

THE MILITANT

INSIDE

Is China capitalist?

Reply to a reader

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A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

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Immigration agents raid packing plants

‘We are not criminals!’ say workers at Swift factories; ‘No deportations!’



AP/Ed Andrieski

Workers, relatives, and supporters rally December 12 outside Swift meat processing plant in Greeley, Colorado, one of six factories raided that day by immigration cops.

BY HELEN MEYERS

MARSHALLTOWN, Iowa—An immigration raid at the Swift meatpacking plant here, one of six targeted by federal cops across the country, was met by angry protesters at the plant entrance. Some held signs reading “We are not criminals”

and “No to Deportations.”

Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) police descended on the Swift plant here December 12, arresting at least 90 workers. Simultaneous raids were carried out at five other company facilities.

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U.S. rulers debate strategy to advance war in Iraq

Many call for sending more troops

BY SAM MANUEL

WASHINGTON, December 13—In the wake of the release of a report by the Iraq Study Group on December 6, the U.S. rulers have intensified discussion on how best to press Washington’s war in Iraq with the aim of establishing a stable client regime in Baghdad. The debate is fueled by the unceasing warfare among

bourgeois factions in Iraq vying for a greater share of power.

At the same time, more capitalist politicians and pundits are pressing to send additional U.S. troops to Iraq.

These include Sen. John McCain, a leading contender for the Republican Party’s presidential nomination in the

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London meeting will celebrate political life of Connie Harris

Cadre of communist movement for 60 years

BY TONY HUNT

LONDON—A meeting to celebrate the life and political contributions of Connie Harris, a cadre of the international communist movement for more than 60 years, will be held here January 13. Harris, a member of the Communist League in the United Kingdom, died December 7 at the age of 84 after a prolonged illness.

Harris’s decades of political activity began as a young worker in Britain as a member of the Women’s Land Army (WLA) during the Second World War. The WLA had been established by the British capitalists to allow them to draft

the male agricultural workers into the armed forces and send them to fight in the imperialist slaughter. Facing abysmal wages and living conditions, and back-breaking work, Harris joined the Agricultural Workers Union and then helped sign up other women to the union.

In the course of her activity in the labor movement, Harris met and joined communists who were affiliated with the Fourth International. That was the international organization founded in 1938 by Leon Trotsky, a central leader of the 1917 Russian Revolution, to continue the course of V.I. Lenin and of

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N.Y. protesters demand justice in brutal killing by the police



Militant/Dan Fein

Hundreds join December 9 march sponsored by NAACP in Jamaica, Queens, to protest November 26 shooting in which cops killed Sean Bell and wounded two others.

BY EMILY PAUL AND OLYMPIA NEWTON

NEW YORK, December 12—Protests continue here three weeks after the cops killed a 23-year-old worker and injured two of his friends in a hail of 50 bullets. While the Queens district attorney has yet to set a timetable for a grand jury investigation, city officials are working hard to defuse popular outrage.

On December 9, more than 300 people marched from the 103rd police precinct

in Jamaica, Queens, to the site of the killing, chanting, “Remember Sean Bell!” Contingents of students from St. John’s University, State University of New York at Stonybrook, and York College joined the action called by the NAACP, as did members of the Bell family. Passersby joined the march as it wound down Jamaica Avenue. Many others stopped to cheer the demonstrators.

Sean Bell was gunned down in the

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Cubans mobilize to mark 50 years of Revolutionary Armed Forces

BY ROSE ANA DUEÑAS

HAVANA, December 2—In a display of revolutionary pride and dignity, hundreds of thousands of Cubans celebrated today the 50th anniversary of the founding of the Revolutionary Armed Forces (FAR). Activities included a political program, a military parade, and a massive demonstration known as the

“March of the Fighting People.”

On Dec. 2, 1956, 82 young revolutionaries from the July 26th Movement led by Fidel Castro landed on Cuba’s southeastern shores in the *Granma* yacht, which had departed from Mexico. From there they launched a revolutionary war, mobilizing workers and peasants against the U.S.-backed dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista. The war culminated in a popular insurrection that ousted Batista on Jan. 1, 1959. Workers and peasants took political power and opened the door to the first socialist revolution in the Americas.

“The Rebel Army was the soul of the revolution,” armed forces minister and Cuba’s acting president Raúl Castro told the morning military ceremony. He was quoting a 1975 speech by Fidel

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Relatives of miners reject state report on Sago disaster

BY PAUL PEDERSON

December 11—West Virginia’s Office of Miners’ Health, Safety and Training today released, and then rapidly withdrew, the findings of its investigation into the mine disaster that killed 12 miners at the Sago Mine early this year.

According to press reports, relatives of the miners who were killed in the disaster were handed a two-inch-thick copy of the report—only one per family—and were then set to be ushered into a prearranged press conference. Instead the miners’ relatives demanded time to read the material and some walked out in protest.

The mine agency then cancelled the press conference and declared that its report, which it had published on its website

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Asian Americans attacked by Boston-area cops win support

BY JOHN HAWKINS

BOSTON—More than 300 people attended the Harry H. Dow Memorial Legal Assistance Fund’s 21st annual dinner here December 1. The audience applauded as the Quincy Four and their support committee received the fund’s Justice in Action Award.

The Quincy Four are Karen Chen, Howard Ng, Quan Manh Thin, and Tat Man Yuen. They are Americans of Asian descent facing charges of disorderly conduct and resisting arrest.

Two of their friends who witnessed the incident and spoke out about it, Mei Cheung and Joanna Ng, also received the award.

The charges against the four stem from an April 30 encounter with police in Quincy, a city just south of Boston. The cops assaulted the four while they were returning home from a traditional Chinese wedding engagement party. One officer pepper-sprayed three of them in the eyes. Three of the cops roughed up Chen, barely five feet tall, giving her a black eye, a swollen face, and numerous bruises. One of the four victims, the prospective groom, was knocked unconscious.

The Dow Fund, named in honor of the first Asian American admitted to the bar in this state, is an affiliate of the Asian American Lawyers Association of Massachusetts. The fund also awarded the Quincy Four a grant to help defray legal expenses.

In presenting the award, attorney Zenobia Lai, the Fund’s president, praised the recipients for their decision to fight the charges against them by the police.

“They could have pled and made the case go away,” Lai said. “But they know that they are not just fighting for them-

selves, but to prevent another Asian American, another person of color, another immigrant, from suffering the same injustice.”

Speaking for the recipients, Chen, an organizer for the Chinese Progressive Association (CPA), thanked the fund for its recognition and generosity.

“The whole thing has been somewhat ironic,” Chen said. “I was told by several people to just keep quiet and it would go away. But how could I do that when I work as an organizer and encourage people to stand up for their rights every day?”

Zenobia Lai is also a leader of the Support Committee for the Quincy Four and director of the Greater Boston Legal Services Community Law Project.

“Since the first pretrial hearing in June, the court proceedings have centered on discovery requests by the defense attorneys for the four individuals,” Lai told the *Militant*. “This is important because it can help establish motive. For example, the attorneys have asked for any internal affairs reports on the police officers involved. Were any of the cops involved in similar incidents against people of color or immigrants? The district attorney has claimed that they no longer have custody or control over such records because they have been transferred to the FBI charged with investigating the complaints filed by the victims.”

In response to publicity surrounding the incident, the city of Quincy has gone on a campaign to bolster its image, including a request for an FBI investigation.

“What the community demanded was an open public investigation with community participation,” Lai said. “The FBI and the Quincy police department are

New Jersey state workers rally against cutbacks



Militant/Sara Lobman

TRENTON, New Jersey—More than 10,000 public workers rallied here December 11 to oppose legislative proposals to cut their pensions and health benefits. Unionists organized by the Communications Workers of America, the New Jersey Teachers Association, and others chanted, “We aren’t the problem,” and held up foam hands demanding, “Back off!” At least six school districts cancelled classes that day, as so many teachers had joined the protest.

—CAROLE LESNICK

both cops. The FBI rarely finds police misconduct, even in pretty egregious cases. The kind of investigation we seek has to come out of public pressure.”

Another part of the city’s attempt at face-lifting was a highly publicized seminar, featured prominently in the October 26 *Boston Globe*, for some of Quincy’s elderly Asian residents.

“The Asian American population of Quincy grew by nearly 150 percent in the 1990s and continues to grow,” Lai said. “Today more than 20 percent of its population is Asian, many of whom are likely to be newer immigrants in no position to be activists.”

Asked about the timing of the incident, Lai said: “Remember what was happening then. We were living through a series of massive pro-immigrant rallies around the country. There was a call to immigrant workers to go on strike on May Day. The fact that the assault of these four Asian Americans took place the day before the May Day strike may be a coincidence. But I don’t think so.

“It is likely that police officers received prep talks at their headquarters at the time to be on the prod against undocumented immigrants—to find them, lock them up, deport them.

“It just so happens that in this instance the police picked on the wrong people, including someone completely comfortable in English and educated as an activist.

“If you cannot speak English it’s dif-

ficult. Who needs to relive the event only to be insulted and called a liar?

“As the case stands now,” Lai noted, “it’s very likely that it will go to trial. When we get to that point we need a strong showing of community support. We have collected over 1,000 petitions and sent them to the mayor, the police chief, and district attorney. We need to keep collecting them and sending them in.”

The next pretrial hearing is scheduled for December 22 at Quincy District Court.

Lai said that letters of protest can be sent to the Quincy mayor, police chief, and Norfolk County district attorney. A sample is posted on the CPA web site, www.cpaboston.org. Petitions can be obtained from the Chinese Progressive Association, 28 Ash St., Boston, MA 02111; Tel: (617) 357-4499; E-mail: justice@cpaboston.org. Donations to help defend the four can be sent to the CPA and earmarked “legal defense for the Quincy 4.”

‘Militant’ holiday schedule

This is the last issue of the *Militant* for 2006. The next issue, dated Jan. 8, 2007, will be a two-week issue. It will be printed and mailed on December 21. We will resume weekly publication with the issue printed on January 4.

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Australia: Send A\$50 to P.O. Box 164 Campsie, NSW 2194, Australia.

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THE MILITANT

Defend the Cuban Revolution

As we approach the 48th anniversary of the triumph of the Cuban Revolution, the ‘Militant’ maintains its proud record of telling the truth about Cuba. It brings you the facts—from the celebration of the founding of Cuba’s Revolutionary Armed Forces this week to Cuba’s internationalism around the world. Don’t miss a single issue!



Working people in the San Agustín neighborhood of Havana join August 8 rally in support of the Cuban Revolution.

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Mobilizations in Cuba

Continued from front page

Castro. Referring to the involvement of workers and farmers in the 1956–58 war against the Batista regime, he said the rebels “gave the people the weapons snatched from the oppressors in the epic struggle, and they merged with the people to become, since then and forever, the people in arms.”

Some 300,000 people from the Havana area participated in the popular march in contingents with their coworkers and neighbors. The lead contingent carried a banner that read, “Imperialism will never be able to crush Cuba.” Many were dressed in red T-shirts, waving small Cuban flags. Marchers carried thousands of homemade signs with slogans such as, “We are the revolution,” “Yankee: nobody surrenders here,” and “Socialism or death.”

The events, part of several weeks of activities celebrating the FAR, were also a tribute to President Fidel Cas-

tro. Festivities for his 80th birthday in August, including an international conference, had been postponed due to his illness.

The military parade began with 120 horseback riders symbolizing the *mambí* fighters of Cuba’s 19th century independence wars. They were followed by companies of troops from Cuba’s Eastern, Western, and Central armies as well as the navy. Young military school cadets then marched, along with members of the all-volunteer Territorial Troop Militias, including an all-female unit. After them came tanks, armored cars, rocket launchers, cannon, and anti-artillery units. Squadrons of MiG fighter planes and attack helicopters flew overhead.

One contingent featured a replica of the *Granma* yacht surrounded by 3,000 schoolchildren waving blue handkerchiefs representing the sea. Lines of young men and women filed



AP

Cuban soldiers march in a military parade marking the 50th anniversary of the founding of Cuba’s Revolutionary Armed Forces and the opening of the revolutionary war.

behind, dressed to simulate the ragtag uniforms of the Rebel Army fighters—long hair, beards, and all.

Raúl Castro said the military review symbolized the history of “138 years of struggle by the Cuban people for their definitive independence,” going back to anticolonial wars against

Spanish rule.

The Rebel Army was the founding nucleus of the Revolutionary Armed Forces and the popular militias, through which millions in Cuba today take part in the defense of the revolution—the strategy of “the war of the entire people,” as it is known here.

In face of nearly five decades of assaults and threats by Washington, “we will continue to consolidate the military invulnerability of our nation based on the strategic concept of the war of the entire people, whose planning and introduction we initiated 25 years ago,” Castro said. “We will preserve at whatever cost necessary the freedom of the Cuban people and the independence and sovereignty of our homeland.”

Beijing expands trade, investment in Angola

BY OLYMPIA NEWTON

Trade between China and Angola in the first 10 months of 2006 totaled \$9.3 billion, nearly a quarter of all Chinese trade with Africa in that period. Chinese government officials have said they expect trade between the two countries to top \$10 billion this year, a nearly 10-fold increase since 2002.

The Angolan government has contracted a consortium of Chinese state-owned companies for \$1.9 billion to rebuild the country’s infrastructure. An article in the Dec. 24, 2005, issue of the *Boston Globe* titled “Chinese scooping up deals in Africa as U.S. firms hesitate,” quoted Angolan congressman Issac Maria dos Anjos, who said Chinese companies’ costs per square meter of construction is one-quarter that of European firms.

“We can make a profit because we have an advantage over other foreign companies—we work holidays, Saturdays, Sundays, most evenings, and we cost a lot less,” Liu “Johnny” Jian Wei, spokesman for the Chinese state-owned Civil Construction company, told the *Globe*. The company had been working on construction projects in Angola for five years.

China exported about \$300 million worth of goods—largely construction materials, furniture, footwear, and textiles—to Angola between January and October of 2006. During that period China imported 98 million tons of oil from that country, one of its single largest suppliers of petroleum.

In 2005 Beijing granted \$2 billion worth of loans to Angola on favorable terms, enabling the government in Luanda to forgo austerity measures the International Monetary Fund had demanded in exchange for credit. Since then it has extended Angola another \$1 billion. Much of the loan money is being spent to build roads, schools, hospitals, and a fiber optic network, and to repair railroads, bridges, and industry in that country.

Many Chinese companies bring in Chinese workers for the projects in Angola and other African countries. This is both to compensate for a lack of construction skills among workers in those countries—where in many cases, as a result of imperialist-imposed underdevelopment, a modern working class is just emerging—and to use a workforce they expect will work hard for relatively low

wages and living standards.

“To cut costs more, we live together, two or three to a room,” said Liu, referring to the Chinese workers he oversees, who are paid about \$500 a month.

“We cannot force them to work like us,” Tu Qingkui, manager of a school construction near Huambo, told a *New York Times* reporter, referring to Angolan workers, many of whom are not used to

Dutch gov’t debate over burqa ban sparks protest

BY CINDY JAQUITH

About 80 people protested outside the Dutch parliament in The Hague November 30 against a recent proposal by the Netherlands government to impose a total ban on wearing the burqa in public, including in schools, on trains, and in court. The burqa is the full-length veil with a mesh screen over the face worn by some Muslim women.

The outgoing Christian Democratic-led government made the proposal on the eve of the November 22 elections. Immigration minister Rita Verdonk said the government “finds it undesirable that face-covering clothing—including the burqa—is worn in public places for reasons of public order, security and protection of citizens.”

Although she claimed the ban was against any kind of head covering such as a helmet, Muslim organizations condemned it as an attack on religious freedom and part of efforts to criminalize Muslims as “terrorists.” They noted that only a few dozen women in the Netherlands wear the burqa.

Protesters in front of the Dutch parliament carried banners stating, “The first lesson of integration: the constitution is for everyone.” One of the demonstrators, Aishah Bayrat, 41, a schoolteacher, said, “The burqa is a religious thing, nobody should interfere with it.”

The Dutch proposal was the latest in a series of similar moves against immigrants who are Muslim under the guise of the “war on terror.” The French government has banned women from wearing Islamic dress in schools; Berlin forbids teachers from wearing headscarves in state schools; and the Belgian city of Maaseik even fines women 125 euros if they dress in the burqa.

In October Britain’s former foreign

secretary, Jack Straw, said Muslim women should remove full facial veils when talking to him, a statement subsequently endorsed by Prime Minister Anthony Blair.

There are about 1 million Muslims in the Netherlands, 6 percent of the population. The majority are workers from Morocco and Turkey and face severe job discrimination, with some 60 percent unemployed. The Dutch rulers have sought to blame these immigrants for the problems of the country’s capitalist economy. A city ordinance in Utrecht, for example, denies women who apply for jobs wearing the burqa the right to welfare benefits, claiming that they adopt Islamic dress simply to avoid getting hired.

The main opposition party in the Netherlands, the Labor Party, offered only meek criticism of the proposed burqa ban. “Amsterdam’s mayor, Job Cohen, of the opposition Labour Party, said he would like to see burqas disappear but a ban may not be the answer,” reported the *Times of India*.

The Dutch parliament overwhelmingly voted this year in favor of banning the burqa in public. Reflecting tactical differences in ruling circles over how to deal with immigration, Labor Party

leader Wouter Bos said that if elected he will pardon thousands of immigrants who remain in the Netherlands even though their applications for asylum have been denied.

Demands that Muslims “integrate” into Dutch society were at the center of the 2002 national elections. Pim Fortuyn, a rightist candidate for prime minister, made opposition to immigrant rights the heart of his campaign. “If I could arrange it legally,” he declared, “I would simply say: no more Muslims can come in.... The country is full.”

Fortuyn posed as a supporter of women’s rights against “reactionary” Islam and called for defending “the nation” and “Dutch culture.” Since his murder in 2002, the Dutch government has implemented even more restrictive anti-immigrant laws and further “antiterrorist” measures undermining political rights.

—MILITANT LABOR FORUMS—

FLORIDA

Miami

U.S. Troops Out of Afghanistan and Iraq! Capitalist Rulers Debate How Best to Establish Stability in Iraq. Fri., Dec. 22. Dinner, 6:30 p.m.; program, 7:30 p.m.

Celebrate the Anniversary of the Cuban Revolution. Film showing on women and the Cuban Revolution, followed by a party. Sat., Dec. 30., 5 p.m. *Both events at 8365 NE Second Ave., Suite 206. Tel.: (305) 756-4436.*

NEW YORK

Manhattan

U.S. Troops Out of Iraq and Afghanistan! Speaker: Ma’mud Shirvani. Fri., Dec. 22. Dinner, 7:00 p.m.; program, 8:00 p.m. *306 W. 37th St., 10th Floor (use north set of elevators). Tel.: (212) 629-6649.*

—CALENDAR—

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Manhattan

Picket Line for the Cuban Five. Wed., Dec. 20, 5:00 p.m. *New York Times Building, 229 W. 43rd St. (between Broadway and 8th Ave.). For more info., contact the Popular Education Project to Free the Cuban Five: (718) 601-4751.*

Young Socialists debate college Republicans on Iran at Albany, New York, campus

BY MAURA DELUCA

ALBANY, New York—Two Young Socialists and two College Republicans debated the subject “Is Iran a Threat?” before an audience of nearly 70 at the State University of New York campus here November 16.

Speaking for the student Republicans, David Oliver defended Washington’s hostile policies toward Iran by comparing Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadi-najad to Adolf Hitler. “Iran is a threat to the region, our allies, and us,” he said. Oliver argued that the United States is “not imperialist,” citing it as “a beacon of hope, liberty, freedom, and peace.”

Young Socialist Ben O’Shaughnessy condemned the U.S. government’s threats against Iran and called for the immediate withdrawal of U.S. troops from Iraq and Afghanistan. He defended Iran’s right to develop nuclear energy against efforts by Washington and its allies to prevent such needed economic development.

O’Shaughnessy said the imperialist governments assert their prerogative to develop nuclear power while seeking “to keep semicolonial countries in their oppressed and underdeveloped status.”

He said, “The question should be: Who poses a threat to whom? Who poses the biggest threat to working people in the Middle East and the world over?”

He pointed to how in 1953 Washington orchestrated a coup against the government of Iran “for the ‘crime’ of nationalizing the country’s natural resources” and reinstalled the shah’s bloody rule. He described the 1979 revolution in which Iran’s workers and farmers overthrew the monarchy, and the subsequent consolidation of the capitalist regime there.

For working people and oppressed nations, the threat “doesn’t come from Iran but from the continued growing world disorder created by capitalism in its decline,” O’Shaughnessy said.

He noted that Washington is the only government ever to unleash nuclear weapons, and that today the imperialist powers maintain thousands of troops around the world, including in Iraq, Afghanistan, and the Korean peninsula.

Defending Washington’s nuclear annihilation of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945, College Republican Kyle Ketcham argued, “President Truman thought that it was best, not only for us, but for the Japanese.... More citizens would have died in a full-scale U.S. invasion.”

During the discussion period, a student cheered the recent electoral victories of the Democrats and asked, “Wouldn’t you say the Republican Party has misled and is creating a sense of hostility and more terrorists?”

Oliver responded by listing bombings that have occurred during Democratic administrations, and said the solution lay in a U.S. military victory in Iraq.

Young Socialist Ben Joyce disagreed with both. Democrats and Republicans, as twin representatives of the U.S. ruling rich, have jointly carried out wars of aggression around the world, he said.

Joyce said working people have no interest in supporting the U.S. rulers’ “war on terrorism,” a cover for launching wars abroad and attacks on political rights at home. He said the only solution is for workers and oppressed people worldwide to unite in a common fight to overturn the imperialist system.

O’Shaughnessy quoted remarks by Cuban president Fidel Castro that revolutionary Cuba did not need nuclear weapons because “we have a different type of nuclear weapon: it’s our ideas.”

“The Cuban Revolution shows what’s possible when workers and farmers organize to take power out of the hands of the exploiters,” he said. That road is also the way forward for working people in the United States, O’Shaughnessy said.

Willie Cotton contributed to this article.

Trade union officialdom in Canada wages chauvinist campaign for ‘Canadian jobs’

BY SANDRA MITCHELL

TORONTO—Having rejected demands by construction unions for amnesty for the estimated 200,000 to 500,000 undocumented workers in this country, the Canadian government is stepping up use of its “temporary foreign workers program” to aid employers who claim labor shortages in industries like construction.

In response, trade union officials across the country, under the banner of protecting “Canadian jobs,” are waging a chauvinist campaign against the hiring of temporary workers from abroad, as well as the importation of products from semicolonial countries.

Last May, under the auspices of the Alberta Federation of Labour (AFL), 500 construction workers rallied outside the annual meeting of Canadian Natural Resources Ltd. to protest “unfair labor practices” at its Horizons oil sands project in response to moves by the company to employ workers from China.

In September, 200 members of Iron

Workers Union Local 97 in British Columbia walked off the job to attend a protest against the application by the German construction company Bilfinger Berger Canada to hire 345 temporary workers from abroad for its Golden Ears Bridge project.

UNITE HERE officials in Quebec have been on a national campaign since April 2005 to demand that Ottawa protect “Canadian jobs” by putting up trade barriers to garment and textile imports from China.

“[China] is a machine,” said Canadian Auto Workers union president Buzz Hargrove, during a November 28 *Toronto Star* interview from Beijing, where he was visiting auto plants. “If we don’t stop it now, our industry will erode and we just won’t have one in 15 to 20 years.”

The “stand up for Canadian jobs” campaign was raised leading up to the November 13 municipal elections here. The incumbent mayor, David Miller, had been criticized for buying new subway cars from a Canadian company at a higher cost than from a Chinese

Australia: Hundreds of thousands march to protest federal antiunion laws



Militant/Bob Aiken

SYDNEY, Australia—Hundreds of thousands of workers rallied across Australia November 30 in a national day of protest against antiunion laws. From two separate rallies in Sydney, some 40,000 workers waving union flags and banners joined a march through the city center. Another 75,000 attended protests across New South Wales. The rallies were part of a campaign organized by the Australian Council of Trade Unions against new industrial laws, introduced by the federal government, that employers are using to attack working conditions and union rights. The focus of this campaign has been to turn out the vote for a Labor government in the 2007 federal elections. Actions in solidarity with workers in Australia took place in the Philippines, Papua New Guinea, and New Zealand.

—LINDA HARRIS

N. Carolina meat packers fight company attempts to fire dozens

BY SETH DELLINGER

TAR HEEL, North Carolina—Workers at the giant Smithfield Foods meat-packing plant here report that bosses have continued to issue “no-match letters,” threatening to fire those who don’t prove legal working status within 60 days. The company says Social Security numbers submitted by 500 employees do not match federal Social Security records.

On November 16–17 about 1,000 workers at the plant walked off the job to protest firings of dozens of immigrant workers given “no-match” warnings.

A Mexican-born packing worker who asked that her name not be printed said in an interview that she had received

one of these letters. After receiving it, she told her boss she would no longer accept being forced to do double work, a situation facing many in the plant because of reduced crew sizes.

“I told my supervisor, ‘You have to get someone else to do the other job,’” she said. “‘I’ll do one or the other, but not both anymore.’”

Israel Ramirez, 30, who works on the kill floor, said it’s common for workers to receive burns from vats of boiling water used to sterilize knives. He said U.S.-born supervisors sometimes blame Spanish-speaking workers, shouting “Why did you do that?” Ramirez, who speaks some English, says he has tried to intervene so that injured workers are sent to the clinic rather than being forced immediately back to their jobs.

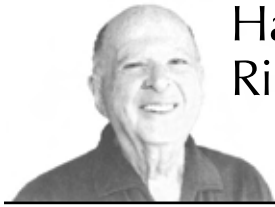
Billy Corley, 40, also a kill floor worker, flips over hogs as they come down the line. He said the carcasses, weighing up to 450 pounds, pass by every few seconds, “but sometimes two come out at the same time. I was 156 pounds when I started here—now I’m down to 130!”

The Smithfield facility, the largest hog-slaughter plant in the world, employs some 5,000 workers and slaughters 32,000 hogs daily. Workers here have been involved in efforts over the past decade to organize into the United Food and Commercial Workers union.

Many workers interviewed said that the company tries to foster divisions within the workforce of U.S.-born Blacks and Latin American immigrants, seeking to make Latino workers think that Black workers receive better treatment and vice versa.

“We need more communication,” said Corley, who is Black. He noted that he and many other U.S.-born workers hadn’t walked out because they didn’t understand the issues involved at the time. “We need to be better informed,” he said, adding that the job action was “an opportunity” for all workers at Smithfield. “The whole plant needed to walk off!” he said.

Finally, charges against Kaiser—Los Angeles city lawyers have filed suits against medical insurer Kaiser Permanente for



Harry Ring

the ugly practice of dumping no-money patients into the city's

50-block skid row. Kaiser operates 10 hospitals in Los Angeles. It faces criminal charges for dumping Carol Reyes, 63. Homeless, she had been living in parks and was picked up and hospitalized by Kaiser for several days. She was diagnosed as suffering dementia.

When the few days of government subsidies ran out, Ms. Reyes was taxied to and dumped into skid row. There she wandered the pavements in a hospital gown

and a pair of socks. It took the city eight months to level the charges against Kaiser. The merciless act was caught on videotape.

They shrug, maybe it kills, so what—"Check your medicine cabinet. Millions of bottles of the widely used pain reliever acetaminophen—some sold as long as three years ago—are being recalled because they may contain metal fragments."—*Los Angeles Times*.

The old shell game—The *Arizona Republic* commented on the recent Congressional gains by the Democratic Party. "Big businesses can work with Dems too," declared the paper. To put it accurately: the headline would have stated: "Dems can—and will—work with big business."

Wal-Mart's Xmas special—Waste: "Spoiled items from the produce deli, meat and dairy departments are sent out for

composting. The compost is then sold at Wal-Mart's stores"—*Los Angeles Times* column.

Swindle, big time—The scandalous prices of college textbooks leaves students enraged. As far as we know, college presidents aren't challenging the book swindle. Simply, they don't want to rock the boat. An annual survey found the yearly take for college presidents is half a million dollars or more.

Scotland: discussion on independence worries UK rulers

BY PETER CLIFFORD

EDINBURGH, Scotland—In the keynote speech at Scotland's Labour Party conference November 24, British prime minister Anthony Blair warned of the "politics of fear and grievance." His talk was almost entirely focused on attacking the Scottish National Party (SNP) and defending the United Kingdom.

Blair's speech reflects a broader concern among the rulers about the prospects of a further weakening today of the UK's centralized state structure. Blair was responding to repeated polls that indicate the SNP is set to be the largest party in the May 2007 Scottish elections, and could well form a coalition government displacing Scotland's current Labour-led administration. Some polls also indicate majority support in Scotland for independence from the UK. The SNP has pledged to press for a referendum on Scottish independence if it forms a government.

The election will be the third since what is known as devolution established a Scottish parliament, after a 1997 referendum in which 74 percent in Scotland voted for doing so. The Scottish parliament has powers over health, education, and local government and can vary tax rates. In addition to elections for parliament, local council elections will take place here too.

Scotland had a separate parliament until 1707, when England's rulers imposed the Act of Union to form a British parliament. In 1801 Ireland was also annexed into the Union and the United Kingdom was formed. The Irish Free State was founded in 1922, after London waged a bloody war against a revolutionary struggle for independence. Bourgeois forces in the Republican movement conceded to London retaining northern Ireland as part of the UK. Thus the UK is formed out of four countries: England, Scotland, Wales, and a part of Ireland.

Labour leaders launched their fight to defend the United Kingdom at a November 7 press conference by Blair. "We share a currency, we share armed forces, we share social security systems," Blair told reporters. "You rip Scotland out of the UK and you lose those benefits, and you will end up with an uncertain economic future with less power for people in Scotland to effect the big changes in the world."

UK chancellor Gordon Brown, a Scotsman, has joined Blair in this campaign. Speaking here September 7, Brown, who has been pressing to succeed Blair in the Labour Party's leadership next year, said, "For all of my political life, I have stood up for Britain and I stand here today again to speak up for Britain and Britishness and for the values that make us proud of our Britishness."

On October 29 Brown introduced

Mervyn King, governor of the Bank of England, to a lecture in Scotland attracting leading business figures. King used his address to speak positively of the Act of Union. There is now "a successful and prosperous union between our two countries," King said.

Boosting Blair's scaremongering about the prospects of an independent Scotland, Home Secretary John Reid, another Scot, told the Scottish Labour conference, "In face of the environment, international crime and terrorism, and mass migration, the narrow nationalists stand helpless."

The apparent growth of support since devolution for the SNP reflects more dissatisfaction with London than growing support for independence. This is what SNP leader Alex Salmond seeks to take advantage of. "The difference between 1999 and 2007 is the experience of devolution," said Salmond October 11. "Labour in 1999 were the 'talk of the walk'; it was a new penny, now it is a pretty tarnished commodity."

Although public expenditure in Scotland runs at 51 percent of gross domestic product, significantly higher than the average for the rest of the UK, few working people see any palpable gains. At the same time, London's moves to privatize education and health services, known as City Academies and Foundation Hospitals, have not been implemented in Scotland. Blair has called for changing this.

Salmond also plays on his differences with London over its support for Washington's policy in Iraq. On November

15 the SNP in a UK parliament motion called for a "strategy for the curtailment of British military responsibilities in Iraq." While differentiating himself from Blair's course, Salmond makes no bones that his concern is to protect imperialist interests. In a September 14 interview with *The Scotsman*, he said that the Iraq war had got in the way of the more important objective of occupying Afghanistan. "We took our eye off the ball in Afghanistan and are endangering the lives of our soldiers," he said.

Salmond describes his program as "social democratic," combining "economic competence with social compassion." At the center of this program is what the SNP terms "fiscal autonomy," or Scottish control of its economy, which includes a proposal to cut corporation taxes from the UK rate of 30 percent to 20 percent.

According to the *Scotland on Sunday* newspaper, Jim Mather, an SNP spokesman, says Scotland should model itself on "successful economies like Ireland...and Norway," which, he insists, should remain in the European Union.

These plans by the SNP are attracting some backing from Scottish-based big business. Thomas Farmer, for example, the owner of the Kwik-Fit chain of car repair garages, has made a substantial donation to the SNP.

"As the election campaign is now well under way, the Communist League has decided it's important to present a working-class alternative, rather than what is on offer from both Labour and the SNP, which is how to protect the interests of the capitalist ruling fami-

lies," said Xerardo Arias in a December 5 interview.

Arias, who works in a meat plant where workers face a ballot shortly on union recognition, will be standing as the Communist League's candidate for Edinburgh city council.

The League will also be standing Peter Clifford for the Lothians regional list election to the Scottish parliament.

"British patriotism and defense of the UK are always used to cut across class differences, to pretend we are all in it together," Arias said. "A blow against the Union can be used by working people to strengthen their battle. That's why the League backs independence."

Unlike the capitalist parties that suggest working people have common interests with the wealthy rulers, the League's campaign "will center on the perspective of supporting struggles by workers to use and extend the trade unions to resist the bosses' assaults," Arias said. "Today fighting to organize the large number of east Europeans and other immigrant workers into the unions is central to unify the working class."

"Unlike our opponents, we are calling for immediate withdrawal of British and other imperialist troops from Iraq and Afghanistan, and call for opposing the assault on workers' rights at home in the name of the 'war on terror,'" Arias continued.

"Through these battles," he said, "a revolutionary movement can be built to take power out of the hands of the ruling wealthy."

25, 50, AND 75 YEARS AGO



December 25, 1981

On December 13, the Polish government—in an unprecedented and ruthless move designed to break the independent union, Solidarity, and roll back the gains made by the working class in the last sixteen months—imposed martial law on the country.

Prime Minister and Communist Party chief General Wojciech Jaruzelski appointed a Military Council for National Salvation, composed of twenty-one top-ranking officers, to administer the government and industry until the "crisis" is over and "discipline" reestablished.

Under military regulations, all strikes and political gatherings are banned. An evening curfew is in effect, and troops and security police are patrolling the streets. All individuals must carry identity papers. Gasoline sales for private use are prohibited. Distribution of leaflets and unauthorized newspapers is forbidden.



December 24, 1956

Last week we reported the Drew Pearson television interview with a Klansman which revealed that the Ku Klux Klan is arming and organizing to maintain segregation in the South by violence and intimidation, and that they are infiltrating local law enforcement agencies and utilizing churches for their purposes.

Within the past month in Clinton, Tenn., Paul Turner, a young white minister was beaten up for escorting Negro children to school, and six miles away the Negro section of Oliver Springs was rocked by an explosive reportedly thrown from a moving car. In Montgomery, Ala., a Negro cab driver was clubbed to death by police for allegedly "resisting arrest" and another Negro was shot by a policeman who said the man "advanced" on him carrying a loaded shotgun.



December 26, 1931

Today we are witnessing in Germany a regime barely short of Fascism, comparable only to the most desperate wartime administration among the bourgeois governments. By official decree, the wages of the workers are cut ten percent, prices are submitted to regulation by a dictator appointed to this office, interest rates are reduced, etc., etc. Needless to say only the wage-cut decree actually remains effective. There is no tool so pliant in carrying out the orders of the Bruening Government as the reformist betrayers in the Trade Unions.

Police force and war ministry are united in the hands of one of Germany's "strong men," the Hohenzollern General Groener. Street meetings are prohibited. Indoor political meetings can only take place in the presence of an "officer of the Law."

Protests in New York

Continued from front page

early morning hours of November 26, when five undercover police officers opened fire on him, Joseph Guzman, 31, and Trent Benefield, 23, as the three sat in Bell's car. Guzman and Benefield received multiple gunshot wounds and were hospitalized. The three African Americans, who were unarmed, were leaving a club in Jamaica where they had attended Bell's bachelor party on the eve of his wedding.

The police claimed after the fact that a fourth man was possibly armed and present at the scene, and that Bell had rammed his car into a detective and then into an unmarked police van. Witnesses on the scene contradicted the cops' account. A preliminary police report, sections of which were made public this week, makes no mention of a fourth man and says that Bell began driving only after a cop began shooting into his car.

The *Daily News* reported today that an unnamed "law enforcement source" who reviewed radio transmissions the night of the attack said police communications right after the shooting made no mention of a fourth man. Nor did the cops organize any search that night for a supposedly armed individual fleeing the scene. In the days that followed, however, the police carried out a dragnet of working-class communities in the Bronx and Queens, interrogating and arresting people on unrelated charges.

According to the police report, after the gunfire subsided, Lieutenant Gary Napoli approached Bell's car and ordered the men inside to show their hands. Guzman put his hands out the car window and was cuffed. Four cops surrounded Benefield, who had gotten out of the car and was lying on the ground with multiple gunshot wounds. The fifth cop pointed his gun at Bell's car. The cops proceeded to handcuff Benefield and Bell, who was mortally wounded, if not already dead. Benefield and Guzman were kept handcuffed in the hospital until protests forced the cops to unshackle them. Cops surrounded Bell in his hospital bed until he was pronounced dead at 4:56 a.m.

The official investigation is moving at a snail's pace. Queens district attorney Richard Brown wrote in a December 11 letter published in the *New York Times* that "desire for quick answers...can not be allowed to influence the pace of our investigation.... We will follow the evidence wherever it leads us, and we will reach no conclusions until all of the facts are in."

Mayor Michael Bloomberg, who initially called the shooting "excessive" in an effort to quell public anger, has tried to dissuade people from participating in more protests. "It probably has nothing to do with this particular case, but we have plenty of problems with crime and with people who don't share in the great American dream," he said. Bloomberg was making a veiled reference to unsubstantiated police reports that Bell, Benefield, and Guzman had been involved in selling drugs.

Other capitalist politicians are trying to channel the protests into reliance on the courts. "We will walk the streets and say that we can't buy justice on the streets, but we can get justice in the courts," said Bronx city councilman Larry Seabrook.

But the protests continue. "We're tired of being victimized," said Imam Abdul Baqi at the December 9 action. "Our youth are sent upstate, discriminated against, criminalized. This is institutionalized racism."

Speakers at the rally included leaders of the NAACP and its youth organization, New York City councilmen John



Militant/Sara Lobman

November 30 vigil in Newark, New Jersey, protesting the police killing of Sean Bell.

Liu and Leroy Comrie, and a representative from the cop group 100 Blacks in Law Enforcement Who Care. In their remarks, most speakers called for legislative and police policy change. Many also demanded that police chief Raymond Kelly step down.

"There is nothing to investigate," said protester Gregory Brown. "We can determine how many times the police were wrong and that's it. There should be no investigation."

Meanwhile, New York cops shot three men December 6–8. When que-

ried about these shootings, Kelly replied, "Sometimes they come in spurts. That's just the way it is."

The most recent victim, Wayne Bolton, 24, was shot when three cops decided he "fit the description" of a suspect in a robbery case. Currently recovering at Elmhurst Hospital Center in Queens, Bolton is facing weapons and drug possession charges.

Another march is set for Manhattan's Fifth Avenue December 16.

Willie Cotton contributed to this article.

Murder indictment dropped against N. Carolina cop who shot unarmed teenager in house raid

BY EDDIE BECK

December 12—A North Carolina judge rescinded a second-degree murder indictment today against a former New Hanover County sheriff's deputy who fatally shot an unarmed teenager in Wilmington December 1.

The murder charges, initially filed against Christopher Long for the shooting death of Peyton Strickland, were then dismissed after the grand jury foreman said he checked the wrong box on the indictment form by mistake.

Strickland, 18, was a student at Cape Fear Community College. He was killed when deputies and police from the University of North Carolina at Wilmington (UNCW) raided the house he was sharing with roommates.

The cops said they raided the house to search for PlayStation 3 machines stolen from UNCW student Justin Raines the day the popular video game consoles were introduced just before Thanksgiving. The police said that Strickland and two friends, Braden Riley and Ryan Mills, were suspected of assaulting Raines and robbing him of the machines.

According to the Wilmington *News*

Observer, university police had issued an arrest warrant that included internet photos of a man they suspected was Mills and two others—whom the cops did not identify—with firearms. Mills did not live with Strickland.

Strickland's roommate, Mike Rhoton, said the deceased teenager was unarmed. An autopsy report said the fatal bullet hit Strickland in the head after striking another object. Bullet holes in the house showed the shots were fired from the outside. Strickland was also hit near his right shoulder. His dog was shot dead too.

According to news reports, Long had been accused of using excessive force in the past. In 2001 he shot and wounded two teenagers during a traffic stop. Long and the two other cops involved in Strickland's death, Larry Robinson and Greg Johnson, were placed on leave.

Jon Mehta, a high school friend of

Strickland, said the cops should not only be fired but charged with murder. "What happened is horrible and a great injustice," Mehta told the *News Observer*. "The police went in there assuming he was guilty. I just think it's inexcusable."

District Attorney Ben David said Long fired his gun after an officer used a battering ram to hit the door. Long claims he misidentified the noise of breaking down the door as shots coming from inside the house. "His belief that there was gunfire coming from inside out was not shared by others," David said at Long's first court appearance.

"How can an indictment one day not be an indictment the next?" said Strickland's parents, Don and Kathy, in a December 12 statement. "We call on the judge presiding over the grand jury to hold an inquiry into what happened here and make the results public."

New Jersey: relatives of victims of police brutality speak out

BY SARA LOBMAN

NEWARK, New Jersey, December 6—More than 100 people participated in a protest meeting here today. It was called by family and friends of Warren Lee, who was beaten to death by Newark police in late October. The event, sponsored by the People's Organization for Progress (POP), was organized to coincide with a rally in New York the same day to protest the killing of Sean Bell by the New York cops. (see article above). A report from the New York demonstration was given to the meeting, which was chaired by POP leader Lawrence Hamm.

Police claim that Lee, a young African American, choked trying to swallow a bag of drugs when cops approached his car. They say all they did was hit him on the back to get him breathing again. Lee's aunt and cousin, Barbara Flowers and Sylvester, circulated photos of Lee after his death

showing a badly beaten face.

Relatives of other victims of cop violence in New Jersey addressed the meeting. They included Elizabeth Moore, whose son Rasheed was killed by the East Orange police in January 2005; Mary Weaver, whose son Randy was shot by police in July 1999; and Earl Williams, father of Earl Faison, who died in April 1999 while in police custody in Orange. After a long fight, three of the officers who killed Faison were convicted and jailed.

"The police will try to justify killing your loved ones," Earl Williams warned. "They'll try to make it seem like they are the victims and your loved one is the culprit."

"The penalty for selling drugs or using drugs is not death," Hamm said. "It's only death in the Black and Latino communities." Lee's family and the POP have called a December 15 march against police brutality here.

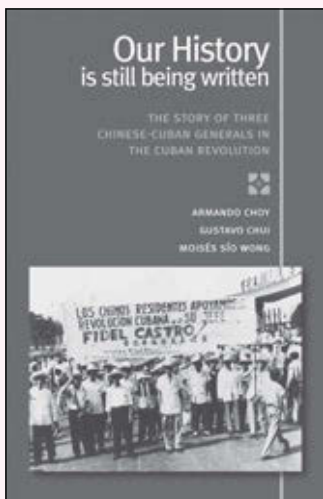
Book by Chinese-Cuban generals popular at African Studies Association conference

SAN FRANCISCO—Hundreds of participants at the November 16–19 African Studies Association (ASA) meeting here visited the Pathfinder Press booth. "The New Scramble for Africa," "HIV Education and Prevention in Africa," "Perspectives on Agriculture in African Economies," and "African Women's Leadership" were a few of the more than 200 panel discussions and roundtables that took place.

Titles on the Cuban Revolution were popular, especially *Our History Is Still Being Written: The Story of Three Chinese-Cuban Generals in the Cuban Revolution*. ASA members also bought 43 copies of Pathfinder books and pamphlets by Thomas Sankara, including nine in French. A range of other titles were sold, from *The Communist Manifesto* by Karl Marx and Frederick Engels to *Malcolm X Talks to Young People* to issues of *New Internationalist*, a magazine of Marxist politics and theory.

Our History Is Still Being Written is available for \$20 at www.pathfinderpress.com.

—JOEL BRITTON



U.S. immigration raids

Continued from front page

ties—in Greeley, Colorado; Worthington, Minnesota; Grand Island, Nebraska; Cactus, Texas; and Hyrum, Utah. The cops arrested a total of 1,282 workers; some have already been deported. Five of the targeted plants are organized by the United Food and Commercial Workers union (UFCW).

As this reporter arrived at the Marshalltown plant, which is organized by UFCW Local 1149, five Homeland Security buses with blacked-out windows were parked at the entrance. Hundreds of people, including relatives and friends of Swift workers, lined the street as the immigration cops put handcuffed workers onto the buses.

As the buses drove off, people chanted in Spanish, “*Estamos con ustedes*” (We are with you) and “*¡Sí se puede!*” (Yes, we can), a common slogan of demonstrations for the legalization of immigrants.

The mood of those in the crowd was a mixture of anger at the arrests and worry

about the fate of their loved ones. ICE agents arrested both meat packers and cafeteria workers.

Mary Lopez, a former Swift worker, was waiting for her daughter, who works at the plant. As she watched workers being herded into the buses, she said, “Who gives them the right to treat workers without papers different than those of us born in this country?”

ICE officials told the media the raids, conducted by 1,000 agents, were the culmination of a 10-month investigation of “a large identity theft scheme that has victimized large numbers of U.S. citizens and lawful residents.” Homeland Security chief Michael Chertoff said in a December 13 press conference that the alleged trafficking of false or stolen documents was a national security issue because they could be used “by terrorists.”

ICE said some workers would face criminal charges. So far the company has not been charged. Swift officials said they

Political life of Connie Harris

Continued from front page

the Communist International during its first five years. Harris participated in the 1944 founding of the Revolutionary Communist Party in Britain, an affiliate of the Fourth International in the UK. The organization was linked politically to the same current as the Socialist Workers Party in the United States.

Her decades of activity spanned the postwar upsurge and the later decline in workers’ struggles. Inspired by the revolution in Yugoslavia in the 1940s, she took part in a work brigade to that country in the early ’50s. She actively joined in defending the Cuban Revolution, which triumphed in 1959. During the political radicalization of the 1960s and early ’70s Harris was on the front lines of the international movement against the Vietnam War in both Britain and Canada, where she lived for a time. She campaigned against London’s and Ottawa’s complicity with the U.S.-organized assault on the Vietnamese people’s national liberation struggle. She was an enthusiastic participant in the rise of the women’s movement in Britain in the 1970s.

Harris helped organize solidarity with the struggles of coal miners and other workers against the onslaught by the UK rulers in the 1980s, spearheaded by the Tory government of Margaret Thatcher, and with the new rise of the ANC-led movement to overthrow the apartheid regime in South Africa.

She was elected to and actively served for years on the International Control Commission of the international communist movement.

From the 1960s until her retirement in the early 1990s, Harris shouldered central responsibility in organizing the distribution of Pathfinder Press and related revolutionary-socialist literature throughout the UK, Europe, and other parts of the globe. This work began in the early 1960s as the Pioneer Book Service operating out of an apartment in south London. It was run by Connie and her husband and comrade, Alan Harris, himself a many decades-long leader of the communist movement in Canada, the UK, and internationally.

Today Pathfinder Books in east London—a retail bookshop and wider book-distribution service to commercial shops and libraries—is a product of those early efforts to systematically circulate books containing the hard-won lessons of the international working-class movement. Those are the written materials that above all help generation after generation of revolutionary workers and youth to understand what communism is: organized action as part of the vanguard of those advancing along the line of march of the working class worldwide to political power, and the generalization of the hard-fought lessons of those struggles.

The January 13 meeting here will feature an international platform of speakers. The panel will include Pete Clifford, an early collaborator in the Pathfinder distribution service, who will speak on behalf of the Central Committee of the Communist League in the UK; Jack Barnes, the national secretary of the Socialist Workers Party in the United States; Jo O’Brien, a member of the organizing committee of the first national women’s liberation conference in the UK that took place in 1970; and a representative of the Young Socialists in the UK. Jonathan Silberman of the Communist League and Mary-Alice Waters of the U.S. SWP will cochair the meeting.

Messages to the event can be sent by email to the Communist League at cleagueuk@aol.co.uk or by regular mail to CL UK, First Floor, 120 Bethnal Green Road, (Entrance in Brick Lane), London, E2 6DG, UK. Messages can also be sent by fax to: +44 20 7613 3855.



Militant/Helen Meyers

Ana Macias, 15, waits December 12 outside Swift meatpacking plant in Marshalltown, Iowa, where her mother and sister work. Hours after Macias gave Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents her sibling’s papers, her sister was still in custody on a bus.

knew the raids were imminent.

Diana Newberry, who works on the loin line at the Marshalltown plant, described what happened there. “At about 7:45 a.m. word began to spread that immigration cops were in the plant,” she said. “In response, workers began to run in the hope of getting out of the plant, but the immigration cops already had the plant surrounded and every exit guarded. The cops, armed and wearing “Police ICE” insignia on their jackets, forced us down to the cafeteria.

“We were then interrogated by about 30 cops. Several coworkers were handcuffed before being interrogated, others after. Coworkers helped handcuffed workers by holding up cell phones to their ears so they could call family members.”

For about five hours no workers were allowed to leave the plant. Around 1:00 p.m. the bosses tried to “order us back to work,” Newberry said. “But workers refused to work without getting something to eat. The company tried to start back up the kill floor and other departments, but there weren’t enough of us, so the company sent the first shift home.”

Several workers complained about being roughed up by police. One, who was pushed up against a wall, told the ICE agent to get his hands off him. Another worker pulled down her collar to show a reporter a bruise on her shoulder from being struck by a cop.

Newberry said the majority of U.S.-born workers, many of them recently hired, showed solidarity with their ar-

rested coworkers. She said a small handful expressed the view that they were “illegals” and “had it coming to them.”

In Worthington, Minnesota, Evangelina Pinto told the *Militant*, “They are tearing apart families, they are taking away working people.”

Swift is the third-largest U.S. processor of beef and pork, with annual sales of \$10 billion, and employs 15,000 workers in nine plants across eight states.

The UFCW announced December 12 that it is seeking a federal injunction against the raids, calling them “an effort designed to terrorize the workforce.”

Protests met the raids at several plants. Dozens of people gathered outside the Grand Island, Nebraska, facility. They shouted at immigration cops and some carried signs saying, “We’re not aliens, we’re human.”

In Greeley, CBS news reported, *migra* cops sealed off the area before the early-morning raid. Nonetheless, several hundred people gathered outside the main gate.

Dozens of young protesters marched near the gate, chanting “*Migra no, Raza sí*” and carrying signs with slogans such as “Don’t take my parents at Christmas.” When a lone rightist showed up to applaud the raid, “people chased him, cursing at him and calling him a racist,” the *Greeley Tribune* reported. He took refuge in a cop car, to jeers from the crowd.

Carlos Sánchez in Minnesota contributed to this article.

U.S. rulers debate Iraq tactics

Continued from front page

2008 elections. Speaking December 10 at Yeshiva University, McCain warned against a “precipitous American troop withdrawal.” He added, “If U.S. forces begin a pullout, we risk all-out civil war and the emergence of a failed state in the heart of the Middle East.”

A top Democrat, Rep. Silvestre Reyes of Texas, the incoming chairman of the House Intelligence Committee, called for sending 20,000 to 30,000 more troops to Iraq. In a December 5 interview with *Newsweek*, he said, “We’re not going to have stability in Iraq until we eliminate those militias, those private armies.”

The Iraq Study Group (ISG) was a commission cochaired by James Baker, a Republican and former U.S. secretary of state, and Lee Hamilton, a Democrat and former congressman.

The report it issued last week rejects a “precipitous” withdrawal of U.S. forces in Iraq. It also proposes a “redeployment” of about half the U.S. troops there to nearby bases, and endorses a “short-term” surge

of U.S. forces in Baghdad to stabilize the Iraqi capital. It calls for accelerating the training of Iraqi security forces by embedding more U.S. army and police trainers into Iraqi units. And it says the number of U.S. troops in Afghanistan should be increased.

The report’s conclusions were endorsed by liberal editors like those of the *New York Times*, but were assailed by much of the conservative press and former military officials.

The *Investor’s Business Daily* called its proposals “pathetic: a pullout dressed in fancy language.”

Retired Army chief Jack Keanne, who served as ISG military adviser, said its proposals are entirely impractical, the December 7 *Times* reported.

U.S. president George Bush said he would “study” the ISG’s proposals but would consider other recommendations too. On December 12, the White House announced that Bush will wait until January to give a speech on Iraq, which had been expected before the holidays.



Connie Harris and Alan Harris arrive in Belgium in 1970 for an international leadership meeting of the communist movement.

Abortion: the issue is a woman's right to choose

Below is an excerpt from *Abortion is a Woman's Right*. The Spanish-language edition is one of Pathfinder's Books of the Month for December. Issued as part of the effort to defend abortion rights, this important pamphlet is also now available to workers and youth in Spanish. Copyright © 1985 by Pathfinder Press. Reprinted by permission.

BOOKS OF THE MONTH

BY PAT GROGAN

On January 22, 1973, women won their most important victory in decades.

The U.S. Supreme Court, in *Roe vs. Wade*, ruled that women had the constitutional right to have abortions. The ruling legalized abortion through the first twenty-four weeks of pregnancy and struck down all laws that restricted that right.

For the first time the right of *women* to decide whether or not to bear children—not the state, church, husband, father, or priest—was recognized.

The women's liberation movement saw reproductive freedom as the most fundamental right of women, a precon-



Militant/Diana Newberry

Jan. 24, 2005, march in San Francisco to back a woman's right to choose abortion. Since 1973, when it was decriminalized, the right to choose has been under bipartisan attack.

dition for full equality and liberation. Without the right to control her own body, a woman could not exercise effective control over her life.

Beginning in the 1960s, contraception was becoming more available and accepted, but it was not foolproof—and still isn't. Advances in medical science had made abortion a safe, simple, medical procedure. But in most states, abortion was against the law. Women were forced to bear children against their will, or risk dangerous—and often deadly—illegal or self-induced abortions.

In 1969, the year before New York State adopted liberalized abortion laws—a step that laid the basis for the later Supreme Court victory—approximately 210,000 women entered city hospitals due to abortion complications.

The restrictions on abortion were powerful and barbaric chains on women. Black women and Latinas suffered the most from the illegal status of abortion. *Eighty percent* of the hundreds of women who died each year were Black and Spanish-speaking women.

And many Black women and Latinas were forced to submit to sterilization

in order to obtain an abortion.

Prior to the emergence of the feminist movement in the late 1960s, many supporters of legal abortion presented their arguments in terms of population control—arguments that are used to bolster the racist practice of forced sterilization.

The feminist movement put the axis for the fight to legalize abortion where it belonged—on the right of women to control their own bodies. It was on this basis that majority support for legal abortion was won.

Because of the stakes involved in the fight for abortion rights, this right was never secure.

Several years ago, Democrats and Republicans alike began to step up their attacks on the right to abortion.

The Hyde Amendment, passed by Congress in 1976, was the most serious blow. It cut off Medicaid funding for abortions, except in cases of rape, incest, or when a woman's life is in danger. In May 1981, Congress cut off funds even in cases of rape and incest.

In October 1984, Congress once again denied abortion funding for

victims of rape and incest.

Since the Hyde Amendment was passed, thirty-six states have cut off state funding for abortions.

This strikes hardest at Black women, Latinas, and the poorest women. It is part of the attack against the right of all women to abortion and lays the basis for further attempts to restrict abortion rights.

In the years 1978 and 1979 alone, almost 1.5 million women were unable to obtain abortions, either because of lack of facilities or inability to pay.

These attacks against women's rights have sharply escalated in the last few years.

There were 180 incidents of violent attacks by right-wing foes of abortion rights on abortion clinics as of November 1984. This includes 20 arsons and firebombings.

Women seeking abortions are harassed, threatened, and called “murderers” by “right-to-lifers” who try to create an atmosphere of fear and intimidation at abortion clinics. They are the shock troops of a broader assault on abortion rights.

The 1984 presidential elections were used as a staging ground for a major escalation in the ideological offensive against women's rights. The main theme sounded was, “Abortion is murder!”

The Catholic archbishops pressed to make abortion the “key issue” in the elections. Fundamentalist Protestant preachers like “Moral Majority” leader Jerry Falwell stepped up their antiabortion propaganda.

Reagan and the Republican Party convention openly endorsed legislation that would “make clear that the 14th Amendment protections apply to unborn children.”

Prominent liberal Democrats like Geraldine Ferraro responded by agreeing that abortion is murder, but that as long as a majority supports abortion rights, it shouldn't be made illegal.

December

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Protest gov’t raids of packing plants

The labor movement and working people everywhere should join with packinghouse workers and their relatives who have loudly protested the recent immigration raids at six Swift plants across the country. We should demand the immediate release of all arrested workers.

This is an attack on all workers. The immigration cops, once again aiding the bosses, are trying to terrorize immigrant workers in order to perpetuate their second-class status—lower wages, unsafe conditions, abusive treatment—and to divide working people, pitting U.S. residents against those without papers.

In six states, 1,000 cops, many in riot gear, stormed the plants and dragged off hundreds of workers in chains and handcuffs. In an effort to tar the meat packers as criminals, immigration officials declared they were arresting them for “identity theft” that supposedly “victimized many U.S. citizens and lawful residents.” Workers at five of the six plants—a total of 10,000—are members of the United Food and Commercial Workers union.

It’s no coincidence the federal cops conducted their raids in the wake of the November 16-17 walkout by 1,000 workers at the giant Smithfield hog slaughterhouse in Tar Heel, North Carolina. The bosses and their representatives in government are alarmed at the example set by these meat packers who took action to protest the firing of dozens of coworkers targeted by “Social Security no-match” letters, pushing back company efforts to dismiss them.

Despite attempts at intimidation, the most recent police raids have also been met with workers’ protests.

These examples of growing confidence and willingness to struggle are another indication of how the massive wave of immigration in recent decades has irreversibly strengthened the working class in the United States. This strength was displayed in a dramatic way in April and May, when some 2 million workers took to the streets—in many cases shutting down plants and mills such as the Swift packinghouses—to demand the legalization of all undocumented immigrants.

The aim of the raids is not to “enforce the law” but to intimidate working people from pressing the demand for legalization and from standing up proudly to say: “We are workers, not criminals!”

Foreign-born workers are not the ones “victimizing” the native-born. The bosses and their government are victimizing all working people. The employers are the ones responsible for cutting wages and benefits, for unsafe conditions and layoffs. The only effective response to the capitalists’ divide-and-rule tactics is unionizing all workers and mobilizing union power to resist these attacks.

Following the example of the meat packers in North Carolina, the unions and other working people need to mobilize to demand: Release the arrested workers—no deportations or firings! End the use of “no-match” letters! Amnesty now! Unconditional and immediate legalization of all immigrants!

Relatives reject Sago Mine report

Continued from front page
hours before, was withdrawn.

“The families were dissatisfied with the information presented today,” said Samantha Lewis, according to the *Charleston Gazette*. Lewis’s husband David was killed in the disaster. “We didn’t feel we had time to review the information,” she said.

The disaster unfolded January 2, when an explosion ripped through an abandoned section of the Sago Mine near Buckhannon, West Virginia. The blast instantly killed one miner and trapped 12 others. By the time rescue workers reached them more than 40 hours later, all but one of the 12 had died of carbon monoxide poisoning.

State investigators claimed that lightning caused the explosion. Their report, however, concedes they don’t know “the specific mechanisms” that made that possible.

In March, the International Coal Group, which owns the Sago Mine, sought to wash its hands of responsibility for the conditions that led to the deaths of the miners by declaring that the accident was “an unpredictable and highly unusual accident” caused by lightning.

“They may be trying to blame Mother Nature for this, but there are so many other factors to blame even if it was an explosion ignited by lightning,” said Catherine McGuire, an attorney representing three of the families of the deceased miners.

LETTERS

China I

In the article in the November 20 *Militant* “As Beijing expands trade with Africa, workers protest job conditions,” Olympia Newton states, “Beijing cloaks its international crusade for profit in anti-imperialist rhetoric.”

Is it really accurate to describe the mission of the government of China as an international crusade for profit? That seems to me to place an equal sign between the Chinese state and imperialist states.

The Chinese Revolution was a powerful one that took 1 billion people out of the stranglehold of capitalism. Unquestionably, the Chinese workers state was badly deformed at birth—it never had a revolutionary leadership. And things are even worse today. But to refer to “Beijing’s international crusade for profit” seems to me to further confuse the issue. The bureaucratic caste depends on the existence of the workers state for its survival. Regardless of the capitalist aspirations of sections of that caste, the workers state has not been overturned.

Betsy Farley
Boston, Massachusetts

China II

An article in the November 20 issue of the *Militant* pointed out that companies owned by China exploited workers in some African countries, in contrast to the policies of Cuba in Africa. It seems that China is practicing imperialism in Africa and capitalist exploitation at home.

I have read articles that thousands of coal miners die in mostly privately owned mines in China every year. However, the workers and peasants of China have not been passive in the face of this vicious exploitation and there are thousands of “social disturbances” in China. But there is no revolutionary leadership, and indeed, the Chinese government would probably repress a real communist organization. However, sooner or later, the oppressed of China will definitely learn lessons and challenge the rule of the capitalist wannabes in the ruling clique.

Nick Brisini
Hastings, Pennsylvania

On to 16-page ‘Militant’

The *Militant* looks good, and the

16-page issue (the latest I got by mail) looks and feels good. Now on to 16 regularly and 24 as soon as the necessary cadres can be put together to make 16 the norm.

I think we have still got a long way to go in convincing more readers to make better use of “On the Picket Line” as a way to give voice to the battles under way around the country and the world, and draw young workers toward collaborating on short pieces for that column.

The paper reads better and your efforts to make it easier to read are appreciated, by me at least.

The articles about *Our History Is Still Being Written* and its reception in the Asian Pacific and Chinese communities and perhaps soon in China are thrilling.

Robin Maisel
Lebanon, 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.

Is China capitalist?

BY OLYMPIA NEWTON

In a letter to the editor, Betsy Farley says the use of the word “profit” in a November 20 article on the expansion of Chinese trade and investment in Africa “seems to place an equal sign between the Chinese state and imperialist states.” In another letter, Nick Brisini writes, “It seems that China is practicing imperialism in Africa and capitalist exploitation at home.”

Farley is correct in pointing out the misleading use of the word “profit” in the article. Profit is surplus value—the difference between what workers produce, on one hand, and the wages they get as well as other production costs, on the other—appropriated by capitalists through their ownership of the means of production. The majority of basic industry inside China today is state-owned. The managers of these companies run

REPLY TO A READER

them using capitalist methods with the goal of “profitability” at the expense of the needs of working people. But these managers do not appropriate the ensuing wealth as individuals; the surplus value created by workers goes to the state. From there, it is apportioned by the ruling bureaucracy. Managers of state companies hope that the more “profitable” their enterprise, the greater their personal benefits will be—whether a fancy house, servants, cars, or other privileges that feed their bourgeois aspirations.

At the same time, the article was accurate in its description of the brutal conditions imposed on workers by Chinese companies in Africa. In a speech to the 1965 Afro-Asian conference in Algeria, Ernesto Che Guevara, the Argentine-born leader of the Cuban Revolution, said, “Socialism cannot exist without a profound change in consciousness resulting in new fraternal attitude toward humanity, both at an individual level, within the societies where socialism is being built or has been built, and on a world scale...” The actions of the Chinese bureaucracy at home and abroad go in exactly the opposite direction by mimicking bourgeois values in their most unrefined and brutal form.

Guevara accused the governments of so-called socialist countries of “tacit complicity with the exploiting countries of the West” for their trade practices with the underdeveloped world. The imperialist powers set the terms: high prices, “cheap” labor power, and so on. But Stalinist bureaucrats or those of the Maoist variety use those terms to their own advantage.

China is a workers state, where workers and peasants overturned capitalist property relations and threw the capitalist class out of political power. There are individual capitalists in China today who own factories and mines, but they are not the ruling class. Their prerogatives and privileges are subordinated to the needs of China’s planned economy. The lack of revolutionary working-class leadership from the outset of the 1949 revolution means that working people have been driven out of politics. But the capitalist wannabes and the small bourgeoisie do not have carte blanche to exploit workers for personal profit, like in capitalist countries.

The bureaucratic ruling caste is motivated by the maintenance, and, if possible, expansion, of its privileged position in society. But its power rests on the nationalized property relations. Unlike a bourgeoisie, this caste is parasitic. It is not historically necessary. Its sole social function is administering and apportioning the wealth produced by working people in an unequal way, to its own benefit. To achieve this goal, the ruling bureaucrats resort to repressive measures and political alienation of the working class.

The Chinese government is not driven to export capital abroad as capitalists do in the United States or other imperialist countries. Marxists use the term “imperialism” to describe the expansionism of finance capital and other features of the highest and last stage of capitalism. The Chinese economy is marked by nationalized property relations and economic planning—however distorted in a workers state deformed at birth, which is degenerating further through “market socialism.” Under an economic system dominated by monopolies and finance capital, the capitalists are periodically driven to wars abroad to conquer new markets and resources to defend their profit interests. A parasitic caste can survive without using the same methods of plunder, while siphoning off wealth produced by labor and nature abroad through payments in kind.