

# THE MILITANT

INSIDE

**U.S. warships in the Gulf  
nearly fire on Iranian vessels**  
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A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

VOL. 72/NO. 3 JANUARY 21, 2008

## U.S. elections highlight worries over economy, war

BY PAUL PEDERSON

NEW YORK—In the January 8 presidential primaries in New Hampshire, Sen. John McCain, who gained over Mitt Romney in the Republican contest, rode the popular support for Washington's "surge" offensive in Iraq. Among the Democrats, widespread distaste for a repeat of the Clinton presidency helped Sen. Barack Obama win the January 3 Iowa caucuses and come a close second behind Sen. Hillary Clinton in New Hampshire.

Obama, a first-term senator from Illinois, garnered 38 percent of the 239,000 Democratic votes cast in Iowa. Clinton ranked third, behind former senator John Edwards.

The Obama victory is "a sign that most Democrats want to 'move on,' as some of them like to say, from the Clinton era," the *Wall Street Journal* editorialized January 5. Obama, the paper said, promises a break "from the dynastic Presidential chain of Bush-Clinton-Bush-Clinton."

The *New York Times* editors wrote January 5 that Clinton appearing in Iowa "with former President Bill Clinton behind one shoulder and former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright behind the other felt like déjà vu—not

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## Kenya: close election win by president sparks clashes

BY SAM MANUEL

WASHINGTON—New protests erupted across Kenya January 8 after President Mwai Kibaki announced he had selected half his new cabinet. Members of the main opposition party were excluded.

Just two days prior, following a visit from a top official of the U.S. State Department, Kibaki and Raila Odinga, the main opposition leader, agreed to negotiate, in an effort to restore stability after riots broke out over a close presidential election.

Odinga now says he still wants to meet with Kibaki but does not recognize his government as legitimate.

Some 600 people have been killed in fighting between Kibaki supporters and those of Odinga, who narrowly lost the election for president on December 27. Odinga's supporters charged Kibaki had stolen the vote.

Kibaki's Party of National Unity is based on Kenya's largest and dominant ethnic group, Kikuyu, which makes up about 22 percent of the population. They were favored by the British during colonial rule and ran many shops, restaurants, banks, and factories. They have dominated the government since independence

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## SWP candidates offer working-class proposals

Socialists call for a fighting labor party, independent of capitalist 2-party system



Militant photos by Willie Cotton

**Socialist Workers Party campaigners hit New York streets January 6 to discuss 2008 elections and offer working-class perspective. Above, SWP vice presidential candidate Alyson Kennedy speaks with cab driver Arvar Pimenter while campaigning in Bronx. Left, Ben O'Shaughnessy, SWP candidate for U.S. Congress in 8th Congressional District, invites worker to attend socialist campaign event.**

BY SARAH KATZ  
AND LUIS MADRID

NEW YORK—Candidates and campaigners for the Socialist Workers Party have been on the streets here, engaged in the discussions among working peo-

ple on the outcome of the recent Democratic and Republican primaries. They are introducing people to the proposals the SWP candidates are putting forward in the interests of workers and farmers.

"As the presidential election campaign unfolds, major questions confronting working people are being discussed," said Martín Koppel, SWP candidate for U.S. Congress in New York's District 15, speaking at a campaign forum here January 4.

Rising food and fuel prices, joblessness, stagnant wages, war, and immigration policy—these are issues workers and farmers are concerned about, Koppel said. He and other speakers for

Continued on page 7

## Minnesota meat packers respond to scheduling of decertification vote

BY CARLOS SAMANIEGO

SOUTH ST. PAUL, Minnesota, January 8—Members of Local 789 of the United Food and Commercial Workers Union (UFCW) passed out flyers today at the Dakota Premium Foods plant in response to the announcement that an election has been scheduled for Friday, January 25, on whether or not to decertify the union there.

The National Labor Relations Board approved holding the election after a company-backed petition was circulated at the plant in early June 2007. This oc-

curred when the first UFCW contract at Dakota had expired and negotiations for a new one were taking place.

Some of the workers at the plant today

Continued on page 9

## U.S. military may widen presence in Pakistan

BY SAM MANUEL

WASHINGTON—The Bush administration is considering whether to expand its covert military operations in Pakistan as part of its "war on terror." White House and Defense Department officials have reason to believe that Pakistan's president Pervez Musharraf might agree to such a move, because he has been so weakened by events following the assassination of opposition leader Benazir Bhutto.

Musharraf, once a protector of the Taliban regime, has been a key Bush administration ally in the wake of the

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## Social Security raises don't keep pace with real inflation

BY RÓGER CALERO

Starting this January, nearly 50 million recipients of Social Security benefits will get a 2.3 percent increase in their monthly checks, the smallest cost-of-living increase in four years.

The adjustment is based on the rise in the Consumer Price Index (CPI) from the July–September quarter of 2007 compared to the same period in 2006. It comes as working people in the United States are paying significantly more for food, energy, and medical care, outpacing increases in benefit payments and wages. Older people are particularly vulnerable,

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Militant/Carlos Samaniego

**UFCW Local 789 members leaflet January 8 outside Dakota Premium Foods.**

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With Cuban support, Garifuna hospital opens in Honduras 9



# Kenya vote sparks clashes

Continued from front page  
in 1963.

Odinga’s Orange Democratic Movement gets its support primarily among the Luo, who represent about 13 percent of the population.

Odinga initially rejected an offer by Kibaki to form a government of national unity. He said the president is in office illegally and should step down. Following a meeting with U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Jendayi Frazier, the highest-ranking U.S. diplomat on African affairs, Odinga canceled a protest rally scheduled for January 8 and announced he would meet with Kibaki.

The capitalist media has presented the fighting as “unavoidable tribal violence,” seeking to shift blame onto Kenyan working people rather than the economic and social conditions they live under, and the imperialist powers and local capitalist politicians who perpetuate those conditions.

Some 250,000 people have fled their homes to avoid the fighting. Some, like mechanic John Kopio, hold Kibaki and Odinga both responsible. “If they don’t dialogue we down here continue to suffer,” he told Reuters news agency.

At least 18 Kikuyus burned to death attempting to take refuge in a church set fire by rival Kalenjins in Kiambaa, a village about a five-hour drive from the capital. “The violence will end when the politicians want to end it,” said Daniel Kibigo, a brick mason. Kibigo, a Kikuyu, was part of a guard organized by villagers that tried to prevent the attack.

Kibaki has been credited with overseeing a major economy in Africa. The World Bank ranks Kenya’s economy eighth on the continent by GDP. But some 16 million Kenyans, half the population, scrape out a living on less than \$1

per day, most in drought-stricken farms in the rural areas. Life expectancy is 50 years, and 1 out of 8 children dies before the age of five, according to the World-wide Islamic Relief agency.

Odinga is a 15-year member of parliament. His district includes the Kibera neighborhood in Nairobi, also known as Africa’s largest slum. He has done little to change conditions there.

Odinga campaigned for Kibaki for president in 2002. His father was a former vice president and wealthy businessman. In 1982 Odinga was accused of plotting to overthrow the government of Daniel arap Moi and imprisoned for eight years.

Kibaki is part of the old guard, has been in parliament since independence, and is a reliable friend of big business and the U.S. government. The Bush administration had initially congratulated Kibaki on his reelection and called on Kenyans to accept the results.

On the other hand the European Union and the British and French governments expressed concern over irregularities in the election.

Britain is the old colonial power in Kenya and remains economically dominant in the country. British settlers established the East Africa Protectorate in 1895 and settled as large-scale farmers by taking land from the Kikuyu, Masai, and others in 1903. Some 60 British companies operate in Kenya with investments valued at nearly \$3 billion.

Last November the French government announced plans to increase its investments in Kenya over the next five years. Jean-Michel Severino, head of the French Development Agency, said Kenya is a strategic target in Africa. Severino said the agency had acquired a 6 percent share in Kenya’s Investment and



EPA/Stephen Morrison

**Cops in Nairobi, Kenya, attack protesters December 31 in Kibera, a stronghold for opposition to president Mwai Kibaki, who claimed close victory in elections.**

Mortgages Bank.

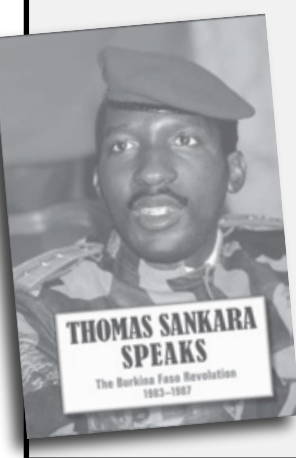
France has been under increasing pressure on the continent from U.S. imperialism. Some 80 U.S. companies have affiliates, subsidiaries, or branch offices in Nairobi. U.S. trade with Kenya in 2006 equaled more than \$1 billion. Kenya is among 37 countries allowed to export a number of goods to the United States duty-free in exchange for dropping tariffs against U.S. exports.

The Kenyan government also provides Washington with an important platform in east Africa for its “global war on terror” and is an important eco-

nomic hub for imperialist interests in the region.

The Bush administration announced it will give \$14 million for equipment and “antiterrorist” training for Kenyan security forces. Some 250 people, mostly Kenyans, were killed in the 1998 bombing of the U.S. embassy in Nairobi. Washington blamed the bombing on al-Qaeda. The U.S. government has pressed Nairobi to enact an antiterrorist law. A draft antiterrorist law was shelved by parliament last April when Muslim groups protested that it violated the rights of Kenyans.

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# U.S. gov't may widen military presence in Pakistan

Continued from front page

overthrow of the Taliban by the U.S. military in 2001. Pakistani and U.S. military forces conduct coordinated operations against Islamist militias concentrated in tribal areas along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border.

The push for greater covert action in Pakistan is part of a broad reassessment of U.S. policy in that country following the December 27 assassination of Bhutto. No one has been arrested and Pakistan's opposition has charged Musharraf with a cover-up and a possible hand in her killing. The Pakistani government postponed parliamentary elections until February 18.

Bush held a meeting with his top cabinet and security advisors January 4 to discuss various options, reported the *New York Times*.

Currently some 50 U.S. Special Operations forces have limited authority to conduct missions in Pakistan, mainly aimed at capturing or killing Osama bin-Laden and other leaders of al-Qaeda.

Options being discussed by the Bush administration include loosening restrictions by Pakistan's government on the CIA's authority to strike selected targets provided by Pakistani security agencies. The CIA could also be allowed to ask for help from U.S. military forces in the area or deputize some forces of the Special Operations Command to act under its authority, according to press reports.

## 'Could result in backlash'

"In the past," the *New York Times* said, "the [Bush] administration has largely stayed out of the tribal areas, in part for fear that exposure of American-led operations there would so embarrass the Musharraf government that it could further empower his critics, who have declared he was too close to Washington.

"Even now, officials say, some American diplomats and military of-

ficials . . . argue that American-led military operations on the Pakistani side of the border with Afghanistan could result in a tremendous backlash and ultimately do more harm than good. That is particularly true, they say, if Americans were captured or killed in the territory."

A Pakistani foreign ministry spokesman dismissed press reports that Washington might ask for wider military latitude in Pakistan. He said only Pakistani military and security forces could take action in Pakistan.

The Bush administration also hopes that Pakistan's new army chief, Gen. Ashfaq Parvez Kayani, will support an expanded role for U.S. troops. Kayani has received extensive training at U.S. military schools. Early in his career, he was an aide to Bhutto when she was prime minister. He later headed Pakistan's intelligence service.

*Stratfor*, a private U.S. intelligence outfit, said that "Musharraf and Kayani may not be on the same page as far as how to deal with the issue of the elections."

Should the opposition lose the election to Musharraf, *Stratfor* predicted "[a] much more organized and sustained version of the rioting that took place in the aftermath of Bhutto's assassination." *Stratfor* said, "Musharraf is well aware of this potential scenario, which is why he has specifically noted that the army will remain deployed even after the elections and that no one will be allowed to engage in civil disturbances. But this assumes that the army chief will order troops to open fire on unarmed demonstrators . . . Kayani is un-



Reuters/Mian Khurshed

President Pervez Musharraf, left, hands over command of Pakistani army to Gen. Ashfaq Parvez Kayani, right, in November 28 ceremony. Washington expects it will be able to get U.S.-trained Kayani to accept an increased direct U.S. military role in Pakistan.

likely to play with fire to salvage the future of one man, even if it is the president."

Leaders of Pakistan's main capitalist opposition parties have stepped up efforts to gain leverage heading into the February 18 parliamentary elections. Musharraf's opponents sharply criticized the postponement of the elections in January but say they will participate. Leaders of Bhutto's Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) and the Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz) (PML-N) have called for an interim government to oversee the elections. PML-N leader Nawaz Sharif, who was ousted as prime minister by Musharraf in 1999, is currently prohibited from running for office.

Conflicting statements by the government have undermined its claim that Bhutto died after striking her head against her vehicle following a bomb explosion. In a CBS interview Musharraf said that she might have died from a bullet wound. The Pakistani government has blamed the killing on al-Qaeda.

PPP leaders have announced that should their party win a majority in the election, they will ask the United Nations to conduct an investigation into Bhutto's assassination. In an attempt to deflect suspicion of his government's involvement in Bhutto's killing Musharraf has asked London's police force, Scotland Yard, to conduct an investigation.

## Social Security doesn't keep up with prices

Continued from front page

since they spend more on health care and energy than the overall population, and these costs have been rising faster than prices in general.

The cost-of-living adjustment will increase the average monthly Social Security payment by \$24. The actual amount received, however, will be \$21, since a \$3 increase in Medicare premiums is automatically taken out of the Social Security check.

Since 1975, adjustments to payments of Social Security benefits have been tied to inflation, a gain made by working people as partial protection against rising prices. As the U.S. rulers have moved to shore up their falling rate of profit, Social Security has been one of their targets.

Workers are also being cheated by changes made during the administration of Democratic president William Clinton to the way the CPI is calculated.

As of January 1999, a new formula was introduced to calculate rises in the prices of nearly

two-thirds of the consumer items tracked by the CPI. The Bureau of Labor Statistics argued in a 1998 report that consumers can "insulate themselves from the impact of higher prices by adjusting their spending to favor relatively lower-priced goods and services." So, the argument goes, if steak becomes too expensive, workers will buy ground beef, or buy smaller quantities, so the price increase doesn't really affect their cost of living. The new formula, they estimated, "will reduce the annual rate of increase in the CPI by approximately 0.2 percentage points per year."

Food and beverages, apparel, gasoline, automobiles, transportation fares, and other goods and services fall under the CPI categories in which this new method is applied.

This manipulation of the inflation rate by the government has resulted in cutting billions of dollars in Social Security payments over the years, and the deterioration of the standard of living for millions of working people.

CPI figures are also important for the more than 4 million federal employees, whose pension increases match Social Security's.

In the 1960s and 1970s the labor movement fought to include cost-of-living adjustments (COLA) in labor contracts. These adjustments, however, have fallen short of keeping up with rising prices. Moreover, the number of workers covered by COLA



Building maintenance workers in New York, members of Service Employees International Union Local 32BJ, rally December 12 for a contract. Bosses demanded they accept wage increase lower than rate of inflation.

clauses has dropped to its lowest level in more than 25 years.

In a recently negotiated contract by Local 32BJ of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) covering some 26,000 janitors, doormen, and other workers at more than 1,000 office buildings in New York, union officials agreed to building owners' demands to limit wage increases to an average of nearly 4 percent a year. The national inflation rate has been 4.3 percent over the past 12 months, and has gone up 10 percent over the past three years.

## CALENDAR

### Celebrate the political life of Robert Simms, a communist militant for 38 years

Robert Simms, an internationalist cadre and leader of the Communist League in Canada, died in Toronto December 3. He was 61. Join us in celebrating his life and political contributions to building the communist movement in Canada and internationally, to which Simms dedicated close to four decades.

**Speakers:** Jack Barnes, national secretary, Socialist Workers Party; Ben Joyce, Young Socialists National Steering Committee; Steve Penner, International Print Project volunteer; Michel Prairie, organizer, Communist League executive committee. John Steele, director of Pathfinder Books in Canada, and Mary-Alice Waters, editor of *New International*, will chair the event.

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# China: reliance on market policies widened inequality

BY CINDY JAQUITH

(Fourth in a series)

In February 1972, as U.S. warplanes were bombing north Vietnam, U.S. president Richard Nixon was welcomed by Mao Zedong to Beijing for a state visit. A few months later Nixon was the guest of Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev in Moscow.

Both the Chinese and Soviet regimes were willing to stab the Vietnamese people in the back in return for improved relations and trade with Washington. The workers states in both countries were governed by parasitic bureaucratic castes, and their foreign policy was based on the narrow national interests of the dominant middle-class layer in each country—at the expense of the interests of the working class worldwide.

In the first years of the Chinese revolution, after the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949, the Soviet Union had extended significant economic and technical aid to China. But following the 1956 de-Stalinization campaign by Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev—in which a fraction of the crimes of Joseph Stalin were exposed but his counterrevolutionary policies maintained—Beijing took its distance from Moscow. Mao felt threatened by the campaign against the Stalin cult, fearing it could threaten his own standing, which was based partly on a personality cult.

The disputes between the two governments became public in 1960, when the Soviet Union ended all economic aid and trade with China, a big blow to the Chinese toilers.

The Maoist regime initially attacked Moscow from the left, condemning as counterrevolutionary the Moscow Stalinists' call for "peaceful coexistence" with imperialism. But it rapidly became clear that Beijing's bureaucratic rivalry with Moscow was in line with its own course of collaborating with U.S. imperialism.

In 1973 the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) declared—falsely—that capitalism had been restored in the Soviet Union and a "fascist dictatorship" was in power there. Mao became a fervent supporter of NATO as a means to restrain Soviet "social imperialism," which he called the greatest threat to world peace, greater than Washington. Beijing established friendly relations with some of the most hated U.S.-backed regimes in the world, from the shah of Iran to Joseph Mobutu in Zaire to Augusto Pinochet in Chile.

## 'Gang of Four'

Following Mao's death in 1976, the faction he had led was quickly deposed. Four of his closest collaborators, including his wife Chiang Ching, were arrested. In a repeat of the factional thuggery Mao had dispensed against his opponents during the Cultural Revolution, his now-dominant rivals went on a public campaign to blame all the problems Stalinism had introduced on the "Gang of Four." Wall posters bearing slogans like "Crush the heads of the four dogs" went up all over the country.

When the dust finally settled from this latest factional battle, one of the



Left, U.S. president Richard Nixon is welcomed to China in 1972 by Mao Zedong, as U.S. warplanes were unleashing torrent of bombs on north Vietnam. Right, students protest in Beijing's Tiananmen Square in May 1989, demanding democratic rights.



former leaders Mao had deposed during the Cultural Revolution, Deng Xiaoping, re-emerged as the new head of state. (See last week's article for a description of the Cultural Revolution.)

Deng deepened the policy of currying favor with Washington. One of the most criminal acts of the Chinese bureaucracy during this period was Beijing's invasion of Vietnam in early 1979. The Vietnamese workers and peasants had defeated U.S. forces in 1975, forcing them to withdraw from Vietnam. Popular mobilizations of the Vietnamese toilers over the next years led to the overturn of capitalism in southern Vietnam in 1978 and the forging of a single, unified workers state.

Instead of extending solidarity, China cut off economic aid to Vietnam and began massing troops on that country's northern border. In December 1978 and January 1979, Vietnamese troops came to the aid of the people of neighboring Cambodia in ousting Pol Pot's hated Khmer Rouge dictatorship. That's when the Chinese bureaucracy decided to invade Vietnam, trying to help Washington push back advances for the socialist revolution in Southeast Asia.

## 'Market socialism'

In the late 1970s the Deng leadership reversed the policies of forced collectivization carried out by Mao and embarked on a course of increased reliance on capitalist market methods that bred new inequalities and class differentiation.

The land that had been collectives or cooperatives was divided up among the families that worked it. The government significantly raised the prices it paid for peasants' produce and permitted them to sell part of their product on the market, promoting the development of wealthy farmers. Deng's slogan was, "To get rich is glorious."

Rural factories, some owned by individuals, were built and by 1989 they employed 90 million workers.

In 1979 the regime expanded the number of peddlers, small businesses, and capitalist enterprises allowed to operate in the cities. State-run factories, which had previously turned over to the government all surpluses, were now allowed to keep the surplus after paying a 55 percent tax.

Four special zones were established in Chinese coastal areas where foreign capitalists could set up businesses. In one of these, Shenzhen, there were more than 1,000 capitalist businesses by 1982. By 1989 there were more than 7,000 joint ventures with U.S., Japanese, West German, and other companies. Chinese exports soared and the country experienced 10 percent growth rates each year from 1978 to 1988. Washington had extended diplomatic recognition to Beijing Jan. 1, 1979, as the U.S. rulers realized they were missing out on a giant opportunity to profit off the exploitation of Chinese labor.

Initially these developments meant higher incomes and greater consumption for many working people. But over time, the greater use of capitalist methods began to increase social inequalities and class differentiation. The shift to market methods in the countryside increasingly disrupted agriculture. The government sharply reduced its investment in agriculture. Farmers sought to plant whatever would make the most on the market. Production of basic food crops went down.

## Unemployment and inflation rise

Over time, unemployment increased in the rural factories and on the land. Millions moved to the cities in hopes of finding work. By the end of the 1980s inflation rose to as much as 50 percent a year, its high-

est levels since 1949.

Culturally, China began to go backward. The number of students in secondary school declined and only 1 percent went on to college, compared to 9 percent in India and 20 percent in south Korea.

The sharp deterioration of living standards for many working people stood in contrast to the growth of a very wealthy layer of government officials and factory owners.

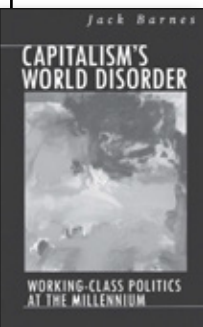
The accumulating social discontent in China exploded in 1989. Hundreds of thousands of students, joined by young workers, marched in major cities to demand democratic rights, more spending on education, and an end to government corruption.

In Beijing crowds of up to one million converged on Tiananmen Square in May. Several thousand students began a hunger strike.

On June 3 and 4, Chinese troops attacked the huge crowd, killing hundreds, if not thousands, in what became known as the Tiananmen Square massacre. In the weeks that followed many thousands, including workers, protested the killings. In Shanghai, at least half the workforce went on strike and joined the protests.

The Tiananmen Square events were a harbinger of the class conflicts that are brewing in China today. The subsequent developments there will be the subject of the final article in this series.

## For Further Reading



### Capitalism's World Disorder

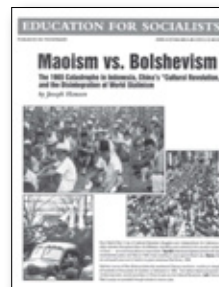
By Jack Barnes

"Big sections of the bureaucratic caste in China . . . are determined to maintain centralization and control over the departments and state enterprises from which they derive their power and privileges. This brings them into conflict not only with workers in these enterprises, but also with other sections of the bureaucracy trying to open up China more to capitalist relations and foreign investment," Barnes writes. "Giant struggles are coming in China. And given the massive urban migrations, the coming history of the countryside there will be settled more than ever by what happens in the cities, not vice versa."—\$24

### Maoism vs. Bolshevism: The 1965 Catastrophe in Indonesia, China's "Cultural Revolution," and the Disintegration of World Stalinism

By Joseph Hansen

Following the Chinese revolution of 1949, many workers and youth in Asia and elsewhere—inspired by that historic blow to imperialism—were politically misled by the Mao Zedong leadership. These articles, reports, and resolutions explain the communist alternative to Mao's Stalinist course, which in 1965 paved the way for a bloody CIA-backed coup in Indonesia. —\$10



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## ON THE PICKET LINE

### **Writers Guild strike enters 10th week**

A strike by members of the Writers Guild of America (WGA) against television network and film studio owners entered its 10th week January 8. Since November 5 when the strike began, production has been affected in more than 60 dramas and sitcoms produced in Hollywood. It was the first strike since 1988 for the movie and television writers organized by the guild, which has 10,000 members.

Negotiations broke off December 7, when representatives for the television networks insisted that the union take off the negotiating table its demand for royalties for films and shows distributed by the entertainment companies through the Internet, DVDs, and cell phones.

The Writers Guild filed a complaint against the companies with the National Labor Relations Board for not bargaining “in good faith” and for ending negotiations.

To step up the pressure on the entertainment moguls, the Writers Guild announced that striking writers would picket the January 13 Golden Globe Awards ceremony for motion pictures and television programs. Organizers of the ceremony cancelled it following an announcement by the Screen Actors Guild advising its members to not cross

the writers’ picket line and not appear on programs using nonunion writers. Golden Globe Awards producers had hoped to convince guild officials to allow writers to work temporarily on the show.

NBC network, which airs the Golden Globes every year, announced that instead it would fill the slot with an awards news conference, along with programs devoted to film clips, interviews, and Golden Globe parties, reported the *Los Angeles Times*.

“If they do an awards show, no matter what they call it, and it’s produced by a struck company, we will picket,” said Jeff Hermanson, of the WGA.

—Róger Calero

### **Contract miners in Chile fight for permanent jobs**

Contract workers at the state-owned Codelco copper mines in Chile staged protests January 3 at almost all of the company’s mines to demand that the company take onto its payroll nearly 5,000 contract workers, as ordered by the country’s labor department in December.

The company is appealing the labor department’s ruling, saying that it should be able to decide who it hires, and that it will hire a lower number of contract workers, and do so at “its own pace.”

Miners stopped production temporar-



Reuters/Chris Pizzello

**Writers Guild members on picket line November 9 in front of Fox Studios in Los Angeles**

ily blocking entrances to the mines, until they were removed by the cops.

“This is a warning protest,” said Cristian Cuevas, president of the Confederation of Copper Workers, which organized the protests.

Last July, some 28,000 contract work-

ers at Codelco went out on strike for 25 days to demand the payment of benefits won during a strike the year before.

Codelco is the world’s largest copper producer. It produces 11 percent of the world’s mined cooper.

—Róger Calero

## Workers disabled at Minnesota plant demand answers

BY HELEN MEYERS

AUSTIN, Minnesota—Workers at Quality Pork Processors (QPP) are demanding that the company explain why 12 employees have been stricken with a rare neurological disease.

All 12 worked on the kill floor “head table” removing meat from pig heads. They developed symptoms of numbness and tingling in their arms and legs. Five of the workers have been diagnosed with chronic inflammatory demyelinating polyneuropathy, or CIDP, a rare immune disorder that can cause lasting damage.

QPP workers and others in this town of 23,000 are concerned that they are not getting the truth about the illness and what caused it. One QPP worker, who asked that her name not be used out of fear of company retaliation, said, “They don’t say what’s going on. They don’t give the information fast enough. They tell us they are not finding anything. We feel they are giving us the runaround.”

The head table workers cut meat from the pig’s head, at a rate of 1,100 pigs an hour, by first slicing off the cheek and snout meat, then inserting a nozzle into the head using compressed air to remove the brain tissue. Doctors treating the sick workers at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota, suspect that exposure to pig brain tissue scattered by the compressed air triggered the illness.

Beginning in December 2006, workers from the head table area who used or worked near the compressed air machine began reporting to the nursing staff at QPP, complaining of pain in their arms, hands, and legs. These workers were referred to the Mayo Clinic.

In October 2007, after seeing a cluster of cases from QPP, a Mayo Clinic doctor contacted the Minnesota Department of Health. One month later, the department officials held a press conference where state health commissioner Sanne Mangan said, “The illness is under investigation and there is no evidence the food

supply has been affected.”

According to the *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, CIDP normally strikes fewer than 2 per 100,000 people. State health officials say the disease may have struck 11 out of 100 people in a particular part of the QPP plant. Minnesota state epidemiologist Ruth Lynfield said that “the patients included men and women from a range of ages and ethnicities. But they all worked in the same part of the plant, removing pig brains with compressed air.” None of the plant’s other 1,300 workers reported similar symptoms. The *Star Tribune* article reported, “Never before have so many cases of this type occurred in a particular locale, specific type of work, or in association with a particular animal, experts said.”

Until the illness had been made pub-

lic, QPP officials took no action to protect head table workers and continued using air compressors to extract pig’s brains. As a result of the publicity QPP no longer uses compressed air and workers who butcher pig’s heads have been given additional protective clothing.

Thirty-seven year-old Susan Kruse, one of the sick workers, has worked for 15 years at QPP. In an interview at her home, she said that in November 2006 she began getting leg cramps, then pain in her arms and shoulders. By February 2007 she was confined to a wheelchair. Her doctors have told her she will not be able to return to work. It was not until this past fall, however, that she learned through the media that coworkers in her department had the same symptoms.

Kruse said for six months she went

weekly to the plant to receive her short-term disability check from the company nurse. “Not once did any of the nurses tell me that other workers from the head table were having the same symptoms and were getting sick,” she said. The one thing she wanted all her coworkers to know is, “they should go to the doctor as soon as they have any symptoms and not wait like I did.”

To date none of the QPP workers have received workers’ compensation because it has yet to be proven where the illness came from. QPP is organized by United Food and Commercial Workers Local 9, as is the Hormel meatpacking plant, which sits beside it.

*Carlos Samaniego contributed to this article.*

## 25, 50, AND 75 YEARS AGO



**January 21, 1983**

On August 26, 1982, Manville Corporation, one of this country’s industrial giants, filed legal documents declaring itself in need of protection under the federal bankruptcy law.

The “creditors” Manville wants protection from are the plaintiffs in some 16,500 lawsuits seeking damages from the company for illness resulting from exposure to asbestos. Among their number are shipyard workers, pipefitters, insulation workers, and brake mechanics. All have or had asbestosis or cancer or both.

Underlying Manville’s maneuver is what medical experts describe as “the nation’s worst occupational health disaster.” It is estimated that 9 million people were exposed to asbestos on the job between 1940 and 1980 and that 1.6 million will eventually die from an asbestos-related disease.



**January 20, 1958**

United Auto Workers president Walter Reuther has decided to use Russia’s Sputniks as an excuse for dropping the shorter work-week as a demand for the 1958 auto negotiations. The shorter work-week demand was proposed, fought for over the years, accepted by the auto workers generally, and finally adopted by two UAW conventions, as an effective method of fighting unemployment. Now, just when unemployment is rapidly rising to pre-World War II levels, Reuther has dropped the demand.

Reuther’s statement says he dropped the shorter work-week demand because “the problem symbolized by the Russian earth satellites has drastically changed what appeared to be the situation at the time of the 1957 convention.” Now, says Reuther, it is necessary for the workers to work long hours in order to contribute to the missiles race.



**January 21, 1933**

The rattle of the sabre grows louder in the Far East. As the Japanese conquest grows in scope grave events of international consequence loom on the horizon. Fear for their territory and sources of exploitation have struck fear into the hearts of American and British imperialism.

At the outset, when it seemed that the Japanese military expedition might end in intervention against the Soviet Union, the diplomatic circles in Washington were quiet as the grave. But now, when it appears that American profits and the huge Chinese colonial market will be swallowed up by Japanese capitalism, a virtual furor of protest has emerged from the Washington watchdogs of the Wall Street bankers’, munition makers’ and manufacturers’ interests in every part of the globe.



# U.S. presidential race

Continued from front page

what Iowa's voters were looking for."

While declaring himself a proponent of "change," Obama's political course has much in common with Hillary Clinton, and with the record of William Clinton's presidency. Obama supports the death penalty, the use of which was stepped up substantially under the Clinton White House. As an Illinois senator, he refused to vote against two bills that would have banned a form of late-term abortion.

In August, Obama said he would have ordered U.S. forces to attack targets inside Pakistan in 2005 without first getting agreement from the Pakistani government.

Like Clinton, he has positioned himself as a strong "Homeland Security" candidate, voting to extend the USA Patriot Act and supporting the "Secure Fence Act," which authorized the construction of hundreds of miles of fencing along the U.S.-Mexico border. Clinton herself voted for a fence in the name of tightening the southern border.

Clinton calls for mandatory health insurance, requiring everyone to buy their own coverage. "Like other things that you buy, [insurance companies] will have to compete for your business based on quality and price," she says on her campaign website. Obama's plan is similar except that it would not be mandatory.

## McCain campaign rides Iraq 'surge'

In winning the Republican primary in New Hampshire, Arizona senator John McCain is reaping the benefits of having been consistent in his war policy. He was an early critic of U.S. tactics in the early years of the Iraq war, calling for more troops there, and today backs the U.S. military offensive led by Gen. David Petraeus in Iraq. In the past three months, deaths of U.S. troops have fallen to the lowest point of any similar period since the U.S. invasion.

"I strongly disagree with the strategy employed by Secretary Rumsfeld. . . . I'm the only one at the time that said we've got to employ a new strategy and outlined what it was, which is the Petraeus strategy," McCain said during a January 5 debate in New Hampshire. "We are succeeding now in Iraq," he said.

"McCain's assessment of the situation in Iraq appears to be the most realistic of anyone running," the *Detroit Free Press* wrote in announcing its endorsement of McCain the following day.

Clinton, during Petraeus's Senate testimony in September, insinuated that he was lying about the success of the offensive, a move that hurt her campaign.

## Candidates seize on economic worries

The day of the Iowa caucuses, the U.S. Department of Labor reported that unemployment had risen to 5 percent. Some of the candidates are appealing to those feeling the current squeeze and who will be most affected by an economic downturn.

"Two leading contenders from each party—Democrat John Edwards and Republican Mike Huckabee—have ramped up their anticorporate, anti-Wall Street rhetoric," the *Wall Street Journal* reported. Edwards, the article continued, "is tapping into working-class appeals . . . as economic anxiety has intensified among voters."

Edwards, a multimillionaire trial lawyer and former senator from North Carolina, said his message of fighting for "the middle class, jobs, and stopping corporate greed" is what carried him to second place in Iowa. He has won substantial backing among the officialdom of major labor unions. Former Green party presidential candidate Ralph Nader announced his support for Edwards just prior to the Iowa vote.

Huckabee, a former Arkansas governor and one-time Baptist preacher and businessman in TV and radio, won the Iowa Republican caucus. One of his ads said, "most Americans want their next president to remind them of the guy they work with, not the guy who laid them off"—a dig at his wealthy opponent Romney.

Despite this demagoguery, Huckabee's "fair tax" plan would replace the federal income tax with a national sales tax, a regressive move that would shift taxes even more heavily onto working people.



John McCain, center, tours Baghdad in April 2007 with Gen. David Petraeus, the commander of U.S. forces in Iraq. The Arizona senator's gains in the 2008 presidential race benefit from the popularity of the "surge" offensive in Iraq led by Petraeus.

Huckabee's platform is well to the right of many of his Republican competitors. He has voiced support for the teaching of creationism in public schools and for the criminalization

of abortion. He said during his 1992 campaign for U.S. Senate that homosexuality is "aberrant, unnatural and sinful" and that "it can pose a dangerous public health risk."



Members of United Steelworkers Local 164 in Des Moines, Iowa, work phones for the John Edwards campaign January 1. Edwards has sought votes among those squeezed by the economic crisis, demagogically denouncing "corporate greed" and claiming to fight for jobs.

## Support Socialist Workers 2008 campaign! SWP candidates across the United States

### CALIFORNIA

Lea Sherman, U.S. Congress, 8th C.D.

Gerardo Sánchez, U.S. Congress, 12th C.D.

Michael Ortega, U.S. Congress, 34th C.D.

James Harris, U.S. Congress, 35th C.D.

Arlene Rubinstein, U.S. Congress, 37th C.D.

### FLORIDA

Omari Musa, Mayor of Miami-Dade County

Margaret Trowe, U.S. Congress, 17th C.D.

### GEORGIA

Eleanor García, U.S. Senate

Loretta Van Pelt, U.S. Congress, 3rd C.D.

Jeanne FitzMaurice, U.S. Congress, 6th C.D.

Jacob Perasso, U.S. Congress, 7th C.D.

### ILLINOIS

Betsy Farley, U.S. Senate

John Hawkins, U.S. Congress, 1st C.D.

Laura Anderson, U.S. Congress, 4th C.D.

Dennis Richter, U.S. Congress, 7th C.D.

### IOWA

Diana Newberry, U.S. Senate

Frank Forrestal, U.S. Congress, 3rd C.D.

Kevin Dwire, State Senate District 33

Helen Meyers, State Representative District 64

### MASSACHUSETTS

William Estrada, U.S. Senate

William Leonard, State Senate, 2nd Suffolk District

### MINNESOTA

Ernest Mailhot, U.S. Senate

Carlos Samaniego, U.S. Congress, 4th C.D.

Rebecca Williamson, U.S. Congress, 5th C.D.

Rollande Girard, State Representative, Dist. 61B

### NEW JERSEY

Sara Lobman, U.S. Senate

Dean Debrosse, U.S. Congress, 10th C.D.

Michael Taber, U.S. Congress, 13th C.D.

### NEW YORK

Maura DeLuca, U.S. Congress, 7th C.D.

Ben O'Shaughnessy, U.S.

Congress, 8th C.D.

Willie Cotton, U.S. Congress, 10th C.D.

Sarah Katz, U.S. Congress, 11th C.D.

Dan Fein, U.S. Congress, 12th C.D.

Martín Koppel, U.S. Congress, 15th C.D.

### PENNSYLVANIA

Osborne Hart, U.S. Congress, 2nd C.D.

Ryan Scott, U.S. Congress, 14th C.D.

### TEXAS

Jacquie Henderson, U.S. Senate

Amanda Ulman, U.S. Congress, 9th C.D.

Steven Warshell, U.S. Congress, 18th C.D.

Anthony Dutrow, State Representative Dist. 138

### WASHINGTON

Chris Hoepfner, Governor

Mary Martin, U.S. Congress, 7th C.D.

### WASHINGTON, D.C.

Seth Dellinger, Delegate to U.S. Congress

Sam Manuel, City Council At-Large



Barack Obama speaks at September rally at Iowa State University. While espousing "change," his politics do not differ much from those of the Clinton White House.



# Socialist campaign

**Continued from front page**

the SWP campaign discussed the results of the previous day's Iowa presidential caucuses and the proposals the socialist candidates are putting forward in the interests of working people.

Similar Militant Labor Forums featuring SWP candidates were held across the country the same day. The socialist campaign has launched as its national ticket Róger Calero for president and Alyson Kennedy for vice president.

At the New York forum the speakers also included Norton Sandler, director of the SWP's 2004 presidential campaign; Olympia Newton, SWP national campaign director; and Ben O'Shaughnessy, spokesperson for the Young Socialists for Calero and Kennedy.

The capitalist candidates all call for "change," Koppel noted. The Iowa victories for Democrat Barack Obama and Republican Michael Huckabee were votes against the "status quo" in the two main capitalist parties.

Some of the big-business candidates use demagoguery to gain support from workers squeezed by the economic crisis. Democrat John Edwards, for example, denounces "corporate greed" as responsible for unemployment and the rising cost of health care. Huckabee, a former Arkansas governor, contrasts his own background—as the son of a fireman who worked two jobs—with that of his wealthy rival Willard Mitt Romney and others he dubs "Country Club Republicans."

The Democrats and Republicans, however, represent the ruling rich, Koppel said. "That's why the Socialist Workers Party candidates explain the need for working people to break with the Democrats and Republicans, and any other capitalist party, and organize independently in the political arena. We need a labor party based on a fighting union movement that can mobilize the potential power of our class to defend our interests against the bosses and their government."

Newton noted that Democrat Hillary Clinton lost votes to Obama and Edwards in the Iowa caucuses because of the negative association many have with the Clinton "legacy," the record of the

William Clinton administration of the 1990s.

She explained that all the Democratic and Republican candidates support Washington's wars abroad under the banner of the "war on terrorism." Obama and Clinton talk about shifting U.S. troops from Iraq to Afghanistan. Clinton has pushed for a more aggressive policy against the Iranian government, voting to label its Revolutionary Guard a "terrorist" organization. Obama has called for sending U.S. troops to Pakistan.

In contrast, she said, the SWP candidates call for the immediate, unconditional withdrawal of all U.S. troops from Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Korea, and every other country where they are stationed.

## Iraq 'surge' and McCain

Sandler noted the praise in the big-business press for the military successes of Washington's "surge" of troops in Iraq under the command of Gen. David Petraeus. The British *Telegraph* named Petraeus its "Person of the Year," noting that in Iraq today "Sectarian killings are down. Al-Qaeda is on the run. And the two million Iraqis who fled the country are slowly returning."

Sandler said the popularity of the "surge" helps explain why John McCain has been leading the polls among the Republican candidates since mid-December. The Arizona senator "is most associated with criticizing President Bush for not increasing the number of troops in Iraq, and now most associated with Gen. Petraeus and the acceptance by millions of what is being accomplished on the ground."

Ben O'Shaughnessy spoke about the activities of the Young Socialists for Calero and Kennedy, through which young people are getting involved in the socialist campaign. This includes street canvassing, helping set up events for the candidates at campuses and in house meetings, and joining in campaign debates.

The Young Socialists for Calero and Kennedy, he said, explain the socialist campaign's perspective of the need to build a revolutionary movement of



Militant/Willie Cotton

Martín Koppel, Socialist Workers candidate for Congress in New York's 15th District, left, and Gabriel García, second from right, campaign for the socialist ticket January 6 in the Bronx.

working people that can follow the example of the Cuban Revolution by taking on the ruling rich and taking political power, establishing a workers and farmers government that will be part of the worldwide struggle for socialism.

Sandler reported that the SWP campaign will petition to put its candidates on the ballot as widely as possible. He urged those who support the socialist ticket to join in these efforts.



## BY ILONA GERSH

CHICAGO—At a January 4 campaign forum here, Betsy Farley, the SWP's candidate for U.S. Senate, introduced her three running mates in Illinois: Dennis Richter, John Hawkins,

and Laura Anderson, who are running for U.S. Congress in the 7th, 1st, and 4th Congressional Districts respectively.

"All of the Democratic and Republican party candidates say they are 'change' candidates," said Richter. "But none offer change in the interests of working people. They will all continue to look after the interests of the rich."

## Working-class unity

Richter reported that in a speech following the Iowa caucuses, Barack Obama said that his electoral victory was a victory for the "unity" campaign. "But there can be no unity between the working class and the capitalist ruling class," Richter explained. "Thirty-two coal miners died last year as a result of

**Continued on page 9**

## FOR FURTHER READING

### Cuba and the Coming American Revolution

By Jack Barnes

"A PROLETARIAN ALTERNATIVE to being whipsawed between choices presented by the Democrats and Republicans begins, and can only begin," Barnes writes, "with working people fighting together to defend the conditions and solidarity of the working class and other toilers in face of declining living and job conditions, rising joblessness, deepening indebtedness, and the ever-present danger of ruinous bursts of inflation or financial panic."

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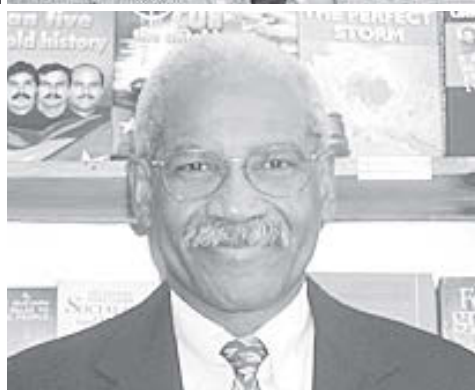
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Militant/Ilona Gersh

Socialist Workers Party ticket in Illinois. Clockwise from top: Betsy Farley for U.S. Senate, Dennis Richter for U.S. Congress in 7th Congressional District, John Hawkins for U.S. Congress in the 1st C.D., and Laura Anderson for U.S. Congress in the 4th C.D.



# Production, property rights, and evolution of the family

*Below is an excerpt from The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State, one of Pathfinder's Books of the Month for January. The author, Frederick Engels, a cofounder with Karl Marx of the modern communist movement, explains how the emergence of class-divided society gave rise to repressive state bodies and family structures that protect the property of the ruling layers and enable them to pass along wealth and privilege. Copyright © Pathfinder Press 1972. Reprinted by permission.*

## BY FREDERICK ENGELS

The slave was useless to the barbarian of the lower stage. It was for this reason that the American Indians treated their vanquished foes quite differently from the way they were treated in the upper stage. The men were either killed or

## BOOKS OF THE MONTH

adopted as brothers by the tribe of the victors. The women were either taken in marriage or likewise just adopted along with their surviving children. Human labor power at this stage yielded no noticeable surplus as yet over the cost of its maintenance. With the introduction of cattle breeding, of the working-up of metals, of weaving and, finally, of field cultivation, this changed. Just as the once so easily obtainable wives had now



**Egyptian painting of a man and wife planting fields. Advances in agriculture strengthened the position of the male in the family, accelerating the overthrow of mother-right inheritance.**

acquired an exchange value and were bought, so it happened with labor power, especially after the herds had finally been converted into family possessions. The family did not increase as rapidly as the cattle. More people were required to tend them; the captives taken in war were useful for just this purpose, and, furthermore, they could be bred like the cattle itself.

Such riches, once they had passed into the private possession of families and there rapidly multiplied, struck a powerful blow at a society founded on pairing marriage and mother-right gens. Pairing marriage had introduced a new element into the family. By the side of the natural mother it had placed the authenticated natural father—who was probably better authenticated than many a “father” of the present day. According to the division of labor then prevailing in the family, the procuring of food and the implements necessary thereto, and therefore, also, the ownership of the latter, fell to the man; he took them with him in case of separation, just as the woman retained the household goods. Thus, according to the custom of society at that time, the man was also the owner of the new sources of foodstuffs—the cattle—and later, of the new instrument of labor—the slaves. According to the custom of the same society, however, his children could not inherit from him, for the position in this respect was as follows:

According to mother right, that is, as

long as descent was reckoned solely through the female line, and according to the original custom of inheritance in the gens, it was the gentile relatives that at first inherited from a deceased member of the gens. The property had to remain within the gens. At first, in view of the insignificance of the chattels in question, it may, in practice, have passed to the nearest gentile relatives—that is, to the blood relatives on the mother’s side. The children of the deceased, however, belonged not to his gens, but to that of their mother. In the beginning, they inherited from their mother, along with the rest of their mother’s blood relatives, and later, perhaps, had first claim upon her property; but they could not inherit from their father, because they did not belong to his gens, and his property had to remain in the latter. On the death of the herd owner, therefore, his herds passed, first of all, to his brothers and sisters and to his sisters’ children or to the descendants of his mothers’ sisters. His own children, however, were disinherited.

Thus, as wealth increased, it, on the one hand, gave the man a more important status in the family than the woman, and, on the other hand, created a stimulus to utilize this strengthened position in order to overthrow the traditional order of inheritance in favor of his children. But this was impossible as long as descent according to mother right prevailed. This had, therefore, to be overthrown, and it

was overthrown; and it was not so difficult to do this as it appears to us now. For this revolution—one of the most decisive ever experienced by mankind—need not have disturbed one single living member of a gens. All the members could remain what they were previously. The simple decision sufficed that in future the descendants of the male members should remain in the gens, but that those of the females were to be excluded from the gens and transferred to that of their father. The reckoning of descent through the female line and the right of inheritance through the mother were hereby overthrown and male lineage and right of inheritance from the father instituted.

As to how and when this revolution was effected among the civilized peoples we know nothing. It falls entirely within prehistoric times. That it was actually *effected* is more than proved by the abundant traces of mother right which have been collected, especially by Bachofen. How easily it is accomplished can be seen from a whole number of Indian tribes, among whom it has only recently taken place and is still proceeding, partly under the influence of increasing wealth and changed methods of life (transplantation from the forests to the prairies), and partly under the moral influence of civilization and the missionaries. Of eight Missouri tribes, six have male and two still retain the female lineage and female inheritance line. Among the Shawnees, Miamis, and Delawares it has become the custom to transfer the children to the father’s gens by giving them one of the gentile names obtaining therein, in order that they may inherit from him. . . .

The overthrow of mother right was the *world-historic defeat of the female sex*. The man seized the reins in the house also; the woman was degraded, enthralled, the slave of the man’s lust, a mere instrument for breeding children. This lowered position of women—especially manifest among the Greeks of the Heroic and still more of the Classical Age—has become gradually embellished and dissembled and, in part, clothed in a milder form, but by no means abolished.

January

BOOKS OF THE MONTH

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8 The Militant January 21, 2008



# For a sliding scale of wages, hours

Gasoline prices in the United States are now more than double—\$3.18 a gallon on average—what they were four years ago. Official inflation figures show grocery prices were up more than 4 percent in 2007 over the previous year, and even higher for items like milk and bread. Hikes in medical costs, rent, and other essentials are also gouging workers. Meanwhile, wages continue to stagnate.

At the same time, in December the official unemployment rate rose to 5 percent—and the actual figure is higher—largely due to layoffs in construction and manufacturing.

What can working people do in response to rising inflation and unemployment?

The candidates of the twin capitalist parties have their proposals. From Democrats Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama, to Republicans John McCain and Michael Huckabee, they offer a range of policies to “invest in U.S. manufacturing,” from tax measures to trade legislation, that are simply designed to increase the profits of U.S. employers—at the expense of working people at home and abroad.

Inflation and unemployment are endemic to the capitalist system. With the capitalist system in the early stages of a world financial crisis, one thing is certain: the bosses will continue to shift the burden of the crisis onto the backs of working people both in the United States and internationally.

In response, the Socialist Workers candidates are campaigning for a platform to defend the interests of working people. A key demand is for a sliding scale of wages and a sliding scale of hours that includes:

- An escalator clause. When prices go up, wages should automatically go up to match. Escalator clauses are also needed for Social Security payments, unemployment benefits, and other benefits.

- A shorter workweek, with no cut in pay. When unemployment rises, work hours must be reduced to guarantee jobs for all.

The labor movement needs to campaign to expose the real prices working people pay. Government inflation figures are rigged, grossly understating the prices of food, clothing, fuel, rent, and transportation. This month, nearly 50 million people who receive Social Security will get the smallest average cost-of-living increase in four years—barely \$24 a month. This is a result of the “recalculation” of inflation figures introduced under the Clinton administration. Many cost-of-living adjustments in union contracts are based on these distorted figures, further lowering the standard of living of millions.

The labor movement should also demand that the bosses open their books. Unions can then expose the truth behind contrived shortages, the collusion between the employers and government agencies, and how bosses and their cronies make out like bandits on price hikes and “labor cost-cutting.”

In addition to a shorter workweek, a massive public works program is needed to build and repair much-needed hospitals, schools, public housing, roads and bridges, and other infrastructure. Millions could be put to work at union-scale wages on such projects, improving social conditions for all working people.

These are demands around which a labor party, based on a fighting union movement, could mobilize the power of the working class, contesting in the political arena against the Democrats, Republicans, and all other capitalist parties.

That's what the Socialist Workers candidates urge working people and youth to join in campaigning for today.

## Socialist campaigners hit streets

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the bosses’ stepped-up profit drive. Can there be unity between the coal miners and the coal bosses?

“Our candidates are campaigning for legalization of all undocumented immigrants. That will help forge unity among working people in struggle,” Richter said.

Hawkins spoke about the world capitalist economic crisis, and pointed to the effects of rising food prices, the threat of unemployment, and other aspects of the economic grind on working people in this country. He explained the socialist campaign’s demand for a sliding scale of wages and hours. This means that as joblessness grows, work hours are reduced with no cut in pay, in order to spread around the available work. And as prices go up, wages, Social Security payments, and other social benefits increase accordingly.

In the lively discussion period, forum participants discussed a range of questions from the audience.

One was on the campaign of the rightist Ron Paul, who in the Iowa caucuses received 10 percent of the vote. “Paul has received support from middle-class layers who feel threatened by the economic insecurity. He presents himself as a total ‘outsider’ who cuts across bureaucratic government red tape,” Richter noted. “He rails demagogically against the IRS and the banks,” added Hawkins.

The following day, socialist campaigners here were on a busy intersection on the South Side of Chicago with the *Militant*, books, and leaflets for the January 11 forum to discuss the elections after the New Hampshire primaries. Campaigners plan to participate in an immigrant rights conference in South Bend, Indiana. Staunch defenders of a woman’s right to choose abortion, they will also attend a hearing on a new Planned Parenthood abortion clinic in Aurora, Illinois, that the Pro-Life Action League and the American Life League want to shut down.

## With Cuba’s aid, hospital opens in Honduras

BY DOUG NELSON

As a result of Cuba’s internationalist solidarity, the first hospital in a Garifuna community in Honduras opened December 8 in Ciriboya, a remote coastal village in the eastern part of the country.

The Garifuna are of mixed African and indigenous descent. They have their own language and are concentrated on the Atlantic Coast of Central America, especially in Belize, Honduras, Guatemala, and Nicaragua. Garifunas face systematic discrimination and, as a result, widespread malnutrition, parasites, and illiteracy. As much as 14 percent of Garifunas in Honduras are infected with AIDS, according to the World Health Organization.

Hundreds of Cuban doctors have been providing free medical care in Honduras, especially in remote rural areas that would otherwise have no such services. The first Cuban doctors arrived in 1998 in the wake of Hurricanes Georges and Mitch, which wreaked havoc in Central America. Worldwide,

about 30,000 volunteer Cuban doctors are providing services in 68 countries.

The Cuban government has trained thousands of students from around the world free of charge at the Latin American School of Medicine (ELAM) in Cuba.

The Cuban newspaper *Granma International* reported that at the December 8 inaugural ceremony at the new hospital, speakers noted that more Garifuna students and doctors from Honduras are currently enrolled in the Cuban medical school than have studied medicine in the 150-year history of the National University of Honduras.

Some of the first Garifuna students who graduated from the ELAM in 2005 helped launch a community project called Health for Our People and set out to build a community hospital.

The new Garifuna doctors have already treated over 20,000 patients in local communities, according to a recent report by the U.S.-based group MEDICC (Medical Education Cooperation with Cuba).

## U.S. warships nearly fire on Iranian ships in Arab-Persian Gulf

BY SAM MANUEL

WASHINGTON—The captain of a U.S. destroyer sailing in the Strait of Hormuz in the Arab-Persian Gulf came within moments of issuing orders to fire on Iranian patrol boats January 6.

The U.S. Defense Department said five Iranian speedboats were approaching a U.S. destroyer, a missile cruiser, and a frigate and had radioed a threat to blow them up. The captain of the destroyer, the USS *Hopper*, ordered the ship’s M240 machine gun trained on one of the Iranian boats just before it steered away.

Tehran says its sailors were simply trying to determine the identity of the destroyer. Iranian foreign ministry spokesman Muhammad Ali Hosseini downplayed the incident, saying it was a normal occurrence, which “happens between the two sides every once in a while.”

Following the U.S. announcement of the incident, the Navy released a video showing speedboats approaching three ships. The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps said the video was old footage and that the radio threat to explode the U.S. ships was faked.

U.S. secretary of state Condoleezza Rice accused Iran of a “dangerous” and “provocative” act. She told the *Jerusalem Post* Iran is “the single greatest threat to the kind of Middle East we all want to see.”

Vice Adm. Kevin Cosgriff, commander of the Navy’s Fifth Fleet, responsible for forces in the Arab-Persian Gulf, said the episode was “more serious than we have seen,” particularly because it occurred in a vital maritime choke point. Some 17 million barrels of crude per day, more than 20 percent of the world’s total oil supply, passes through the Strait of Hormuz from Saudi Arabia and other Gulf oil producers. Heavy armor and military supplies are also transported to Iraq and other Gulf states through the Strait.

A U.S.-led force of 45 warships, including British ships, maintains a constant patrol in the Gulf. In the last year, in an attempt to intimidate Tehran, they have carried out two major military exercises off Iran’s coast.

Gholam-Ali Haddad, speaker of Iran’s parliament, said, “If one side should charge others of meddling in this region, that side would be Iran, because unlike the Americans, who came from thousands of kilometers away and stationed their navy ships in the Persian Gulf, we are a natural neighbor of this waterway.”

The Pentagon claimed the U.S. ships were in international waters, but the demarcation of the border on the strait remains in dispute. Last March Iranian ships captured 15 British sailors in the Arab-Persian Gulf who Tehran said were in Iranian waters.

## Meatpackers

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were part of the two-year-long fight to win the union, which began with a sit-down strike in the cafeteria on June 1, 2000, and finally compelled the bosses to recognize the UFCW. Some of these workers, together with others newer at the company, have been working with Local 789 staff members to explain to coworkers the need to fight to keep the union at the plant.

Some have helped produce issues of *The Workers Voice*, a newsletter in support of the union that has helped expose the poor working conditions on the job and antiunion lies spread by the company.

As Local 789 officials and pro-union workers passed out flyers with the announcement of the election date, union organizer Jenny Shegos said one worker told her that “he couldn’t understand how anybody would want to vote against the union.” She also noted that “some workers saw not only this fight, but were looking to the next one, which is to get a new contract.”

A number of workers told the union campaigners they would be voting for the union and were telling others to do the same. Among the issues workers point to as reasons to support the union were the high rate of injuries on the job, the fast line speed, and company harassment, especially of pro-union workers.

*Carlos Samaniego is a member of UFCW Local 789 and works at Dakota Premium Foods.*