

THE MILITANT

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A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

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Socialist candidates Calero and Kennedy on national tour

BY SAM MANUEL

February 6—As the U.S. election campaign moves beyond the “Super Tuesday” primaries, the Socialist Workers Party candidates for president and vice president of the United States are hitting the campaign trail with stops on the East and West Coasts. They will visit 15 cities in the next month.

Socialist Workers presidential candidate Róger Calero is joining a February 7 protest in Trenton, the New Jersey state capital, to oppose plans to close St. James and Columbus hospitals in Newark. Officials of Catholic Health East, which owns the hospitals, say they must be closed because they are losing money.

Speaking at a February 1 hearing on the hospital closings, Sara Lobman, the SWP candidate for U.S. Senate from New Jersey, said, “Health care and our lives come before profits. The labor movement must take up the fight for universal, government-guaranteed health care.”

Calero is campaigning in Washington, D.C., February 9–11. He joins local socialist candidates in a campaign forum on Saturday, February 9, titled “Super Tuesday and beyond: Working people need our own party!”

Seth Dellinger, the SWP candidate for District of Columbia delegate to the

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Blackouts in China, S. Africa highlight energy gap in world

BY SAM MANUEL

WASHINGTON—Massive power outages in China, South Africa, and Argentina in January highlighted an acute problem affecting much of the world: a lack of energy sources and electrical capacity to further industrial development and meet the needs of nations oppressed by imperialism.

Severe blizzards in China in late January left some of the country’s coal-fired power plants with as little as three days’ worth of coal. Seven percent of China’s power plants had to be temporarily shut down. About 80 percent of China’s electricity is generated with coal, in a country where energy demands have steadily increased along with popular expectations for higher living standards.

“The effects of massive power outages in China could have created as severe an effect as Hurricane Katrina, which took the largest U.S. port off line for three days,” noted a January 31 report by Strategic Forecasting (Stratfor), a private U.S. intelligence analysis firm. It said that in previous years, the disruption of coal shipments by snowfalls have caused blackouts and brownouts throughout the country.

Widespread blackouts last month in both Argentina and South Africa shut down industry and left many homes without electricity.

In South Africa, mines—the country’s main employer—shut down for four days at the end of January because Eskom, the government-con-

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‘Now we must win a decent contract’

Victory for union at Minnesota packinghouse is boost to efforts to organize other workers



Militant

Unionists rally at Dakota Premium the day before 2–1 vote to keep the union there

BY CARLOS SAMANIEGO

ST. PAUL, Minnesota, February 5—The January 25 union election victory at Dakota Premium Foods was quickly followed by workers pushing back new company attacks that aimed to weaken the growing union support among meat packers here.

Just days after the workers rejected a company-backed drive to decertify the union and voted by a nearly 2–1 margin to remain organized in United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) Local 789, the bosses fired Charlie Hultman.

He immediately went to the union headquarters to let his coworkers and union officials know what happened. Four hours later he was back on the job.

The same day, union officials got the company’s agreement to return Solomon Thomas to work as well. Thomas, an African American, had been forced out of the plant after racist treatment by a supervisor, who repeatedly used racist insults against him including “chango,” Spanish for “monkey.”

Hultman, one of the newer union

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Chicago worker fights deportation, champions legalization for all

BY JORGE LERTORA

CHICAGO, February 3—Factory worker Flor Crisóstomo refused to report to immigration authorities for deportation January 28, taking refuge instead in Adalberto United Methodist Church, located in Chicago’s predominantly Puerto Rican Humboldt Park.

Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) denied her appeal of a deportation order and instructed her to appear with a suitcase of no more than 40 pounds and an airline ticket ready for deportation. “At that moment,” recalls Crisóstomo, “I said I’m not leaving. I asked my pastor and my church for sanctuary and they gave it to me.”

Interviewed at the church, she says she is striving to be seen “not as a symbol of fear, but rather as a symbol of the need to struggle.” Crisóstomo, who is now classified by authorities as a “fugitive from justice,” says what matters most is winning “legalization for all, because that way we win



Militant/Martha Contreras

Flor Crisóstomo, a factory worker in Chicago fighting against her deportation.

the right to wage increases, to form unions, to receive medical care, to get education.”

Crisóstomo, 28, was one of the two women arrested in the 2006 nationwide ICE raid at 40 IFCO Systems plants. The company manufactures pallets. More than 1,100 workers were taken into custody. Crisóstomo was released after 30 hours thanks to protests here.

Six of the 38 workers employed at

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Democratic, Republican candidates offer ‘change’ from unpopular past

BY PAUL PEDERSON

February 6—The U.S. presidential race remains highly contested in the wake of the Democratic and Republican primary elections held February 5 in more than 20 states.

In the Republican race Arizona senator John McCain dominated. Mitt Romney, former governor of Massachusetts, trailed a distant second, and conservative former Arkansas governor Michael Huckabee came in third but made gains. The Democratic race was closely divided between senators Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama.

The results register efforts by major wings of both parties to present a new face and shed the baggage of unpopular policies, especially as fears of a recession grow. Among Republicans, “maverick” McCain often lines up against the party majority and other candidates on key issues. Among Democrats, the attraction to Obama’s mantra of “change” shows many reject the prospect of an-

other Clinton presidency.

McCain’s lead has sparked an angry reaction in the Republican Party’s right wing, which sees the prospect of his winning the nomination as a further weakening of their base.

Ultrarightist Patrick Buchanan devoted

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Collapse of mortgage debt bubble is part of wider world financial crisis

BY PAUL PEDERSON

NEW YORK, January 30—Sales of new homes in the United States last year fell by 26 percent—the largest drop on record since the U.S. Commerce Department began tracking them in 1963.

The collapse in the U.S. housing bubble is part of the accelerating world crisis in the capitalist banking and financial system, as trillions of dollars resting in mountains of debt and financial speculation begin to lose value.

To try to reverse their declining profit rates over the past quarter century, the U.S. capitalist class—like its imperialist rivals in other countries—has increasingly been driven to invest in stocks, bonds, currencies, derivatives, and other forms of speculative capital, instead of investing in new industrial plants and equipment that draw more workers into expanded production. Many giant banks and companies that posted record profits by investing in such high-stakes gambles are now facing ruinous losses.

The latest dominos to fall are specialized bond insurance companies—so-called monoline insurers—that had cashed in on the U.S. housing boom by insuring securities based on debt, including mortgage debt.

On January 22 the U.S. Federal Reserve bank, seeking to spur lending, lowered interest rates by 0.75 percent, the largest single reduction in rates in more than 15 years. The Fed made a further half-percent cut a week later.

“What the Fed is trying to do is to

head off the worst aspects of a banking crisis in which the arteries of credit that drive economic activity are becoming blocked,” wrote columnist George Magnus in the *Financial Times* January 24.

Contraction of credit

As loan defaults increase, banks and other financial institutions become unwilling or unable to extend credit. On the receiving end, wealthy borrowers have proven less willing to seek credit to expand their investments—regardless of how low the interest rates go—because it seems less and less likely they will profit. And for working people and many in the middle classes, it will be increasingly difficult to get loans and other credit. As unemployment and inflation increase with a downturn in the business cycle, existing debts will weigh heavier on millions.

In contrast, over the past two decades, wealthy individuals and firms had used more and more credit to finance speculation, mergers, and buyouts. Meanwhile, as real wages stagnated or declined, workers and sections of the middle class sank deeper into debt. Financial institutions lured them into relying increasingly on easily available credit to finance homes, cars, tuition, health care, and many other expenses.

In the decades after 1950, U.S. financial institutions advanced an average of \$1.50 of credit for every dollar rise in the gross domestic product. In the 1980s that measure—called credit intensity—began to rise, reaching \$3 in

Farmers in Mexico march against NAFTA



Reuters/Henry Romero

Some 100,000 farmers marched January 31 in Mexico City to protest the lifting of tariffs on corn and other agricultural imports from the United States under the North American Free Trade Agreement. They called on the government to renegotiate the trade treaty with the United States and Canada, which has made it increasingly difficult for Mexican peasants to survive on the land due to their country’s unequal trade relations with the two imperialist powers. Protests also took place in other Mexican cities.

—RÓGER CALERO

the 1990s. It peaked in 2007 when credit was being generated at a rate nearly 4.5 times greater than the gross domestic product.

Many debts, including personal debts, have been bundled together in different forms and sold by securities traders like stocks. As long as the credit kept flowing, their value increased.

On January 14 two economists employed by the National Bureau of Economic Research, Carmen Reinhart and Kenneth Rogoff, issued a paper comparing the previous 18 post-World War II banking crises in industrialized countries. Their conclusion was that the United States today shows the same characteristics of those financial disasters—“only more so.”

The impact of the wave of U.S. home foreclosures on the financial system, they noted, “has been greatly magnified” because of the complex bundling of so many of these debts into paper that is traded and treated as wealth.

These new forms of speculation, which economists claimed would “spread risk efficiently,” are today “extremely nontransparent and illiquid,” Reinhart and Rogoff wrote. That means no one knows how much of the paper is based on debt that is worthless, so no one wants to buy it.

The so-called monoline insurance companies—the two largest are Ambac and MBIA—began as insurers of municipal bonds. When a local government wants to sell bonds to raise capital, they go to these firms and buy their insurance. These giant companies have been able to maintain the highest available credit rating, AAA. So when a municipal government bought this bond insurance, their credit was viewed as less risky and they were allowed to offer the bonds at a lower interest rate.

In the 1990s these firms began insuring new types of securities based on bundles of debt, including subprime or high-risk mortgage debt. By 2007 their stock had reached record levels.

All that is now coming undone. In January, Fitch, a major rating agency, downgraded Ambac’s credit rating from AAA to AA, which means all the paper that it insured is now likewise downgraded. MBIA, for its part, has insured securities worth 150 times more than it has in its account. It will likely soon face a similar downgrade. The total amount of paper backed by monoline insurers was valued at \$3.3 trillion in 2006.

“I believe the monoline insurance companies like Ambac and MBIA are

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THE MILITANT

Support fight against police brutality

“The ‘Militant’ gets the truth out about police brutality worldwide.”

—Family and friends of Freddy Wilson, Chicago



Family and friends of Freddy Wilson, killed by Chicago police in November 2007, at an event to demand justice for victims of police brutality.

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Ottawa re-arrests man facing deportation under ‘antiterror’ law

BY JOHN STEELE

TORONTO—Algerian-born Mohamed Harkat, jailed without charges from 2002 to 2006 under Ottawa’s “antiterror” laws, has been re-arrested on trumped-up charges of violating his bail conditions.

Harkat was originally jailed under “security-certificate” legislation that allows indefinite detention of “terror suspects” who don’t hold Canadian citizenship on the basis of secret court hearings and evidence. Neither he nor his lawyers have been permitted to see “evidence” under which the Canadian Security Intelligence Service and the Canadian government deem him a threat to national security as an al-Qaeda agent. Harkat denies any ties to al-Qaeda.

Agents of the Canadian Border Services Agency (CBSA) and city cops swooped down on Harkat’s apartment January 29 while he was taking a shower and hauled him off to jail. Harkat shares the apartment with his wife Sophie Harkat, his mother-in-law Pierrette Brunet, and her spouse. Bail terms call for him to be accompanied by either his

wife, mother-in-law, or her spouse at all times. There are cameras outside his home, constant physical surveillance by CBSA agents, and he must wear an electronic monitoring bracelet.

His mother-in-law is no longer a full-time resident at the home, which the CBSA claims is a breach of Harkat’s bail conditions. “There was no breach of Mohamed Harkat’s bail conditions. . . . The arrest constitutes harassment in the context of an unconstitutional law,” said the Justice for Mohamed Harkat Committee in a statement.

The committee reports that CBSA officials confirmed to Harkat that a cabinet minister ordered his arrest. It notes that Harkat’s arrest took place a week before a scheduled review of his bail conditions and while Bill C-3, a modified version of Ottawa’s security-certificate law, is before the Canadian parliament. It was also on the eve of a Supreme Court appeal by Adil Charkaoui, one of four other security-certificate detainees the committee is also defending.

Sophie Harkat, along with other opponents of security-certificates, has



Sophie and Mohamed Harkat after his earlier release from prison, June 2006.

been campaigning for fair trials for the five and abolition of the security-certificate system. A partial victory was won last February when the Supreme Court ruled that secret hearings in which the accused don’t have access to evidence against them are a violation of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. However, instead of throwing out the law, the court gave the government a year to reword it.

The revised law was passed by the House of Commons in December, and

is currently being debated in the Senate. When it comes into force it will likely mean new hearings for Harkat and the other four.

“We are having an impact! Continue to keep the pressure on members of Parliament and senators to defeat Bill C-3 and abolish security-certificates,” the Justice for Mohamed Harkat Committee said in its statement. To send endorsements or for further information contact the committee at (613) 276-9102 or sophielamarche@hotmail.com.

Australia: action to protest gov’t takeover of Aboriginal communities

BY BOB AIKEN

SYDNEY, Australia—An ongoing debate over the federal takeover of 73 Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory has marked the first two months of the new Australian Labor Party (ALP) government headed by Kevin Rudd. A broad coalition of Aboriginal organizations has called a “Convergence on Canberra” for the February 12 opening of parliament, to demand that the Rudd government carry out an “immediate review” of this takeover.

Pat Turner, a leader of the Combined Aboriginal Organisations of the Northern Territory, stated, “We want proper changes that are constructive and are worked out in conjunction with Aboriginal people done before the end of this next calendar year.”

—MILITANT LABOR FORUMS—

ILLINOIS

Chicago

The Fight to Legalize all Immigrants as Working People Face the Economic Crisis. Speakers: Dennis Richter, Socialist Workers Party candidate for U.S. Congress, District 7; others. Fri., Feb. 15. Dinner, 7:00 p.m.; program, 8:00 p.m. 3557 S. Archer Ave. Tel: (773) 890-1190.

IOWA

Des Moines

Legalize Immigrants Now! Oppose Iowa Anti-immigrant Bills! Speakers: José Ramos, editor of *El Latino* newspaper; Kevin Dwire, Socialist Workers Party candidate for Iowa House of Representatives #65. Sat., Feb. 16. Dinner, 6:30 p.m.; program, 7:00 p.m. 3707 Douglas Ave. Tel: (515) 255-1707.

TEXAS

Houston

Why Workers Need Our Own Political Party. Speaker: Róger Calero, Socialist Workers 2008 candidate for president. Fri., Feb. 15. Dinner, 6:30 p.m.; program, 7:30 p.m. 4800 W. 34th St., Suite C-51A. Tel: (713) 688-4919.

Starting last June, with Rudd’s bipartisan support, former Liberal prime minister John Howard sent federal officials, backed by cops and army personnel, to assert control over almost all Aboriginal communities on Aboriginal land in the Northern Territory. While Howard claimed this was to deal with child abuse in the indigenous communities, the federal government’s actions were widely denounced by Aboriginal groups as an “invasion.”

Following gains in their land rights struggle in the 1970s, Aboriginal clans won ownership of almost half of the Northern Territory. A measure of self-government in the Aboriginal settlements was won as well, but, after decades of government neglect, these communities remain marked by lack of jobs, housing, health services, and schools. Many Aborigines hope the new measures will address this social crisis.

Rudd has declared his continued support for the intervention while promising to modify some of the measures being imposed, with a review next June. Without announcing details, the ALP government has promised to reintroduce a job creation scheme and permit system, both of which were abolished by the Howard government. The permit system allowed Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory to control who entered their land.

The Rudd government has, however, continued to implement a program to place under federal supervision the welfare payments of all Aborigines living in the communities. Federally appointed managers are now in charge of dozens of these communities, and the federal takeover of township leases remains in place. Measures to increase policing of alcohol consumption in these communities

will also remain in place.

In mid-December a national controversy was sparked by judicial leniency for six juvenile and three adult Aboriginal males who pleaded guilty to gang rape of a 10-year old Aboriginal girl in the indigenous township of Aurukun in northern Queensland. The three men received suspended six-month sentences. The former ALP premier in Queensland, Peter Beattie, and new federal Liberal Party leader Brendan Nelson were among those who called for extending the federal intervention being imposed in the Northern Ter-

Worker in Chicago fights deportation

Continued from front page

her plant participated in the March 10, 2006, march for legalization in Chicago. “The boss didn’t give us permission, but we went anyway,” she says.

Leading up to the May 1 demonstration for legalization that year, the 38 workers united and went to the boss together to request time off. Confronted with this he felt he had no choice but to grant it, but asked that they work half a day. They agreed and during their breaks made signs and marched out together at lunch time. The placards demanded legalization now and recognition that they are workers, not criminals.

Crisóstomo came to this country in 2000 in order to get a job that would allow her to support her three children in Mexico. The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), she maintains, is the cause of the current wave of immigration. Adopted in 1994, NAFTA lifted trade barriers between Mexico, the United States, and Canada. Crisóstomo’s family lost a restaurant along the highway once freeways were built to allow more direct access to the U.S.

market. “That was the end of many small businesses, and today many villages have become ghost towns,” she says.

“NAFTA made it impossible for me to feed my children in my home town. The situation has gotten worse,” she explains. On January 1, as part of the NAFTA agreement, the Mexican government ended tariffs on corn and other products imported from north of the border, meaning that many Mexican farmers will be priced out of the market by cheaper U.S. goods. “With the final elimination of the tariffs on corn, food, sugar, and powdered milk perhaps a million more Mexican farmers will cross the border to find work in this country,” Crisóstomo thinks. The U.S. government “can build a [border] wall to the heavens but they can’t stop people from crossing to feed their families.”

She urges a big turnout for the May Day demonstrations this year for immigrant rights: “May First should continue to be the working class’s holiday. We’re already organizing to march in Chicago.”

YS campaigners join election debate at N.Y. state campus

This column is written and edited by members of the Young Socialists, a revolutionary socialist youth organization. For more information contact the YS at 306 W. 37th St., 10th Floor, New York, NY 10018; tel. (212) 629-6649; e-mail: youngsocialists@mac.com.

YOUNG SOCIALISTS IN ACTION

BY TOM BAUMANN

ALBANY, New York—More than 75 students attended an event here January 29 entitled “America’s Next President,” at the State University of New York campus. The eight speakers were from the College Republicans, College Democrats, and Young Socialists for Calero and Kennedy. They represented Republicans Rudolph Giuliani, Michael Huckabee, Mitt Romney, Ron Paul, and John McCain; Democrats John Edwards, Barack Obama, and Hillary Clinton; and Róger Calero, the presidential candidate of the Socialist Workers Party.

The program began with an introductory statement on behalf of each party. Colleen Ryan, representing Romney, spoke for the Republicans. “We are for defending our borders against illegal immigration, less government interference, and lower taxes,” she said. Ben Jacobs, who represented both Obama and



Militant/Dan Fein

Speakers at January 29 event at SUNY Albany campus. From left: Ben O’Shaughnessy, Young Socialists for Calero and Kennedy; Ben Jacobs for both Obama and Clinton; Sam Estabrooks for Edwards; Mark Trebatch for McCain; Henry Lampman for Ron Paul; Colleen Ryan for Romney; Kenny Sohmer for Giuliani; Alyssa Castagliola for Huckabee.

Clinton and spoke for the Democrats, said student activity to win votes for the Democratic candidates was a positive feature of his party.

Ben O’Shaughnessy, a national spokesperson for Young Socialists for Calero and Kennedy, said the Socialist Workers candidates explain the need for working people to break with the Democrats and Republicans and to build a labor party based on fighting unions that can contend in the political arena in the

interests of the working class. He said Calero and SWP vice presidential candidate Alyson Kennedy offer a course of action for working people to defend and fight for their interests against the ruling capitalists and their twin parties.

The speakers were then asked to address five topics: the economy, the environment, health care, immigration, and the “war on terror.”

“Ron Paul is for using property rights to defend against pollution,” said Henry

Democratic, Republican candidates offer ‘change’

Continued from front page

ed the February 11 issue of his biweekly magazine, *The American Conservative*, to a full-out assault on McCain’s record. The front cover, subtitled “The Trouble With John McCain,” leads with the headline “Invade the World”—referring to his support to the U.S. military offensives in Iraq and elsewhere—and “Invite the World,” alluding to his promotion of immigration reform in order to maintain a large pool of superexploited immigrant labor.

“On the two issues where Bush has been his best, taxes and judges, McCain has sided against him,” Buchanan wrote in his editorial “The Great Betrayal.” He added, “On the three issues that have ravaged the Bush presidency—the misbegotten war in Iraq, the failure to secure America’s borders, and the trade policy that has destroyed the dollar, de-industrialized the country, and left foreigners with \$5 trillion to buy up America—McCain has sided with Bush.”

Right-wing commentator Rush Limbaugh has said that if McCain is elected, “it’s going to destroy the Republican Party.”

Among Democrats, support for Obama reflects a broad rejection among many people of the idea of returning to the Clinton era.

“In the wake of George W. Bush, even a miracle might not be enough for the Republicans to hold on to the White House in 2008. But what about two miracles?” liberal columnist Frank Rich wrote in an article titled “The Hillary Road to Republican Victory” in the January 27 *New York Times*. “The new year’s twin resurrections of Bill Clinton [campaigning aggressively for Senator Clinton] and John McCain, should they not evaporate, at last give the G.O.P. a highly plausible route to victory.”

There is a sense among many Dem-

ocratic politicians—especially with millions increasingly worried about an economic recession—that their party’s victory may be jeopardized by identifying with the policies of the Clinton years, which were part of a decades-long bipartisan shift to the right.

The Clinton administration ended “welfare as we know it” by dismantling Aid to Families with Dependent Children; increased prison sentences and use of the death penalty; expanded assaults on the rights of foreign-born workers; and altered the consumer price index to reduce cost-of-living-increases in income.

Comparing Obama to Clinton, Rich said in a February 2 column, “Their marginal policy differences notwithstanding. . .which brand of change is more likely. . .to get America moving again?”

All the Democratic and Republican candidates have been trying to convince working people and the middle classes that they will take measures to cushion the impact of a recession.

While Obama is not associated with the past, many pundits note that his call for “change” has little substance.

“Mr. Obama has built an exciting campaign around the notion of change,” the *New York Times* editorialized January 25 in a lukewarm endorsement of Clinton for the Democratic nomination. It described Obama as “incandescent if still undefined” and said he “holds no monopoly of ideas that would repair the governing of America.”

Obama tries to avoid identifying himself as a champion of Black rights. When a noose-hanging incident and the unjust prosecution of six Black youths in Jena, Louisiana, sparked a large antiracist rally in September, Obama wrote that it “isn’t a matter of black and white. It’s a matter of right

and wrong.” He was criticized by fellow Democrat Jesse Jackson for his weak response.

“We don’t want to play that old game, that game that has held us back,” Obama said while campaigning in Alabama, the *Birmingham News* reported January 28. “That game that says some of you got a black child in a bad school and a white child in a bad school and that’s two different situations. They’re the same situation.”

The Clinton campaign, for its part, seems to use every opportunity to remind voters that Obama is Black. After Obama defeated Hillary Clinton in the South Carolina primary, William Clinton compared the Obama candidacy to that of Jackson. “Jesse Jackson won South Carolina in ’84 and ’88,” he said. “Jackson ran a good campaign. And Obama ran a good campaign here.”

Socialist candidates on national tour

Continued from the front page

U.S. House of Representatives, has been active in supporting the fight by immigrant workers in nearby northern Virginia against legislation that deputizes local cops as immigration police. A family of workers involved in that fight will host a house meeting with Calero during the tour.

The Socialist Workers candidates have joined in the fight against immigration raids and deportations, “no match” Social Security letters, and for the immediate legalization of all undocumented workers with no conditions.

Calero will also talk with workers at meatpacking plants where the local socialist candidates and their supporters have been campaigning.

Kennedy West Coast tour

As we go to press, Socialist Workers vice-presidential candidate Alyson Ken-

Lampman. He said his candidate was for “allowing the free market to run its course” in regard to protecting the environment.

“The bosses’ disregard for the safety and health of workers goes hand in hand with their reckless plunder of nature,” said socialist O’Shaughnessy. He said strong, fighting unions could enforce not only safe job conditions but also defend the health and well-being of communities threatened by industrial pollution. He said the Socialist Workers Party candidates point to the need to build a revolutionary movement in this country in order to establish a workers and farmers government that can mobilize millions in defense of both land and labor.

Sam Estabrooks, speaking for Edwards, said that to protect the environment “cleaner” energy solutions could be developed and utilized.

On immigration, most of the Democrats and Republicans said their candidates were for “securing our borders.” The Edwards representative noted it would be “unrealistic” to deport 12 million undocumented workers. Jacobs said that in addition to “border security,” Clinton and Obama are for cracking down on workplaces that hire undocumented workers.

“The socialist candidates are active in the fight for the immediate and unconditional legalization of all undocumented workers,” said O’Shaughnessy. “We call for an end to the raids and deportations.” He said joining that battle is a life and death question for the labor movement today, as the bosses continue to use the issue to try to divide workers.

On the “war on terror,” Mark Trebatch said McCain would put “intense pressure on Syria and Iran.” He pointed to the success of the military surge in Iraq for the U.S. government and said McCain will keep troops there “as long as it takes.”

O’Shaughnessy said Calero is calling for the “unconditional and immediate withdrawal of all U.S. and coalition troops from Iraq, Afghanistan, and wherever else they operate.” He contrasted this to the various candidates who argue for a “phased withdrawal” or “draw-down” and support troop increases in other theaters of Washington’s wars. He said the socialist candidates are opposed to attacks on workers rights at home and call for the repeal of the USA Patriot Act.

nedy starts her West Coast tour in Seattle. She will also travel to the nearby Yakima Valley, a big center of agricultural workers. Thousands of immigrant workers and their supporters held May Day rallies in Seattle and the Yakima Valley the last two years demanding legalization.

Kennedy will participate in a regular monthly protest outside the Northwest Detention Center in Tacoma, where more than 1,000 immigrants have been jailed. Many of them were rounded up in workplace raids or traffic stops.

Kennedy will also talk to longshore workers. Some of the longshore workers in Washington were active in extending solidarity to miners, most of whom were from Mexico, at the Co-Op Mine in Utah during their 2003–2006 fight to be represented by the United Mine Workers of America. Kennedy worked at that mine and was part of the organizing effort.

700 rally against hospital closing in New Jersey

BY ANGEL LARISCY

NEWARK, New Jersey—More than 700 people packed St. James Catholic Church in the Ironbound section of this city on January 19 to protest the closing of St. James hospital.

On January 10 officials of Cathedral Healthcare Systems, managed by the Archdiocese of Newark, voted to have Catholic Health East (CHE) of Pennsylvania assume ownership of the three Catholic hospitals in Newark.

CHE announced that it would close two hospitals, St. James and Columbus, and put \$100 million into improvements for the third, St. Michael's Medical Center. The state of New Jersey has guaranteed a \$250 million bond to pay for capital improvements and debt reduction.

Officials say the hospital closures are necessary because the three hospitals combined are losing \$6 million a month. St. James and Columbus are the two smaller hospitals. At all three hospitals, 60 percent or more of the patients are uninsured or on Medicare or Medicaid.

Sixteen hospitals have closed in New Jersey in the last decade, four in the last year. Several others are in bankruptcy.

Two days after news of the closures, 150 people rallied in the Ironbound to demand that St. James stay open. The following week 700 attended a rally and

march called by Newark United to Save St. James.

Speakers at the rally included doctors and nurses from the hospital along with priests from churches and members of the city council and state assembly. Remarks were translated into English, Spanish, and Portuguese.

Many in the crowd indicated they have been using the hospital and doctor's offices there for decades and it is only walking distance from their homes.

One of the organizers of the rally, Christina Hilo, announced that buses are being organized to travel to the state capitol in Trenton on February 7, the first day the legislature opens, to protest the hospital closing.

"We have to fight and not let them steal our hospital," said Josephine Puna, a registered nurse who has worked at St. James for 35 years. "They are really robbing the community. Where are people supposed to go?"

When city councilman Augusto Amador said, "St. James is not going to close outright. All acute care services will be transferred to St. Michael's and everything else is on the table," crowd members began to yell, "We deserve all services!"

State assemblyman Albert Coutinho was booed when he told the crowd that many hospitals have closed, the hospi-



Militant/Angel Lariscy

January 12 rally in Ironbound section of Newark to protest closing of St. James Hospital.

tals are losing \$6 million a month, and people "have to accept reality."

Chanting and carrying signs that read "Keep St. James Open" in English and Spanish, the crowd marched to the hospital down the block, where a rally was held on the front steps. Workers inside leaned out windows and some came to join the spirited crowd.

After the rally, the group marched around the block and received a warm response from people who came out of their homes. "The past 20 years of cuts, privatizing of Medicaid and Medicare, and bleeding to death of services by both the Democrats and Republicans has led to this," said Moses Williams, a retired

x-ray technician and former member of District 1199J National Union of Hospital and Health Care Employees who worked at both St. James and Columbus for five years. Sign-up sheets for buses to the February 7 rally in Trenton are circulating among employees at St. James, he said.

A report released on January 24 by the New Jersey Commission on Rationalizing Healthcare announced that more hospitals in the state will close. The report says the state will help those hospitals it deems "essential" and "financially viable" but others will close because of an alleged glut of hospital beds and an increase in outpatient centers.

Workers condemn anti-immigrant raids in Tennessee

BY STEVE WARSHALL

Immigrant workers and their supporters are denouncing a series of immigration raids that began in mid-December in the middle Tennessee town of Springfield.

On January 1, Tennessee passed a law that threatens employers with heavy sanctions if they "knowingly" hire workers without papers. Since 1990, the number of immigrants in Tennessee has increased by 267 percent. There are now an estimated 100,000 undocumented workers in the state.

On December 5, NewsChannel 5, a Nashville TV station, aired an undercover investigation complete with hidden-camera video of workers at the large Electrolux factory in Springfield. The plant employs about 3,500 and produces electric and gas stoves. By the end of last year some 4,000 Hispanics lived in the town, many of them working at the plant.

The TV report charged the company was hiring undocumented workers and sought to give the impression that this was a threat to U.S.-born workers. It quoted a white woman saying, "They're taking over." The same woman later declared, "Since the Mexicans will work for a lower amount of money, they will hire them, and then leave us out here, not being able to find a job."

One week after the TV show aired, the plant was raided by immigration cops.

In a phone interview, Davil Gutiérrez, who worked at the plant for seven years, told the *Militant* about conditions there. "Because they knew of our difficulties as immigrants the company really abused Hispanics," Gutiérrez explained. "Often they would put just one of us on a job that normally required two workers. Officially the pay scale is \$9 to start, but because

they hire through a contractor, Randstad, we only received \$7.50 to start. This was supposed to last three months, but it was common that you'd be working six months to a year before you got a raise, and then only by steps, up to \$9."

Between the December 5 television report and the immigration raid one week later, the company began reviewing personnel records. Some workers left the plant, suspecting a raid was imminent. The Nashville *Tennessean*

reported that 14 people were arrested that night. As many as 800 workers lost Electrolux jobs during the week.

"On December 12, the ICE [Immigration and Customs Enforcement] raided the town with 14 vehicles," Eliu Maldonado, pastor of the Iglesia Cristiana Ebenezer in Springfield, said in a phone interview. "I followed them, telephoning people all the while. One of our church members had his house surrounded by 16 agents. They were banging on his

door and laughing. They shouted that they were going to send them all back to Mexico."

"The landlords took advantage of the raids, too," Gutiérrez explained. "If they suspected that someone had left town, they broke into the apartment and threw out all the belongings, regardless of whether the people were coming back or not. This happened to many people, all of whom were paid up in rent through the month."

25, 50, AND 75 YEARS AGO



February 18, 1983

WASHINGTON, D.C.—The government has sharply escalated its attacks on the independent truckers' shutdown that began January 31.

At his February 4 news conference, President Reagan accused the strikers of "murder" and said he had directed the FBI to work with local cops "to put an end to this violence." Offering absolutely no proof of his charges against the strikers, Reagan defended once again the tax increase the truckers are protesting. Drivers say it will force many of them to pay as much as \$5,000 more in taxes.

Meanwhile, Ohio cops arrested 17 striking drivers on riot charges.

While the extent of the shutdown remains difficult to estimate, due to the anti-strike bias of the big-business media, organizing committees and rallies by drivers continue to spread. Gatherings were held in Phoenix, Arizona; Pittsburgh and New Stanton, Pennsylvania; Bordentown, New Jersey; Hamilton, Ohio; and elsewhere.



February 10, 1958

Feb. 5—A bread line in Memphis, Tenn., touched the heart of Sen. Albert Gore, Democrat of that state, and brought him to the point of proposing a national public works program to create jobs. He watched long lines of unemployed moving slowly to receive free food taken from government surplus stock.

"I am surprised and disturbed to find approximately ten percent of the people in Shelby County standing in lines for distress distribution of food," the Senator said. City officials in Memphis stated that 10,352 families had registered for aid. Many were farm laborers seeking off-season work in Tennessee, according to Memphis officials.

Whatever the case might be—farm laborers in Tennessee, miners in depressed metal industries, auto workers in Detroit, steel workers in Ohio and Pittsburgh—reports of growing layoffs and rising applications for relief continue.



February 17, 1933

Open warfare has at last broken between Peru and Colombia for control of the small Amazon port of Leticia. It is possible that this conflict together with that between Paraguay and Bolivia for possession of the Gran Chaco, may develop into a continent-wide war, with British and American imperialism supporting the opposing sides.

The official Communist party press in its estimation of the situation assumes that there are already two clearly defined blocs of Latin American lackey governments servile to the interests of British and American imperialism respectively. It is however pure lightmindedness to jump at conclusions after the fashion of the *Daily Worker* experts who analyze every Latin American problem regardless of its complexity, according to the magic formula wherein British imperialism unconditionally supports one side while Wall Street has all its stakes on the other.

Working class grows in China, social inequalities sharpen

BY CINDY JAQUITH

(Last in a series)

The last two decades in China have been marked by the massive migration of peasants to the urban industrial centers, swelling the ranks of the largest working class in the world. Hundreds of millions of rural toilers have been forced off the land and into the cities, where they work in state-owned factories or, increasingly, in plants owned by foreign or Chinese capitalists. The latter have mushroomed in the wake of measures the government has carried out in recent decades.

After Chinese workers and peasants swept the landlords and capitalists out of political power in the 1949 revolution, land was nationalized and distributed to landless peasants. The capitalists were expropriated and industry was placed under state control, with centralized national planning and a monopoly of foreign trade. As a result, living conditions for toilers in the cities and in the countryside advanced qualitatively ahead of other semicolonial countries in the region.

But the new workers state in China was deformed at birth due to the counterrevolutionary policies of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), a Stalinist party whose leadership sought above all to preserve its material privileges and those of the rest of the petty-bourgeois layers in the government bureaucracy—at the expense of the workers and peasants and of the world socialist revolution.

The forced collectivization of the peasantry and other bureaucratic policies in the first 20 years had disastrous consequences in China, discussed in earlier articles in this series. The last article described the shift that took place in the late 1970s, when the leadership under CCP chief Deng Xiaoping began to open up major cities on China's coast to foreign investment and loosened restrictions on the establishment of private businesses (see January 21 *Militant*). The government moved away from centralized planning, which includes production decisions based on social needs and price controls. Instead they increasingly allowed prices, wages, and production to be determined by capitalist market methods.

There have been substantial changes in China's economy as a result. From 1998 to 2003, the number of small and medium-sized factories operated by the state was cut in half. Some were merged into other state enterprises and many were sold to private owners. More than 27 million workers were laid off, according to the government. The total number of workers in state-run enterprises dropped from 110 million in 1995 to 66 million in 2003. The number of workers in "collective enterprises," which have autonomy from central planning, went from 31 million to 10 million.

According to an October 2007 report to the U.S. Congress, China's state-owned enterprises—which are concentrated in heavy metals, mining, petroleum and gas extraction, and transport equipment—produced about 75 percent

of value-added industrial output before economic reforms in 1979. By 2005 they produced only 38 percent. Another 28 percent was produced by foreign-owned companies. Eighteen percent came from private, Chinese-owned firms, and the remainder from enterprises owned by local governments.

The Chinese economy grew by 11.4 percent in 2007, its fastest expansion in 13 years. It has grown by at least 10 percent in each of the last five years. Today China is the world's largest producer and consumer of steel and the second-largest user of energy, the majority from coal. In 2008 it is expected to surpass Germany as the biggest merchandise exporter on the globe.

Consequences of capitalist methods

This tremendous surge in the economy has improved the living standards of many Chinese, especially the middle classes and layers of the urban working class. It has raised the expectations of workers and peasants that a better life is possible. But the proliferation of capitalist methods, not only in privately owned enterprises but state-run ones as well, has led to an increase in social inequalities and a widening disparity between city and country.

A report issued in 2005 by the United Nations in collaboration with the Chinese government, the Swedish embassy, and Shell (China) Ltd., describes some of what has happened.

As the government diverted farmland to construct rural factories, power plants, and other projects, 40 to 50 million peasants lost the land they had worked. Many received no compensation.

The ranks of those called "migrant workers" swelled. These are workers who leave their homes in the countryside in search of work in towns and cities. By 2004 they numbered 140 million, with large "floating populations" of workers living in precarious conditions in major cities.

Under reactionary legislation introduced during the Mao Zedong years, migrant workers do not have government authorization to live permanently in the cities. They are not entitled to government pensions, medical care, or unemployment compensation. They do the hardest and most dangerous work, and are paid on average about 80 percent of what "legal" urban residents receive for performing the same work. Many labor seven days a week to make ends meet.

Decline in medical care

Living standards in the cities are still superior to those in much of the countryside, however, even if one leads the harsh life of a migrant worker. According to the UN report, working people in rural areas make up the overwhelming majority of the poorest 10 percent of the population. Government spending on social services is 10 times higher for the cities than the countryside. Infant mortality—24 per 1,000 live births overall in 2006—is twice as high in rural areas. Many farm families cannot afford to send their children to school.



Workers assemble air conditioning units in June 2007 at factory in Nanchang, China, part of private joint venture. Migration from rural areas has swelled China's industrial working class.

The government-funded health-care system has largely been dismantled as a result of the "market reforms," and today working people in China pay increasingly more for medical services. While in 1980 an estimated 85 percent of rural toilers had some form of government-provided medical care, even if minimal, by 1998 less than 13 percent had access to any medical services. The number of rural health-care workers has declined by 12 percent since 1980.

In the cities, most low-paid workers lack the money needed to obtain medical care or go to school. "The best off generally are those working in state-owned enterprises, followed by those in urban collectives," the UN report states. These workers are also more likely to have some benefits and protection from government agencies if they are laid off.

The frenzied pace of the expansion of industry under these conditions has led to horrific safety conditions. China's Ministry of Health admits that the country has one of the highest rates of occupational disease in the world. Legislation introduced in response to black lung disease is routinely ignored by both state- and privately-owned coal mines, the UN report says.

"Statistics show that in 2003, China produced 35 percent of the world's coal but accounted for 80 percent of the world's coal mining-related deaths," the report states. More than 3,700 coal miners were killed in 2007.

Along with this comes the destruction of the environment by industrial pollution and reckless developers who ignore the consequences of their construction projects on nature and surrounding communities.

While no capitalist ruling class has been reimposed on China, the number of superwealthy individuals and families has multiplied over the past decade,

and many in the ruling state bureaucracy aspire to join them. The *Wall Street Journal* recently reported figures on China's most wealthy. In 2006 there were 345,000 millionaires and in 2007 there were 106 billionaires—more than anywhere outside the United States.

The brutal conditions of work and growing social inequalities have been a source of protests by working people for years. In 2004, for example, Beijing reported there were 74,000 labor strikes, demonstrations, and other actions against layoffs, corruption, environmental damage, and working conditions in factories.

Around that same year, the regime began making some limited concessions. It started to dismantle a draconian tax on peasants. Some "pilot" medical projects were initiated in the villages. In 2005, the state began providing free textbooks and abolished school fees for the worst off children.

Farmers take back land

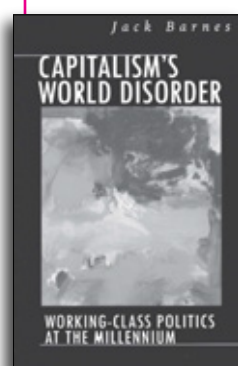
The character of the struggles bubbling today in China is very much affected by the changes wrought by the socialist revolution there and its continuing impact on working people's consciousness and self-confidence.

One example is a recent protest by peasants on the outskirts of the city of Fujin, close to the Russian border. In late 2007, thousands of peasants began a struggle there against officials who were selling off collective land to developers. In one village the peasants reclaimed the land and divided it up among the families, who had previously worked it collectively. The government moved to stop that and the leader of the peasants, Yu Changwu, was arrested.

The farmers released a statement on the Internet in which they said local officials "have actually become

Continued on page 9

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

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N.Y. event honors Luis Miranda, Cuban revolutionary in U.S.

BY OLGA RODRÍGUEZ

NEW YORK—More than 250 people attended a celebration here of the life and political contributions of Luis Miranda January 26. Born in Havana, he immigrated to the United States in 1948 and for more than half a century was an organizer in the defense of the Cuban Revolution and its socialist course. Miranda was president of Casa de las Américas, an organization of Cuban Americans who support the revolution, from 1987 until his death last November.

The meeting, held at the Service Employees International Union Local 1199 hall, was sponsored by a coalition of groups active in solidarity with Cuba. It was co-chaired by Marianna Lamberti, a granddaughter of Miranda; Nancy Cabrero, the new president of Casa de las Américas; Rosemari Mealy, a longtime Black rights and Cuba solidarity activist; and Frank Velgara of the Popular Education Project to Free the Cuban Five and of ProLibertad, which campaigns for the release of Puerto Rican political prisoners.

In the audience were a number of decades-long members of Casa de las Américas and its predecessor Casa Cuba. One of them, Arnaldo Barrón, addressed the meeting.

Cabrero introduced Barrón as a founding leader of the New York chapter of the July 26 Movement, which was organized at the initiative of Fidel Castro when he toured several U.S. cities in 1955 in preparation for the revolutionary war in Cuba against the U.S.-backed Batista dictatorship. Two years later the July 26 Movement in New York launched Casa Cuba.

Barrón cited the names of several Cuban co-fighters who, after the victory of the Cuban Revolution in 1959, remained in the United States and, like Miranda, were staunch defenders of the revolution. Most of the Casa Cuba cadres were factory or restaurant workers who were intensely loyal to the Cuban Revolution and fearlessly defended it in face of police and rightist attacks over the decades.

“We organized to oppose the U.S. blockade against Cuba,” he said. “There is a small group [of wealthy Cuban Americans] in Florida who work against Cuba, but that group has always and will always have to face opposition from other Cubans here—Cubans who are part of this country and who defend Cuba.”

This proud history was also illustrated in an exhibition of rare photographs and other archival material on display at the meeting, which spanned five decades of activity by Miranda and Casa.

Addressing the meeting, Rodrigo Malmierca, Cuba’s ambassador to the United Nations, praised Miranda as a Cuban patriot who “was a part of the migration of humble workers from Cuba to the United States and, like many other immigrants, he faced discrimination.” He said further, “It is true that the *Batistianos* [Batista henchmen] came over here after 1959. But it is also true that they have been unable to erase the names of people like Luis and others like him who are matchless examples of dignity and heroism.”

An internationalist

Malmierca noted that Miranda and



Arnaldo Barrón (left), founding leader of July 26 Movement in New York, and Puerto Rican independence fighter Rafael Cancel Miranda speak at January 26 meeting to celebrate life and political contributions of Luis Miranda, longtime organizer of defense of Cuban Revolution.

Casa de las Américas “promoted solidarity with struggles in the United States, the Dominican Republic, Nicaragua, and Puerto Rico, as well as Cuba.”

Rafael Cancel Miranda, a longtime leader of the Puerto Rican independence movement, spoke of the historic ties between the Cuban revolutionary movement and the Puerto Rican independence struggle. A little-known fact, he said, is that one of the Puerto Rican *independentistas* who joined the July 26 Movement in New York in the 1950s was Filiberto Ojeda Ríos, who later became a leader of the Macheteros group and was killed by the FBI in Puerto Rico in 2005.

He explained that Casa de las Américas was among the first organizations to organize support for the five Puerto Rican Nationalists prisoners—Cancel Miranda and four others who spent



Photos by Roberto Mercado

more than a quarter century in U.S. prisons following an armed protest they carried out in Congress against U.S. colonial rule. “Cuba’s support for the independence of Puerto Rico has always been unconditional, total, and complete,” he said.

Luis Miranda was a revolutionary, Cancel Miranda said, and “Che [Guevara] said it would be an honor to be a revolutionary in the United States.”

Several members of Miranda’s family participated in the event. Miranda’s daughter Barbara Miranda-Sakaris spoke, and Marianna Lamberti read a poem by Cuban poet Nicolás Guillén titled *Tengo* (I Have), which, she said, expressed what her grandfather devoted his life to.

Leonard Weinglass, one of

the attorneys for the five Cuban revolutionaries locked up in U.S. prisons, spoke of Miranda’s tireless efforts to win support for the freedom of the Cuban Five. Martín Koppel of the Socialist Workers Party described Miranda’s identification with and support to working-class struggles in the United States, from the United Farm Workers battles in the 1960s to the successful unionization fight by meat packers at Dakota Premium in St. Paul, Minnesota.

Also speaking were Rhadamés Rivera of SEIU Local 1199; Carlos Rovira of the Party for Socialism and Liberation; Rebeca Toledo of the Workers World Party; Radhamés Morales of Fuerza de la Revolución; Roger Wareham of the December 12th Movement; and Bonnie Massey of the Venceremos Brigade.

Casa de las Américas member Umberto Gonzales, the Puerto Rican group Plenarios de la 21, and Abram Llano provided musical tributes. A short video about Luis Miranda filmed by his granddaughter Gabriela Lamberti was also shown.



Roberto Mercado

Luis Miranda (left) with Antonio Camacho, former Puerto Rican political prisoner.

China, S. Africa power crisis shows energy gap in world

Continued from front page

trolled utility company, could not generate enough power to ventilate and cool the deep underground mining shafts. The utility has resorted to rotating power cuts around neighborhoods. The South African outages also disrupted industry in other nearby countries.

Since 1994, when the African National Congress came to power, South Africa has doubled the percentage of its population connected to the electrical grid to more than 70 percent, the *New York Times* reported January 31. But the country faces a challenge in building new power plants and bringing them on line fast enough to meet growing electrical needs. Plants commissioned in 2003 and 2004 have yet to be built.

Rising demand in Southeast Asia

A large percentage of the population in the semicolonial world lacks electricity. In India 44 percent of the population, 500 million people, are without electricity, Stratfor reported. Only 39 percent of Indonesia’s population, the fourth largest in the world, has access to electricity. Few African countries have electrification rates above 50 percent.

Power shortages affected Vietnam in early 2007. A similar crisis is imminent in Thailand because of increasing demand and stagnant output. In India, where blackouts are com-

mon, especially in summertime, energy needs are expected to double by 2030.

Imperialist investors are looking to make a buck through financing power plants in power-starved semicolonial countries. Morgan Stanley recently estimated that “developing” countries will need to spend nearly \$22 trillion on infrastructure over the next decade—the majority in Asia and much of it on power plants.

The British government-owned private equity group CDC Group recently said it plans to spend \$1 bil-

lion for infrastructure in semicolonial countries, which is targeted to benefit its overseas operations. Its investment in developing electricity in Uganda, for example, will largely benefit the numerous British-owned companies in its former colony.

Many businesses operating in these countries seek “stabilization” agreements from the governments in exchange for building plants and factories. These agreements guarantee imperialist companies “first draw” on water and power, at the expense of the local population.

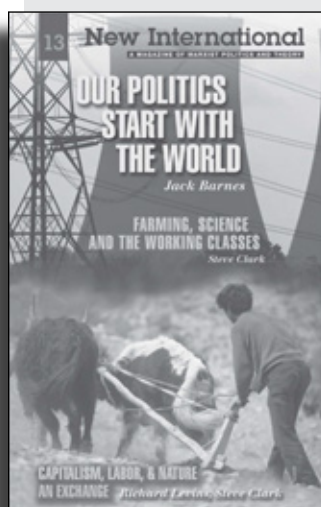
New International no. 13

Our Politics Start with the World

By Jack Barnes

The huge economic and cultural inequalities between imperialist and semicolonial countries, and among classes within almost every country, are produced, reproduced, and accentuated by the workings of capitalism. For vanguard workers to build parties able to lead a successful revolutionary struggle for power in our countries, says Jack Barnes, our activity must be guided by a strategy to close this gap.

New International no. 13 also includes: “Farming, Science, and the Working Classes” by Steve Clark and “Capitalism, Labor, and Nature,” an exchange between Richard Levins and Steve Clark. \$14



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Bolshevism: the fight for Marxist continuity today

Below is an excerpt from Their Trotsky and Ours, one of Pathfinder's Books of the Month for February. It is based on a talk by Socialist Workers Party national secretary Jack Barnes at a convention of the Young Socialist Alliance in 1982. The section of the talk excerpted below reviews the importance of the Bolshevik-led Russian Revolution and the role of its leadership in forging the Communist International (Comintern)—the first truly world party of socialist revolution. Copyright © Pathfinder Press 1983. Reprinted by permission.

BY JACK BARNES

What I want to focus on here is the Comintern's integrated view of the world revolution. The Comintern for the first time incorporated two new elements decisive to the revolutionary struggle for

BOOKS OF THE MONTH

workers and farmers governments and the dictatorship of the proletariat in the twentieth century.

First, the victory and consolidation of the Russian Soviet republic fundamentally changed the relationship of class forces in world politics. The Comintern recognized that mobilizing the international working class and its allies to defend this historic revolutionary conquest



Presiding Committee of 1920 Congress of the Peoples of the East, in Baku, Azerbaijan. In white coat and tie is Nariman Narimanov, head of Azerbaijan Soviet government. To his left, Bolshevik leaders Gregory Zinoviev and Karl Radek; and Béla Kun, Hungarian leader of the Comintern. The conference hammered out a common policy in the fight against imperialist domination.

against imperialism was an integral part of extending the socialist revolution worldwide. "The struggle for Soviet Russia has become merged with the struggle against world capitalism," the manifesto of the second Comintern congress explained in 1920. "The question of Soviet Russia has become the touchstone by which all the organizations of the working class are tested."

That is more true than ever today, when this initial conquest of the world working class has been augmented by the establishment of workers states in China, Korea, Vietnam, Eastern Europe, and Cuba, with more on the way in the Caribbean and Central America.

Second, the Comintern projected a course toward a truly *world* socialist revolution for the first time. Before then, the Marxist workers movement had considered socialist revolution to be a realistic perspective only in a relatively small number of industrialized countries, primarily in western Europe and North America. In large part, this had been an accurate reflection of the uneven development of capitalism and growth of the working class on a world scale in the latter half of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth. Membership in the Second International was limited almost entirely to European and North American workers parties.

The international workers movement paid a big overhead for this limitation. The composition of the Second International made it harder to resist the growing cancer of racism and apologies for colonialism that wracked major components of it in those years. Lenin always combated this and told the truth about it both while in the Second International and afterwards.

The Comintern recognized that the Russian Revolution had ushered in a new period in the world revolution. It came to the conclusion—following a report by Lenin at its Second Congress and some vigorous debate and discussion—that even the most economically backward countries could "go over to the Soviet system and, through certain stages of development, to communism, without having to pass through the capitalist stage." This was possible if soviet power based on mass organizations and delegated bodies of workers and peasants were established, if the working class exercised leadership in the struggle for national liberation, and if the Soviet government in Russia came to the assistance of such revolutionary regimes "with all the means at its disposal."

No country in the world, the Comintern said, was doomed to inevitable and indefinite capitalist development with

its attendant horrors. The victory of the Bolsheviks and its consequences had put the socialist revolution on the agenda, not just in the industrially advanced countries or a handful of the most developed colonial countries, but worldwide. It was possible to make the revolution—not guaranteed, not easy; in fact, very difficult. But it was possible. This could now be seen.

With that perspective in mind, the Comintern threw its energies into becoming a truly *world* communist organization. Proletarian Marxist parties could and must be built in *every* country.

Lenin pointed out in his opening speech to the second Comintern congress that this gathering "merits the title of a World Congress," because "we have here quite a number of representatives of the revolutionary movement in the colonial and backward countries." The statutes adopted by that congress proclaimed that the Comintern "breaks once and for all with the traditions of the Second International which, in reality recognized the existence only of people with white skin." It continues, "People of white, yellow, and black skin color—the toilers of the whole earth—are fraternally united in the ranks of the Communist International."

The Comintern leaders never denied the difficulties involved in this perspective of building a world party and extending the world socialist revolution. But they had confidence in the working class, which had shown what it could accomplish in October 1917. That confidence has been borne out by the subsequent sixty years of this century, as the events in Central America and the Caribbean demonstrate. The Bolshevik-led workers and peasants of Russia had opened the epoch of the world socialist revolution against imperialism—*our epoch*.

In presenting this integrated view of the world socialist revolution, the Comintern recognized and analyzed both the differences and the interrelationship between the struggle of the toilers of the colonies and oppressed nations for liberation, and that of the proletariat and its allies in the economically advanced capitalist countries.

February

BOOKS OF THE MONTH

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Closing the world energy gap

The power failures that have recently gripped China, South Africa, Argentina, and other nations bring into sharp relief the huge inequalities in access to electricity between imperialist and semicolonial countries, and between classes within those countries. The disparities in economic infrastructure and development, reproduced every day by the workings of capitalism, can only widen as the U.S. ruling families and their imperialist rivals in Europe and the Pacific compete for markets.

Electrification is a fundamental precondition for developing modern industry and agriculture, as well as access to culture. Yet there is a huge gap in the world. The imperialist countries, with only 14 percent of the world's population, consume 60 percent of the electricity. Meanwhile, sub-Saharan Africa accounts for 9 percent of the global population but only 1 percent of electricity usage. In Pakistan, more than 40 percent of the people have no power, and in Nepal, the figure is more than 90 percent. As always, it is the workers and farmers who bear the brunt of this crisis.

Washington and other imperialist powers are all too quick to offer loans to governments of semicolonial nations in return for hefty interest payments and increased exploitation of their resources and labor. But when it comes to *real* aid that could qualitatively increase the productivity of labor in these countries and make them less dependent on the advanced capitalist countries, the imperialists will block that—and anything that jeopardizes their opportunity to exploit and profit.

They arrogantly deny the semicolonial world the right to take whatever measures necessary—including

ing the development of nuclear power—to meet their energy needs. They claim industrial growth for these nations “wastes” scarce resources, pollutes too much, or causes “global warming.” In a similar way, workers in the industrialized countries are told we should drive our cars less, turn off the lights more, and turn down the heat so “we” can “save energy.” But that is a false “we.” There are workers and farmers of the world who produce the wealth, on the one side—the real *us*—and the landlords and capitalists who appropriate that wealth for their own benefit, on the other.

The labor movement should support the efforts of nations oppressed by imperialism to acquire and develop the energy sources needed to bring much of humanity out of darkness, including nuclear power. We should champion the cancellation of the Third World debt and the lifting of all U.S. tariffs and “anti-dumping,” “fair labor,” and “environmental protection” regulations, which reinforce the world inequalities in trade.

After the 1917 Russian revolution, working people in that country embarked on a campaign to spread electrification throughout the country, to close the gap between city and countryside and strengthen the alliance of workers and peasants. Workers did the same after the 1959 Cuban Revolution. Today, 95 percent of the population in Cuba has access to electricity and the revolutionary government is extending its availability further.

The toilers in Russia and Cuba were able to accomplish this because they had taken political power out of the hands of the landlords and capitalists and formed their own government. That's what's needed today the world over.

China social inequalities grow

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landlords. And farmers have been forced to become serfs. We decided to change the structure of land ownership and protect the land rights of farmers through family or individual ownership.”

A reporter for the Sydney *Morning Herald*, who went to the village and interviewed the peasants, discovered that they did not see themselves as fighting for “privatization” or personal gain, but rather trying to defend the nationalized land from corrupt officials. The January 4 *Herald* reported, “Peasants in Yu's village say they do not understand the concept of private ownership, let alone demand it. They are content to continue the system of collective ownership and individual farming rights. They are not closely linked with activists in other villages, let alone other provinces, and they are fiercely proud that China is hosting the Olympics.”

The skirmishes over land use, the environment, job safety, and the high cost of living will not develop overnight into the kind of popular upsurges that swept Stalinist parties from power in Russia and Eastern Europe in the 1990s. But those battles are coming in China, and it will be evident when they do.

The privileged bureaucrats act as if China is immune to the growing crises of the world capitalist economy. But China is becoming more and more integrated with the world economy every day and cannot escape the consequences of the coming economic catastrophe.

The rise in world food prices is just one example. Last year university students at several schools boycotted the cafeterias over the high price of food. The rate of inflation last year was 4.8 percent, three times higher than the year before. In rural areas, inflation runs about 18 percent higher on average than in the cities.

Today, some in the bureaucracy aspire to turn China into a capitalist country, while others want to maintain nationalized property because they are afraid further upheaval would jeopardize their privileged social position. This will be a factor in the coming struggles.

Whatever the pace of the class struggle, capitalism will not be restored in China without a historic battle to defeat the working class. Today, however, the working class there is far stronger and more experienced than the one that overturned capitalist rule more than half a century ago.

Dakota contract

Continued from front page

workers, was on light duty after a job injury when he was fired. “I have a two-day-old baby,” Hultman said in an interview. When he arrived at work, he noted, the company “practically told me ‘Congratulations, and you're fired.’”

“People are happy to hear how I got my job back. They say, ‘Good, we need something like that.’” He added, “It's great that people from different races have come together. It's a good example for other people. This is how it's supposed to be. It's supposed to be the land of the free.”

In the months leading up to the union vote, the Dakota Premium bosses shifted their hiring practices by bringing in a much larger number of U.S.-born workers, including workers who are Black, Native American, and white. They also hired many workers who are on court probation.

Over the previous years, the big majority hired were Latino and foreign-born workers, many of whom were the backbone of the successful battle to organize the union in 2000-2002. The majority remains Spanish-speaking.

The bosses expected that the changed composition of the workforce would allow them to pit workers against each other, native-born against foreign born, Latino against Black, and that those on legal probation would be afraid to take a stand against the company.

The opposite happened—workers defeated the company attempts to divide them. They voted for the union in even greater numbers than before, 152 to 82. In July 2000 the vote to unionize was 112 to 71.

Signaling a new stage of their struggle, the unionists at Dakota put together a new issue of their newsletter, the *Workers' Voice*, and marked it Vol. 4, issue no. 1.

The newsletter publicized the victory in winning back the jobs of Hultman and Thomas, and explained the need to use union power to stand up to further attacks and to win a new, better contract. It also urged a big attendance at the special union meeting and victory celebration at the Local 789 union hall planned for February 9.

“The *Workers' Voice* needs to keep coming out,” said Argelia Flores Díaz, a kill floor worker. “The fact that the supervisors' harassment was mentioned in it helps get the bosses off our backs a little more. And the fact that the union phone number was on the flyer was important because it helps workers think they don't just have to take this abuse.”

Rebecca Williamson, who works in the boning department, said it was important not only to get workers at Dakota but other meatpacking workers to the victory celebration. “The effect of this campaign goes beyond Dakota, even beyond this area. Other workers have been paying attention, and so have other bosses. If we had lost at Dakota, the company's sister plant in Long Prairie [Minnesota] would have been next. I think with this victory we've opened up wider possibilities to build the union in meatpacking.”

Financial crisis

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in worse shape than most realize . . . and the exposure by various banks to their problems is much larger than currently understood,” John Mauldin, a financial commentator and hedge fund manager, wrote in his January 25 Internet newsletter.

“There are very serious suggestions that several extremely large banks (and not just in the U.S.), of the ‘too big to be allowed to fail’ size, technically have negative equity,” Mauldin wrote.

Banks and government officials are now discussing what type of bailout package will be extended to these insurance companies. Some commentators are saying this won't solve the problem.

The problem can't be solved by capital investment alone, Gillian Tet, a *Financial Times* columnist wrote January 25. “In recent months,” he said, investor confidence in the forms of debt speculation that these bond insurers poured their money into “has collapsed on a dramatic scale.”

LETTERS

Wives of Cuban 5

The article of Sam Manuel is very interesting, informative, and important, considering how difficult it has been for the family of the Cuban Five to visit them, particularly (as the article stated) Olga Salanueva and Adriana Pérez. [See “Wives of two framed-up Cubans in U.S. prisons: Give us visas to see them!” in Feb. 11, 2008, *Militant*.]

But in reading this article I noticed that there is an incorrect statement of fact that you may want to know for future articles. Although Olga has not visited her husband René in prison, Ivette González has been able to visit him on two occasions already and has been accom-

panied to the prison by her older sister Irma González. The visit has not been highly publicized but it is incorrect to say that she has not visited her father in prison.

In solidarity,
Alicia Jrapko
International Committee for the Freedom of the Cuban Five

Ireland: solidarity with Cuba

Between October 9 and 14 a number of events to commemorate the death of Che Guevara were organized in Ireland. The largest event of this type took place in Dublin, with a noon time vigil at the General Post Office and a evening “Celebration of the Interna-

tionalist Hero.”

In Derry, Northern Ireland, the Republican youth organized a protest in Guildhall Square in solidarity with the Cuban Five and several hundred signatures were collected demanding the release of the five political prisoners.

Roy Inglee
Elsmere, Delaware

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.