

THE MILITANT

INSIDE

**Workers reject
pornographication of politics**
EDITORIAL, PAGE 7

A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

VOL. 72/NO. 14 APRIL 7, 2008

Obama speech on Blacks in U.S. prompts discussion

BY OLYMPIA NEWTON

A March 18 speech on race relations by Barack Obama helped convince a broader layer of the U.S. ruling class that he is competent to be president for the next four years. It also opened a discussion on racism in the United States in the big-business media, on factory

floors, and college campuses.

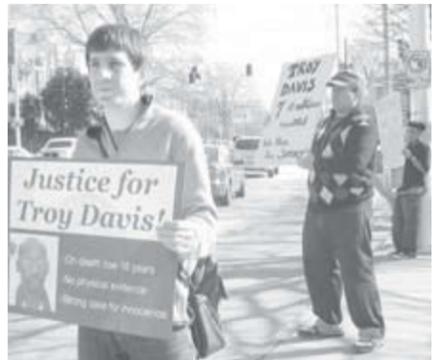
In the days following the talk, the Democratic Party leadership quickened its process of lining up behind Obama. The Florida and Michigan parties ruled out the possibility of redoing the primaries in those states, a maneuver that could have helped rival Hillary Clinton.

Opinion pieces in major dailies began presenting Clinton as a pariah for her refusal to drop out of the race. William Richardson, the governor of New Mexico who held senior-level positions in the William Clinton administration, formally endorsed Obama.

Obama's speech was a rare instance of a major bourgeois politician acknowledging that discrimination against Blacks continues to exist in housing, education, employment, and all other aspects of U.S. society.

As such, it registered changing
Continued on page 7

Troy Davis denied appeal, faces execution



Militant/Clay Dennison

Supporters of Troy Davis protest denial of appeal March 25 in Atlanta.

BY CLAY DENNISON

ATLANTA—In a 4–3 decision, the Georgia State Supreme Court ruled March 17 to deny Troy Davis's appeal for a new trial or evidentiary hearing.

Davis, who is Black, was charged in the 1989 killing of a white police officer.
Continued on page 6

100-plus subs to 'Militant' sold in four days

BY OLYMPIA NEWTON

March 26—Supporters of the *Militant* sold more than 100 subscriptions the first four days of an eight-week campaign.

From truck drivers discussing how to resist the rising costs of fuel and maintenance.
Continued on page 4

Workers in Chicago: 'All out on May Day!'

Anti-immigrant graffiti attack on socialist campaign hall draws protests



Militant photos by Laura Anderson

Some 60 people picket outside Wheatland Tube factory March 19 in Chicago after company there fired 17 workers who protested bosses' use of no-match letters to intimidate workers. Inset, anti-immigrant graffiti smeared on front window of Socialist Workers Campaign hall. The campaign held a meeting there to protest the rightist attack.

BY ILONA GERSH

CHICAGO—The front window of the Illinois Socialist Workers Campaign headquarters was defaced with anti-immigrant graffiti March 19. "Buy a wetback" someone scrawled on the window. At the center of the display inside the window was a campaign poster that read, "Build the May Day march! Legalization for all immigrants!" Also in the window were leaflets for the May Day action here, as well as copies of the *Militant*.

The socialist candidates and their supporters are organizing along with coworkers to not go to work May 1 and instead to join the noontime rally for immigrant rights that has been called by many organizations in the region.

Betsy Farley, the Socialist Workers candidate for U.S. Senate, released a statement on the vandalism. "My campaign will not be intimidated from supporting legalization for all immigrants and protesting every instance of immigration raids and deportations. This is not only an attack on my campaign. It is a threat against everyone who supports the right of immigrants to equal treatment, their right to work in this country, and their right to organize unions."

The vandalism comes in the context of stepped-up activities in support of the rights of immigrants in the Chicago area. These include a picket line of 60 workers and family members at Wheatland Tube Company, protesting the firing of workers who received no-match letters (See article on this page).

Farley was the featured speaker at the Militant Labor Forum two days after the
Continued on page 7

Wheatland Tube workers fight no-match firings

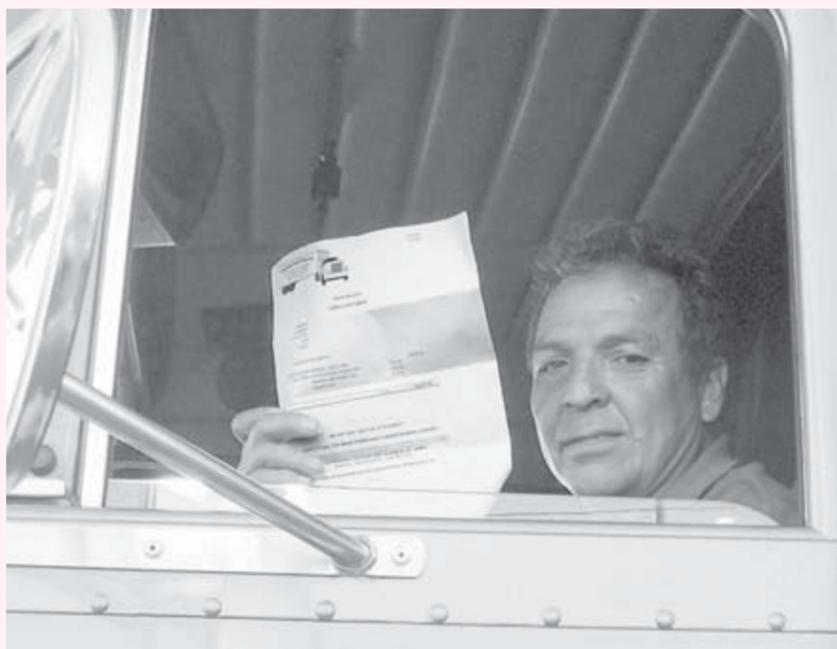
BY LAURA ANDERSON

CHICAGO—Sixty people, workers at Wheatland Tube along with their friends and family, protested March 19 in front of the factory in Chicago's South Side against recent firings there. Some of the workers who were fired had recently participated in a press conference announcing the filing of a complaint with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) against Wheatland for discrimination.

The workers filed the EEOC complaint in response to a previous firing. The press conference aired on the Spanish-language TV station Univisión.

Martin Unzueta, from the Chicago Workers Collective, said 20 workers that
Continued on page 6

Independent truckers fight rising costs



Militant/Naomi Craine

LONG BEACH, California—"I'm one of the lucky ones. My 1999 truck is paid off. But with diesel prices going up almost every day this month, I spend \$600 to \$800 a week," port truck driver René García told *Militant* reporters as he stopped at the diesel pump. García, pictured above, showed this reporter the bill for \$200 he paid to fill up.

"The port just takes our money like bandits," he added. "It's an abuse that my four hours a day of waiting time is unpaid."

With diesel costs up \$1.30 a gallon over a year ago, independent truckers are facing a rising cost squeeze.

According to the *Quad City Times* in Davenport, Iowa, some owner operators have called for an April 1 strike to demand relief from the combined costs of fuel and insurance.

—ARLENE RUBINSTEIN

Also Inside:

- Minnesota unionists demand 'Contract now!' 3
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- Workers in Van Nuys, California, fight deportation 6

Greek translation of 'Declarations of Havana' celebrated at meeting

BY SAMI MONASTIRIOTIS-GHNEIM

KATERINI, Greece—More than 40 people attended a meeting to celebrate the publication of *The First and Second Declarations of Havana* in Greek. The event was hosted by the To Mati book-

sage the Cuban revolution has provided to the youth of the world. He introduced Cala and Natasha Terlexis, who spoke representing Diethnes Vima.



BY DAVID SALNER

Volunteers in the Pathfinder printing project have recently added 120 reviews of Pathfinder Press books to the publisher's website, www.pathfinderpress.com. This brings the total of reviews posted on the site to 140.

The reviews, which can be found on the web page for each book, are important tools for bookstore, library, and individual buyers interested in selecting Pathfinder titles.

These reviews span more than 70 years and come from internationally distributed journals such as the *New York Times*, *Le Monde Diplomatique*, and the *Christian Science Monitor*, as well as from a number of scholarly sources and trade journals that are widely distributed to book buyers

PATHFINDER AROUND THE WORLD

store here in the town of Katerini, located in the agricultural region of Pieria.

Since the book was first published by Diethnes Vima last June, 300 copies have been sold to bookstores and to workers and youth at political events.

The meeting received local television coverage including an interview with José Cala, first secretary of the Cuban embassy, who was one of the speakers.

Cala explained the importance of the book to Cuba's continued survival despite the U.S.-imposed embargo. "That a country of 11 million inhabitants, economically underdeveloped and militarily inferior to the U.S., can incite such fear as to make military confrontation unthinkable makes the revolution stronger in the eyes of the world," he said.

Zissis Zannas, president of the Youth of Synaspismos (Coalition of the Left of Movements and Ecology), opened the event highlighting the important mes-



Home page of Pathfinder Press website, where 140 book reviews can now be found.

and librarians. Many are by well-known writers, scholars, and activists, including Alice Walker, Rafael Cancel Miranda, Piri Thomas, and René González, one of the five revolutionaries from Cuba imprisoned in the United States on trumped-up charges of "conspiracy to commit espionage."

A customer who wants to see what others think of *Woman's Evolution* by Evelyn Reed can visit that book's page and browse through 22 reviews. "Useful in sociology and anthropology courses and to any woman needing encourage-

ment about the contributions of her sex to history" is the way the *American Association for the Advancement of Science* describes this book. "Mandatory reading for students of the Cuban Revolution" is how *Hispanic American Historical Review* describes *Episodes of the Cuban Revolutionary War, 1956-58* by Ernesto Che Guevara.

Pathfinder volunteers working on this project are convinced that many more reviews exist and would welcome help from anyone with access to subscription-based review and clippings websites.

Palestinian rights backer starts hunger strike

BY DEBORAH LIATOS

MIAMI—Sami Al-Arian, a Palestinian rights supporter imprisoned on frame-up "terrorism" charges for five years, began his third hunger strike March 3 to protest continued government harassment.

Earlier that day Al-Arian was informed that he would be called to testify before a grand jury, for the third

time, only weeks before his scheduled release date. Under his plea agreement, Al-Arian should have been released by April 2007. However, because he did not testify before the previous grand jury investigating Muslim charities, his sentence was suspended and he served one year on civil contempt charges. His current release date is April 7.

Al-Arian, a former University of South Florida professor, was indicted in 2003 on charges of racketeering, conspiracy to maim and murder, and of providing material support to the Palestinian group Islamic Jihad. In December 2005 the government's case collapsed when a federal jury in Tampa, Florida, acquitted him of the terrorism charges and deadlocked on other counts. Despite not being convicted on any charges, he was returned to prison.

Al-Arian agreed to plead guilty to "conspiracy to provide services" to Islamic Jihad and be deported from the United States in exchange for the gov-

ernment releasing him from prison.

Instead, the government has kept him in prison and continued its campaign of harassment.

"All Americans should reject this continuing manipulation of our legal system the same way the Tampa jury rejected the case against Dr. Al-Arian when they acquitted him in December 2005," said Peter Erlinder, professor at William Mitchell School of Law and one of Al-Arian's attorneys.

"This latest decision to call Dr. Al-Arian before a grand jury clearly breaches his plea bargain and seems a political maneuver to lengthen his prison term," said the executive director of the National Lawyers Guild, Heidi Boghosian.

Protests to demand freedom for Sami Al-Arian have been organized, including in Raleigh and Butner, North Carolina. For more information on Al-Arian's defense campaign see www.freesamialarian.com.

THE MILITANT

Build May Day marches for immigrant rights!

Week after week, the 'Militant' brings you news of how working people are organizing from coast to coast for May 1 marches to demand amnesty for undocumented immigrants and an end to raids and deportations.

Don't miss a single issue!



Militant/Arlene Rubenstein

February 14 rally in Los Angeles protesting immigration raid at a plant the week before.

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Signed articles by contributors do not necessarily represent the Militant's views. These are expressed in editorials.

Unionists at Minnesota slaughterhouse demand 'Contract now!'

BY JULIAN SANTANA

SOUTH ST. PAUL, Minnesota, March 24—"Contract Now!"; "For Better Working Conditions"; and "For a Decent Raise!" were among the signs held by dozens of unionists and their supporters who greeted workers leaving the Dakota Premium Foods plant today. The big majority of the 250 meatpacking workers coming out of the plant expressed their support for the contract fight as they stopped their cars to talk to the demonstrators and take a union leaflet. Some Dakota workers joined them.

The action was organized by United Food and Commercial Workers Union (UFCW) Local 789, which

represents workers at the plant and is currently in negotiations with the company for a new contract. Participants also included members of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees and the May Day Coalition, which is organizing a rally for immigrant rights in the Twin Cities on May 1.

The company's response to the strong union showing was to have its security guard harass workers who stopped their cars. The guard yelled at workers and more than once hit their car windows to get them to move. He did this to every car that stopped, even those with no cars behind them and even when they were off company property. Several workers commented that the aggressiveness of the guard fit in with the bosses' firings and other abuses in recent months, since workers defeated a union decertification effort by the company.

UFCW Local 789 scheduled the action for the day before the third negotiating meeting with the company. At the previous negotiating session workers proposed a substantial wage



Jennifer Christensen

Unionists and supporters rally outside Dakota Premium Foods slaughterhouse in South St. Paul, Minnesota, March 24, to demand the company negotiate a decent contract.

raise, control of the line speed to no more than 94 cows an hour, giving union officials access to the plant whenever workers needed them, paid sick days, better protection of seniority rights, and the right to bid on job openings. So far, the company's answer to all the contract demands has been "No."

Dave Vasquez, a kill floor worker and new union steward at Dakota, is one of the workers helping to organize to win a new contract. Of the union demonstration and union support he said, "I know the blustery

wind chill discouraged some people, but little by little people are coming together. It's getting bigger and bigger." He reflected the attitude of most Dakota workers toward wages and the contract fight when he said, "We need to go forward in time not back in time."

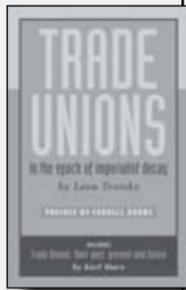
Julian Santana is a member of UFCW Local 789 and a kill floor worker at Dakota Premium Foods. Rebecca Williamson, a member of Local 789 and a boning department worker at Dakota, contributed to this article.

For Further Reading Trade Unions in the Epoch of Imperialist Decay

by Leon Trotsky

Food for thought—and action—from leaders of three generations of the modern revolutionary movement.

Invaluable to the practical education of militant workers who are relearning today what a strike is and how it can be fought and won—militants who, in the course of such struggles, become interested in ideas about how the entire system of capitalist exploitation can be ended. \$15.00



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MILITANT LABOR FORUMS

FLORIDA Miami

Imperialism's March Toward War and Depression. Benefit for the Militant Fund. Speaker: Margaret Trowe, Socialist Workers candidate for U.S. Congress, District 17. Sat., April 12. Program, 4 p.m.; followed by dinner and party. 8365 NE 2nd Ave., 2nd fl. Tel: (305) 756-4436.

ILLINOIS Chicago

Cuba and the Coming American Revolution. Speaker: Laura Anderson, Socialist Workers candidate for U.S. Congress, District 4. Fri., April 4. Dinner, 7 p.m.; program, 8 p.m. Donation: \$5 dinner; \$5 program. 3559 S Archer Ave. Tel: (773) 890-1190.

MINNESOTA Minneapolis

Stop Immigration Raids and Deportations! Immediate and Unconditional Legalization! Panel of speakers active in building the May 1 march in the Twin Cities. Fri., April 4. Dinner, 6:30 p.m.; program, 7:30 p.m. Donation: \$5 dinner; \$5 program. 1311 1/2 E Lake St., 2nd fl. Tel: (612) 729-1205.

NEW YORK New York

Black Rights and the Working Class: A Discussion of Barack Obama's Speech. Speaker: Olympia Newton, Socialist Workers Party. Fri., April 4. Dinner, 7 p.m.; program, 8 p.m. 307 W 36th St. 10th fl. (north elevators). Tel: (212) 629-6649.

Countries bordering Serbia recognize Kosova

BY OLYMPIA NEWTON

The governments of Croatia, Hungary, and Bulgaria recognized Kosova's independence March 19. The diplomatic measure came after pro-Serbia forces inside Kosova staged their most violent provocation since the country became independent February 17.

"[I]ndependent Kosovo is a reality," a Hungarian diplomatic official told Reuters, "and recognition cannot be avoided."

Croatia, Hungary, and Bulgaria all border Serbia. Croatia was part of the workers state of Yugoslavia, as were Serbia and Kosova. Capitalist property relations were also overturned in Hungary and Bulgaria, and those countries were ruled by bureaucratic Stalinist castes until the early 1990s.

"I do understand this is a difficult one for Serbia to swallow," said Croatia's prime minister Ivo Sanader. "But I don't expect a worsening of political and economic relations because there is no alternative to good neighborly relations."

"[R]ecognition of Kosovo is certainly not an act of good will between neighbors," said Serbian president Boris Tadic. Prime Minister Vojislav Kostunica assured business leaders that the political differences between the governments would not hinder economic relations. Trade between Belgrade and the three countries totaled nearly \$1.2 billion in 2006.

The government in Belgrade has divided over how best to undermine the new nation of Kosova. Ninety percent of Kosova's population are ethnic Albanians, who have been systematically discriminated against by the Serbian government.

On March 14, Serbs in Mitrovica, a city in northern Kosova with a majority-Serb population, occupied a

UN-run court. Two days later, UN police raided the court and arrested 53 people. Serb rebels attacked a UN convoy with automatic weapons and grenades.

The UN police withdrew from Mitrovica and were replaced by French, Belgian, and Spanish troops under NATO command. Some 150 U.S. troops were deployed on the Albanian side of Mitrovica. Dozens were wounded and a UN cop was killed in the ensuing fighting.

UN officials accused the Serbian government of direct involvement in the violence. Tadic said that his government was only interested in "helping" Kosovar Serbs. His government has called on the 120,000 Serbs who live in Kosova to ignore Kosovar au-

thorities, and promised rewards to those civil servants who remain loyal to Belgrade.

Tadic also criticized Serbia's minister for Kosova for pursuing policies among Kosovar Serbs that could potentially harm Belgrade's interests.

The Serbian government collapsed March 10 over whether or not to pursue membership in the European Union—an avenue toward increasing much-needed foreign investment—now that the majority of EU member states have recognized Kosovar independence.

More than 30 governments have recognized Kosova's independence. Romania, Bosnia, and Macedonia, which also border Serbia, have not yet done so.

CALENDAR

Panel Discussions on

OUR HISTORY IS STILL BEING WRITTEN

The Story of Three Chinese-Cuban Generals in the Cuban Revolution

Sunday, April 6
Miami

Reception, 3 p.m.; program 4 p.m.

Speakers: Professor Edmund Abaca, director of Africana Studies at University of Miami; Andrés Gómez, Alianza Martiana; Tony Jeantenour, Veye Yo; Professor Akin

Ogundiran, chair of African-New World Studies Program at Florida International University; Mary-Alice Waters, editor of Our History Is Still Being Written.

Location: Veye Yo political center, 28 Northeast 54th St. (corner of Miami Ave.)

Sponsors: Alianza Martiana, Veye Yo, African-New World Studies Program at Florida International University.

For information call (305) 284-6340.



Tuesday, April 8

New Brunswick, New Jersey

Reception, 7 p.m.; program 8 p.m.

Speakers: Welcome by Matt Matsuda, College Avenue Campus Dean. Robyn Rodriguez, Assistant Professor of Sociology at Rutgers; Mary-Alice Waters, editor of Our History Is Still Being Written.

Location: Rutgers University New Brunswick, Asian American Cultural Center, 48 Joyce Kilmer Ave, Livingston Campus.

Sponsors: Asian American Cultural Center, Asian Studies Program, Center for Latino Arts and Culture, Department of Latino and Hispanic Caribbean Studies, Hermandad de Sigma Iota Alpha, Lambda Theta Alpha, Latin American Studies Program, Native Tongue, Rutgers Union of Cuban American Students, Sigma Lambda Beta, Sigma Lambda Gamma.

For information call (732) 932-1263.

Communist League launches London election campaign

BY JONATHAN SILBERMAN

LONDON—Twenty people attended a lively March 21 meeting at which the Communist League launched its campaign for a seat in the Greater London Assembly. Election agent Paul Davies announced that Julie Crawford, 43, a meat-processing worker, is contesting the City and East constituency. Voting for the assembly and London mayor takes place May 1.

Crawford outlined the League's campaign platform. "In the face of rising unemployment and inflation, and spreading wars and attacks on rights," she said, "workers need to act politically to defend our class interests, refusing to subordinate our struggles to the bosses and their parties."

Campaign cochairperson Andrés Mendoza, a student and member of the Young Socialists, explained that the week before, campaign supporters had joined thousands on an antiwar protest. "We took along a campaign banner that called for immediate and unconditional withdrawal of all UK and coalition troops from Iraq and Afghanistan," he reported.

A lively question-and-answer session followed the presentations. "What does the Communist League say about the environment?" asked student Dominic Sowa. "What's your response to right-wing outfits who physically assault Black people and immigrants?" asked Henry Johnson, 23, who just moved to London from the United States. "Don't the British like immigration as long as immigrant workers receive lower wages?" asked Wing Hong Ning, a retired worker of Singapore Chinese origin.

Responding to Wing's question, Crawford said that "Ken Livingstone, standing for reelection as London mayor, 'defends' immigration in precisely such terms. He has spoken enthusiastically of how young im-

migrants coming here from abroad to work allow companies in London to enjoy 'American levels of productivity.' That's because the employers subject them to substandard wages and working conditions."

"Some workers and youth get wooed by Livingstone's so-called proimmigration stance, alarmed at the use by his opponent, Conservative Boris Johnson, of terms like "piccaninnies" and "watermelon smiles" when speaking of people from Africa," Crawford continued. In fact, she pointed out, Johnson has expressed views very similar to Livingstone in terms of the employers' wanting and needing immigrant labor in order to increase their profits. "Our campaign offers a working-class alternative to them both," Crawford said.

"The employers' 'productivity drives' are aimed at making us work longer and harder for less," she continued. "Super-exploitation of immigrants is part of this. Where I work, there are periodic raids against immigrant workers designed to divide the workforce and weaken us all. Defending the rights of immigrant workers is key to organizing and transforming the unions," the communist candidate explained.

Opportunities abound to sell 'Militant' subs

Continued from front page

tenance, to students getting involved with the Socialist Workers 2008 election campaign, to workers organizing for May 1 actions to demand legalization for immigrants—there are thousands of potential new readers of the socialist press across the United States.

This week, there are many discussions on the job about the speech by Democratic presidential hopeful Barack Obama on race, as well as ongoing discussions on the capitalist economic crisis and how workers can defend themselves.

The book *Cuba and the Coming American Revolution* is available for only \$5 with any subscription—new or renewal. The special offer will help those who want to learn more about the

Young socialists protest Iraq, Afghanistan wars



Militant/Robert Kopec

SAN FRANCISCO—On March 19 young socialists joined Gerardo Sánchez, Socialist Workers Party candidate for U.S. Congress, (pictured above at right) and other campaign supporters in a demonstration here against the war in Iraq, held on the fifth anniversary of the U.S.-led invasion and occupation.

Young campaigners for Róger Calero and Alyson Kennedy, the SWP candidates for president and vice president, explained that on taking office their candidates will take measures to immediately withdraw U.S. troops from Afghanistan and Iraq.

They introduced other young people to Sánchez, who explained that when he and the other SWP candidates are elected to Congress, they will help form a socialist caucus that will fight against giving one more cent or one more person to the imperialist war drive.

Young socialists in San Francisco have also been active on campuses, such as at the University of California at Davis, where they are helping defend the Cuban Revolution through promoting the Pathfinder book *Our History Is Still Being Written: The Story of Three Chinese-Cuban Generals in the Cuban Revolution*.

—MICK DIDDAMS

Spring 'Militant' Subscription Drive March 22 – May 18 ♦ as of March 26

Country/City	Quota	Sold	%
SWEDEN	25	2	8%
UNITED STATES			
Des Moines, IA	140	16	11%
Carrollton, GA	145	13	9%
Seattle	115	10	9%
Miami	120	10	8%
San Francisco	125	8	6%
Chicago	120	7	6%
Twin Cities	145	8	6%
Newark, NJ	130	7	5%
New York	325	16	5%
Doraville, GA	130	6	5%
Los Angeles	110	4	4%
Washington, D.C.	140	3	2%
Boston	60	1	2%
Philadelphia	85	1	1%
Houston	90	1	1%
San Diego	8	0	0%
U.S. Total	1,988	111	6%
AUSTRALIA	55	3	5%
CANADA	105	0	0%
NEW ZEALAND	65	0	0%
UNITED KINGDOM			
Edinburgh	45	0	0%
London	75	0	0%
UK Total	120	0	0%
Int'l Totals	2,358	116	

Maritime struggles are theme of Seattle meeting

BY EDWIN FRUIT
AND JOHN NAUBERT

SEATTLE—Nearly 40 people attended a special Militant Labor Forum March 22 to raise money for the Militant Fund. The featured speaker was Tom Leonard, a veteran leader of the Socialist Workers Party.

Leonard gave an account of the days he was a merchant seaman during and just after World War II. He described the racism and discrimination against Chinese contract laborers working on merchant ships, and urged people to read *Our History Is Still Being Written: The Story of Three Chinese-Cuban Generals in the Cuban Revolution*, which

revolutionary socialist perspective presented in the pages of the *Militant*.

"Supporters of the *Militant* in Seattle got off to a good start on the first day of the drive," writes Edwin Fruit. "We went to a post office in the Black community, a Mexican food store, and a neighborhood near the University of Washington." Six people subscribed that afternoon, and two more renewed their

subscriptions that night at a meeting to raise money for the Militant Fund.

To get involved, contact distributors near you listed on page 8.

Cuba and the Coming American Revolution

By Jack Barnes

With a new foreword by Mary-Alice Waters



"There will be a victorious revolution in the United States before there will be a victorious counterrevolution in Cuba."

That 1961 statement by Fidel Castro remains as true today as when it was spoken. This is a book about the class struggle in the U.S., where the revolutionary capacities of workers and farmers are today as utterly discounted by the ruling powers as were those of the Cuban toilers. It is about the example set by the people of Cuba that revolution is not only necessary—it can be made.

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WWW.PATHFINDERPRESS.COM

veterans' benefits. "They waited until almost all of us had died to grant benefits," he said. "One of the main benefits they extended to us is that we can be buried in a veterans' cemetery!"

Jessie Hasting, a member of the Young Socialists, made an appeal to the audience to pledge and make contributions to the \$100,000 Militant Fund. "The *Militant* needs workers like us to keep the paper in print and continue to use it as a tool to open minds and give a voice to the working class," she said. Nearly \$1,300 was collected and \$5,000 pledged toward the Seattle goal of \$7,000 for the drive.

In addition, \$375 was collected for the Maritime Project Fund, which helps make it possible for Leonard to do research and speak around the country.

ON THE PICKET LINE

General strike of 3 million in Greece paralyzes country

ATHENS—Three million workers in the private and public sector participated in a general strike called by the country's two labor federations, bringing the country to a standstill March 19. The strike protested proposed cuts in pensions and the raising of the retirement age.

An estimated 150,000 striking workers took to the streets in Athens. Electrical workers, dock workers, and garbage collectors had the most militant and largest contingents in the demonstration. Similar marches and rallies were held in major cities across the country.

The strike shut down all public services, with hospitals only treating emergency cases. Industrial production and transportation were crippled. Striking transportation workers ran the trains during the time of the labor march free of charge to help workers participate.

New Democracy, the ruling capitalist party, was reelected on assurances that pension rights would not be curbed. But Prime Minister Konstantinos Karamanlis has proposed a plan in which some pensions would be capped and over 100 pension funds will be unified with the aim of limiting available health and social services.

The plan would end early retirement options for working mothers, those employed in "hazardous" jobs, and workers who have completed 35 years of work but have not yet reached 60 years

of age. Under the bill, thousands of immigrants and young workers, as well as seasonal or part-time workers, will no longer have health-care coverage.

Parliament adopted the pension bill the day after the strike with the governing party's two-vote majority. All other parties voted against it.

The unions are planning further protests while calling for a constitutional referendum to recall the bill.

—Sami Monastiriotis-Ghneim

Teachers union rallies against budget cuts in N.Y.

NEW YORK—The United Federation of Teachers and community groups organized a rally outside City Hall here March 19 to protest massive budget cuts in education. Thousands of teachers, students, parents, and administrators chanted "Keep the promises!" and "*Si se puede!*" (Yes we can!) in the rain.

Some \$180 million was cut from the Department of Education's funding this year without warning. Close to \$600 million is proposed to be cut from next year's budget.

Many at the rally explained that after school and extracurricular programs were the first to go with this year's budget cuts.

The slogan "Keep the promises" refers to a state government pledge made last year. The state agreed to give New York City schools an extra \$3.2 billion over a four-year period as a result of a lawsuit.



Militant/Willie Cotton

Some 1,500 members of Service Employees International Union Local 1199 rally March 15 to support Bronx, New York, nursing home workers striking for health benefits.

On January 24 New York mayor Michael Bloomberg announced that because of the national economic slowdown, \$1.5 billion would be cut from the city's budget over the next two years.

—Willie Cotton

Health care workers rally in support of N.Y. strike

BRONX, New York—Some 1,500 members of Service Employees International Union 1199 rallied March 15 in solidarity with 220 striking workers at the Kingsbridge Heights Rehabilitation Center here. The strikers are demanding that the owner, Helen Sieger, pay health-care benefits and negotiate a new

contract.

Local 1199 organized its members and supporters to attend the rally from Baltimore, Washington, D.C., and throughout New York State.

"This strike was the only option left for us after Helen Sieger refused to pay for our health benefits. It's been three long weeks and she has shown no consideration for how this strike is affecting the nursing home residents or the community," said striker Jacqueline Simono. "All we want to do is go back to work taking care of our patients, but we have to stand up for our rights," she said.

—Willie Cotton

Australian gov't steps up military intervention in E. Timor

BY LINDA HARRIS

SYDNEY, Australia, March 13—East Timorese soldiers and police, together with Australian troops and UN cops, are searching for 30 rebel soldiers accused of attempting to assassinate the president of East Timor, José Ramos-Horta, and the prime minister, Xanana Gusamo.

Ramos-Horta was seriously injured in the February 11 attack. The rebel soldiers, led by former army lieutenant Gastao Salsinha, retreated to the mountains west of Dili, the capital, following the attempt. The government of East Timor declared a state of emergency, establishing an 8 p.m. to 6 a.m. curfew and prohibiting all public gatherings. The curfew is set to expire at the end of March.

The Australian government sent an additional 120 soldiers and 70 federal police to Dili following the attack.

Australian prime minister Kevin Rudd flew in to Dili February 15 in a show of Canberra's determination to restore stability in East Timor.

East Timor, also known as Timor-Leste, lies between Indonesia and Australia. It is the poorest nation in the Asia-Pacific region. Some 40 percent of its 1 million people live below the official poverty line. Only 11 percent of homes in the countryside have electricity. The country has rich oil and gas deposits off its shores, but the Australian rulers get the bulk of the profits from their extraction.

East Timor was a colony of Portugal until 1975. It was then occupied by Indonesia with the backing of Canberra and Washington, despite ongoing resistance by the Timorese people. In 1999 Australian troops led a force under the UN flag, replacing Indonesian

military rule. Independence was won in 2002.

A leader of the rebel troops, Maj. Alfredo Reinado, was killed together with his bodyguard in the attack on Ramos-Horta's residence. Their funeral drew 2,000 people.

Reinado emerged as a key figure during civil strife that engulfed East Timor in early 2006, when a mutiny by sections of the military erupted over conditions in the armed forces and regional discrimination over promotions. The government at the time, led by the Revolutionary Front for an Indepen-

dent East Timor (Fretilin), responded by firing almost 600 soldiers out of an army of 1,500.

Fighting between rebel troops led by Reinado and forces loyal to the government began in Dili. Thousands of houses were burned and as many as 100,000 people left homeless as a result. In May 2006 the Australian government, under then Prime Minister John Howard, sent 1,300 ground troops into East Timor to restore "stability and normality."

The intervention was planned to last until the 2007 elections. Ramos-Hor-

ta, Canberra's favored candidate for president, won 70 percent of the vote in those elections, ousting the Fretilin government.

The additional troops Canberra sent in February this year bring the number of Australian troops in East Timor close to 1,000. They are part of an International Stabilization Force established in 2006 by Australia and New Zealand. About 170 New Zealand troops are in East Timor. In addition, about 150 Australian police are part of the 1,500-strong UN police force there.

25, 50, AND 75 YEARS AGO



April 8, 1933

President Ronald Reagan went on television March 23 to propose another massive escalation of military spending. Central to his justification of this arms buildup was the allegation that Soviet military power is now directly challenging what he termed "our vital interests" in Central America and the Caribbean.

Four years ago the people of Nicaragua and Grenada threw out bloody, U.S.-backed dictatorships and established governments that defend the interests of the workers and farmers, not the landlords and capitalists or their Washington allies.

The socialist revolution is advancing in our hemisphere.

That is why Washington must increasingly resort to military power. It is attempting to halt, and eventually turn back, the march of history.



April 7, 1958

The arrest of 35 young men in the Gulf of Mexico on charges of violating the Neutrality Act for embarking on a voyage to Cuba to aid the struggle against dictator Batista speaks louder than all the propaganda issued from Washington.

The Neutrality Act, under which 35 freedom fighters were arrested, has little to do with keeping the U.S. neutral in the Cuban revolt. For the U.S. is not neutral—it supplies economic, financial, and military aid to Batista.

The U.S. labor movement should immediately protest the arrests in Brownsville, Texas, and other parts of the U.S., of Cubans and Americans opposed to Batista. The AFL-CIO should take the lead in demanding that Washington immediately end its policy of propping up Batista and imprisoning his opponents.



April 8, 1933

TAYLORVILLE, Illinois—The trial of the 22 Kincaid miners, charged with murder, is under way in the Christian County Circuit Court. Its sessions occur with a packed hall of miners from all parts of the Illinois coal fields. The first two up for trial, whom the Peabody coal company intends to burn in the electric chair, are Emil Dupire, coal miner, and Mattozzo, chief of police in Kincaid and supporter of the Progressive Miners of America.

The three main witnesses of the state are Peabody men and the evidence consists of contradictory and frame-up material.

We must use all legal means at our disposal, but under and around these necessary defense measures a powerful mass movement of the American workers must be organized to fight for the release of the framed-up Kincaid miners.

Inside the ring and out, Van Nuys workers fight effort to deport them

BY MICHAEL ORTEGA

VAN NUYS, California, March 22—"This match is about defending our rights and an end to the immigration raids," said the announcer today at the *lucha libre* (free fight), a Mexican-style wrestling event. The match was organized by workers at the Micro Solutions Enterprises plant here who were rounded up in an immigration raid in February. The 138 workers detained in the raid are fighting the government's effort to deport them.

The main bout was between a masked wrestler, "Super Mojado" (Super Wet-back—a racist term for Mexican immigrants) and his allies, who defeated "INS Man," referring to the Immigration and Naturalization Service, the former name for the immigration police.

"I've come to fight against discrimination and for immigrants of all ethnic backgrounds," declared Super Mojado before the fight.

"You're going back to Mexico!" yelled INS Man to a chorus of boos and angry shouts from the crowd of more than 300.

The Micro Solutions workers and their supporters have established a group, United Workers of Van Nuys, to organize their struggle. Van Nuys is the district in Los Angeles where the plant is located.

"We're stuck," explained Arturo, one of the workers facing deportation. "We can't work but we have to pay rent, bills, and buy food." Many workers detained have GPS tracking ankle bracelets bound to their leg to ensure they do not leave Los Angeles County. This makes getting another job almost impossible.

Ulises, a leader of the workers' group, said the United Workers of Van Nuys will be marching in the March 29 an-

nual César Chavez walk. "We're going to march with shorts on to protest these apparatuses, and those of us that don't have them will tie a cell phone to our ankles," he said.

At the *lucha libre*, flyers were distributed to build the May 1 march and rally in Los Angeles for immigrant rights.

"The workers from Van Nuys have begun helping organize the action for May 1 and will be a very important contingent," said Gloria Saucedo, of Hermandad Mexicana Nacional (Mexican National Brotherhood). "They're an example because they've been detained but they're organizing freely and openly against their deportation."

May Day marches will begin in downtown Los Angeles and in MacArthur Park, where last year police rioted and assaulted peaceful demonstrators.

Workers across U.S. plan for May Day

BY PAUL PEDERSON

In factories and other workplaces across the United States workers are discussing what to do together on May 1.

"My coworkers and I are utilizing our union bulletin board to share information about the demonstrations, to open a discussion around immigrant rights, and encourage everyone to take off work and hit the streets on May Day," Jessie Hastings, a grocery store worker and Young Socialist member in Seattle, told the *Militant*.

May Day actions have been called in many U.S. cities. These include Boston; Chicago; Houston; Los Angeles; Miami; New York; San Francisco; San Jose, California; Seattle; Twin Cities; and Washington, D.C.

Wheatland Tube workers fight no-match firings

Continued from front page

the company claims have mismatched Social Security numbers have been fired in recent weeks.

While waiting for the press to show up, the youngest supporters of the fired workers made signs in a Mexican restaurant that had opened its doors to the demonstrators. The Spanish and English signs included: "no-match letters = discrimination," "work for all," "documents for all," and "Wheatland: don't take our livelihood away."

At Wheatland Tube, a Chicago manufacturer of tubing and conduit, workers belonging to the Sheet Metal Workers Local 73 had for two years prevented the company from firing 63 workers. The Social Security Administration had sent the company "no-match" letters, claiming the workers' Social Security numbers did not match official records. Some of the workers have 17 years' seniority.

Fernando Velásquez, a machine operator for nine years, was fired after speaking at the press conference. "I spoke on Univisión in the morning and when I went to my shift at 6 p.m., the security would not let me in."

"I stood up for our coworkers who got fired. I don't regret it!" he added. "We have paid vacations and other benefits owed to us. The company did it to pocket more money and hire workers for less."

Several pickets described how one fired worker was physically pushed to his locker and then out the door. "We aren't terrorists, we work hard," said Rosalva Romero, whose husband is one of the 63 people on the list to be fired, although he is still working. "My family has worked in this plant since the late '60s," she added.

Romero and others explained that it is uncommon to have a five-day workweek at Wheatland Tube. Workers put in 12-hour shifts around the clock for six, and sometimes seven, days a week.

Abel Quintero, who had eight years at the company, said, "I'm here to win our jobs back." His young son was continually chanting, "No to no-match!" and holding up a sign to passing traffic that said, "no deportations."

Jasmine Velásquez, the daughter of Fernando Velásquez and a high school senior at Benito Juarez High School in Chicago, spoke about the importance of the fight for legalization in relation to the



At left, workers from Micro Solutions in Van Nuys facing deportation after February raid and their supporters attend March 22 fundraising wrestling event. Right, wrestler Super Mojado, who defends the rights of immigrants, defeats INS Man, the immigration cop.

Endorsers include the Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights of Los Angeles (CHIRLA), the March 25th Coalition, Hermandad Mexicana Nacional, and others.

The United Workers of Van Nuys are organizing a rodeo April 6 to raise funds and win support. Their fight has received regular coverage in *Hoy*, *La Opinion*, the *Los Angeles Times*, and

Spanish language radio shows. The Mexican consulate is contributing to the legal defense. Several Central American consulates are also getting involved.

"We're organizing to fight so that we're not deported," said Flor, another leader of the United Workers. "But whether we stay or not we want to be an example to anyone who has this happen to them."

This movement began in 2006, when Congress was considering a bill that would criminalize undocumented immigrants who live and work in the United States and those who aid them.

In response some 2 million workers exploded into politics on May Day of that year. They carried out a one-day nationwide political strike—the first-ever in U.S. history. They organized rallies in over 140 cities and towns to demand legalization for all immigrants. The anti-immigrant bill went down to defeat.

That action was the first step toward reclaiming May Day as a workers' holiday. Last year, half a million workers poured into the streets again on May 1.

This year in several cities struggles are fueling interest and determination

among workers to demonstrate their strength to the employing class on May 1. This is the case in Los Angeles, where 138 workers are fighting government efforts to deport them (see above), as well as in Chicago, and in the Twin Cities.

In the Twin Cities, meat packers from Dakota Premium Foods were among the 30 people who met March 18 to plan a May 1 march and rally in St. Paul.

In New York, representatives of a dozen different organizations met March 20 at the Bayanihan Filipino Community Center in Woodside, Queens, to build a rally and march from Union Square in New York City and another action in Hempstead, Long Island.

The Chicago May Day action has been set for noon. About 30 representatives from a wide range of organizations met March 18 at the United Electrical Workers hall in Chicago to build the action. They called a "Unity Assembly" on April 5 to bring together all the forces in the area building May 1.

That same evening in Houston, 30 workers gathered at a community center on the southwest side of town to build the May 1 action there.

"Many are talking about voting in 2008, but we are going to vote with our feet on May Day," Cesar Espinosa from the Central American Resource Center (Crecen), an organization for Central American immigrants, told the meeting.

Troy Davis faces execution

Continued from front page

officer in Savannah, Georgia. Seven of the nine witnesses who testified against him have recanted or contradicted their story. He has been on death row for 16 years.

"The stakes are high in this case. They may be nervous that if they allow witness recantations in this case, they may have to allow them in other cases," said Laura Moyer, deputy director of Amnesty International in Atlanta, who is an activist in Davis's defense.

Defenders of Davis kicked off a "Tues-

days for Troy" campaign on March 25. At least 18 volunteers gathered at a busy Atlanta intersection with signs, leaflets and petitions. They plan to get out each Tuesday to distribute information.

Moyer said that with the denial of Davis's appeal, his supporters are focusing on a campaign to save his life by winning clemency. "It is essential that we mobilize as many people as possible to pressure the parole board," she said. For more information on Davis's case, call (404) 876-5661 ext. 12, or write Lmoyer@aiusa.org.

De-pornographication of politics

For weeks we have witnessed a display of the deepening pornographication of politics.

Gossip, speculation, and “news” about details of the private lives of New York governor David Paterson and his predecessor Elliot Spitzer have flooded the newspapers and television.

These news stories aim to focus the attention of working people on the moral character of the “rich and powerful” and the latest titillating tidbit printed about their personal affairs instead of their political assaults against the working class.

For example, as stories of his marital infidelities capture the headlines, the Paterson administration has joined the New York mayor and other politicians in a drive to raise tolls, fees, and train fares for workers in the city.

These scandals reflect the growing factionalism, demagoguery, and degradation of political discourse in bourgeois politics. A sharpening tone that takes the form of personal attacks are the hallmark of this. It is spurred by frustration, uncertainty, and fear among sections of the ruling class with their inability to find a self-confident political course out of the deepening economic and social crisis of world capitalism.

The Spitzer scandal also revealed the scope of the assault on privacy that the ruling class is seeking to legitimize under the banner of fighting the “war on terrorism.”

Federal police have greatly expanded their use of fishing expeditions into personal financial records, wiretapping, and electronic surveillance. These are all intended as tools to be used by the ruling class as the crisis deepens and workers seek avenues to organize and resist.

One good sign is the widespread disgust among many working people at the endless string of scandals. “Keep it to yourself! We don’t want to hear it!” many are saying.

That response is part of the de-pornographication of politics. It is a step toward political and class clarity.

By refusing to be drawn into the low-level personal attacks and scandals, those who take this stand are choosing the moral high ground over the gutter of the politics of resentment. Such attitudes also help prepare working people for the day when the same methods are used to smear leaders of union struggles and leaders of other battles by the oppressed and exploited.

Obama’s speech on U.S. Blacks

Continued from front page

social attitudes brought about by the struggle for Black rights. It reflected the fact that the overwhelming majority of the working class, including workers who are not Black, do not want to roll back the clock on social gains of the last half century.

The talk was a departure from how Obama had conducted his campaign to that point. It was a serious policy speech, not empty phrase-mongering about “hope” and “change.”

Obama has campaigned as a multiethnic candidate capable of uniting voters across racial lines. He has distanced himself from struggles in the Black community and instead promoted, as an ABC news reporter described it, “the post-racial unifying sheen of his campaign’s promise.”

Speaking at the 2004 Democratic Party convention, for example, Obama said, “there is not a black America and a white America. . . . There’s the United States of America.”

The speech came after an escalation of race-baiting in the presidential race. Geraldine Ferraro, a member of the Clinton campaign’s finance committee, told the press that “If Obama was a white man, he would not be in this position. And if he was a woman (of any color) he would not be in this position.” The implication that Blacks somehow have it easy set off a wave of controversy, and Ferraro resigned from Clinton’s campaign.

Around the same time clips of sermons by Jeremiah Wright, the former pastor at the church Obama attends, began circulating on the internet and TV. In one, Wright says, “The government lied about inventing the HIV virus as a means of genocide against people of color.” In others, he presents the drug problem in the Black community as a U.S. government plot.

“We supported Zionism shamelessly while ignoring the Palestinians and branding anybody who spoke out against it as being anti-Semitic,” said Wright in 2006.

In his speech Obama called Wright’s comments “incendiary.” He said Israel is a “stalwart ally” and blamed “the perverse and hateful ideologies of radical Islam” for spawning the violence in the Middle East.

Obama presented Wright as someone marred by “the anger and bitterness of those years” of legal segregation in this country. Obama’s explanation belittled not only Wright but other demagogues like him who have built their careers on race-baiting and conspiracy theories. “For the men and women of Reverend Wright’s generation,” Obama said, “the memories of humiliation and doubt and fear have not gone away.”

In taking up how to solve racial discrimination,

Obama hammered away at themes of unity as “Americans.” “We need to come together to solve a set of monumental problems,” he said. “Two wars, a terrorist threat, a falling economy, a chronic health-care crisis and potentially devastating climate change; problems that are neither black or white or Latino or Asian, but rather problems that confront us all.”

He argued these problems can be traced to failed policies and cultural legacies, not the workings of the capitalist system, which depends on the super-exploitation of Black labor for profit.

Referring to affirmative action, Obama said that when white people “hear that an African American is getting an advantage in landing a good job or a spot in a good college because of an injustice that they themselves never committed . . . resentment builds over time.”

While the liberal press lined up behind Obama after the speech, conservative reaction was divided. Ultrarightist Patrick Buchanan ran a scathing racist review in an article he titled “A Brief for Whitey.” Buchanan called the talk “the same old con, the same old shakedown that black hustlers have been running.”

Such dismissals of the speech prompted rightist Robert N. Going, a militant foe of abortion, to write in *The Judge Report* blog about racist discrimination he’s witnessed over the years. He described a case he heard as a judge in the 1990s in which a Black woman was charged with disorderly conduct for throwing an ashtray in a diner after the man behind the counter told her, “We don’t serve niggers here.”

In *National Review Online*, columnist Charles Murray criticized fellow conservatives for their dismissal of Obama’s speech. “I can’t vote for him. He is an honest-to-God lefty,” wrote Murray. “But the other day he talked about race in ways no other major politician has tried to do, with a level of honesty that no other major politician has dared, and with more insight than any other major politician possesses. Not bad.”

Justin Raimondo, a contributor to Buchanan’s *American Conservative* magazine, picked up Murray’s remarks and reposted them on the ultraright website *Tikimag.com* with the postscript, “Amen.”

Correction

An article in the March 31, 2008, issue incorrectly stated that the March 8 car caravan in Miami, which protested U.S. restrictions on travel to Cuba, passed “for the first time” along S.W. 8th St. “past such rallying points for opponents of the Cuban Revolution as the Versailles Restaurant.” In fact, there have been previous caravans raising similar demands along this route.

Workers repelled by N.Y. scandal mongering

BY PAUL PEDERSON

Sordid details of the private lives of prominent politicians have dominated headlines in recent weeks. In New York, the tale of Governor Elliot Spitzer’s visit with a prostitute brought his quick resignation and a flood of sensational exposés.

The scandal-mongers kept buzzing when David Paterson, Spitzer’s replacement, called a press conference less than a day after he took office to bare all of his marital difficulties. In the days that followed he elaborated further on his affairs and added that he used illegal drugs three decades ago.

Many working people are voicing frustration at the flood of “news” about the private lives of politicians.

“I’m getting tired of the sex scandals,” David Bowman of Brooklyn wrote in a letter to *AM New York*. “Enough already. Let’s talk about something else, like the state budget.”

Cops and prosecutors used extensive electronic surveillance and pried into records of private communications to fish for the evidence they used against Spitzer.

The investigation began when Spitzer’s bank filed a “suspicious activity report” with the Treasury Department after he made a series of cash transfers from several accounts. The use of such reports has increased greatly in recent years. In 2003, banks filed 413,000 suspicious activity reports; in 2006 that number rose to 1 million.

Chicago vandals

Continued from front page

attack on the campaign offices. “Winning the majority of workers to support and fight for legalization is a life-and-death-question for the labor movement today,” Farley said. “This is an essential part of transforming the unions into fighting organizations of our class.”

“We need a party of our own, 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.”

“All of the Democratic and Republican candidates have anti-immigrant positions,” Farley said. “Our campaign joins with millions of workers in this country who call for the immediate, unconditional legalization of all immigrants.”

Farley said that in the mattress factory where she works as a sewing machine operator, the majority of workers left work to join the massive May 1 march in Chicago last year. “I will not be working on May Day this year,” the socialist explained. “Already in our shop workers are beginning to discuss taking the day off to join the noon rally and march this May 1.”

Several messages of support were read at the forum. Rosi Carrasco of the Chicago-based Latino Organization of the Southwest, said, “We have to show solidarity with the Socialist Workers Party and all organizations that raise their voice for the rights of workers and the immigrant community. We denounce those racist and anti-immigrant attacks that try to quiet our voices.”

Raymundo Reyes, a leader of the Association of Immigrants of Indiana, wrote, “We condemn the attack and we stand with you, because if they attack one, they attack us all. . . . Papers for all! And with strength and unity, let’s march on May 1st!”

The socialists ask that messages be sent to city officials demanding that the Chicago police arrest and prosecute whoever carried out the March 19 act of vandalism against the Illinois Socialist Workers Campaign offices, located at 3557 S. Archer Ave. in Chicago.

Messages should be sent to: Superintendent of Police Jody P. Weis, Chicago Police Department, 3510 S. Michigan Ave., Chicago, IL 60653; email: police@cityofchicago.org; and to Mayor Richard Daley, Office of the Mayor, City Hall, 121 N. LaSalle St., Room 507, Chicago, IL 60602; fax: (312) 744-8045. Send a copy to the campaign at chicagoswp@sbcglobal.net.

Cuba's revolutionary army of workers and peasants

Below is an excerpt from Making History. This collection of interviews with four generals of Cuba's Revolutionary Armed Forces is one of Pathfinder's Books of the Month for March.

The selection below begins with a reference to the situation in Cuba in 1989, when José Abrantes was removed as interior minister and convicted and sentenced to 20 years in prison on charges of abuse of authority, negligence of duty, and improper use of government funds and resources. Div. Gen. Arnaldo Ochoa was tried, convicted, and executed that same year for hostile acts against a foreign state, drug trafficking, and abuse of office.

The interviews in Making History were conducted by Socialist Workers Party national secretary Jack Barnes, Pathfinder Press president Mary-Alice



Members of Cuba's First Company, 134th Militia Battalion, celebrate victory over CIA-trained invasion force at Playa Girón, Cuba, in April 1961. Militias composed of workers like those above played a decisive role in fighting to defend the revolution.

BOOKS OF THE MONTH

Waters, and Militant staff writer Martin Koppel. The excerpt below is from an interview with Div. Gen. Néstor López Cuba. Copyright ©1999 Pathfinder Press. Reprinted by permission.

BARNES: Following the crisis in the Revolutionary Armed Forces and Ministry of the Interior in 1989, involving Ochoa and Abrantes and several others,

many in the United States and elsewhere noticed that the FAR [Revolutionary Armed Forces] took on even more leadership responsibility throughout Cuba. The breadth of what the armed forces were responsible for seemed to expand. The revolutionary integrity exemplified by the FAR seemed to take on even greater importance. I wondered if you could comment on whether or not this perception is an accurate one? Because those habits and values of revolutionary honor and discipline set a very important example for workers and youth in the United States and elsewhere.

LÓPEZ CUBA: Yes, that's accurate, if one looks at this from the standpoint of moral authority and prestige—without this diminishing in any way the FAR's subordination to the party, to the constitution, and to the authorities democratically elected by our people. And the leadership qualities of Raúl that we were discussing earlier also had a big influence here, I believe.

Since the triumph of the revolution, there has never been an economic battle, there has never been a natural disaster, where the armed forces have not been at the side of the people. Over thirty-eight years of revolution, there has never been a moment when the armed forces have not fought shoulder to shoulder with the people: whether in social efforts, economic

tasks, or defense. This gives the FAR a great deal of authority.

Moreover, we have never allowed corruption in the armed forces. We are intransigent: the armed forces must be kept free of all personal interest. This is also an important aspect of the education of the cadres.

In capitalist countries, I believe, it is not unusual for an army officer to engage in business, to have capital, and he often devotes more time to business than to the armed forces. In the FAR no one is going to find any officer involved in activities beyond the revolutionary tasks we have taken on and the principles we have established.

In the 1980s, although the armed forces were very professional and technically proficient, we had some gaps in the areas of administration, finances, and production. So, in 1990 the minister [of defense, Raúl Castro,] called on the FAR to address these problems.

Raúl has demanded four things from the cadres of the armed forces. First, they must be political cadres, with high political, ideological, and moral qualities. Second, they must be highly skilled military professionals. Third, they must have the basic skills of food production and agriculture. And fourth, they must have a rudimentary knowledge of economic affairs. They don't need to be

economists, but they do need to know where each peso we spend comes from, and how to use it effectively.

We have integrated these requirements into the professional training of our cadres—both of older officers such as myself, and of the youngest ones. This is part of the program of study for new officers, and the veteran officers are given regular refresher courses on techniques of leadership, planning, economics, and production.

An army of workers and peasants

All this gives the armed forces in Cuba more authority, more prestige. I think the origins of our Revolutionary Armed Forces and of its cadres has a lot to do with this, as well. It's no secret to anyone that there are not many Colin Powells who can make it to the rank he achieved in the United States. Because generally the officers in capitalist armies are the sons of the bourgeoisie, of generals, of high officials, of better-off families.

In our army we make sure that our officer corps includes farmers, workers, those from the ranks of the humble, from the masses. Without such a policy, the social composition of the officer corps will slowly be transformed, and in the end will have negative results.

We pay conscious attention to the social background of those who go to officers' school—the Camilitos.¹ Fifty percent of the Camilitos must be the children of workers and farmers. The other 50 percent is made up of children of teachers, doctors, officials, and others. But it's a requirement that half must be from families of workers and farmers, so the army does not lose its class origins.

In spite of spending forty years in the struggle, for example, I continue to think like a peasant, like someone who tills the soil. I have not lost sight of my origins.

1. Students of the Camilo Cienfuegos Military School. Cienfuegos was a Rebel Army commander in 1958. His plane was lost at sea in October 1959 while he was returning to Havana from a mission in Camagüey to combat a counterrevolutionary mutiny.

March **BOOKS OF THE MONTH**

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