

# THE MILITANT

INSIDE

'Capitalism's long hot winter is our spring'

Marxist magazine presented at Havana book fair

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A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

VOL. 70/NO. 10 MARCH 13, 2006

## Mine workers strike in Mexico

Protest boss greed that killed 65  
Demand safety measures to prevent other disasters



El Sol de Zacatecas/Eulalio Contreras

Striking copper miners rally March 1 at Grupo Mexico's San Martín mine in Sombrerete, Zacatecas, Mexico.

BY ANTHONY DUTROW

SAN JUAN DE SABINAS, Mexico—In response to poor maintenance of equipment and deteriorating safety conditions, 4,000 members of the Mining and Metal Workers Union at Cananea and La Caridad, the country's two largest copper mines, began a strike February 28. The mines are owned by Grupo Mexico, the same company that owns the Pasta de Conchos coal

mine, where 65 miners were killed in a methane gas explosion February 19.

"The company would not agree to their demands for better equipment maintenance and safer working conditions and so they struck," Consuelo

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## Pentagon: Washington faces 'long war'

BY SAM MANUEL

WASHINGTON—"The United States is a nation engaged in what will be a long war," states the Pentagon's 2006 Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR). The report is prepared once each presidential term and presents the main lines of U.S. imperialism's military strategy and priorities. The term "long-war" is used 41 times in the review.

Top White House officials have made the same point in recent speeches. Wash-

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## Miners' union calls march in Alabama

March 7 action to demand job safety

BY CLAY DENNISON

BROOKWOOD, Alabama—Some 150 coal miners and others gathered February 21 at the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) hall here for a public forum on the safety crisis confronting mine workers today. At the meeting UMWA vice president for District 20 Daryl Dewberry announced that the union is responding by organizing a march in Montgomery, the state capital.

"The march is set for March 7," Dewberry told the *Militant* in a subsequent interview.

"We are going to Montgomery to demand the mine safety enforcement that is our right," Dewberry said. "The majority of union mines in Alabama will be observing mourning days on Tuesday, March 7. We are gathering at the Civic Center in Bessemer, Alabama, at 10:00 in the morning, and a car caravan will leave from there at 11:00 a.m. We will



Tuscaloosa News

Donna Boyd stands at mike during February 21 meeting at hall of United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) Local 2245 in Brookwood, Alabama. She is the sister of Clarence Boyd, who died in a 2001 explosion at the Jim Walter No. 5 mine there. UMWA announced march at that meeting.

travel together to Montgomery, where we will hold a rally at the statehouse at 1:00 p.m. The union is asking miners to wear our colors—camouflage clothes that are our symbol of solidarity."

The keynote speaker at the February 21 meeting was Artur Davis, a member of the U.S. House of Representatives from Alabama's 7th Congressional District, which includes Birmingham

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## Partisans of Militant Labor Forum in Price, Utah, fight eviction attempt by landlord tied to coal bosses

BY ILONA GERSH

CHICAGO—"Organizers of the Militant Labor Forum in Price, Utah, have launched a fight against the attempted eviction of the forum from its premises by the landlord, who has ties to the coal companies in the area," said Alyson Kennedy here on February 26.

She was addressing a special Militant Labor Forum in Chicago titled "Defend labor rights." Supporters of the *Militant* newspaper organize these forums.

The Chicago event was one of a series of special forums to build support for the fight by the *Militant*, the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA),

and coal miners who fought to win UMWA representation at the Co-Op mine in Huntington, Utah, to defeat a harassment lawsuit by C.W. Mining—the owner of the Co-Op mine (see

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### Special Militant Labor Forums

#### Defend Labor Rights!

Support fight to defeat coal boss harassment lawsuit

#### Saturday, March 4

Des Moines, dinner 6 p.m., program 7 p.m.

—Speaker: Bill Estrada, former Co-Op miner and defendant in C.W. Mining harassment lawsuit

Philadelphia, dinner 6 p.m., program 7 p.m.

—Speaker: Argiris Malapanis, *'Militant'* editor

#### Sunday, March 5

Houston, reception 2 p.m., program 4 p.m.

—Speaker: Paul Mailhot, Socialist Workers Party

Miami, reception 2 p.m., program 3 p.m.

—Speaker: Norton Sandler, Socialist Workers Party

#### Saturday, March 11

Boston, reception 5 p.m., program 6 p.m.

—Speaker: Paul Mailhot, Socialist Workers Party

Toronto, reception 3 p.m., program 4 p.m.

—Speaker: Argiris Malapanis

For address of Militant Labor Forum halls and other information see directory on page 10

## On to 500 new endorsers for labor defense case

BY PAUL MAILHOT

SALT LAKE CITY—Seventy-four new supporters are being added to the Militant Fighting Fund endorser list this week. In all, 240 individuals, union locals, and representatives of other organizations have joined this important labor rights and freedom of speech campaign in February. Organizers of the Militant Fighting Fund are projecting to reach 500 new endorsers by April 1.

"We've got some momentum now," said Norton Sandler, director of the Militant Fighting Fund. "If we reach out to other union locals, discuss the case with everyone interested in the

struggle for safety in the mines and other fights working people are involved in today, and talk to everyone buying the *Militant* about endorsing, we can go well

Continued on page 4

## Miners help get 'Militant' around

BY ARGIRIS MALAPANIS

"Company officials at the Rockspring mine in West Virginia used to kick us off every time we went to sell the *Militant* at the mine portal," said Cindy Jaquith during a February 26 Militant Labor Forum in Pittsburgh on defending labor rights. "Miners there told us recently, 'Can't you do something to not get kicked off? We need you to stay and sell this paper.' They then drew a map of the area, showing us another spot where many miners drive

Continued on page 4

## Protesters in D.C. condemn abortion ban in S. Dakota

BY ARRIN HAWKINS

Around 50 defenders of a woman's right to choose abortion demonstrated in Washington February 28 to protest a measure approved by the South

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U.S. gov't uses safety sting to round up undocumented 6



# Australian women win access to ‘abortion pill’

BY JOANNE KUNIAISKY

SYDNEY, Australia—On February 16, Australia’s federal parliament removed obstacles that have effectively banned the use of RU-486, a medication that induces abortion when taken in the first seven to nine weeks of pregnancy. Despite a campaign to maintain the current law, the vote reflected majority support for women’s right to choose abortion.

RU-486 is available in more than 30 countries. In 1980 the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) approved its use in Australia. It has been used by more than a million women worldwide and is cheaper than a surgical abortion. But in 1996 the federal parliament amended the Therapeutic Goods Act that required approval by the federal health minister as well as TGA clearance for its use. Until late last year, not a single drug company had applied to the TGA to import or manufacture RU-486. The first application this year coincided with the introduction of a bill to strip the Health Minister of his veto powers.

The bill to remove the ministerial veto was sponsored in the Senate by women members from four different parties: Lyn Allison, Australian Democrats, Fiona Nash, National Party, Claire Moore, Australian Labor Party, and Judith Troeth, Liberal Party. Parliamentary leaders on all sides released members from party discipline for this vote.

The heated debate in parliament received wide media coverage and was preceded by public hearings that received 4,000 submissions in the debate. Opponents of a woman’s right to choose abortion picketed outside parliament each day the bill was discussed,

waving coffins and pictures of fetuses. Federal Health Minister Anthony Abbott, known for his opposition to abortion, told parliament, “We have a bizarre double standard in this country where someone who kills a pregnant woman’s baby is guilty of murder but a woman who aborts an unborn baby is simply exercising choice.” Abbott continued, “Somehow, up to 100,000 abortions a year are accepted as a fact of life—almost by some as a badge of liberation from old oppressions.”

Prime Minister John Howard backed Abbott in the debate. He argued that “RU-486 is not an ordinary drug,” and that elected officials should not “hand over decisions to people who are not accountable.”


Sarah Wickham of the National Union of Students told one hearing on the bill that “The introduction of RU-486... would be a huge benefit to all university students, particularly rural and regional women for whom access to abortion is rare. It is simply wrong for one man to decide the freedom of choice and reproductive rights of all Australian women.”

## Mexico gov’t to close hotel that expelled Cubans

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

U.S. government officials succeeded in getting a Cuban delegation expelled from the Sheraton Maria Isabel Hotel in Mexico City, where they were meeting with U.S. oil company representatives about prospects for investing in offshore drilling in Cuba’s territorial waters. After the Mexican and Cuban governments protested the expulsion, Mexico City

### Dozens in D.C. protest S. Dakota abortion ban



Campbell Roth, courtesy of the National Organization for Women

**Continued from front page**  
Dakota legislature that would ban abortion in that state. If signed by the governor, this measure would make abortion illegal, including in cases of rape and incest. Doctors who perform abortions could face jail time of up to five years.

The protest (see photo above) was called by Common Sense South Dakota, an organization formed by Steve Hildebrand, former campaign manager of Democratic South Dakota senator Thomas Daschle, to oppose the anti-abortion measure. The National Organization for Women, NARAL Pro-Choice America, Planned Parenthood, and other defenders of a woman’s right to choose came out for the impromptu rally at the JW Marriott Hotel where a national governors meeting was being held. Protestors demanded that South Dakota governor Michael Rounds veto the law.

In an interview on ABC News “Good Morning America” February 25, Rounds said, “I will seriously consider signing the bill. It would be a direct frontal assault on *Roe v. Wade*.” The law would take affect July 1. Planned Parenthood, which operates the only abortion clinic in the state, said that it will file a lawsuit to overturn the law as unconstitutional.

officials ordered the U.S.-owned hotel closed February 28 for “infringement of local law,” according to a government notice quoted in the *Miami Herald*.

On February 3, the Treasury Department’s Office of Foreign Assets Control informed Starwood Hotels, which owns the Sheraton, it was in violation of the Trading with the Enemy Act and the Cuban Democracy Act of 1992 by allowing this meeting to take place. These laws prohibit U.S. companies and their overseas subsidiaries from providing any facilities or other services to Cuban individuals or companies. Hotel management then told the 16 Cubans officials participating in the meeting to leave and sent their room deposits for their three-night stay to the Treasury Department.

The meeting, organized by the U.S.-Cuba Trade Association, included representatives from ExxonMobil,

the Valero Energy Corporation, and Caterpillar. It reportedly continued at another hotel in the city not owned by a U.S. company.

Cuban and Mexican government officials protested Washington’s action. “There does not exist and neither should there exist the extraterritorial application of this law in our nation,” Mexican foreign minister Luis Ernesto Derbez told the media. An editorial in the February 6 online edition of the Cuban daily *Granma* condemned this further extension of “the criminal U.S. economic war on Cuba...to the detriment of the sovereignty and laws of other countries.”

Responding to these public statements, U.S. secretary of state Condoleezza Rice told a Congressional panel February 16 that “dislocations” caused by Washington’s economic sanctions against Cuba would be “looked at.”

# THE MILITANT

*‘Helps us know about other workers’*

*“This is a totally different paper, everything in it is to help people.”*  
—Romeo Patajo

*“The Militant helps us to know what’s happening with other workers.”*  
—Agnes Cuzzamu



Members of UFCW Local 401 at Lakeside Packers in Brooks, Alberta. Front, from left, Norma Palo, Mila Juan, and Agnes Cuzzamu. In rear, from left, Romeo Patajo and Eddie Balanza.

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# Pentagon: U.S. rulers face ‘long war’

**Continued from front page**  
ington is facing a “long-war against a determined enemy,” U.S. president George Bush said in his January 31 State of the Union address.

The course outlined in the Pentagon’s review and the president’s speeches, and indicated in the 2007 military appropriations proposals by the White House, has a long continuity. It goes back to Washington’s response to the 1979 Iranian revolution as stated in the Carter Doctrine in 1980. “Let our position be absolutely clear,” said President James Carter at the time, “an attempt by any outside force to gain control of the Persian Gulf region will be regarded as an assault on the vital interests of the United States of America, and such an assault will be repelled by any means necessary, including military force.”

It has had bipartisan backing through the 1991 Gulf War, the Clinton administration’s embargo and bombing of Iraq, two wars in the Balkans, military assaults on Somalia and Sudan, and the demonizing of North Korea, Iran, Syria, and others as “rogue nations.”

Over the last half decade, however, a historic shift in the global deployment of U.S. imperialism’s armed forces, its military strategy, and its order of battle has been sharply accelerated. Dubbed by the Defense Department as the military’s “transformation,” this shift was outlined to a large degree in the Pentagon’s previous Quadrennial Defense Review. The Pentagon’s current plan expands on those changes.

“Championed by the White House and pushed forward by the Defense Department, this transformation aims at preparing for the character of wars

the imperialist rulers know they need to fight—at home as well as abroad,” said a Socialist Workers Party resolution adopted by the SWP convention last year. “No substantial wing of either the Democratic or Republican parties has a strategic alternative to this course. And it is already too far advanced to be reversed.”

The document, titled “Their Transformation and Ours,” was published in issue 12 of the Marxist magazine *New International* (see ad on page 8.) The resolution analyzes the sharpening interimperialist conflicts fueled both by the opening stages of a world depression and by the most far-reaching shift in Washington’s military policy and organization since the opening stages of World War II.

## End of ‘peace dividend’

The 2006 QDR asserts that when Bush took office for his first term, “The country was in many respects still savoring victory in the Cold War.” During the 1990s, Washington had acted as if it had less need for waging wars. It took the U.S. rulers about a decade to figure out that the “peace dividend” from the end of the Cold War, which included scaling back military spending, was over and that it needed to make an adjustment to face the “new enemy”—which includes “terrorist groups” and states that harbor them.

The transformation of the U.S. military that Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld has pushed the last half decade includes a number of core elements. One is that the U.S. rulers will not conduct a war of the kind they fought in 1990–91 against Iraq, when “it took six months of planning and transport to summon our fleets and divisions and position

them in battle,” as Rumsfeld told the U.S. Senate in September 2004. “In the future, we cannot expect to have that kind of time.”

To accomplish this goal, the Pentagon has been organizing smaller, light armored brigades with greater independent powers of command, which can move anywhere in the world within days. These would replace the larger divisions reliant on tanks and other heavy armor that were used in the first U.S.-led war against Iraq. In addition, the Pentagon has been putting in place heavier reliance on Special Operations forces; intermixing of units of the army, navy, and air force in combat; and shutting down some of the U.S. bases in western Europe while shifting more troops to the east and to central Asia.

## Military restructuring

The 2006 defense review reaffirms Washington’s accelerated course toward developing lighter, more agile, and expeditionary armed forces. Towards this end, the QDR says that the Army is reorganizing “into modular brigade-based units—including brigade combat teams.” These combat teams are at the heart of the Army’s shift from a “battle-ready force (peace) to battle-hardened forces (war).” This historic change involves “moving away from a static defense in obsolete Cold War garrisons and placing emphasis on the ability to surge quickly to trouble spots across the globe,” the review states.

Rumsfeld explained the financial implications of these moves at the February 16 hearing of the Defense Subcommittee of the House of Representatives Appropriations Committee on the fiscal year



Garry Leech

**U.S. Special Forces officer teaches counterinsurgency to Colombian army unit; a growing number of U.S. troops have been sent there since 2000.**

2007 military budget. The Defense Department projects doubling the funding for Special Operations Forces, including for the first time a Marine Corps component, Rumsfeld pointed out. The Defense Department projects the largest growth in Special Operations Forces, increasing them by 50 percent between 2001 and 2011. Four existing ballistic missile submarines are to be refashioned into platforms allowing Special Operations Forces “to penetrate denied areas to locate high-value individuals, designate targets for precision strike or conduct direct action missions.” Each of these submarines will carry 150 Tomahawk missiles.

The Brigade Combat Teams structure represents a 46 percent increase in readily available combat power, says the QDR. It shifts the emphasis from having the bulk of soldiers in the institutional army, the so-called tail, to more powerful operational forces that deploy and fight, the “teeth.” This includes not only improving the combat-readiness of active-duty soldiers but also of the members of the National Guard and Reserves, who were once considered a strategic reserve to be called once in a lifetime for a major war.

Another goal of the Army’s transformation is to move from a “separate military Service concepts of operation—to joint and combined operations.” All related steps must contribute to “joint war-fighting capability,” the defense review says.

Following findings from the 2001 QDR, the current defense review projects increased spending on “intelligence gathering.” This includes use of satellites and other space platforms, aerial vehicles that can “identify and track moving targets in denied areas,” and better human spying—including steps to “improve cultural and linguistic skills.”

## Not a ‘broken army’

In the congressional defense budget hearings, Rumsfeld and his top generals stressed maintaining a volunteer army. “We are fighting this long war with an all-volunteer force,” said Peter Pace, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Gen. Peter Schoomaker said he was commissioned 37 years ago in the “post-Vietnam army” that “if it wasn’t broken, it was darn near broken.” Schoomaker said military spending dropped to 4.8 percent of GDP in the “post-Cold War drawdown” and that there was a \$58 billion hole in equipment at the time of the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon.

*This is the first of three articles. The next installment will describe the drawing of more imperialist governments in Europe into various U.S.-led “coalitions of the willing,” and the U.S. military’s renewed focus on Latin America and Africa outlined in the 2006 defense review.*

# Rightist jailed in Austria for ‘Holocaust denial’

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

In one of a series of recent attacks by European governments on freedom of expression, an Austrian court February 20 convicted right-wing British historian David Irving of making statements denying the occurrence of the Holocaust. He was sentenced to three years in prison in a one-day jury trial.

The charges stemmed from two lectures and a press interview Irving gave in Austria in 1989. He was charged with saying that the Nazis did not annihilate 6 million Jews during World War II. At the time, Irving peddled the lie that most of those who died at camps like Auschwitz were not executed, but succumbed to diseases like typhus.

The governments of Austria, Germany, France, and other European countries have all passed laws making it a crime to question the existence of the Holocaust. The 1992 Austrian law,

under which Irving was convicted, says that “whoever denies, grossly plays down, approves or tries to excuse the National Socialist genocide or other National Socialist crimes against humanity in a print publication, in broadcast or other media” can be sentenced to up to 10 years in prison.

The United Kingdom, which does not have a Holocaust denial law, is home to a large number of similar thought-control measures. The conviction of Irving, for example, came within days of a British government agency ordering the suspension of London mayor Kenneth Livingstone for making “unnecessarily insensitive and offensive” remarks (see article on page 11). On February 6 Muslim cleric Abu Hamza al-Masri was found guilty by a British court of “using threatening, abusive or insulting words or behaviour with the intention of stirring up racial hatred.”

Irving, 67, was arrested November 11 and held without bail after visiting Austria’s southern province of Styria to address a right-wing student group. At the trial in Vienna, Irving pleaded guilty to denying genocide against Jews during World War II in his 1989 appearance in Austria. He also told the court that he changed his mind about the Holocaust in 1991 after studying the personal papers of Nazi leader Adolf Eichmann.

Presiding judge Peter Liebertrue didn’t agree. “The court did not consider the defendant to have genuinely changed his mind,” the judge stated after announcing the sentence. Irving’s attorney said that he would appeal the

court ruling. Proposals by liberal forces and or their middle-class radical followers to “ban fascists” or other “extremists” are not new to Europe or the United States. Farrell Dobbs, a central leader of the drive to organize hundreds of thousands of truckers and others in the Midwest in the 1930s, who later became national secretary of the Socialist Workers Party, described how Teamsters in Minneapolis refused to be drawn into efforts to ban rightist groups, such as the Silver Shirts or the German-American Bund.

Dobbs says in “Counter-mobilization: A Strategy to Fight Racist and Fascist Attacks,” published by Pathfinder, that he and other labor militants “concentrated on explaining to the workers why they couldn’t rely on any arm of the state apparatus to protect them against the fascists and why they should rely only on themselves to do so.” Relying on the courts and cops, Dobbs explained, disarms working people in understanding the nature of the capitalist state and what the source of any fascist movement is—capitalism itself—and how to fight it.

Teamsters Local 544 instead organized a defense guard to countermobilize against the rightists with the forces of labor and its allies. When the Roosevelt administration imposed a loyalty oath on workers on public works projects, Local 544 explained that “even if the government does something in passing to curb the rights of the fascists, all that happens in the last analysis is that the rulers get a new pretext for attacking the anticapitalist forces.”

## For further reading

### Countermobilization: A Strategy to Fight Racist and Fascist Attacks

by Farrell Dobbs



“The main thing is to educate a growing army of antifascists. The issue at stake for every fighter is: Are you going to be ready when the real thing comes? And it will come.” — \$8

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# Forum supporters in Price fight eviction

**Continued from front page**  
article below). Kennedy, a former Co-Op miner and a defendant in the C.W. Mining suit, is one of the organizers of the Militant Labor Forum in Price.

The forum hall in Price is located, along with other offices, on the second floor of a building managed by the Far West Bank in downtown Price, Kennedy said. One of the best-attended events its organizers hosted recently was a forum in January on the explosion at the Sago Mine in West Virginia when 12 miners were killed on the job. Another was held February 18, the day after a court hearing in Salt Lake City on the C.W. Mining suit to discuss the outcome of the hearing and the next steps in this labor defense case, Kennedy noted. *Militant* editor Argiris Malapanis was a featured speaker at that forum.

Three days later, she said, a manager of the Far West Bank told volunteers who help organize the forums that they have to get out of the hall by the end of the month. He said the bank has a lot of customers it does business with that “you are against,” adding, “You can go somewhere else to peddle your poison.”

“Right away,” Kennedy said, “we hired a lawyer, Don Torgerson, of the law firm Bailey & Torgerson. Our attorney was subsequently informed by the lawyer representing the bank that his client is taking steps to evict us at any cost. This is an attack on the right of working people to come together at the Militant Labor Forums to exchange experiences and discuss how to organize to defend workers and farmers from attacks by the bosses and the government, including Washington’s imperialist wars. We will fight this attack on freedom of speech.”

Torgerson agreed. “This is a free-speech issue, not a lease issue,” he told the *Militant*. “It’s clear the landlord wants them out for political reasons.”



Kennedy was joined by other speakers on the panel of the Chicago forum. Among them was Mary Johnson, a long-time organizer for prisoners’ rights and fighter against police brutality and racism. Prisoners need newspapers like the *Militant* and books published by Pathfinder Press to find their self-worth, Johnson said. “The *Militant* is important because it tells the truth,” she continued. “Anytime you take the truth to the people you are a threat.” Other speakers included Ben Rasmach, a student at the University of Chicago who has been getting support on campus for the Militant Fighting Fund (see front-page article), and Maria Moreano of the Young Socialists in the

Twin Cities, Minnesota.  
After a fund appeal by Dennis Richter from the Socialist Workers Party, those present contributed \$611 to help the *Militant* continue fielding reporting teams and meet other operating costs.  
Forums like that in Chicago have also been held in San Francisco, Los Angeles, Seattle, New York, Atlanta, Birmingham, Pittsburgh, Washington, and Newark, New Jersey. Contributions to the *Militant* at these meetings have so far exceeded \$8,500. (See front-page ad for similar upcoming forums.)

*Alyson Kennedy contributed to this article.*



Militant/Betsey Stone

**Militant supporter distributes paper at the McKinley mine in Arizona on January 31.**

## Toward 500 new endorsers of labor defense case

**Continued from front page**  
over that goal.”

Among the union locals and prominent individuals who recently endorsed the *Militant’s* defense campaign against the Co-Op coal mine bosses’ harassment lawsuit are International Longshoremen’s Association Local 21 in Beaumont, Texas; six shop stewards from United Food and Commercial Workers Local 401 in Brooks, Alberta, Canada; five officers of United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) Local 1332 from the McKinley coal mine in Window Rock, Arizona; and Sobukwe Shukura, southeastern region co-chair of the National Network on Cuba.

In all, seven union locals voted in February to endorse the Militant Fighting Fund. United Auto Workers (UAW) Local 2188 at the Delphi plant in Fitzgerald, Georgia, sent a check for \$300 with its endorsement. Workers at Delphi are expecting a fight over the company’s attempt to tear up their union contract. Several workers who appreciate the *Militant’s* coverage of labor battles and the struggles of Black farmers helped win the endorsement of the local. UAW Local 270 in Des Moines, Iowa, also endorsed and sent a check for \$50.

The coal boss lawsuit against the *Militant*, the UMWA, and 16 miners who fought to bring the union into the Co-Op mine is being contested in a federal court in Salt Lake City. The defendants have all filed motions to dismiss

the case, which centers on charges by the coal company owners that they have been defamed and injured by the actions of the miners and their supporters. Coming out of a February 17 hearing, where two Salt Lake City dailies were released from the lawsuit, Federal Judge Dee Benson said he plans to issue a written decision on the motions to dismiss the case filed by the remaining defendants.

The Militant Fighting Fund is helping to defend the *Militant* and publicize the

fight of all defendants against this retributive lawsuit. In addition to endorsements received since February 1, new supporters have donated \$3,600 to help meet mounting legal and publicity expenses.

More help is needed. Please send endorsements and contributions to the Militant Fighting Fund, P.O. Box 520994, Salt Lake City, Utah 84152. Fax: (801) 924-5910; E-mail: MilitantFightingFund@yahoo.com

## ‘Tribune’ corrects article on lawsuit

BY NORTON SANDLER

In its February 23 edition, the *Salt Lake Tribune* ran a correction that read, in part, “The Socialist Workers Party is no longer a defendant in the lawsuit, and the *Militant* newspaper is published by the Militant Publishing Association, not the Socialist Workers Party.”

The *Tribune*, one of the two largest dailies in Utah, printed the correction in response to a letter to its editor sent two days earlier by *Militant* editor Argiris Malapanis.

“The article by Jason Bergreen in your February 18 edition, ‘Judge tosses lawsuit against newspapers,’ reporting on Federal Judge Dee Benson’s decision to dismiss the defamation lawsuit by C.W. Mining Co. against your newspaper and the *Deseret Morning News*, contains an inaccurate statement,” Malapanis said. “Its final paragraph wrongly states, ‘The judge is considering motions to dismiss

by several other defendants, including the Socialist Workers Party and its newspaper, *The Militant*, and The UMWA.’

“The Socialist Workers Party is not a defendant in the lawsuit,” he continued. “At a hearing on June 14, 2005, Judge Benson instructed the attorneys for C.W. Mining and the International Association of United Workers Union to rewrite their clients’ ‘amorphous’ and ‘vague’ complaint so the defendants would know who was being sued, for what, and which of the plaintiffs were supposedly damaged by alleged defamations. When the plaintiffs filed an amended lawsuit on July 13, 2005, they dropped the Socialist Workers Party as a defendant, along with others.

“It is equally inaccurate to say the *Militant* is the newspaper of the Socialist Workers Party. This false accusation was contained in the first complaint by C.W. Mining, but abandoned when the lawsuit was rewritten. It should not be resurrected now through inaccurate reporting.”

“Our newspaper is published by the Militant Publishing Association. Neither the SWP nor any other party controls the *Militant*. As the editor I am solely responsible for the content and viewpoints of the paper.

“The *Militant’s* masthead states it is a socialist newsweekly published in the interests of working people, and that guides our editorial stance. We do not check articles from reporters or other contributors for the author’s organizational affiliation or political ideology.

“This has been our policy since 1940. It remains so today, 66 years later,” Malapanis concluded.

The same correction in the February 23 *Tribune* also said, “The Kingston family-owned C.W. Mining Co. has said it fired one of its coal miners in 2003 for refusing to sign a form acknowledging a failure to perform his duties adequately.” This was to correct the following statement in the same *Tribune* article: “The company claims it fired one worker for talking up the UMWA and the rest of the miners left their jobs in sympathy.”

‘Militant’ Subscription Renewal Campaign January 21–March 13, 2006 Week 5 of 7				
Country/City	Quota	Sold	%	Renewals
AUSTRALIA	30	23	77%	19
NEW ZEALAND				
Auckland*	30	24	80%	15
Christchurch*	16	11	69%	2
N.Z. Total	46	35	76%	17
SWEDEN	36	27	75%	16
ICELAND	12	8	67%	3
U.S.				
Detroit	4	5	125%	2
Twin Cities	70	65	93%	30
Chicago	40	32	80%	19
Miami	70	53	76%	22
Tampa	4	3	75%	1
Price	70	51	73%	31
Philadelphia	60	43	72%	23
San Francisco	60	43	72%	21
Houston	65	46	71%	16
Albany, NY	16	11	69%	6
Washington, DC	35	24	69%	16
Des Moines	85	56	66%	28
Seattle	35	23	66%	13
Boston	40	26	65%	8
Salt Lake City	30	17	57%	6
Pittsburgh	40	21	53%	11
Atlanta	60	31	52%	12
Los Angeles	75	38	51%	20
Newark	65	33	51%	18
New York	175	87	50%	55
Birmingham	40	19	48%	7
New Orleans		4		4
U.S. Total	1139	731	64%	369
CANADA	75	45	60%	24
UK				
Edinburgh	22	15	68%	10
London	50	26	52%	16
UK Total	72	41	57%	26
Int’l totals	1410	910	67%	474
Should be	1350	964	71%	
* Increased quota				

## Miners help get ‘Militant’ around

**Continued from front page**  
to work, which the company couldn’t claim it owns.”

Using that map, *Militant* distributors had quite a success in a repeat visit February 23 at this mine near East Lynn, West Virginia. “We sold 48 copies of the *Militant*,” said Paul Pederson from New York, who was part of the team. “And a woman who owns a local restaurant near the mine’s entrance paid \$6 for 20 copies of the special issue with the banner headline, ‘Unionize the mines! Build the UMWA!’ to distribute at the store.”

A majority of the 250 workers at Rockspring voted in 2003 to be represented by United Mine Workers of America Local 1113. The regional labor board certified the vote, but the company appealed and the miners have been waiting for over two years

for a decision from the national board. “Many of these miners see the *Militant* helping their struggle,” Jaquith said.

During a visit to Brooks, Alberta, Canada, February 17–21, “We sold 13 subs, of which 8 were renewals we got through house meetings,” said Natalie Doucet from Toronto. Workers at the Tyson-owned packing plant there won union recognition and a first contract after a determined strike, during which many were introduced to the *Militant*. In the recent visit, unionists invited Arrin Hawkins of the Young Socialists in the U.S. to give a talk on imperialism and Africa today, based on her recent trip to Equatorial Guinea. Many workers at the Tyson plant are from Africa. “This time we strengthened ties with several workers and found new ones,” Doucet said.

Through such efforts the goal of the campaign to increase the *Militant’s* long-term readership by winning 1,350 new and repeat subscribers is within reach. You can join the effort!



**Murder for profit**—With coal barons refusing to safeguard miners, the mines continue to take their deadly toll.



Harry Ring

Travesty fines are now in the spotlight. For instance: In 2004, in the Super Bowl in Alabama, a federal fine of \$550,000 was

imposed because of a flashed breast by a performer. Earlier in Alabama in 2001, a notorious Jim Walters mine took the lives of 13 miners. Initially the mine owner was fined \$435,000, but a federal judge reduced it to \$3,000.

**No honor among cops?**—Spurred by the Civil Liberties Union, Denver cops released to the media a mountain of files of illegal spying gathered in Denver and beyond. The current dope is that the spy cops

were conned by a former spy chief who persuaded them they were following federal guidelines. In a sense that's probably true. Obviously enthused, the local cops spied on more than 200 groups and 3,200 people.

**Capitalism, truly great**—In the rural area of Monett, Missouri, fire fighters stood by and watched a garage and vehicle burn. Why? Area members were dues paying members. Nonmembers were

not entitled to fire fighting services. And with the rules, on-the-spot payments are not acceptable.

**Or at least, until capitalism is buried**—"Records of all criminal convictions and cautions will remain on police files for 100 years."—*The Times*, London

**And finally, capitalist philosophy**—"Bullying...is a fact of life.... To suffer and endure is unfortunately the lot

of some."—Retired New Zealand High Court Judge David Morris, as reported in the *New Zealand Herald*.

**A plea for patience**—Among veteran readers and some of the new ones as well, clippings are swelling the mailbox. So give us a chance to get them in. We'll do our best to meet the challenge. Please don't stop. And special thanks to a veteran reader, who escaped Katrina, and sends a flow of clippings.

## Exhibit shows slave labor built New York

BY ARRIN HAWKINS

NEW YORK—Chattel slavery was not only a "peculiar institution" of the South but the foundation for capitalist development across the United States. An exhibit at the Historical Society here shows how colonial New York became an international center for commercial, and later, industrial capitalism based on slave labor.

"Slavery in New York" is a multimedia exhibition that opened here October 7. It reveals through displays of "Negroes to Be Sold" ads, like the one pictured on this page, wanted posters for runaway slaves, ledgers of slave ships, and other objects from the lives of enslaved Africans, how integral the institution of slavery was in the development of New York City.

The Dutch, and later British merchants, amassed great profits from manufacturing and insuring the vessels used in the slave trade. They transported sugar, tobacco, indigo, and cotton grown by slave labor in the Americas to Europe, and supplied the British plantation economies in the Caribbean. New York became one of the main ports of international commerce in the Western Hemisphere, centered on the trans-Atlantic slave trade, which brought 12 million Africans to the Americas over 400 years.

Part of the exhibition shows the work of Blacks in constructing the city. Enslaved Africans cleared forests and built roads, docks, and most of the infrastructure of the early Dutch colony, including the wall after which Wall Street was named and the first city hall.

"Slavery in New York" originated in the discovery in 1991 of an African burial ground, which covered six acres

of lower Manhattan. Up to 20,000 people were reportedly buried there before the ground was closed in 1794. The remains of more than 400 bodies were unearthed in the excavation. On February 28, President George Bush declared the site a national monument.

These skeletons are testaments to the brutal conditions Black slaves faced. A study on the unearthed bones conducted by the African Burial Ground Project in 1994 found signs of hard labor—fractured bones and skulls, and indications of torn muscle ligaments from lifting, carrying, and pulling heavy loads. The study showed these slaves had a life expectancy of 15 to 20 years.

Many Africans in New York in the mid-1600s could obtain freedom after years of enslavement, the exhibit shows. Groot Manuel de Gerrit, for example, petitioned the Dutch West India Company for his freedom in 1644 and was given a parcel in the area known as the "Land of Blacks," now Greenwich Village. "Freedom" for these Africans, however, was limited. They were forced to pay an annual tax to the colonial government or donate a portion of their crops to the market. Their children remained slaves.

By the mid-1600s, repressive laws codified slavery, making black skin a permanent sign of servitude. Blacks were prohibited from gathering in groups larger than four, later reduced

to three. Slaves could not meet together, bear arms, or pass property onto their children. Blacks could not testify against whites in court.

In 1712, a group of Africans armed with guns and hatchets revolted, killing nine whites. Twenty-seven slaves were captured and 21 of them were executed, some "burnt, others hanged, one was broke on the wheel, and one hung alive in chains in town," says a letter by Governor Robert Hunter displayed in the exhibit.

In 1703, 43 percent of New York households had slaves, compared with 6 percent in Philadelphia and 2 percent in Boston, the exhibit shows. Black slaves made up 20 percent of colonial New York's population in 1746. The numbers of free wage laborers who were Black grew in the 1800s. Some 10 percent of free Blacks worked as seamen, with a sixth of the ships leaving New York docks having all-Black crews. Free Blacks fought for basic rights, and won the right for free Black males to vote in 1813. Eight years later, however, the second state constitution restricted suffrage for Blacks, requiring \$250 in property for Black men to vote. Similar restrictions were lifted for white males.

The "gradual emancipation" law

of 1799 granted freedom to any child born to a slave mother after July 4, but required them to remain servants until boys were 28 and girls 25. It was not until 1827 that slavery was abolished in New York—50 years after the first American revolution brought its end in several northern states. The Civil War against the southern slavocracy dealt the deathblow to the decaying institution and ushered in the era of free wage labor across color lines.

"Slavery in New York," which closes March 26, shows a hidden chapter of this city's history. I recommend it.



## 25, 50, AND 75 YEARS AGO



March 13, 1981

President Reagan proposed in his budget speech to Congress February 18 that black lung benefits to miners be cut. The next day the president of the United Mine Workers of America, Sam Church, and other officers and staff from the union's Washington headquarters picketed the White House in protest.

Church issued a long press statement explaining the truth about black lung benefits and what it would mean to cut them. It is so difficult to meet the eligibility requirements that it takes years to be certified. He reported on the common case of miners not being certified for black lung benefits until after their deaths—with their widows receiving some money.

Church explained that 4,000 miners a year die from black lung, that 70 percent of retired miners show black lung symptoms and cannot enjoy a healthy retirement.



March 12, 1956

Twenty-six officials and members of Local 107, United Electrical Workers, independent, were railroaded to prison March 2 for an indefinite term on contempt of court charges. The local has been on strike against Westinghouse Corporation at the Lester, Pa., plant since Oct. 14 for higher wages and other contract changes.

The unionists had been ordered to pay \$22,000 in fines for allegedly violating a court injunction against mass picketing, but refused to pay it. "We go to jail," said Carl Gray, local president, "rather than permit our members to be deprived of a single bite of food of the modest relief aid we can give them from the contributions of area residents."

Workers at nearby plants immediately pledged new support after the jailing.



March 15, 1931

Following a session of Congress which failed to contribute one iota to solving the problems ravaging the economic life of the country and inflicting indescribable misery upon the working class—a Congress which not only marked the stark reaction of the Hoover administration but also the impotence of the "progressive group" in the Senate—the latter summoned a conference in Washington where the flower of American middle class liberal thought gathered to express themselves on the problems that Hoover's Congress failed to solve.

The "progressive" leaders demonstrated their incapacity to rise above their source, their bloodless impotence, their inherent inability to break from the class of big business and big finance, behind which they are constantly trailing.

### For further reading

#### America's Revolutionary Heritage

by George Novack

A historical materialist analysis of the genocide against Native Americans, the first American revolution, the Civil War, and the rise of industrial capitalism. Explains how the second American revolution was needed to overthrow slavocracy in the South and how a counter-revolution defeating Radical Reconstruction was necessary to consolidate capitalist rule. **\$22.95**

#### Radical Reconstruction

by Jack Barnes

From "The Fight for a Workers and Farmers Government in the U.S." in 'New International' no. 4, pp. 225–230; examines rise and defeat of Radical Reconstruction after the Civil War. **\$12**

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## — ON THE PICKET LINE —

### **UNITE HERE organizes rallies to unionize hotel workers**

CHICAGO and SAN FRANCISCO—Some 1,000 hotel workers and supporters rallied in Chicago February 15 as part of a national campaign called Hotel Workers Rising. Organized by the UNITE HERE union, the campaign aims to pressure the bosses to raise wages and improve working conditions for hotel workers. The union is seeking to sign up many of the estimated 1 million nonunion hotel workers nationwide. Currently, about 90,000 hotel workers are union members. “I have to make 16 rooms in eight hours,” Elena Ortega told the Chicago rally. “I get home without energy and I don’t have time for my children.”

In San Francisco, another 1,000 workers joined a similar rally. UNITE HERE Local 2 members in this city have been without a contract at area hotels for nearly 18 months. There is currently a union boycott of 13 San Francisco hotels after owners locked out workers in late 2004 after they went on strike.

—Angelica Contreras  
and Laura Anderson

### **California: Foster Farms poultry workers fight for union**

LIVINGSTON, California—More poultry workers at Foster Farms are signing up for the fight for union recognition and a decent contract. More than 1,400 of the more than 2,000 workers in the plant have signed up to be represented by the International As-

sociation of Machinists (IAM), League of Independent Workers president Ralph Meraz told the media. Last fall unionists carried out three brief strikes to win their demands. The union continues to sign up more workers, including many recently hired by the company. Foster Farms refuses to recognize the affiliation of the League with the IAM, calling it illegal. The union has filed for a court injunction to compel the company to recognize its decision and begin negotiations. Supporters are also preparing for a March 26 hearing by the National Labor Relations Board to rule on their affiliation with the IAM.

—Lea Sherman

### **Teamsters strike Sikorsky Aircraft in Connecticut, Florida**

Some 3,600 workers struck Sikorsky Aircraft in Connecticut and Florida February 20. The unionists, members of Teamsters Local 1150, voted by a 2 to 1 margin to reject the company’s proposed three-year contract that would sharply increase workers’ health-care co-payments. The company wants employees to pay 20 percent of premium costs. The union represents 3,500 workers in Connecticut and 90 in Florida. The company, which is a division of United Technologies, produces civilian and military helicopters. This is the workers’ first strike against the company since 1963.

—Brian Williams

### **New York building workers strike to protest layoffs**

BRONX, New York—Members of

Service Employees International Union Local 32BJ at the Fordham Hill Cooperative Apartments went on strike here February 12 to protest the layoff of 10 co-workers—one-third of the workforce. The unionists have been working without a contract for 11 months, said shop steward Ivan Latorre. Some scabs have been hired to work in the evenings. “They are trying to break the union here,” said striker Luis Arroyo. “The layoffs went too deep and the company expects us to do the same work with 10 fewer workers.”

—Dan Fein

### **Firefighters in Iceland rally for wage increase**

REYKJAVIK, Iceland—One hundred firefighters in full gear gathered outside the state mediators offices here February 9 where representatives of their union, the National Association of Firefighters and Ambulance Drivers, and government officials were meeting. They came to give support to their negotiating committee and

### **Greece: Seamen end 8-day strike**



Militant/Natasha Terlexis

Members of the Panhellenic Seamen’s Union in Piraeus, Greece, February 22. Workers ended their eight-day strike the following day. Negotiations continue over the unionists’ demands to protect pensions, decrease their taxation, and for 10-month minimum contracts. During walkout the workers won broad solidarity in labor movement. The seamen’s demands are part of call for a March 15 general strike, which is being organized by the Greek Federation of Workers and public workers unions.

—NATASHA TERLEXIS AND MARIA PLESSA

protest the way the municipalities have been dragging out the talks. The union is demanding a starting monthly wage of 165–175,000 kronur (US\$2,600), an increase from the current minimum of 104,833 kronur.

—Ólöf Andra Proppé

### **Sweden: butchers strike for four hours to protest firings**

KRISTIANSTAD, Sweden—Some 150 butchers employed by Swedish Meats here struck for four hours January 25 in response to the firing of 10 co-workers. The conflict started last year when the bosses lowered the piece rate, claiming their calculations were based on a new way of cutting. “This would have lowered the wage at least 50 Swedish krona (\$6) an hour,” said Ola Kjell, one of those who had been fired. The butchers responded with a work slowdown, cutting only the minimum required of them. The company then told 10 of the workers that they had to transfer to another job at a lower wage rate the following day. When they rejected this shift they were sent home without pay. The butchers are continuing their slow-down action.

—Dag Tirsén

## Tyson shuts down two Nebraska plants

BY EDWIN FRUIT  
AND HELEN MEYERS

NORFOLK, Nebraska—The owners of Tyson Fresh Meats have closed two beef plants in northeast Nebraska. Workers were given notices by supervisors on the morning of February 15. The company told the 365 workers at the West Point slaughter plant the factory would close that day. The 1,300 workers at Tyson’s processing facility here in Norfolk were told their last shift would be two days later. Tyson is the largest employer in the two cities.

Workers at the Norfolk plant are members of United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) Local 271. Last September Somali workers there led a walkout of 300 to protest the bosses’ denial of prayer breaks and the firing of 10 workers for “unauthorized breaks.” About half the workers in the plant are Somali-born, while many others are from Sudan and Mexico. The union won prayer breaks in the contract signed with the company in December.

Dina Tovar, who worked at the Norfolk plant, told the *Militant*, “We employees make the product and do everything in the plant whether the supervisors are there or not. Without us they can do nothing and now they put us in the street.” Most workers had not expected the closings. New employees had started work at the plants as recently as two weeks ago and 50 were hired in the last month. Thirty-two Sudanese workers were brought to West Point by Tyson two months ago.

Tyson spokesman Gary Mickelson said shutting down the plants “was a business decision.” Company officials project the factory closings will save the owners \$40 million per year.

Tyson is the world’s largest processor and marketer of chicken, pork, and beef. Company officials said they will move work from the closed plants to Tyson’s slaughter and boxed-beef factory in Dakota City, Nebraska. An 84,500-square-foot expansion is projected to be completed in March with a workforce of 3,600.

It is reported there will be 400 new jobs in Dakota City and 150 each at the Lexington, Nebraska, and Emporia, Kansas, plants. Marvin Harrington, president of UFCW Local 222 in Dakota City, said that even with these openings there would still be about 1,000 left without work. “They’re going to limit the number [they hire], that’s for sure,” he said. He added that he doesn’t believe Tyson is done with restructuring in the Midwest.

Tyson officials have stated they will comply with federal law, which requires companies to provide pay and benefits to workers for 60 days if less than 60 days’ notice has been given for a shutdown. There will be a \$5,000 moving bonus for those rehired by Tyson. The money is to be given out over several months and is dependent on workers completing probation in their new position.

Said Yousuf, vice president of UFCW Local 271 in Norfolk, told the *Militant*, “We have heard that the company will pick which workers can transfer to their plants, giving preference to those with very skilled jobs and records without any problems such as injuries or attendance.” He said a union representative from Omaha had come to the plant to give out applications for a UFCW-organized poultry plant, but the bosses had refused him access to the plant. “The union was growing in

strength, reaching close to 70 percent since the new contract was signed in December. Now much of the community here will be torn apart because so many of us work at Tyson and small businesses here depend on the Tyson workers,” said Yousuf. He noted that the Somali community in Norfolk numbers around 900, with some 600 employed by Tyson.

Edwin Fruit is a member of UFCW Local 1149 and works at Tyson in Perry, Iowa.

## U.S. gov’t uses safety sting to round up, arrest undocumented workers

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

In a recent meeting with representatives from labor and immigrant rights groups, officials of the Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (BICE) of the Department of Homeland Security defended sting operations against undocumented workers. BICE agents, posing as occupational safety officials, lured the workers in supposedly mandatory job safety meetings where they arrested them on the allegation they did not provide proper work documents.

Last July immigration cops arrested 48 undocumented workers at the Seymour Johnson Air Force Base in North Carolina after posing as representatives of the federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) and insisting the workers had to attend what turned out to be a phony training session.

“They said they [BICE] would not commit to not doing this anymore,” Marielena Hincapié, director of programs at the National Immigration

Law Center, told the media after attending the January 30 meeting with immigration agents.

“If immigration officials are going to use OSHA as a ruse, all they will do is reduce the trust of workers to go to OSHA with concerns about safety problems,” said Ana Avendano, a lawyer representing the AFL-CIO who also attended the meeting, according to an article in the February 11 *New York Times*.

BICE spokesman Dean Boyd said such sting operations are standard operating procedure. “We’re not going to rule out valid investigative techniques,” he told the *Times*.

On February 9, immigration agents arrested nine undocumented immigrants working for a subcontractor at the Dugway Proving Ground, a military testing site southwest of Salt Lake City, Utah, the *Times* article reported. In January, immigration officials arrested 11 undocumented workers at Tyndall Air Force Base near Panama City, Florida, the *Times* said.



# ‘Union thugs’? Transit workers in N.Y. stand up to bosses, gov’t

BY MICHAEL ITALIE

NEW YORK—The three-day strike by subway and bus workers here against the Metropolitan Transit Authority (MTA) in December polarized this city along class lines. Most working people identified with the 34,000 unionists willing to risk fines to resist concessions and win dignity on the job. The ruling capitalists expressed utter contempt for the strikers and surprise when a slim majority of workers rejected the deal union officials reached with the MTA after calling off the walkout.

## UNION TALK

The *New York Post* labeled the strikers “You Rats” in a full front-page headline for the supposed chaos the walkout caused. In fact, most working people dealt with the inconvenience of no train and bus service, getting around by other means. Capitalist politicians and the big-business media expressed hopes the employers and the government taught these workers a lesson after the executive board of the Transport Workers Union (TWU) Local 100 called off the strike before any of the demands workers struck around were met. “This was a strike that never needed to happen, and we hope that message reverberates in the future,” whined an editorial in the December 29 *New York Times*.

But large numbers of working people cheered on the transit workers for standing up to the MTA in spite of the Taylor law, which bans strikes by public employees. They identified with the determination of transit workers eager to use union power to fight concessions, even after returning on the job December 23. As Anthony Dejesus, a bus driver, told the *Militant* January 2, “I’d go on strike again, right now, for a better contract.”

### ‘Thugs’ and ‘selfish’?

The wealthy capitalists, their kept politicians, and the big-business media grew more frenzied in their attempt to defeat the strike and then tie the union in red tape with behind-the-scenes negotiations with union tops, followed by demands for binding arbitration—all of which is intended to turn the affected workers into spectators. But every time Mayor Michael Bloomberg or New York governor George Pataki labeled Local 100 members “thugs” and “selfish,” they made their contempt for all working people clearer to millions, boosting support for TWU members.

Picket lines were large and spirited during the walkout. While in battle workers changed themselves. “The strike was effective, it made people less relaxed,” said Steve Shaw, a subway car mechanic in the Bronx. “They were paying more attention to what was going on. It affected the voting on the contract, too.”

On January 20 bus and subway workers voted down a settlement recommended by the majority of the union executive board. Many workers were angry at being asked to make concessions—first-ever payments for medical coverage—while the MTA is sitting on a \$1 billion budget surplus. To a large degree, however, TWU members rejected the deal to say no to the abuse by the mayor, governor, and the MTA bosses. Some Local 100 members sported buttons saying, “Union thug”—standing up to the degrading depiction the mayor and the capitalist media made of them.

While transit workers were fighting uncompromisingly, Local 100 officials treated the strike as a negotiating tactic. After calling off the walkout, they entered into closed-door talks with the MTA and government mediators. While doing so, they called no solidarity rallies to tap into the huge reservoir of public support that could bring to bear not only the voice of the local’s members but that of the millions who identified with the TWU’s cause.

### Cops and the ‘line of duty’

The TWU officialdom also presented Patrolmen’s Benevolent Association (PBA) president Patrick Lynch as a leading “union” backer of the transit workers, and the cops as fellow “public workers.” This undermined support for the fight among working people and youth who hate the cops for countless acts of brutality.

Furthermore, it flew in the face of the class interests of transit and other workers. The cops are paid to protect capitalist property and defend capitalist rule. They are not part of the labor movement, and any difficulties they may face with their employers don’t elicit compassion from working people. Their duty is to take orders from their capitalist masters, which means breaking strikes and carrying out racist beatings of Blacks, Puerto Ricans, and others. The New York cops are not asking for an end to these duties. That would mean an end to their jobs.

In a December 27 statement announcing the TWU had reached a deal with the MTA, Local 100 president Roger Tossaint urged union members to back the tentative contract. One of the reasons he gave is that the deal “provides for increasing the death benefit for members who die in the line of duty.”

## San Francisco: Militant Labor Forum fights frame-up

BY LEA SHERMAN

SAN FRANCISCO—Supporters of the Militant Labor Forum here defended the weekly program at a February 9 hearing to appeal frame-up citations carrying a fine of \$1,200 for allegedly posting flyers on “historic” city lampposts. As a result of their appeal, supporters of the forum succeeded in having the fine reduced to \$450.

The flyers publicized a program last August featuring a panel of young people who attended the World Festival of Youth and Students in Caracas, Venezuela. The citations issued by the “green patrol” of the Department of Public Works were for leaflets in Spanish and English placed on four lampposts in the Mission District, where posting is prohibited.

“The Militant Labor Forum is a free-speech forum, organized by volunteers, that focuses on issues of importance to the labor movement and all working

### Orlando, FL: over 500 rally against racist march



Militant photos by Maggie Trowe

Above: Police surround February 25 rally against racist march in Parramore, the main Black community in Orlando, Florida. Inset: Students Brittany Holliday (left), 16, and Stephanie Cohn, 18, were among many cops prevented from joining rally.

ORLANDO, Florida, February 25—More than 500 people mobilized here today to oppose a march by the white supremacist National Socialist Movement (NSM) through the city’s Black community. The neo-Nazi group, based in Roanoke, Virginia, had put out a press release saying, “The situation for white citizens in Orlando is intolerable. Folks cannot walk the streets for fear of criminal thugs.” Protected by a heavy police phalanx, 22 NSM members marched through the neighborhood with signs such as “White pride” and “White people unite.” The racists held a rally, which was cut short as counterdemonstrators shouted, “No Nazis in Orlando!” Police escorted the neo-Nazis out of the area in SUV’s surrounded by police motorcycles. Some 300 cops were on hand not only to protect the neo-Nazis and arrest and harass counterprotesters, but to block off streets around the rally site, making it difficult for many people to join the antiracist mobilization. Police blockades, for example, prevented students Brittany Holliday and Stephanie Cohn from joining the anti-Nazi protest. “We came because what they [the NSM] are doing is wrong,” said Holliday. “How can they say Black people are causing trouble when they are starting the trouble?” Cops arrested 17 counterprotesters on charges that included wearing a ski mask on a public way.

—MAGGIE TROWE

This argument disarms workers in any confrontation with the employers, for two reasons. First, terms such as “the line of duty” are used for the military and police—bodies of armed men and women the capitalists use to fight the workers and prevent them from defending their interests as an exploited class. Second, unionists can’t be proud of increasing “death benefits” for relatives of those killed on the job—especially when the bosses’ profit greed is claiming more and more lives of coal miners and other working people. Instead unions can enforce safety and ensure no worker dies on the job. They can do so by insisting their members and other workers won’t toil under unsafe conditions and will walk out the minute bosses refuse to resolve any safety problem.

### Drop fines and jail threats

The transit workers still face the draco-

nian provisions of the Taylor law, which call for \$1 million a day fines against the union, and penalties of two days’ pay per member for each day on strike. A state supreme court judge is to hold hearings on the fines and the possible jailing of union officials.

The MTA is also seeking binding arbitration to ram down the throats of the workers a concession contract worse than the one they rejected—including cuts in health care and pensions and more leeway for the bosses to impose disciplinary actions.

Working people should stand with the transit workers and their union as they attempt to defend themselves from these attacks by the MTA and the city and state governments. The labor movement must demand all fines, and all charges against union officials, be dropped. The transit workers’ cause is the cause of all labor.

people,” forum director Elizabeth Stone explained at the hearing. Stone asked that the fines be waived because the flyers were posted without the knowledge or agreement of the forum’s organizers, the weekly program has limited resources to pay such a fine, and the forum series plays an educational role in the community.

Statements addressed to the hearing by workers who attend the forum underlined the harm that would be done by the fines. Brian Everette, an airline mechanic and member of the Aircraft Mechanics Fraternal Association, spoke on the importance of the forum taking up labor issues, such as the current employer attacks on airline workers.

In a letter submitted to the hearing, *San Francisco Chronicle* pressman Kerry Garza wrote, “I especially appreciated a program sponsored by the forum that took up the efforts of my

union, the IBT/GCIU San Francisco Web Pressmen & Prepress Workers Local #4, to win a fair contract with the *San Francisco Chronicle*. Given that the posting was done without the knowledge of those organizing the forums, to force them to pay the fines for the citations would be unjust as well as harmful to this educational activity.”

Milton Chee, a long-time participant in the forum and member of the United Transportation Union, attended the hearing and submitted a letter pointing to the forums being bilingual, “offering a chance for English and Spanish workers to state their views and exchange them.”

Militant Labor Forum supporters also submitted at the hearing a letter explaining the injustice of the citations they had sent to Supervisor Tom Ammiano in the city’s Ninth District, where the forum is located.

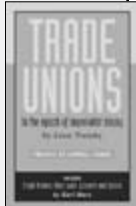
### For further reading

#### Trade Unions in the Epoch of Imperialist Decay

by Leon Trotsky  
Food for thought—and action—from leaders of three generations of the modern revolutionary workers movement. Features “Trade Unions: Their Past, Present, and Future” by Karl Marx.

Includes preface by Farrell Dobbs. \$15

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# ‘Capitalism’s long, hot winter is our spring’

## Two newest issues of ‘Nueva Internacional’ presented at Havana Book Fair

BY MARTÍN KOPPEL

HAVANA—The magazine *Nueva Internacional* and books published by Pathfinder Press “enrich the arsenal of politics and ideas—not only for the working class, farmers, and youth in the United States, but in our country as well,” said Mario Rodríguez Martínez. He was speaking at a February 12 event here where the two most recent issues of *Nueva Internacional* were presented. More than 50 people attended the meeting, which was part of this year’s Havana International Book Fair.

Rodríguez, who spoke on behalf of the national leadership of the Association of Combatants of the Cuban Revolution, said he found the article titled “Their Transformation and Ours,” in issue 6 of the Marxist magazine, particularly useful. He noted that the document, a resolution of the Socialist Workers Party, explains what is driving the “transformation of the American army aimed at achieving a greater geographic reach and an increase in its military actions.”

Other speakers at the event were Carlos Rodríguez Almaguer, president of the Martí National Youth Movement; Fernando Rojas, vice president of the Federation of University Students (FEU) in Havana; Darío Machado, member of the editorial board of the magazine *Cuba Socialista*; Eliades Acosta, director of the José Martí National Library; and Mary-Alice Waters, the magazine’s editor. They were joined on the platform by Armando Hart, one of the central leaders of the urban underground during the revolutionary struggle that overthrew the Batista dictatorship in the 1950s, and today director of the Office of the Martí Program.

Waters, who also chaired the meeting, explained that *Nueva Internacional* is the Spanish-language translation of *New International*, which is published in French as well. A number of issues and many articles have also appeared in Swedish, Icelandic, Greek, and Farsi. All are distributed by Pathfinder Press.

### ‘Great turning point in class struggle’

As a magazine of Marxist politics and theory, Waters said, *New International* is “above all, a tool to arm, and to be used by, workers and youth actively involved in the practical work of building a com-



Militant /Jonathan Silberman  
Above, panelists at February 12 presentation of *New International* magazine’s two latest issues at the Havana International Book Fair. From left: Mario Rodríguez Martínez, Armando Hart, Carlos Rodríguez Almaguer, Mary-Alice Waters, Eliades Acosta, Fernando Rojas, and Darío Machado. Left, participants at the meeting.

munist party and youth movement in the United States especially.”

Issues 6 and 7 of *Nueva Internacional*—nos. 12 and 13 of the English-language magazine—“put forward, with conviction and with facts, the view that we are today living through a great turning point in the class struggle,” Waters said. “Communists and the broader vanguard forces they lead must fully absorb this historic moment and begin acting on its political logic. Its origins do not lie in a single mythical event such as September 11. They do not lie in specific policies pursued by one or another Congress or U.S. president, whoever his advisers may be.

“The roots are to be found in the downward turn in the curve of capitalist development that began almost three decades ago with the exhaustion of the economic expansion spurred by preparations for and the enormous destruction resulting from World War II. Today we are witnessing the sharp acceleration of that crisis. As the lead article in *Nueva Internacional* no. 6 explains, ‘One of capitalism’s infrequent long winters has begun.’ And for us it is going to be very long and very hot.”

As the U.S. rulers, in preparation for the coming battles at home and abroad, carry out the most far-reaching transformation of their military policy and organization in more than 60 years, Waters said, we also see “the beginning of another transformation: the transformation of the working class. Impelled by these momentous changes, by the increasing social and economic pressures, working people are beginning to resist, and a small but expanding and combative vanguard is beginning to take the lead to reach for, organize, and use union power and other forms of popular power to defend themselves.” (The text of the remarks by Waters, along with those of Acosta and Mario Rodríguez, will appear in a coming issue.)

Eliades Acosta saluted *Nueva Internacional* as “a magazine written and promoted by communists” in the United States who say “loudly and clearly: we’re communists and we’re here to do away

with capitalism, to do away with imperialism. We know that capitalism is by definition the enemy of humanity.”

He focused his remarks on the feature article in issue 6, “Capitalism’s Long Hot Winter Has Begun,” by Jack Barnes, national secretary of the Socialist Workers Party. The article “is an accurate assessment of the deep structural—not conjunctural—crisis of capitalism, and of the opportunities for communists posed by this crisis,” he said.

Acosta noted that the article explains how the Northern Command, part of the reorganization of the U.S. military, was initiated under the Clinton administration. It establishes a command structure for deployment of the U.S. armed forces against working people at home.

He cited Washington’s recently released Quadrennial Defense Review, in which Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld emphasized that Washington is waging a “long war” that “will last no less than 20 years.” In *Nueva Internacional*, Acosta said, “Barnes and the American communists signaled this development and gave an accurate assessment of it.”

“But out of the great crises come great solutions,” he concluded. Yes, capitalism’s long hot winter has begun. “But their winter is our springtime.”

In her opening remarks Waters noted the importance of the presence on the platform of multiple generations of Cuban communists. The Association of Combatants of the Cuban Revolution, a nationwide organization made up of Cubans who have taken part in revolutionary struggles and internationalist missions over more than half a century, was represented by Mario Rodríguez Martínez. He himself was involved in the underground struggle in Havana in the 1950s against the Batista dictatorship. In 1994–2001 he served as Cuba’s ambassador to Italy and then Mexico.

“Defense of the socialist state as our number-one task is not a slogan—it’s a reality that conditions have imposed on us. Our people face this task with dignity, renewed spirit, and intelligence,” Rodríguez said.

“What encourages us and deepens our commitment even more, however, is the demonstration of how revolutionaries in the United States are committed to and

participate in this struggle from within the very belly of the beast.

“They fight for Cuba. They fight for the Americas as a whole. They fight for their own people.”

### Promote knowledge of Marxism

To confront Washington’s threats today the Cuban people are strengthening the defense of their revolution, Rodríguez said. “The collapse of the meringue in the USSR will never happen here,” he stated. What distinguishes Cuba is “the role of the masses as the main protagonists of the revolution.”

The communist political perspectives presented in *Nueva Internacional* “are very important today,” Rodríguez concluded. To answer the imperialist propaganda offensive against the Cuban Revolution, “we must awaken a knowledge of Marxism” among workers and youth.

Fernando Rojas of the Federation of University Students and Carlos Rodríguez of the Martí Youth Movement addressed these same questions from the viewpoint of the new generations in Cuba.

Rojas said that in face of imperialist threats and propaganda against the Cuban Revolution, “we need to promote discussion among young people” in order to “develop resistance to the pro-capitalist offensive.”

“Think socially; act politically: the key to the party today” was the title that Carlos Rodríguez gave his remarks. He called special attention to “Their Transformation and Ours” as “an excellent and clarifying summary of the current conditions of workers’ struggles and of the ideological and structural changes of the empire we confront.”

He noted “the clear need to increasingly involve youth in this organized struggle, since they are the ones who will live well into the 21st century, where not only the triumph of an idea but the survival of the human species will be decided.”

Also speaking was Darío Machado, a member of the editorial board of *Cuba Socialista*, the theoretical magazine of the Central Committee of the Cuban Communist Party. Machado, the author of numerous books including *¿Es posible el socialismo en Cuba?* (Is socialism in Cuba possible?), is a researcher responsible for the social sciences in the Ministry of Science.

Drawing attention to the article “Our Politics Start with the World” in *Nueva Internacional* no. 7, Machado said he found especially useful a section of the article titled “What was opened by the Cuban Revolution,” which points to the fundamental shift in the development of revolutionary leadership in the world that came with the victory of the Cuban Revolution.

At the conclusion of the meeting the audience welcomed Armando Hart’s request to say a few words. Expressing his respect for the work of Pathfinder and those who produce *Nueva Internacional*, he spoke about the need to reach out to U.S. society with the ideas of Cuban anti-imperialist leader José Martí. He noted above all the importance of those ideas in the Cuban Revolution’s fight against

continued on page 9

### for further reading

#### *New International*

#### Capitalism’s Long Hot Winter Has Begun

(in issue no. 12) —\$16

In Spanish: *Nueva Internacional* no. 6

#### Our Politics Start with the World

(in issue no. 13) —\$14

In Spanish: *Nueva Internacional* no. 7



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# Miners discuss Buffalo Creek disaster at film showing

BY PAUL PEDERSON

MAN, West Virginia—"The water was between 25 and 30 feet high and I saw a house floating on top," said Gertie Moore, a retired school bus driver, describing the February 1972 coal waste flood that swept through 16 coal communities along Buffalo Creek, West Virginia. "I learned later that the Billings family, a husband and two children, were inside. They never made it."

Moore was attending the February 25 screening here of *The Buffalo Creek Flood: An Act of Man* (1975) and *Buffalo Creek Revisited* (1984). Mimi Pickering of Appalshop, a film, media, and art collective in Kentucky, produced both documentaries.

The town of Man sits at the mouth of the hollow that was flooded when a dam holding 130 million gallons of waste from Pittston Coal Company's mining operations burst after two days of heavy rains. The flood killed 125 people, left 1,121 injured, and made 4,000 people homeless.

Many of the 120 people who filled the local high school auditorium to view the films had lived through the disaster.

"Before it happened I remember some of the children on my school bus," Moore said. "The little Dylan girl, Darla, who got on the bus one day after her parents had done some house cleaning and brought me a bouquet of plastic flowers. And David Adkins Jr., who was too young to go to school and would sit on warm days and watch the bus go by like he was saying 'I'm going to ride that bus next year'.... All of them were lost."

According to the March 2006 issue of *National Geographic*, some 500 coal waste impoundments, also called slurry ponds, dot Appalachia, more than half in West Virginia and Kentucky.

In a practice called "mountaintop removal," coal companies have created massive surface mines over the last three decades by removing the top of mountains to expose the seams of coal. The rock and soil the coal barons remove in the process are dumped into nearby river valleys, while creating vast ponds to place the waste from washing coal. These ponds are often many times larger than the one that collapsed at Buffalo Creek.

One impoundment, owned by Massey

Energy, the largest coal producer in the region, has a capacity for 2.8 billion gallons of coal waste—nearly 22 times larger than the one that burst at Buffalo Creek. It sits right above the Marsh Fork Elementary School, with an enrollment of 240 children.

In October 2000, the bottom of a slurry pond built by Massey in Kentucky collapsed into an abandoned underground mine, pouring 250 million gallons of coal slurry below. The waste filled the mine tunnels and burst out of the mine entrances into two creeks that flowed into the Tug Fork river. The spill destroyed 20 miles of stream valley.

According to Jack Spadaro, a former official with the Mine Safety and Health Administration who investigated the Buffalo Creek disaster, there are 225



Debris from destroyed homes on Buffalo Creek, West Virginia, after 1972 disaster.

of these waste ponds built above abandoned underground mines. The spill in Kentucky, Spadaro told the *Williamson Daily News*, contaminated the drinking water of 27,000 people.

In July 2002, another Massey slurry pond overflowed and destroyed more than a dozen homes in Logan County. "Massey jumped in there and told them, honey, you just pick out any brand new

double-wide trailer you want to replace the one you lost," Gertie Moore said. "They hoped to keep things quiet by acting quickly."

"We just want to get the word out about the company negligence," said Moore, who has worked with others to document the history of the flood and Pittston's culpability in it. "We want to stop another thing like this from happening."

## UMWA calls march in Montgomery, Alabama

Continued from front page

and a few coalfields. Davis said he will call for a "full-fledged" congressional hearing into safety in the mines nationwide. His remarks were followed by presentations by miners, as well as family members of miners killed in a 2001 explosion at the nearby Jim Walter Resources No. 5 Mine.

The forum became an open discussion on steps needed to defend workers' health and safety in the mines.

"My life has been put in danger five times in three weeks," said Derrick Barger, a young miner who currently works at Jim Walters' No. 5 Mine. Barger described one example in which a Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) inspector had come to look at deteriorating roof conditions in an escape way near his work area, after a complaint had been lodged about the hazardous condition. The inspector said the roof was safe. Barger was given some work to do in that area. Fifteen minutes after he finished the task the roof collapsed where he had been working, the coal miner told the meeting.

"MSHA cannot be trusted to investigate itself," said Freda Sorah, whose husband Joe died in the 2001 explosion at No. 5. After 13 miners were killed in that disaster, Sorah said, instead of strengthening mine safety, the government cut the budgets for MSHA and the state mine inspectors. She demanded that all underground electrical power sources be isolated from the mine atmosphere and equipped with methane sensors that will cut the power automatically. Such measures may have prevented the 2001 explosion, Sorah pointed out.

"After the Brookwood disaster, what happened at Sago should have never occurred," said Wanda Blevins, whose husband David was also killed in the 2001 explosion. "[Labor] Secretary [Elaine] Chao said the exact same thing at Sago that she said after Brookwood." Blevins went to West Virginia to visit the families of the miners killed in the January disaster at the Sago Mine. "I told them, 'You can't trust the federal government,'" she said.

"MSHA has allowed more and more mines to use belt air," said James Blankenship, UMWA Local 2245 president. He was referring to the practice of

pumping fresh air into the mine down the tunnel containing the belt that delivers coal to the surface. This saves the coal bosses the expense of digging a separate entry to pump air into the mine. "Some of the most flammable and toxic materials are found on the belt," Blankenship said.

"Everything we have gotten from MSHA we have forced them to do," said John Cupps, UMWA Local 8982 safety committee chairman. "Every law has been made because of bloodshed." The companies, he said, "could care less—just run coal and forget about your safety."

"We don't want Omega block seals," said Dwight Cagle, UMWA Local 2397 president and safety committeeman. He was referring to the soft, lightweight blocks that were used instead of concrete to seal abandoned sections of the mine at Sago. The failure of those blocks in the Sago explosion to withhold the blast has been cited as one of the factors that

magnified the disaster.

"We need emergency shelters," said Randell Erwin, an officer of UMWA Local 1948. He pointed out that such underground shelters saved the lives of potash miners in Canada in a mine fire this year.

"What does it take to get the law changed?" asked Donna Boyd in the discussion. Boyd's brother Clarence died in the 2001 explosion.

"Some say we can't fight the government," responded retired miner Vernon Bankston. "But we have always fought the government and we will continue to fight the government for our safety."

A miner, whose name this reporter didn't catch, said at the end of the discussion, speaking at the open mike, "Safety in the mines starts in the union hall."

*Clay Dennison is a coal miner and member of UMWA Local 2133 at the Oak Grove mine near Birmingham, Alabama.*

## Gas explosions prompt evacuation of Alabama's Shoal Creek mine

BY CLAY DENNISON

BIRMINGHAM, Alabama, March 1—Five days after a methane gas explosion ripped through Drummond Company's Shoal Creek mine near here February 24, explosions have continued to ignite fires in the mine.

The *Birmingham News* reported that four blasts have been detected inside the mine, with the largest yet occurring February 28. According to the *News*, Thomas Wilson, health and safety representative of the United Mine Workers of America, said carbon monoxide levels have reached more than 6,000 parts per million, a level high enough to cause death after 15 minutes of exposure.

"The night before the explosion, a company official said if a brattice [a ventilation control] blew out he would evacuate the mine—and when it happened they didn't do it," miner Morris Caffey told the *Militant*. "It's going to be a crisis if someone doesn't nip this in the bud."

"We do not consider this to be a major event," said a statement released by the company.

More than 800 people work at Shoal Creek Mine over three production shifts.

Miners reported that the company did not start evacuation procedures until Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) officials ordered the company to halt operations. All miners were evacuated safely.

Wilson told reporters that the miners are angry that the company didn't act immediately. "We are seeing the legacy from an epidemic of lax compliance and lax enforcement," he stated. "In this case, failure to evacuate until ordered was gross negligence."

UMWA international vice-president Daryl Dewberry told the press that problems with the mine's ventilation system may have triggered the fire. Referring to a recent state of Alabama mine inspection ordered as part of a lawsuit the union has filed, he said, "That was part of the mine not inspected. The state didn't have the manpower or the resources to inspect that area. A more thorough inspection could have curtailed this."

## Havana book fair

Continued from page 8

corruption and for political integrity.

At the Havana book fair the two issues of *Nueva Internacional* were among the best-selling titles brought by Pathfinder Press. Over the course of the 10-day fair and at events the following week in Havana and other Cuban cities, a total of 189 copies were sold or distributed as complimentary copies to libraries, organizations, and individuals.

Many of those who visited the Pathfinder booth, eager to gain a better understanding of U.S. and world politics, were immediately attracted to the title of the article "Capitalism's Long Hot Winter Has Begun." One of these was Yanet Fuentes, 20, a student at the University of Havana. "I want to know why the U.S. government is carrying out these wars," she said. "This is what I've been looking for."



# Miners strike in Mexico

Continued from front page

Aguilar, a union spokesperson, told the *Militant*.

It was such disregard for safety by the bosses that led to the deadly explosion at the Pasta de Conchos mine, coal miners and other workers in San Juan de Sabinas told the *Militant*.

Another 1,500 workers at a Grupo Mexico zinc refinery in San Luis Potosí, who are fighting for a contract, joined the strike February 28, Aguilar said.

The following day, the union called an indefinite nationwide strike involving the union's entire membership of 270,000. That walkout, Aguilar said, was in response to efforts by the Mexican government to interfere in the union's internal affairs.

On February 24, Grupo Mexico executives and government officials informed the family and the media that rescue operations at the Pasta de Conchos mine were ending, due to high levels of explosive gases in the mine. They offered compensation to the families of the dead miners of 750,000 pesos (\$72,000) each. Three days later they announced it may take months to recover the bodies of the miners.

"We want our loved ones, not your money!" family members shouted at the company officials here February 24. Hundreds have gathered in front of the mine entrance, keeping a 24-hour vigil there since the explosion. "For them it is less expensive to leave them underground than to recover them, but for us the money makes no difference," Norma Leticia González, whose father was among the dead miners, told the Mexican daily *La Jornada*.

Mexican government officials and the big-business press across North America repeated claims that the miners themselves or "nature" were to blame for the conditions that caused the explosion.

"It's terrible to say, because they are probably dead," said Julian Gutiérrez, a federal mine inspector with the Mexican Geological Service, referring to the miners. "But they share much of the blame for this."

"The most dangerous aspect of the mine was the poverty of the miners," the *New York Times* asserted in a February

24 article. "Miners sometimes override safety triggers and work even when gas levels exceed the safety threshold."

The same *Times* article also stated: "The omnipresent possibility of a methane explosion and death underground is as much part of the culture here as the dirt-poor towns of concrete-block houses, the taco stands, and the Roman Catholic Church."

"No one can be blamed" for the miners' deaths, Rogelio Aguirre, the supervisor of the five mine inspectors from the federal labor ministry, told the *Houston Chronicle*. "Nature imposes itself, the gas surges, accidents happen," he said.

Miners who worked at Pasta de Conchos say these are lies. They say the company's drive for coal production at all costs caused the deadly blast. With prices booming, production in Mexico's coal mines is up 20 percent. Most of it is mined here in the state of Coahuila, along Mexico's northeast border with Texas.

"The company never took into account how gassy this mine is. Especially in the section they were working in," Manuel Flores, a mechanic who has worked at the mine for 17 years, told the *Militant*. While the mining machines are programmed to shut off at 1.5 percent methane, "I've seen them just keep on running way past this," he said.

"I have never seen anything so terrible in terms of safety," Ignacio Moreno, 38, a heavy equipment operator who had been working at the mine since last fall, told the *Chronicle*. "It was just produce, produce, produce. If they had put more money and attention into safety, this wouldn't have happened."

Flores said the company hadn't replaced or tested his emergency oxygen supply, called a self-rescuer, for 17 years. "You don't know if it will ever work when you need it," he said. Flores is a member of the union. He said more



Militant/José Aravena

Mine rescue team member speaks to those gathered by the Pasta de Conchos mine in San Juan de Sabinas, Mexico, February 21. The death of 65 miners trapped underground has sparked strikes across Mexico.

than half the miners there are nonunion contract employees.

Leonardo Sánchez, a contract worker, started work at the mine a year ago. He said the contractors often are assigned to work with inferior equipment and have fewer rights than those in the union. Contract workers make up over half of those that perished in the mine collapse.

The miners are paid a base wage of \$45 to \$85 a week, and they depend on production bonuses of up to \$450 a month for most of their earnings. The company designed the pay system this way to put the maximum pressure on workers to produce coal at all costs, Sánchez explained.

The company used antiquated methods to support the roof of the mine shafts, Sánchez said. He pointed out that there was a greater danger of roof falls there compared with other mines he had worked in. This could have contributed to the scale of the cave-in caused by the explosion.

Federal inspectors cited the mine "for at least 34 safety violations last summer," noted the *Chronicle* article, giving

the company "until this month to rectify them." Among these was failure to use limestone powder on the mine walls and ceiling to dampen the explosiveness of coal dust.

Felix Mendoza Moreno, the former general secretary of a union local at a now-dormant coal mine nearby, was among those standing vigil outside the mine. He invited *Militant* reporters to visit him at his home in the mining town of Palaú, about 15 miles from the site of the disaster. The area is surrounded by massive piles of coal mine tailings, and several working mines.

Moreno described the importance of the union in defending safety on the job. "When faced with a dangerous situation in the mine we took action. We got out and the union backed it up," Mendoza said. "Because this is the only job around here a lot of miners are now afraid to speak up. That has to change or more are going to die."

*José Aravena reporting from Mexico, and Paul Pederson and Luis Madrid reporting from New York, contributed to this article.*

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## AN APPEAL TO OUR READERS

The 'Militant' has spent over \$4,000 this year to provide firsthand coverage from the coalfields of the United States, Canada, and Mexico, like the article above. We plan to continue, with your help. *Militant* reporters are getting ready to go back to Mexico to cover the strikes there, and to Alabama to report on activities by miners leading up to the March 7 UMW march in Montgomery. Please contribute generously. Send your check or money order to The Militant at 306 W. 37th St., 10th Floor, New York, NY 10018.



# Build UMW march! Back Mexican strikers!

Two actions by the labor movement in North America point the way forward in the fight to confront the crisis of job safety and the bosses' profit drive that's endangering workers' lives. They deserve unequivocal support by trade unions and all workers and farmers.

One is the March 7 demonstration called by the United Mine Workers of America in Montgomery, Alabama. The other is the strike by 5,500 copper and zinc miners and other workers in northern Mexico calling for safety improvements and protesting company greed that killed 65 fellow miners trapped in a coal mine after a methane blast.

It's the employers' disregard for safety that killed the coal miners in the northern Mexican state of Coahuila—just like the 24 miners who have died in U.S. mines this year. That's what working people told *Militant* reporters on the scene. But bosses, government officials, and the capitalist media are working overtime to cover up the blame.

Dripping with class contempt, an article in the February 24 *New York Times* asserted that workers' deaths were simply part of their "culture" of "dirt-poor towns...taco stands and the Roman Catholic Church." Mexican government mine inspectors have argued that "no one can be blamed" because "accidents happen," or even that the workers were responsible for their own deaths because they were so desperate for an income that they disregarded safety.

Those cynical rationalizations are familiar to U.S. miners, who have heard bosses and government officials use similar lies against workers north of the border. The bottom line is: miners' lives don't count; bosses' profits are paramount.

But Pasta de Conchos miners tell a different story. For the bosses "it was just produce, produce, produce," said miner Ignacio Moreno. "I have never seen anything so terrible in terms of safety." He added, "If they had put more money and attention into safety, this wouldn't have happened."

Workers are not the cause of the mine deaths. Nor is it "nature." Nor "an act of God." It's the bosses' ravenous drive to increase production and fatten their profits—fueled by

competition for markets, inherent in the profit system.

It's not true miners' deaths on the job are inevitable. When workers are organized and have a union that they use, they can prevent deaths. A month ago, when 72 workers were trapped underground by a fire at a Canadian potash mine in Esterhazy, Saskatchewan, no miners were killed. The reason? The workers, who are unionized, had forced the company to establish emergency shelters in the mine and other safeguards that saved everyone's lives.

The starting point for the labor movement must be: *no miner or any other worker has to die*. The only way to prevent deaths and maimings on the job is for workers to organize and mobilize union power to enforce safety. As a miner at a recent union meeting in Brookwood, Alabama, put it, "Safety in the mines starts in the union hall."

Workers in Mexico, the United States, and Canada are all brothers and sisters. We share common conditions and have a common enemy—the profit-hungry bosses.

An exemplary act of working-class solidarity by Local 890 of the Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union at the Canadian potash mine captured the meaning of these common class interests. The local's president, Phil Polsom, sent a message to the miners' union in Mexico last week, which said, "We can show solidarity no matter where the borders," pointing to the potential to forge an alliance of working people across North America and beyond.

The March 7 UMW march for mine safety in Montgomery, Alabama, shows what needs to be done. So does the February 16 one-day walkout by UMW miners at the Freeman United Coal mines in central Illinois who protested when a company doctor tried to get a miner to return to work over the instructions of his own physician.

We urge working people and youth everywhere to back the strikers in Mexico and the UMW march in Montgomery. Send messages of support! Organize solidarity delegations! Get out the word about these workers who are standing up for all labor.

## —MILITANT LABOR FORUMS—

### ALABAMA

#### Birmingham

**Solidarity with Mexico Miners! An Eyewitness Report from Disaster in San Juan de Sabinas, Mexico.** Speaker: Anthony Dutrow, correspondent for the *Militant*. Sun., March 12. Brunch, 2:00 p.m.; program, 3:00 p.m. 3029A Bessemer Rd. Tel.: (205) 780-0021.

### CALIFORNIA

#### Los Angeles

**The Fight for Women's Rights Today.** Speaker: Virginia Garza. Fri., March 10, 7:30 p.m. 4229 S. Central Avenue. Tel.: (323) 233-9372.

### IOWA

#### Des Moines

**Why Censorship Should Be Opposed by Working People.** Speaker: representative of the Socialist Workers Party. Fri., March 10. Dinner, 6:30 p.m.; program, 7:30 p.m. Donation: dinner \$5, program \$5. 3707 Douglas Avenue. Tel.: (515) 255-1707.

### FLORIDA

#### Miami

**Speakout against Boot Camp Killing of Martin Lee Anderson.** Speaker: Ellen Brickley, Socialist Workers Party. Fri., March 10. Dinner, 6:30 p.m.; program, 7:30 p.m. 8365 NE 2nd Ave. #206. Tel.: (305) 756-4436.

### MINNESOTA

#### St. Paul

**Abortion Rights Under Attack: How to Defend Our Rights.** A panel discussion. Fri., March 10, 7:30 p.m. Donation: \$5. 113 Bernard St. E. Tel.: (651) 644-6325.

### TEXAS

#### Houston

**Reportback from San Juan de Sabinas, Mexico.** Speakers: José Aravena and Anthony Dutrow, Socialist Workers Party. Fri., March 10, 7:30 p.m. 4800 W. 34 St. Suite C51-A. Tel.: (713) 869-6550.

## —CALENDAR—

### NEW YORK Manhattan

#### ***Women and the Cuban Revolution Today***

#### **Hear leaders of the Federation of Cuban Women**

Speakers: Dora Carcaño and Maritzel González.  
**Sat., March 11, 6 p.m. reception, 7 p.m. program.**  
*Martin Luther King Jr. Auditorium, SEIU Local 1199, 310 W. 43rd St. (near 8th Avenue).*  
*For more information call (212) 629-6649.*

## —LETTERS—

### ‘Militant’: the workers’ voice

So many miners have died this year all over the world and it is only the end of February. The important issue is how safe are the mines where these accidents occurred and do the miners have a voice to speak out when unsafe working conditions are present?

In most instances, I would say that a lot of the miners who work in nonunion mines are afraid to speak out and let people know how bad that mine is and that they would lose their jobs for speaking out. The *Militant* has been that voice for workers who could not speak out or organize for better working conditions. To put a muzzle on freedom of speech when it concerns peoples' lives is criminal.

This is the opportunity for folks to organize the mines. With so many new operations opening up in the coalfields, more workers are at risk for

death or permanent injuries because of putting profits before people. Keep up the good work *Militant* and don't let the establishment stop you from telling the stories of all those workers who have no other avenue.

*Kathryn South  
Oak Hill, West Virginia*

*Kathryn South is the secretary of the National Black Lung Association. Her letter was read at a special Militant Labor Forum in Pittsburgh on February 26 on "Defending labor rights" (see front-page ad for other such forums).*

—Editor

### Unionize the mines

I live in the coalfields of western Pennsylvania and my grandfather, Camillo Brisini, was an organizer for the United Mine Workers of America. In the 1990s I formed the Coal Country Coalition, which battled the racist Klan and supported workers' rights.

I was very interested in the February 6 *Militant* editorial, "Unionize the mines! Build the UMW!" It pointed out that the main solution to the problems facing coal miners, such as safety on the job, was to form a UMW local "in every single mine."

I agree. I also think it's imperative to point out that the present capitalist system can never be reformed to truly meet the needs of workers and small farmers or provide real safety on the job for the toiling masses.

*Nick Brisini  
Hastings, Pennsylvania*

**The letters column is an open forum for all viewpoints on subjects of interest to working people. Please keep your letters brief. Where necessary they will be abridged. Please indicate if you prefer that your initials be used rather than your full name.**

# London mayor suspended for ‘offensive remarks’

BY JONATHAN SILBERMAN

LONDON—In a ruling aimed at restricting political space, Kenneth Livingstone, the mayor of London, was suspended from office for four weeks. On February 28, the day before it was to take effect, a high court judge froze the suspension order pending a statutory appeal.

The decision to suspend the mayor was taken by a three-person Adjudication Panel for England that investigated offensive remarks that Livingstone made a year ago to a journalist for the London *Evening Standard*. The panel found him guilty of breaching the Greater London Authority code of conduct by making remarks that were "unnecessarily insensitive and offensive" and "did damage to the reputation of his office." Livingstone was also ordered to pay £80,000 (US\$140,300) in court costs for the case.

The exchange between Livingstone and *Standard* reporter Oliver Finegold took place at the end of a Feb. 8, 2005, reception held at City Hall to mark the 20th anniversary of Labour member of parliament (MP) Chris Smith coming out as a gay. Smith was the first MP to do so. The *Evening Standard* had campaigned against the use of public money for the reception.

In response to a question from Finegold, Livingstone asked the journalist if he'd ever been a "German war criminal." On hearing that Finegold was Jewish, Livingstone likened him to a Nazi concentration camp guard.

Livingstone's remarks were widely reported in the media. The London Assembly unanimously voted for the mayor to withdraw them. Government officials, including Prime Minister Anthony Blair, publicly called on the mayor to apologize. He also described Livingstone's suspension as "bloody stupid." Livingstone admitted that the remarks were offensive but refused to withdraw them or apologize. The Board of Deputies of British Jews called on the Standards Board of England to investigate the matter.

The Standards Board—known here as a quango, a quasi-autonomous non-governmental organization—referred the matter to the Adjudication Panel, a subcommittee. "The unusual punishment comes at a time when Britain, and Europe in general, are wrestling with the definitions and limits of free speech," wrote *Washington Post* correspondents Kevin Sullivan and Mary Jordan February 25. "Muslims worldwide have angrily protested a Danish newspaper's publication of cartoons of the prophet Muhammad." Livingstone was prominent in the London protests against publication of the cartoons, calling them "an orgy of Islamophobia."

Support for the mayor's suspension has come from the *Evening Standard*, the London Jewish Forum, and the chair and deputy chairs of the London Assembly.

Condemning the ruling, Livingstone said, "This decision strikes at the heart of democracy.... Three members of a body that no one has ever elected should not be allowed to overturn the votes of millions of Londoners."

The ruling was also attacked in a February 25 London *Times* editorial. Writing in the paper two days later, former editor William Rees-Mogg commented, "The panel was established by law—one of the many foolish laws passed by the Blair administration—but they were not enforcing the law, they were enforcing their own subjective discretion.... The issue is more than a matter of a show-off mayor or a silly subcommittee of an unelected quango abusing its inappropriate powers. It concerns the ancient issue of 'due process of law'.... Without due process, there is no law. A merely subjective judgment, lacking judicial safeguards, by an unelected tribunal, does not constitute due process."

"In theory traditional court processes and attitudes to civil liberties could work," Blair wrote in the February 26 *Observer*. "But the modern world is different from the world for which these court processes were designed."