

# THE MILITANT

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A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

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## 595 workers arrested in Mississippi ICE raid

BY SUSAN LAMONT

CARROLLTON, Georgia—Nearly 600 immigrant workers were arrested August 25 in Laurel, Mississippi, after agents from Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) descended on Howard Industries, Inc., a major producer of electrical transformers. It is the largest such workplace raid to date.

All entrances to the plant were sealed by heavily armed ICE officers wearing flak vests, according to the *Jackson Clarion-Ledger*. Hispanic workers were segregated from other plant employees, and mobile trailers were set up to conduct interrogations of workers, most of whom were then taken to nearby jails.

Nearly 500 of the 595 arrested are being held at the new ICE detention center in Jena, Louisiana. Others are being held in Mississippi jails.

An attorney for eight of the workers said they face criminal charges of using false Social Security cards and identification papers. If convicted they could get two years in prison and/or a

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## U.S. gov't expands spy agencies, operations

BY SETH GALINSKY

Over the last two months the U.S. government has set up two new “counterintelligence” divisions, proposed changes in rules for both the FBI and cop agencies to expand their spy operations, expanded the powers of the Director of National Security, and passed a law allowing phone-tapping without a warrant.

The measures are “breaking down a wall erected after congressional hearings in 1976 to rein in such activity,” the *Washington Post* said August 16. It was referring to restrictions imposed after the exposure of covert programs by the FBI, the CIA, and other cop agencies in the 1960s and ’70s.

The Defense Intelligence Agency announced August 5 the formation of the Defense Counterintelligence and Human Intelligence Center. The purpose of the office is to carry out “strategic offensive counterintelligence operations,” against non-U.S. citizens, Mike Pick, director of the office, told the *Post*.

The agency admits that its goal

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## Moscow reinforces Georgia occupation

Recognizes ‘independence’ of regions as cover



Reuters/Adrees Latif

Russian troops on an armored personnel carrier pass Georgian policeman at checkpoint inside the Georgian region of South Ossetia. Thousands of Russian troops occupy a “buffer zone” miles deeper into Georgian territory.

BY SETH GALINSKY

Russian president Dmitri Medvedev signed decrees August 26 formally recognizing the “independence” of the Georgian regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, a pretext for the continued occupation of Georgian territory by Russian troops. The Russian parliament unanimously approved a similar motion the previous day.

The Russian military easily defeated the Georgian army in five days of unequal combat at the beginning of the month. Moscow cynically claimed it acted in defense of the rights of Abkhaz and Ossetians.

“Russia’s historic role of the guarantor of peace in the Caucasus has

increased,” Boris Gryzlov, speaker of the lower chamber, said with an almost imperial arrogance. “The Caucasus has always been and will remain the zone of Russia’s strategic interests.”

U.S. president George Bush demanded that the Russian government reverse course and guarantee the “territorial integrity” of Georgia.

On top of the troops it has in South Ossetia and Abkhazia, Moscow says it will keep 2,500 soldiers in the rest of Georgia. It also says it will set up 18 checkpoints in a “buffer zone” around the two regions, meaning that a large swath of Georgia will continue under

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## Workers protest killing of immigrant by Maryland cop



Militant/Seth Dellinger

August 20 rally in Langley Park, Maryland, against killing of immigrant worker Manuel de Jesús Espina by Prince George’s County cop. Speaking (center) is Dorothy Elliot, a leader of the People’s Coalition for Police Accountability.

BY SETH DELLINGER

LANGLEY PARK, Maryland—Several hundred workers turned out for a protest vigil at the Liberty Place Apartments here to demand justice for Manuel de Jesús Espina, a 40-year-old plumber from Guatemala. Espina was gunned down August 16 by Prince George’s County cop Steven Jackson as Espina was celebrating his birthday in his apartment.

According to witnesses Jackson beat Espina, beat him with a baton, and then shot him in the stomach.

Jackson, who was moonlighting in uniform as a security guard, said Espina had an open alcoholic beverage.

The cops said that Jackson feared for his life, first claiming that Espina, who was unarmed, had tried to take his gun. Later in a media statement they changed their story to say that Espina had tried to take his baton. Espina’s son, Manuel de Jesús Espina Jacome, confronted Jackson over the killing and tried to resuscitate his father. He was arrested and charged

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## N.Y. state cuts hit workers, protect wealthy bondholders

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

NEW YORK—After a one-day emergency session August 19, the New York State Assembly and Senate overwhelmingly approved \$1 billion in cuts to social programs that affect working people the most. On the chopping block was \$500 million in health and Medicaid services and a 7 percent reduction in funds for the City University of New York.

The legislators were called back into session from their summer break by Gov. David Paterson to reopen the state budget passed in April. Paterson said the state was facing a \$6.4 billion deficit for next year that in three years will balloon to \$26.2 billion. The governor said this crisis “may yet be as challenging to the American population as even the Great Depression.” Several weeks earlier Paterson imposed a hiring freeze and cut state spending by \$630 million or 7 per-

cent.

The cuts hit “every area that we could find that we believed could absorb some pain,” stated Sen. Thomas Libous, deputy majority leader of the Assembly. The cuts include programs

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# Farm workers protest ‘heat deaths’ of workers in fields

**BY JOEL BRITTON**  
SACRAMENTO, California—Some 500 members and supporters of the United Farm Workers union rallied at the state capitol August 18 to protest the “heat deaths” of six farm workers this summer.

Grape field worker Doroteo Jiménez told the *Militant* that employers don’t abide by the state’s rules to prevent heat stroke. He cited the death of his 17-year-old niece Maria Isabel Vasquez Jiménez, who collapsed while pruning grapevines in near-100-degree heat close to Stockton on May 14. She died two days later.

Maria Jiménez’s boss refused to summon emergency medical help right away. By the time she was driven to a clinic in Lodi her body temperature had reached 108 degrees. She was revived several times but never regained consciousness.

Doroteo Jiménez asked the United Farm Workers (UFW) union to assist him and his coworkers in protesting working conditions in the grape fields. On the day his niece collapsed, workers had started at 6:00 a.m. and were given only one water break.

UFW president Arturo Rodríguez joined farm workers and supporters in a protest march in June from Lodi to Sacramento.

State of California rules require that bosses provide “enough fresh water so that each employee can drink at least 1 quart per hour, and encourage them to do so.” It further requires bosses to provide “access to shade for at least 5 minutes of rest when an employee believes he or she needs a preventative

recovery period.” Jiménez says that workers need to understand the laws that protect them but, he said, the bosses can’t be relied on to enforce the rules. “Farm workers need to be organized ourselves,” he said. Without the union, “we will never be united. With it, we can have more voice.” Jiménez was fired in June for backing a wrongful-death lawsuit on behalf of Maria Jiménez’s mother against West Coast Grape Farming and Merced Farm Labor, the contractor who hired the workers.

Following the rally at the capitol, farm workers were organized to visit members of the state legislature and urge them to vote in favor of a bill supported by UFW officials that would allow “mediated” representation elections. As the Associated Press reports, “bill supporters likened [it] to voting absentee. Workers would fill out a ballot to decide if they wanted to authorize a union at that point or make the decision through the tradi-



Militant/Joel Britton  
**Farm workers and supporters protest at Sacramento state capitol, August 18. Crosses represent 15 workers who have died of heat stroke while working in the fields in last three years.**

tional ballot-booth vote. “That would reduce the potential pressure that workers could face from growers as they walked into a voting booth, bill supporters said.” The Sen-

ate has now passed the bill. It goes back to the Assembly, which had passed it earlier, and then to Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger who vetoed two previous versions.

## 3 face trial in killing of immigrant in Pennsylvania

**BY JANET POST**  
PHILADELPHIA—Three youths from Shenandoah, Pennsylvania, have been ordered to stand trial for the beating death of Luis Ramírez, a 25-year-old Mexican immigrant worker who lived and worked in Shenandoah.

After a preliminary hearing August 4 a district judge ordered Brandon Piekarsky, 16, and Colin Walsh, 17, to stand trial on charges of criminal homicide, which could also include third-degree murder.

Also standing trial is Derrick Donchak, 18, charged with aggravated assault with a deadly weapon. He is accused of holding a metal device in his fist while punching Ramírez.

Ramírez had lived in the United States for six years. He worked in a potato products factory and picked fruit in the fields. He died of severe head trauma on July 14 after being beaten to the ground and then kicked in the head as he walked home two days earlier. During the attack, the youths allegedly yelled racial slurs. All three defendants are also charged with ethnic intimidation.

In the hearing, Ben Lawson, 17, who was with the accused during the beating, testified that the three had met at Piekarsky’s house the next day to create a lie about the attack. “We made up a plan that we’re going to tell the cops that nobody kicked him, that there were no racial slurs, there was no booze, and Brian [Scully] got hit first,” Lawson said.

Witness Eileen Burke testified that she heard Piekarsky yell at a friend of

Ramírez at the scene, “Tell your. . . Mexican friends to get the. . . out of Shenandoah or you’ll be laying next to him.”

Piekarsky and Walsh decided not to ask to be tried as juveniles, and will thus have jury trials in adult court. They each face a maximum state prison sentence of 20 to 40 years. The judge ruled out the charges of first- and second-degree murder, which could have brought life sentences.

A demonstration supporting justice for Ramírez was organized outside the preliminary hearing by Latina, a Chicago-based immigrant rights organization; Center without Borders; and the May First Coalition. Latina has also raised contributions to assist the fiancée of Ramírez, Crystal Dillman, and their children.

The Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund, a national Latino legal organization, organized a July 29 candlelight vigil in Shenandoah to call for justice for Ramírez. The group is helping to provide legal assistance.

## THE MILITANT

### Legalize undocumented immigrants!

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July 27 march in Postville, Iowa, against arrest of 390 workers in raid by immigration police.

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# U.S.-NATO operation kills 90 Afghan civilians

BY RÓGER CALERO

Despite widespread protests, Washington is defending a military operation it led in western Afghanistan August 22 that killed at least 90 people. According to the Voice of America News, “The Pentagon believes the attack legitimately targeted militants.”

But an investigation of the deaths by the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan found that 90 civilians were killed—60 children, 15 women, and 15 men.

While initially insisting that only al-Qaeda and Taliban forces were killed, Washington said August 26 that five civilians also died. Dismissing the civilian deaths, U.S. Lieutenant Nathan Perry said, “We believe those to be family members of the targeted militant Mullah Sadiq.”

U.S.-led “coalition” forces and Afghan National Army commandos carried out the August 22 raid in the

district of Azizabad, where dozens of villagers were assembled for a memorial honoring a villager who was killed last year. Local officials told the *Washington Post* there was no warning prior to the attack.

Under increasing pressure to address the rising number of civilian casualties resulting from operations like this, Afghanistan president Hamid Karzai dismissed two senior Afghan army officers involved in the Azizabad operation. The Afghan Council of Ministers announced August 25 that it would review current agreements with the occupation forces to facilitate better coordination during operations.

At the same time, Karzai’s top aide assured reporters that his government would not demand the occupation troops leave. “We need the foreign forces until our own military institutions are able to defend Afghanistan,” said Homayan Hamidzada. There are



NATO coalition war planes on patrol in Afghanistan. More than 3,400 people have been killed in Afghanistan this year as a result of U.S.-led NATO air and ground operations.

now nearly 70,000 foreign troops in Afghanistan.

More than 3,400 people in Afghanistan have been killed in the fighting so far this year. Afghan and coalition officials claim most of them are Islamist

insurgents.

Karzai has repeatedly warned the imperialists that civilian casualties are undermining their operations, and has called on the U.S.-led forces to instead focus on fighting al-Qaeda and Taliban in Pakistan. “The war against terrorism is elsewhere, and that’s where the war should go,” he said in April, according to the *International Herald Tribune*.

Meanwhile, Pakistan’s five-month-old coalition government broke apart August 25 when Nawaz Sharif, the main leader of the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz, left the coalition along with other members of his party. Sharif withdrew following the announcement by Pakistan People’s Party leader Asif Ali Zardari that he would run for president to replace Pervez Musharraf, who was forced out of office under threat of impeachment.

Zardari, who has emerged as the main political figure since Musharraf’s resignation, has made a series of gestures to demonstrate his resolve to fight Islamist forces. In a BBC interview August 24, Zardari said the Tehrik-i-Taliban, an umbrella group of the Taliban in Pakistan, should be banned. The following day the group was placed on the Interior Ministry list of banned organizations.

## Moscow to keep thousands of troops in Georgia

**Continued from front page**  
direct Russian military control.

While Russian troops have left some positions and no longer occupy Gori, for example, they maintain a stranglehold on the city. Russian forces have also constructed an outpost just north of the Black Sea port of Poti.

“Poti is not in the security zone,” Anatoly Nogovitsyn, deputy chief of the Russian general staff, told *RIA-Novosti*. “But that doesn’t mean that we will sit behind the fence and watch as they drive around in Hummers.”

The “security zone” is part of the cease-fire agreement that was forced on Georgian president Mikhail Saakashvili, with the aid of Paris and Washington, when the Russian army occupied close to one-third of Georgian territory. The accord does not call for removal of Russian troops from Georgia; instead it says they should withdraw to positions they held prior to August. It allows them to stay in a “security zone” some three miles outside the South Ossetia and Abkhazia boundaries.

### South Ossetia paramilitary forces

South Ossetian paramilitaries looted homes and killed Georgians while Russian soldiers stood by.

According to the *Moscow Times*, the plunder was still continuing in Kekhvi as of August 25. Every house in this Georgian town in South Ossetia has been burned down and most of its residents fled when Russian troops advanced in early August.

“This is not looting, this is trophies,”

## — CALENDAR —

### NEW YORK

#### Bronx

**Concert for Freedom of the Cuban Five.** Featured musicians include Danny Rivera, Victor Victor, Chuchito Valdes, Puerto Rican Golden Jazz All Stars, and special guest Danny Glover. Sat., Sept. 13, 8:00 p.m. *Hostos Center for the Arts and Culture, 450 Grand Concourse at 149<sup>th</sup> Street. Sponsor: International Committee for the Freedom of the Cuban Five.*

### WASHINGTON, D.C.

**March to demand “Free the Cuban Five.”** Sat., Sept. 13. *Assemble at 10:00 a.m. at Malcolm X park. March to the White House at noon. For more information: (917) 887-8710.*

Garik Meriyev, a South Ossetian wearing camouflage pants, told the Moscow-based daily.

The London *Independent* reported August 12 that hundreds of Ossetian “volunteers” were recruited from North Ossetia and given assault rifles and \$400 once they signed up.

Dozens of cars filled with militiamen traveled through the Roki Tunnel, which leads from North to South Ossetia, interspersed with a column of hundreds of Russian troops and tanks.

With the help of Russian troops, South Ossetian militia armed with Kalashnikovs took over Akhagori, a 45-minute drive from Tbilisi on August 16. The town made up of Georgians, Ossetians, Armenians, and a handful of Russians had lived together for years under the Georgian government, but now the Georgians have fled.

“This used to be our territory,” the captain of the South Ossetian forces said. “And this will be our territory in the future.”

Moscow hopes to maintain its chauvinist domination of Georgia and to send a message to other former Soviet countries with its easy victory, in spite of the deteriorated state of the Russian military.

### Moscow, Kiev naval fleet dispute

Moscow expects that Ukrainian president Viktor Yushchenko will pay attention. Yushchenko traveled to Tbilisi to show support for Georgian president Saakashvili and said he would ban Russian warships from returning to the Black Sea port of Sevastopol, in the Crimea region of Ukraine, where the Russian fleet is based. But the Ukrainian president’s order was countermanded by Yuriy Yekhanurov, the country’s defense minister, who later said the Russian ships could come and go as they please.

After the breakup of the Soviet Union in 1991, Moscow took the lion’s share of the Black Sea Fleet—81.7 percent of the ships. Kiev got the rest.

In 1997 Kiev conceded to a 20-year lease on the port with Moscow. Yushchenko now says he will not renew it.

The first Russian ship involved in the attack on Georgia returned to Sev-

astopol August 22 and was greeted by local pro-Moscow organizations. Most of the residents of the port are Russian.

On August 23, Yushchenko presided in Kiev over the first military parade there in years, including tanks, armored personnel carriers, and missile launchers, to celebrate 17 years of independence from the Soviet Union.

### NATO-Moscow relations on hold

After Washington protested Moscow’s “disproportionate” invasion of Georgia, U.S. officials warned there would be “consequences.” Washington and Moscow had been cooperating through U.S.-led NATO.

Joint projects have included occasional participation of Russian warships in NATO “counterterrorism” patrols in the Mediterranean Sea, sharing information on combating the Taliban

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## Maryland cop kills immigrant

**Continued from front page**  
with second-degree assault and resisting arrest.

Elvia Rivera, 23, Espina’s downstairs neighbor, witnessed the beating outside her apartment and opened the door out of concern for Espina. “He [Jackson] was hitting him very hard. He was screaming and hitting him,” she said, in an interview with the *Washington Post*. Jackson and Espina entered Rivera’s apartment where the shooting then took place.

Several workers who spoke at the vigil rejected police claims that Espina had attacked Jackson. They instead described a pattern of police abuse of the overwhelmingly Latino residents of the apartment complex.

One of the speakers to address the vigil was Dorothy Elliot, a leader of the People’s Coalition for Police Accountability. Elliot’s son, Archie Elliot, was shot dead by Prince George’s County cops while handcuffed in the back of a police car in 1993. “Who would have thought this would happen again,” she asked, “only six weeks after the death of Ronnie White.”

White, a 19-year-old Black youth, was

found strangled to death while being held in a Prince George’s County jail in June two days after being arrested as a suspect in the death of a Prince George’s County cop. None of the security guards on duty at the time have been charged or arrested in connection with his murder.

“We need justice, but we can’t wait for it. We have to mobilize in the streets,” Elliot said.

Elizabeth Zuniga, one of many local residents who gave examples of police abuse of Latino immigrants, described how she was harassed and then detained for trespassing while waiting for the bus. Another woman who spoke said she was sexually assaulted by three cops.

“They don’t care about us Hispanics,” a construction worker named Danilo Mayorga told the crowd. “They don’t protect us, they exclude us and take advantage of us.”

“My brother has lived in this country for 16 years and never had any problems with anyone. Why did they kill him?” Trinidad Espina asked in an August 23 phone interview with the *Militant*. “What happened to him has happened to too many people. So we are fighting for justice. And we won’t stop!”



# Washington expands spy agency operations

**Continued from front page**  
is not to arrest and bring criminal charges against alleged spies or terrorists. The operations are “tightly controlled,” said the Pentagon’s chief spook Toby Sullivan, and that their main tasks are “to gather information, to make something happen . . . to thwart what the opposition is trying to do to us.”

The clandestine program has already been functioning for the last two years on a trial basis and has “performed admirably,” Sullivan said. He refused to give any details.

The Army, Air Force, and Navy all have similar programs.

The Department of Homeland Security recently set up its own spy division. The department is “vulnerable to adversaries who seek information about our nation’s homeland defense programs, classified or unclassified,” director Michael Chertoff claimed in an August 4 memo.

Homeland Security, formed in 2003 from 22 different cop agencies, has 216,000 employees and agents around the world. All its employees must now inform the agency every time they plan to travel outside the country and report back anytime anyone asks for “sensitive” information.

Sometime in August the Justice Department gave congressional staff members a glimpse of new guidelines that would allow the FBI to open an investigation on U.S. citizens, spy on them,

and pry into their private records without even the pretense of investigating illegal activity or plans. According to the *New York Times*, the rules authorize the FBI to use “pretext interviews, in which agents do not honestly represent themselves while questioning a subject’s neighbors and work colleagues.”

Last year the FBI announced that it is overhauling its database so it can manage records from “more than 15,000 informants.” It is not clear if the snitches are all U.S. residents, or recruited by FBI agents in other countries.

An FBI document obtained by ABC-News.com in June 2007 admits an increase in “black bag” jobs carried out in recent years.

“The execution of covert entry/search operations usually requires the [FBI] to physically deploy a team of approximately 11 agent personnel full time over a period of time (usually at least 3 days) to the target location,” the document states. In 2006 each of the black bag unit’s 18 agents spent an average of 97 days on the road for the government-sanctioned breaking and entering.

In July, the Justice Department proposed revising the federal government’s



Militant/Eddie Beck

**U.S. government has long history of spying on and disrupting, labor, Black, and working-class organizations. Above, workers from Smithfield meatpacking plant, who have been fighting for a union, at 2007 Martin Luther King Day march in Fayetteville, North Carolina.**

domestic spying rules for 18,000 state and local cop agencies for the first time since 1993. The changes would give legal cover to cop espionage on groups and individuals, encourage investigations based on “suspicion” of aiding “terrorists,” and promote passing on files to federal agencies.

U.S. government spy agencies have a long history of infiltrating labor, Black,

and other working-class organizations at home and around the world; assassinating government officials and leaders who are not to the liking of Washington; spreading false information; writing poison pen letters; and using every trick in the book to disrupt any individual or group who stands in the way of the economic and political interests of the ruling class.

## Immigration cops raid Mississippi factory

**Continued from front page**  
\$250,000 fine.

ICE spokeswoman Barbara Gonzalez said the raid was the first part

of an ongoing investigation.

“We began getting indications that ICE was planning something about 10 days ago,” explained Bill Chandler, executive director of the Mississippi Immigrants Rights Alliance (MIRA), in a telephone interview with the *Militant*. MIRA is helping organize defense for the workers arrested, as well as aiding families affected by the raid. In addition to U.S.-born Black and white workers, many of the 800 workers at Howard are immigrants from Mexico, Panama, Brazil, Guatemala, Germany, and other countries. The plant is organized by the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers.

“We began to get calls from workers on the Gulf Coast and in the Hattiesburg and Laurel area that ICE was becoming more visible,” Chandler said. “Others told us that ICE was recruiting legal staff and judges in the area, another indication that a raid was coming.”

“We organized a series of meetings in the Latino community on the Coast and in Hattiesburg and Laurel, and volunteers went door-to-door with information to let people know what their rights are, to help workers prepare

for what was coming,” Chandler said.

MIRA is asking for messages of protest against the raid to be sent to ICE and to Mississippi Gov. Haley Barbour at [gov@governor.state.ms.us](mailto:gov@governor.state.ms.us).

## SWP presidential campaign tour schedule



Presidential candidate Róger Calero, center facing camera, speaks with participants in May Day rally in Los Angeles demanding legalization of immigrants.



Vice presidential candidate Alyson Kennedy being interviewed by a Georgia TV station April 1 at a truckers' convoy in Atlanta protesting high fuel costs.

### Presidential candidate Róger Calero

Aug. 28–Sept. 2  
Los Angeles

September 3–5  
Chicago

September 6  
Madison, WI

September 7  
Muscoda, WI

September 10–12  
Atlanta

September 13–14  
Washington, D.C.

### Vice presidential candidate Alyson Kennedy

Aug. 28–Sept. 1  
Twin Cities, MN

September 4–6  
Philadelphia

September 7–10  
Boston / Burlington, VT\*  
\*filing for ballot status

September 12–15  
Newark, NJ

September 16–20  
New York

September 23–26  
Seattle

**Get the Socialist Workers Campaign on the Ballot!**

STATE	STATUS
NEW YORK	PETITIONS FILED
NEW JERSEY	✓ ON THE BALLOT!
WASHINGTON	✓ ON THE BALLOT!
VERMONT	PETITIONING COMPLETED
MINNESOTA	PETITIONING COMPLETED
LOUISIANA	✓ ON THE BALLOT!
FLORIDA	✓ ON THE BALLOT!
DELAWARE	✓ ON THE BALLOT!
COLORADO	✓ ON THE BALLOT!
IOWA	✓ ON THE BALLOT!



# Australia: Communist League candidates defend Aboriginal rights

BY RON POULSEN  
AND ALASDAIR MACDONALD

SYDNEY, Australia—Opposition to the federal government's interventions into 73 Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory was the focus of an August 16 speak-out of about 100 people in Redfern, Sydney, organized by the Aboriginal Rights Coalition.

Robert Aiken, Communist League candidate for mayor of Canterbury in the September 13 local elections, addressed the gathering. "My campaign is getting out the truth about this intervention and the resistance to it. All working people have an interest in supporting this fight," he said.

Aiken is a meat packer and member of the Australasian Meat Industry Employees Union. Linda Harris, a sewing machinist and member of the Textile Clothing and Footwear Union of Australia, is standing for Bankstown City

Council as a Communist League candidate.

At the August 9 launch of the Communist League campaign, Aiken described the fight in defense of casual workers that is beginning to develop at Primo, a meatpacking plant where he works. The company, with a workforce of more than 1,000, also uses an agency that hires Chinese-speaking workers. The agency pays them \$2 per hour less than other casual workers at the plant and does not pay any additional allowances or overtime rates. Until the workers protested, it did not issue the required pay slips. More recently, some of these workers were not paid on time.

Some workers at Primo have been discussing how to use union power to protest this abuse of immigrants.

"As the mayor, I will champion these struggles by workers for pay and condi-



Militant/Ron Poulsen

Robert Aiken, Communist League candidate for mayor of Canterbury in Australia, addresses rally at August 16 speak-out sponsored by Aboriginal Rights Coalition.

tions, and demand that all visa categories that enable bosses to increase the exploitation of workers be abolished," Aiken said.

## Opposes 'antiterror' raids and laws

Harris told the audience at the campaign launch she was running for office in a working-class area that feels

the "heavy hand of the cops" on the streets, from daily harassment against youth of Middle Eastern, Pacific Islander, African, or Aboriginal appearance to several recent "antiterror" raids.

In February a criminal trial began against nine men who were arrested in an "antiterror" raid in Bankstown in November 2005. All are facing charges of "conspiracy to do acts in preparation for, or planning, a terrorist act," which can carry a life sentence.

In the guise of "fighting terrorism," Harris said, since 2001 the government has introduced laws, backed by both the Liberals and Labor, "aimed at curbing the rights of working people to organize and act in our own defense."

The Communist League calls for the repeal of all "antiterror" police powers and laws. Harris called for the release of the "Bankstown Nine" and the dropping of the frame-up conspiracy charges.

She also called for "the immediate withdrawal of Australian and all 'coalition' troops from Iraq, Afghanistan, and other theaters of the 'war on terror,' as well as all Australian forces out of East Timor and the Pacific."

## ON THE PICKET LINE

### Quebec Wal-Mart workers win union contract

MONTREAL—Eight workers at the Wal-Mart Tire and Lube Express Centre, members of Local 486 of the United Food and Commercial Workers union in Gatineau, Quebec, have become the first Wal-Mart workers in North America to win a union contract.

The pact, imposed by a government arbitrator after a three-year judicial process, came into effect August 15.

According to Local 486 president Guy Chénier, the three-year contract covers improvements in wages and vacations and establishes a grievance procedure. Wages will rise from the current minimum of Can\$8.50 an hour to a minimum of Can\$11.54 (Can\$1=US 95 cents). Previously workers were paid minimum wage and increases of 30 cents an hour were granted "randomly." Their wages will reach Can\$15.94 by 2010.

The union was recognized by the Quebec Labor Board in June 2005, but after delaying tactics in court by Wal-Mart the dispute was referred to binding arbitration.

The other 250 store workers at the facility are not in the union. Another Wal-Mart store in Gatineau is unionized but without a contract.

The UFCW is also expecting a decision soon on a first contract for 200 store workers at a Wal-Mart store in St-Hyacinthe, southeast of Montreal.

In 2005, Wal-Mart closed its Jonquière store northwest of Quebec City days before an arbitrator was to impose a contract there.

On August 7, the federal Supreme Court agreed to hear the union's case, which charges Wal-Mart violated Quebec Labor laws as well as the workers' "right to freedom of association" under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

During the arbitration hearings Wal-Mart officials argued that they couldn't change their "business model" and that if the wage structure was

changed they would have to close the automotive department.

There are 77,000 Wal-Mart workers in Canada.

—John Steele

### Municipal workers in Scotland strike for higher wages

EDINBURGH, Scotland—Municipal workers conducted a 24-hour strike in Scotland August 20 to protest a 2.5 percent wage offer over three years. The strike action by more than 150,000 workers, members of trade unions Unison, Unite, and Britain's General Union saw the closure of schools, leisure centers, libraries, museums, day-care centers, and crematoriums across the country. Refuse collection, street cleaning, and ferry services were also affected.

The walkout followed a 48-hour strike in July by municipal workers throughout the United Kingdom protesting a 2 percent limit on pay raises for public sector workers. The limit

was imposed by the Labour Party government in Westminster (*see article in the Militant, July 28, 2008*).

Speaking to some 500 people who attended a strike rally in Glasgow's George Square in the pouring rain, Carol Ball of Unison said "2.5 percent is a pay cut." Official figures put inflation at 4.4 percent.

Kath McLeod, a care worker in Rutherglen, Glasgow, told the *Militant* she had been "picketing since 6:00 a.m. in nonstop rain. They say we put up inflation but we have to cover our costs."

Davy Kerr, a driver for Social Services in North Lanarkshire, said that all the drivers at his depot were out on strike. "Our main concern is the three-year deal. Who knows what inflation will be in 2010. We want a one-year deal that matches inflation."

The day following the walkout the employers' umbrella group, the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, invited the unions to reopen pay negotiations.

—Pamela Holmes

## 25, 50, AND 75 YEARS AGO



September 9, 1983

On August 31, more than one million people participated in the funeral procession of the slain Philippine opposition leader Benigno Aquino in the largest public protest in Philippine history.

The massive mobilizations in the wake of the Aug. 21 assassination of Aquino reveal the breadth of the opposition to the U.S.-backed dictatorship of Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos.

On August 25, 500,000 people accompanied Aquino's body from his family's house to a nearby church so that more people could view the open coffin. Marchers chanted "Confront them!" and sang songs about their "enslaved country."



September 8, 1958

The United Socialist Campaign to elect Rev. Joseph P. King to Congress from the Second District [Chicago] won a resounding victory yesterday when the Board of Election Commissioners upheld his right to a place on the ballot.

In a desperate attempt to keep King off the ballot, the machine of incumbent Democratic Congressman Barratt O'Hara had earlier instigated two challenges of King's nominating petition as being permeated with "fraud." But Rev. King's case was so strong that despite its two-to-one domination by Democrats, the election board had no choice but to rule in favor of the socialist candidate. His campaign committee had filed some 3,500 more signatures than legally required.



September 9, 1933

When President Roosevelt was granted the power to reduce the gold content of the dollar by one half and to inflate currency the interrelation of politics and economics was clearly seen by the stimulation this act gave to the increase of the prices of commodities.

The commodities that the workers buy have increased greatly in price and average over 30 percent in many cities.

The apologists of capitalism are systematically propagandizing the general public to the effect that there is no inflation. The cost of living however, has gone up rapidly and consistently, and this is what the worker means by inflation, because this is how inflation is expressed in his every-day life.



# Equatorial Guinea

Continued from page 7  
nobón, with two flights a week.”

Airports in Malabo and Bata are also being upgraded, and a new international airport, with a runway capable of landing the largest passenger and freight planes, is under construction in Mongomeyen near the eastern city of Mongomo. In addition, the deepwater ports of Bata, Malabo, and Luba are being expanded to make possible further growth of the oil industry and developing international trade with Equatorial Guinea and the broader region. “The port of Malabo,” Obiang said, “will be the largest and deepest port in western Africa.” Electrification: a major challenge

In most of sub-Saharan Africa, less than 5 percent of the rural population has access to electricity, and Equatorial Guinea is no exception.

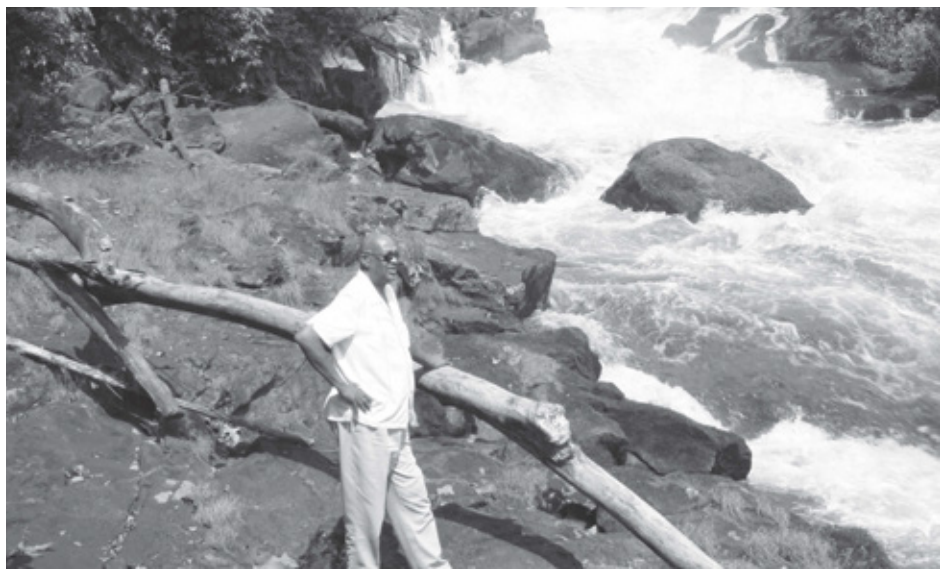
“Electrification is an elementary precondition if modern industry and cultural life are to develop,” notes Jack Barnes in “Our Politics Start with the World,” the lead article in issue 13 of *New In-*

ternational cannot be used in daylight hours, and for only a few hours in the evening.

In the town of Añisok in the north-central region, Dr. Amarilis Contreras, a Cuban physician who staffs the medical center there, told us that “when there is no power, we use kerosene lamps or flashlights to do our work. We sterilize our instruments with boiling water.”

Even the provincial capitals of Mongomo, Ebebiyin, and Evinayong have power for just 12 hours a day, from about 6:00 p.m. to 6:00 a.m. Malabo and Bata now have electrical generators operating 24 hours a day, but they are hit by frequent blackouts because of generating power and distribution networks inadequate to meet growing demand. We directly experienced all these facts more than once.

Along rural roads, women can frequently be seen walking long distances with enormous baskets of firewood on their backs to provide fuel for cooking and other household needs—another reminder of how vital electrification and increased productivity of labor are to the



Militant/Martín Koppel

**Militant reporter Omari Musa at site of Djibloho hydroelectric project on Wele River, which is to be completed in four or five years. The project will provide power for all of continental Equatorial Guinea and some areas of Cameroon and Gabon.**

ternational magazine. Electrification means being “able to decide whether to stop a meeting because it’s getting dark. To have the possibility to study and work comfortably after sundown. For children to do their schoolwork or to read to each other in the evening. Simply to pump water to village after village, saving countless hours of back-breaking work for every family, and especially for women and girls.”

In Equatorial Guinea, the reality of this challenge and its importance becomes apparent when driving through the countryside at night, even along the main roads. In each cluster of homes many are dark, while in others a single light is shining or a kerosene lamp casts a shadow in a room.

There is no nationwide electric grid; each city and town relies on its own generators. In most of the country, electricity is available only five hours a day, from 6:00 p.m. to 11:00 p.m., and even then many homes are not connected to any power source.

Local residents gave us one example after another of what this means for everyday life. Many students cannot do their homework at night, or must travel to some other home or building where light is available. Food cannot be refrigerated. Surgery and many other medical procedures cannot be performed in hospitals during the day, unless they have a functioning diesel generator for emergency situations, which many don’t. Computers, where they are available,

emancipation of women, as well.

One of the highest-priority development projects under way is a hydroelectric dam at Djibloho, near the district capital of Añisok. Harnessing the power of the Wele River, it is expected to provide electricity for all of continental Equatorial Guinea as well as areas

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Militant/Martín Koppel

**Graduates from National University of Equatorial Guinea awaiting August 5 graduation ceremony in Bata. At the time of independence in 1968, the country had fewer than a dozen university graduates; the university opened in 1995. Today there are more than 3,000 university-trained graduates in the country.**

of Cameroon and Gabon. It will be the single biggest step so far toward establishing a nationwide electrical grid.

Pedro Mba Obiang Abang, the national assembly delegate for Añisok district, drove us to the site where the dam and hydroelectric plant are due to be completed in four or five years. The lead contractor is a Chinese enterprise.

“The Chinese government has lent us \$2 billion to finance the development of the electrical system, including the hydroelectric plant,” President Obiang informed us.

A recently arrived 26-member Cuban volunteer brigade of electrical technicians is working with the state-run electrical company, SEGESA. In a July 31 meeting in Bata with several brigade members, José Luis García Chaviano, who heads the group working on the continent, told us that their job was to train Guinean technicians in upgrading the electrical infrastructure and administering the distribution system. As in many countries where working people lack electricity, there is no centralized control over its distribution, and jerry-rigged extensions and hook-ups run everywhere, with the safety problems, fire hazards, and accidental deaths by electrocution such practices entail.

“The system of underground electrical cables here in Bata is high-quality, but the foreign companies that built it left without leaving the plans and diagrams. Nor did they provide training in maintenance or safety,” said Ricardo

García, one of the Cuban electricians. “We are training technicians in maintenance, without which the equipment will be damaged more and more.”

“Our priority is people’s safety and health,” insisted Wilfredo Arbelo. “We train everyone in safe methods, from the managers to the workers, including the most basic steps such as wearing helmets and gloves.”

### Expansion of university system

Expansion of the National University of Equatorial Guinea (UNGE) was another of the notable changes of the last three years. The university was founded in 1995, soon after the discovery of oil.

“You cannot have development without skilled cadres,” Obiang said. “That is why we had to create the national university.” Noting that many at the time thought it was an adventure for a small underdeveloped country like Equatorial Guinea to establish its own university, he continued, “We now have 3,000 trained graduates.”

On August 5, another 102 students graduated from the National University of Equatorial Guinea, receiving degrees in agronomy, teaching, humanities, engineering, environmental sciences, medicine, and other fields. María Jesús Nkara, director of academic affairs, reported that the university now has 2,275 students—double the number from three years ago. To increase the capacity, two new campus facilities are being built,

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# Legalize undocumented workers!

The arrest of nearly 600 immigrant workers August 25 in Laurel, Mississippi, is the largest single-site immigration raid in U.S. history—one and a half times the number arrested at the Agriprocessors plant in Postville, Iowa, in May.

We should emulate the example of working people in Iowa who immediately took to the streets in response to the Postville raid, protesting outside the Cattle Congress fairground where workers were first held and joining two marches in Waterloo and Postville. They demanded: free all those detained, stop the raids, legalization for all immigrant workers now!

The U.S. ruling class wants to intimidate workers, not cut off the flow of immigrant labor, which they desperately need to maintain their competitive edge against their imperialist rivals. Taking advantage of rising U.S. unemployment to scapegoat immigrants, they try to convince U.S.-born workers that “illegal aliens” are stealing “American” jobs.

That is a bald-faced lie. The massive May Day mobilizations for legalization of immigrant workers, and the fights for unionization and better working con-

ditions led by these workers in garment shops, coal mines, and meatpacking plants strengthen the fighting space for all workers.

The attacks on immigrant workers: more raids, criminal charges on frame-up accusations of “identity theft,” and stepped-up police harassment and border detentions are an attack on the entire working class.

The raids and scapegoating go hand in hand with new measures to give the FBI, the U.S. armed forces, and local cop agencies a freer hand in spying on and disrupting unions, Black organizations, working-class political parties, and all those who refuse to go along with the injustices, indignities, and dehumanizing effects of capitalism.

The only way we can build strong, fighting unions is by refusing to allow the bosses to divide us and by rejecting the attempts to convince us that there are “American” jobs for “American workers.” There are just jobs, and workers need to stand together to fight for higher wages and better working conditions no matter what side of the border we happen to have been born on.

## Moscow keeps troops in Georgia

Continued from page 3

in Afghanistan, and developing anti-missile technology.

At U.S. insistence the planned Russia-NATO naval exercise in the Pacific Ocean with U.S., British, and French participation was cancelled. Washington also barred Moscow from a joint “anti-terrorist” operation called Active Endeavor.

The Russian government announced that it intends to freeze all military cooperation with NATO. One casualty: a not yet implemented April agreement that would allow supplies and equipment to U.S.-led forces

in Afghanistan to pass through Russia and former Soviet republics in Central Asia. Currently 70 percent of the supplies come from Pakistan via the Khyber Pass and much of the rest through Russian airspace.

A U.S. Navy destroyer carrying about 55 tons of baby food, diapers, milk, toilet paper, paper plates, and bottled water reached Georgia’s Black Sea port of Batumi August 24. Washington has sent several ships and planes with humanitarian aid to Georgia over the last several weeks. The U.S. embassy in Tbilisi said that on August 27 U.S. ships with aid will dock at Poti, which is under Russian control.

## Changes in Equatorial Guinea

Continued from page 8

one in Malabo and another in Bata.

Nkara drew attention to the fact that 42 percent of the university students are women. To applause from the audience, she added that it is gratifying that a small but growing number of graduates from the school of technical engineering are female and now work for the electric company, “doing the same work as the men, including climbing ladders and electric poles.”

Addressing the graduating class, President Obiang noted that when Equatorial Guinea gained independence 40 years ago, it had fewer than a dozen university graduates. Trinidad Morgades, today UNGE vice rector of the Malabo campus, was the only Guinean with a university degree in humanities at the time. Those seeking university education had to go to Spain or elsewhere abroad to study, and few returned to Equatorial Guinea.

Knowledge of that history, and of what their graduating class represented for the future of their country, filled the students and faculty with evident pride.

“We had to work very hard at the medical school,” said Tecla Mangue Mitogo, 26, as she waited for the

graduation ceremony to begin. “We had to learn to study.”

“Now I’m glad I will be contributing to my country as a doctor,” she said. “I’m waiting to find out what city I will be asked to work in.”

Students graduating as teachers, engineers, agronomists, and in other fields expressed similar pride in what their training meant.

“Of the 20 students who began together in the oil engineering course, only four of us are graduating today,” Marcos Esono Ndong told us. “Seven or eight dropped out after the first year, and another six or so the second. The course was too hard, and overcoming all the material obstacles was too much. Several others learned enough of the basics to get hired by one of the big international oil companies and left. Four of us finished and will work for the development of our country.”

(A second article will deal with the development of health care in Equatorial Guinea.)

*Mary-Alice Waters, Brian Taylor, and Omari Musa contributed to this article.*

## New York cuts hit workers hardest

Continued from front page

from homeless shelters to libraries, hospitals, nursing homes, and state universities.

As legislators met, the halls of the Capitol “were filled with chanting people opposed to any cuts in their health care program,” reported Associated Press. “People in wheel chairs protested outside the governor’s office.” Service Employees International Union Local 1199 issued a joint statement with the Greater New York Hospital Association expressing opposition to the health-care cuts.

The state has accumulated \$52.8 billion in debt, which is owed to wealthy bondholders who profit off sizable interest payments allocated to them in each year’s budget. Bondholders are allocated \$5.3 billion in “debt service costs,” a \$400 million increase from the

previous year. In addition, the budget projects \$2.7 billion toward paying off the debt principal, which rose by \$3.2 billion from the previous year. That’s \$8 billion in this year’s budget for the wealthy bondholders.

While capitalist politicians discuss what social programs to cut and at what pace in order to reduce budget deficits, payment to the bondholders is never on the table for discussion.

In another development, New York State comptroller Thomas DiNapoli is seeking approval by the legislature to place a larger portion of state pensions in higher-risk investments. State pension assets are now \$153.9 billion. Currently 25 percent of these funds can be placed in investments like private equity, real estate, and hedge funds that are at the heart of a growing crisis in the U.S. financial market.

## U.S. government weighs mortgage company bailout

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

Shares of the giant mortgage companies Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac reached 20-year lows in August as government moves to bail them out appear imminent. The two companies, which are privately owned but government-sponsored entities, hold or back \$5.3 trillion of the \$12 trillion total in outstanding U.S. home mortgages.

Fannie Mae’s market value has declined by 95 percent over the past year, shrinking to \$5.2 billion from almost \$40 billion. Freddie Mac’s stock is down 91 percent this year with shareholders’ value shrinking from \$22 billion to \$2 billion. Moody’s Investors Service on August 22 cut the two mortgage companies preferred stock five levels to the lowest investment grade.

The rising number of home foreclosures and defaults have led to huge losses by both companies, which reached \$14.9 billion over the past year. Freddie Mac reported that its losses from foreclosures and other failed home loans nearly doubled in the second quarter of 2008 from the previous three months to \$2.8 billion. Fannie Mae’s losses rose to \$5.3 billion in the second quarter from \$3.2 billion in the first quarter.

“The Treasury Department will have to step in soon to rescue to both agencies with an equity infusion because their stocks have shriveled to a combined market capitalization of around \$7 billion,” stated an August 25 *Barron’s* article. “Ruinous dilution precludes their raising even \$20 billion, let alone filling the \$100 billion in negative equity that we estimate exists in the combined balance sheet.” The article added, “The real test for Fannie and Freddie will come over the next five weeks when, according to Barclays Capital, the pair will have to raise and roll over \$225 billion of mostly short-term debt.”

A housing bill signed into law by President George Bush July 30 allows the Treasury Department to extend an unlimited line of credit to Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac and to buy their stock.

William Poole, former head of the St. Louis Federal Reserve, told the media that Freddie Mac is technically insolvent and Fannie Mae’s value may be negative next quarter. Former Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan has called for both companies to be nationalized, which would wipe out all current shareholders entirely.

Despite government moves to lower interest rates, tighter credit demands by these agencies and the banks have kept mortgage rates high. At the end of August a 30-year fixed-rate mortgage averaged 6.37 percent, the highest level in six years.

“Fewer people are willing to buy property, which contributes to a decline in housing prices and that leads to more foreclosures and higher losses, which hurts Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, which pull back by tightening their mortgage terms, thus continuing the cycle,” Robert Litan from the Brookings Institution told the *Washington Post*.

Government intervention to “save” these two mortgage companies poses a threat to a number of regional U.S. banks, noted an article in the August 23 *Financial Times*. They hold a large amount of preferred shares in Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, which would be wiped out. The collapse of these companies will also have serious consequences on the world capitalist economy. About one-fifth of securities issued by the two mortgage companies are held by overseas investors. This includes \$376 billion by investors in China and \$228 billion in Japan.

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