South African column of armored vehicles, which since October 14 had been advancing from Namibia toward northern Angola, headed for Luanda. It was the first organized resistance encountered by the invaders, who suffered considerable casualties but were able to hold their position and continue advancing north due to their superior numbers and resources. Cuban and Angolan blood were spilled together for the first time....

## Operation Carlota

Led by Fidel and Raúl, the country's authorities decided to send the first regular troops from our country to wage combat in Angola and take on the South African aggressors....

Any of the men selected could have said no; it was each individual's decision, made with the utmost freedom, that determined who departed for the battlefield. That was the beginning of Operation Carlota, which would last fifteen and

a half years until May 25, 1991, when the last 500 Cuban internationalists in Angola returned to their homeland after demonstrating with flying colors our people's spirit of solidarity and the ability of a small country to mobilize countless resources and military forces.

With the objective of taking Luanda, attackers from the north had twice attempted to break the FAPLA's defense in Quifangondo, 22 kilometers from the capital.

On both occasions, the aggressors had been repulsed by FAPLA combatants and some 40 Cuban instructors and their Angolan students from the CIR in Dalatando.

For the third and last attack, on November 10, the aggressors assembled a powerful and heterogeneous group: the regular troops of the FNLA and Portuguese mercenaries were joined by at least two infantry battalions and several armored battalions from Zaire's regular army; a general and 25 officers from the apartheid regime, well-equipped with heavy cannons brought by plane from South Africa; and several CIA paramilitary officers. They also had an airplane from the racists at their disposal to scope out FAPLA positions.

The defenders of Quifangondo were also reinforced. The participants from the previously mentioned combats were joined by 200 soldiers from the Katanga infantry and two Cuban artillery batteries: one of 120 millimeter mortars, and another of BM-21 reactive rockets, which arrived at the port of Luanda the same day, on November 7. The first company from the Special Troops Battalion arrived in Luanda on November 9. By the next day, they were already deployed in Cacuaco as reserve troops for the Cuban and Angolan forces stationed in Quifangondo.

Very early on the morning of November 10 combat began. The attackers suffered a crushing defeat.

The aggressors' armored vehicles were put out of combat and their infantry, under fire from the BM-21s, suffered heavy losses.... Luanda had been saved. At one minute past midnight on the 10th, at a mass rally, President [Agostinho] Neto proclaimed the birth of the People's Republic of Angola.

Immediately afterward, on the 11th, the Special Troops unit marched south under orders of Díaz Argüelles to establish a line of resistance against the invaders.

Days before, on November 8, the battle of Cabinda had begun, and it would last until the 12th.

The enemy was gathering together a reinforced regiment from the Zairian

regular army, plus up to three battalions from the so-called Cabinda Enclave Liberation Front (FLEC), another puppet organization, and a company of white mercenaries....

In spite of their superiority in troops and weapons, after attacking the enclave from three directions and waging combat for four days, a large number of the assailants were wiped out and the majority of them dispersed....

In mid-November, the South African column was stopped along the banks of the Queve River. Units of the FAPLA, Cuban instructors and units from the Benguela CIR, and the first Special Troops Battalion companies played the leading roles in that feat. They blew up the bridges over the Queve and established a line of defense between Porto Amboim, Gabela, and Quibala, which was never broken by the enemy.

Under the leadership of Officer René Hernández Gattorno, head of one of the Special Troops Battalion companies, another event took place days later that established a precedent: the combat of Ebo, on November 23, south of the aforementioned defensive line. The action culminated in bloody defeat for the South Africans, who after losing 80 to 90 men and numerous armored vehicles were so demoralized that they halted their offensive for several days.

Support from Cuba continued to grow. On November 13, Commander Leopoldo Cintra Frias arrived in Angola to lead an artillery regiment that landed in Angola between November 27 and December 1. After these units arrived, the situation began to turn in favor of the revolutionary forces.

In late November, Commander Abelardo Colomé Ibarra also arrived to take command of the Cuban military mission, shoulder-to-shoulder with the MPLA. Colomé, Cintra Frias, and Díaz Argüelles comprised the Cuban leadership of the war against South Africa, its allies, and its puppets.

Following our tradition of struggle, they were in the most dangerous locations, leading their men; it is no coincidence then that on Dec. 10, 1975, Commander Díaz Argüelles lost his life when an anti-tank mine exploded as he was traveling down a road in the Southern Front....

By late March of 1976, the last invading units were leaving Angola. During that lapse of about five months, thousands of heavily armed Cuban internationalists arrived in Angola without pause, reaching a total of 36,000 troops.

On March 27, 1976, the last detachment of South African racists crossed the Cunene River and penetrated Namibia, which was occupied by the forces of apartheid. From the Atlantic Ocean to the border with Namibia, and from Cabinda to Cunene, the People's Republic of Angola was free of the invaders and their puppets. Everything seemed to indicate that the war had come to an end, and that after a certain period allowing the FAPLA to assume the defense of that immense territory, the altruistic aid of the Cuban internationalists would no longer be needed.

1. Piero Gleijeses, *Conflicting Missions: Havana, Washington, and Africa, 1959–1976*. (The University of North Carolina Press, 2002), p. 293.



# Union dues & contracts: Lessons from Teamsters in 1930s

During and in the aftermath of the recent three-day transit workers strike in New York City the Metropolitan Transit Authority threatened to remove dues check off from paychecks of Transport Workers Union Local 100 members. State authorities had previously imposed this measure during the 11-day transit strike in 1980. The excerpt below from chapter 2, “Leadership show-down,” of *Teamster Power*, by Farrell Dobbs, describes how the class-struggle leadership of Teamsters Local 574 (later 544) in the 1930s dealt with the question of maintaining a union shop and organizing to collect dues. It was part of the fight to strengthen and extend union power in Minneapolis and throughout the Midwest. Farrell Dobbs was a central leader of the Teamsters organizing effort in Minneapolis and the 11-state over-the-road campaign that brought tens of thousands of workers into the union. He later became national secretary of the Socialist Workers Party. We are running this excerpt in place of the weekly *Books of the Month* column. Copyright © 1973 by Pathfinder Press. Reprinted by permission.

## BY FARRELL DOBBS

Whether an elected officer or an apprentice organizer, all on the union staff got the same pay. None had to be hired in order to serve the union; they would do that in any case as best they could. It was a matter of making it possible for a given number of individuals to devote their entire time to organizational work. On that premise maximum effort was expected from each person; any variations in the services rendered would then result simply from differences in

individual experience and ability.

Neither union post nor individual talent had any bearing on the rate of pay. All staff members...received comparable wages...

To round out the organizational machinery a job steward system was established. Union members at each company selected a representative to fill the post. As would be expected, those chosen as stewards had played prominent roles during the strikes. In effect, the broad strike committee was being transformed into a permanent union body with vital functions.

As directed union representatives on the job, it was the stewards’ duty to defend the rights of union members; to see that working agreements with the employers were enforced; to bring all workers on the job into the union; and to insist that they keep themselves in good standing. Regular meetings of the steward body were held, with the union staff participating in the discussions.

Provisions for a closed-shop contract, entailing compulsory union membership and dues payments, had been included among Local 574’s prestrike demands. This had been done at the insistence of Hall<sup>1</sup>, who took the bureaucratic view on the question. That view sees the closed shop as a liberating instrument—for the bureaucrats, that is, not the workers. It enables officials sitting on top of a union to more or less freely ignore or go against the wishes of the rank and file. No matter how dissatisfied this may make the workers, dues must still be paid, and the bureaucrats continue to have a union treasury at their disposal.

A different view on the same question arises when workers are inspired by the union. They develop a healthy resentment against freeloaders on the job and look for ways of forcing them to favor putting a clause in the agreement with the employer making payment of union dues compulsory. It follows from this that the closed-shop question is a

tactical matter; one to be decided according to the total complex of factors in a given situation.

In Local 574’s case, Hall’s closed-shop demand was unrealistic; as events proved, it took a bitter struggle to win even the simplest form of union recognition. Yet with other, more complex factors in the internal union situation taking precedence, it was unwise to oppose Hall on the closed-shop matter. The issue was simply allowed to die a natural death during the fight with the bosses.

Now that the employers had been defeated and the local was firmly rooted in the trucking industry, the rank and file strongly favored compulsory union membership and dues payments. The problem was one of finding a way to apply the desired compulsion. Key steps toward that end had been taken in setting up the union staff and organizing the steward system. A further measure was then devised which came to be known as a “fink drive.”

Drives of this kind took place periodically. They were conducted by mobilizing the entire union staff and a substantial number of volunteer union activists who took off from work for the purpose. A dragnet was formed to comb the city. Trucks were stopped on



The union newspaper *Northwest Organizer* would regularly publish the complete texts of all contracts negotiated by Teamsters Local 544. Its Feb. 18, 1937, issue (above) published this fairly representative one—a short, one-page contract with the printing industry in the area. Local 544’s contracts never included no-strike clauses. The *Northwest Organizer* was launched in April 1935 as the publication of the Northwest Labor Unity Conference—a left-wing formation in the labor movement that included Local 544 and other unions.

the streets; a check was made of loading docks, shipping rooms, warehouses, etc.; back dues were collected from delinquent members, and new members were signed up. Through this overall combination of measures the local was able to maintain a rather tight union shop.

<sup>1</sup> Cliff Hall was hired by the executive board of Local 574 (later 544) to serve as the local’s business agent in 1934.

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# Imperialism, not oil, is curse in Africa

As Washington and other imperialist powers scramble to grab the biggest possible hunk of Africa’s oil wealth, the capitalist media has churned out articles decrying poverty in oil-rich countries such as Nigeria, Chad, and Equatorial Guinea. Joined by liberal advocacy groups, they argue, as a recent *New York Times* article did, that an “oil curse” has “doomed African countries endowed with oil, diamonds, and gold to deepening corruption and violent conflict.” Their solution? Pressure African governments to report on how they use their oil income.

An outrageous example of such imperial conduct was the World Bank’s recent actions against Chad. As a condition for a loan, the bank had demanded that Chad deposit its oil revenues in a London escrow account, agree to spend a set amount on “poverty reduction,” and submit its budget for approval by an imperialist-backed “oversight committee.” When the government of Chad balked at this violation of the country’s sovereignty, the World Bank froze its oil account.

Asking imperialist governments and corporations such as ExxonMobil to enforce “transparency” and “good governance” is like calling for the fox to guard the henhouse. It’s intended to divert attention from the main source of pillage in the world: Washington, London, Paris, and other imperialist powers.

What happens to the massive wealth from Africa’s oil wells, diamond mines, hardwood forests, and cocoa plantations? Chad, for example, receives only 12.5 percent of revenues from its oil pipeline—ExxonMobil and other imperialist

monopolies get the lion’s share. The so-called oil curse is a self-serving myth. It boils down to the following message: African nations “can’t handle” too much oil, or any other wealth, so imperialist governments are needed to step in and tell those countries how to run their economies: by turning over their natural resources to the energy monopolies and keeping them in bondage to finance capital. Corruption is not the source of poverty but a symptom of something more fundamental: the system of imperialist domination and capitalist exploitation. Bribes, extortion, and violence are a normal part of capitalism—only the imperialist powers carry out their piracy on such a massive scale that they pass laws to call it legal, and then enforce it with military might.

Today Washington is moving to expand its dominance in Africa and edge out its competitors, especially in oil-rich West Africa and the Gulf of Guinea. About 15 percent of U.S. oil imports come from Africa, and that figure may grow to 25 percent in a decade. That’s why Washington is stepping up its military presence there, from its “Trans-Sahel Counterterrorism Initiative” in West Africa to a planned U.S. base in São Tomé and Príncipe.

Imperialism, not oil, is the curse the peoples of Africa face. Working people around the world should call on Washington and other imperialist powers to pull all their troops out of Africa, cancel the foreign debt, and end all economic sanctions against African countries.

## LETTERS

### Katrina and corruption

I found a copy of the *Militant* at a bus stop in Houston. I picked it up. They were talking about ME. I am a victim of Hurricane Katrina and the mess-up by the city and state

administration: Mayor Ray Nagin and “Governor do nothing” Kathleen Blanco.

I live in the 9th Ward, but near Lake Pontchartrain. My apartment still stands and it looks as though no looters have ransacked the place. My sister, brother-in-law, aunt, and cousin all have gone to my apartment and they said the whole area looks like Hiroshima. No electricity, no phone service, no water at all. This has been since early September.

What’s been done? Nagin is running for re-election now! He is carefully working to repair the areas where he was strongest in the last election. Everybody knows this. I can’t vote for him again. I know how the city government is corrupt. I don’t trust anything Nagin says.

Nagin has come to Houston twice to ask (beg) New Orleans citizens to come “home.” He was asking us to return to a place unsafe in many ways.

I am a teacher now in Houston. I live in an apartment complex paid for by FEMA. There are many people who have gone back to visit for a day. They come back with the truth.

For 40 years, since Hurricane Betsy (1965) we have been always told that the levees that surround New Orleans make it safe for us. I couldn’t evacuate. My old car would not make the trip. It would break down and leave me stranded. I had no choice but to stay and survive. I beat the hurricane, survived for two days after the storm. I was taken by bus to Houston.

As I said, I found the *Militant* and on page 2, Sept. 26, 2005, you advertise a subscription: \$5 for 12 weeks. I have enclosed a check for this.

Richard Brown  
Houston, Texas

### Bolivia’s sewage system

The article about Bolivia in issue no. 1 says that less than 1 percent of the population has “sewage service.” I’m not sure what “sewage service” is, but according to one set of UN figures I saw around 45 percent of urban households have private or shared flush toilets, which must represent considerably more than 1 percent of the population. I think what the 1 percent figure may refer to is how much waste water is treated. The population of La Paz alone is a million or so, and it can’t be true that almost none of them have “sewage service.”

Arnold Weissberg  
New York, New York

*Thanks for the note. According to Habitat for Humanity, a little over half of Bolivia’s 8 million people, or 55 percent, have access to sewage services, that is, removal of sewage through pipes. If a stricter definition of “sewage services” that includes waste treatment is used, however, the 1 percent figure may be accurate. According to the UN Environmental Program, “In Bolivia sewage treatment is virtually non-existent.” This has been a major factor in the resurgence of cholera in that country and elsewhere in Latin America and the Caribbean.*

—Editor

## Health-care rally

### Continued from front page

said Christine Johnson along the march route. She is one of thousands of members of Service Employees International Union Local 1199 here who do home health-care work.

There is no guaranteed 40-hour workweek, Carlotta Bishop pointed out. If the workers fall below 40 hours in a week they lose all medical coverage for the coming month.

“They’re working people like us,” said bus driver Greg Jordan, one of a number of Transport Workers Union (TWU) members who joined the march. TWU Local 100 members walked out in late December, shutting down the city subway and buses for three days, in a contract dispute with the Metropolitan Transit Authority. “All these companies are making money off our backs,” Jordan said. “Working people have to stick together.”

# New Orleans

### Continued from front page

weeks after levees broke in the wake of Hurricane Katrina in August. Five months later tens of thousands of working people remain dispersed around the country.

Louisiana’s Democratic governor Kathleen Blanco immediately backed the proposal. New Orleans mayor Ray Nagin, who is Black and also a Democrat, initially said he would support it too. “As far as I am concerned, this plan is the way we are going to go, with some tweaks,” Nagin said, according to the *Times Picayune*.

Working people first expressed their outrage at the proposal—which includes a requirement that residents would have from four months to a year to prove their houses should not be bulldozed—at a January 11 hearing, where the Bring New Orleans Back Commission presented the plan. “I don’t know you, but Mr. Canizaro, I hate you,” said Harvey Bender, a laid off city worker from New Orleans East. Joseph Canizaro, a wealthy developer, authored the plan. “You’ve been in the background scheming to take our land,” Bender said.

During a heated meeting at City Hall on January 14 attended by 500 people, many of them from some of the hardest hit neighborhoods, Nagin said he is now “uncomfortable” with the four-month building moratorium. He told residents of Gentilly, Pontchartrain Park, and New Orleans East they should continue to rebuild for now.

“At the end of the day this city will be chocolate. It will still be a majority African-American city,” Nagin said a few days later during the city’s official King Day rally. That parade was changed from its traditional route, which begins in the Lower Ninth Ward. Nagin cited safety concerns for the change. Nevertheless about 200 people marched in the parade starting in the Lower Ninth Ward, which was organized by several groups that have been involved in helping residents clear their property, renovate homes, and file legal challenges to evictions.

Waiting for the parade to kick off, Lionel Smith condemned Nagin’s decision. “The King Day parade began here before it became official,” he said. “No storm and no mayor will stop us from having King Day in the Lower Ninth.” The New Orleans NAACP president and several city council members attended the activity.

“They tell you: collect your insurance money, get your \$30,000 from FEMA—or leave!” Emanuel Borden told the *Militant*. “They want your land. Me, personally, I’m here to stay.” Borden was among the thousands who stood along Broad St. waiting for the “Second-line” march of traditional New Orleans jazz bands to commemorate King’s birthday with a focus on the “rebirth” of the city. The march wound through parts of New Orleans where neighborhoods remain uninhabited.

Borden’s rental home was demolished by the flooding. “I lived just four blocks from where the levee broke through the Industrial Canal into the Lower Ninth Ward,” said Borden, a pipefitter back to work at the Avondale shipyards. “They had over 6,000 before Katrina hit, now about 4,000 of us are back,” he said, adding that Northrop Grumman, the owner, set up a camp at Avondale, which is still home to many workers. “They’re not allowed to bring their families, so most go to visit on the weekends in Houston, Baton Rouge, or other cities,” he noted, adding he is currently housed in a hotel near the shipyard.

“I have a contractor ready to do the work but I can’t get permits,” said Charles Blandon as he sifted through the remains of his home in the Lower Ninth Ward. “The moratorium is already in effect.” Former residents there say they are only allowed to visit to determine the extent of damage to their homes and to retrieve valuables.

Blandon is also concerned about the city’s new flood elevation plan, which could require him to raise his house a foot or more in order to be eligible for flood insurance. “I got an estimate of \$100,000 to do that. How can people down here afford that on top of the cost to rebuild?” he asked.

Tony Dutrow from Houston contributed to this article.

### Appeal to our readers

Since Hurricane Katrina last August, the *Militant* has spent over \$8,000 to send reporters to the U.S. Gulf Coast to provide coverage like the article above. As this issue goes to press, 15 readers have contributed a total of \$2,265 to cover travel and other reporting costs. Please continue to give generously. Send contributions to the *Militant* at 306 W. 37th St., 10th floor, New York, NY 10018.