

THE MILITANT

INSIDE

Venezuela Int'l Book Fair
spreads access to culture
—PAGE 7

A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

VOL. 73/NO. 46 NOVEMBER 30, 2009

Foreclosures mount as capitalist crisis deepens

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

Despite government programs attempting to stem the crisis in the capitalist housing market, foreclosures continue to rise. The number hit a record high in the third quarter with more than 937,000 filings. So far this year 3.8 million notices of default have been filed, according to Moody's Economy.com.

The crisis goes far beyond those who have taken out subprime mortgage loans, which require no money down but have interest rate payments that increase. Millions who had signed up for adjustable rate mortgages (ARM) are facing similar prospects of foreclosure.

About 10 percent of all mortgages in the United States are scheduled to "adjust" in the next few years, with the numbers peaking in the second half of 2011, according to First American CoreLogic. Those loans are worth about \$1 trillion. Nearly 20 percent of the borrowers who have them are already seriously behind

Continued on page 8

'Health-care reform' aims to cut social wage

Bill imposes fines for those without plans



AP Photo/Paul Beaty

Crowded emergency room at Stroger Hospital in Chicago July 30. Stroger is a "safety net" hospital, providing minimal care to Medicaid and uninsured low-income patients. Such programs are targeted for cuts as part of "health-care reform" bill being hashed out by Congress.

BY SETH GALINSKY

The health-care reform bill passed by the U.S. House of Representatives, like its counterpart in the Senate, contains new attacks on the rights and social wage of working people.

The House version narrowly passed November 7 by a vote of 220 to 215. One Republican, Anh Cao from New

Orleans, voted for it. To become law the Senate must approve a bill, and the two versions would have to be reconciled and voted on again.

The keystone of the nearly 2,000-page bill is the health-care "mandate," which requires all U.S. citizens and legal residents to have health insurance. Those who can't afford to buy insurance at the going rate would be eligible for government subsidies. Anyone still without insurance would be forced to pay a fine.

Under the proposed law a "Health
Continued on page 3

Washington prepares new moves against Iran

BY CINDY JAQUITH

November 16—As relations between Washington and Tehran deteriorate, the Iranian government is shifting its tone on President Barack Obama, whose election it welcomed. Moscow, meanwhile, has signaled its willingness to back further actions against Iran if it continues to enrich uranium for its nuclear program.

Washington and the imperialist powers in Europe have demanded Tehran cease enriching uranium, charging it is doing so to build an atomic bomb. Tehran denies this, saying it will use the uranium as fuel for peaceful nuclear energy purposes.

Negotiators for the Iranian government met in Geneva in October with representatives of the United States, United Kingdom, Germany, France, Russia, China, and the UN's International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). Tehran was presented with a demand that it ship about 70 percent of its enriched uranium to Russia and France for further enrichment and processing. The remaining 30 percent of the uranium Iran would have on hand would not be enough to make a nuclear bomb.

On November 12, with a month
Continued on page 8

White House stalls on troop decision for Afghanistan war

BY BEN JOYCE

As President Barack Obama continues to stall on a decision about how many additional troops, if any, to send to the U.S.-led war in Afghanistan, debate within his administration sharpens.

After days of media leaks from the

White House that it was considering sending up to 40,000 troops, Obama's ambassador to Afghanistan said that he had reservations about the wisdom of that course.

The debate on troop deployment comes as Washington is rethinking
Continued on page 6

N.Y.: Court upholds conviction of Lynne Stewart



AP Photo/Mary Altaffer

Lynne Stewart, center, with supporters across street from federal courthouse in Manhattan November 17 after appeals court upheld her conviction on frame-up "conspiracy" charges and ordered judge to consider longer sentence. Stewart had been lawyer for Sheik Omar Abdel-Rahman, convicted in 1996 for "seditious conspiracy." See article on page 4.

'Militant' subscription drive success: wins 2,008 readers

BY NORTON SANDLER
AND TOM BAUMANN

November 18—Juan, a meat packer who works below the kill floor at Dakota Premium Foods in St. Paul, Minnesota, got his subscription to the *Militant* today at the union meeting, reports Frank Forrestal. With that subscription on the final day of the drive, 30 work-

ers in the plant became readers of the socialist newsweekly over the course of the eight-week subscription campaign.

Supporters of the *Militant* in cities around the world made an extra push to ensure that the goal of 2,000 readers was met. With the campaign short of the goal early today by seven, in the final hours 15 subscriptions were gotten for a total of 2,008.

Two teams of *Militant* supporters in
Continued on page 3

Party-building fund bursts over top at \$100,000

BY JAMES HARRIS

Congratulations to the supporters of the party-building fund for the Socialist Workers Party. With \$100,169 contributed the fund has exceeded its \$95,000 goal.

The purpose of the fund is to aid the Socialist Workers Party in reaching out to workers, farmers, and young people. Workers worldwide are living through the initial stages of a great
Continued on page 4

Also Inside:

Bay Area hotel workers strike for new contract	2
Nearly 50 million lack adequate food in U.S.	2
Five Guantánamo inmates to be tried in N.Y. for 9/11	4
N.Y. campus press covers socialist's bid for office	5

Bay Area hotel workers strike for new contract

BY BETSEY STONE

SAN FRANCISCO—Chants of “No contract, no peace” echoed through the downtown area here November 13. Hundreds of hotel workers and their supporters picketed outside the Palace Hotel, where a lavish reception celebrating its 100th anniversary was taking place.

The Palace Hotel is owned by Starwood Corporation. According to an information flyer from UNITE HERE, the union that represents the workers, Starwood registered \$1.9 billion in profits from 2006 to 2008. In the first nine months of this year the company has raked in \$180 million in profits and its stock price has risen 85 percent.

The picket action came on the heels of a three-day walkout by Palace Hotel workers, who are fighting demands by San Francisco hotel owners for increased workloads through combining jobs and that workers pay higher amounts for health care. The union is asking for a 1.5 percent pay increase in order to cover health-care and pension costs.

Kaiser Permanente, which covers most UNITE HERE Local 2 members, estimates that costs for health-care coverage will rise by 30 percent over the next three years, reported the *New York Times*.

The strike was one of a number of recent actions by members of the union, whose contract ran out in August.

On October 22, with hotel owners refusing to budge from their take-back demands, more than 3,000 Local 2 members voted by a 92 percent

margin to authorize strikes against 31 of the city’s hotels. The union’s 125-member bargaining committee was given authority to call strikes.

Among the pickets at the Palace Hotel was Adrian Henriquez, a bartender at the Holiday Inn. “The hotels are trying to take back what they failed to get in 2004,” he said. Henriquez was referring to the union’s fight between 2004 and 2006 that turned back employer demands for increased health-care premiums and a two-tier system of health benefits. At that time the union negotiated with owners of the downtown hotels as a group. This time UNITE HERE is bargaining with the hotel chains separately.

“The hotel owners are crying that they are not making enough money,” said Esther Dominguez, who has worked 33 years as a housekeeper. “Yes, the economy is bad today. But the hotels are making money. We cannot afford these extra payments for medical care. They can. They should pay.”



Militant/Betsey Stone
Hotel workers picket Palace Hotel in San Francisco November 12 as part of three-day walkout to protest bosses’ demands that they pay more for health care and take on increased workloads.

Nearly 50 million lack adequate food in U.S.

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

More than 49 million working people in the United States lacked access to adequate food last year, the largest number since the government started keeping track of “food insecurity” 14 years ago. This is an increase of 4 percent from the previous year, according to a report issued by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA).

The report, which is based on Census Bureau surveys conducted in December 2008, said that nearly 17 million children—more than one in five—were living in households that lacked enough food.

The number of children who sometimes were “outright hungry” rose from nearly 700,000 to almost 1.1 million in one year, reported the *Washington Post*.

Nearly 15 percent of people of all ages did not consistently have adequate food last year, compared with about 11 percent in 2007. The *Post* called this “the greatest deterioration in access to food during a single year in the history of the report.”

More than one in three single mothers raising children faced food shortages, the report notes. It also said that Blacks and Latinos were more than twice as likely as whites to face food scarcity sometime during the year.

Levels of hunger have undoubtedly risen further through 2009, with official

unemployment figures increasing from 7.2 percent last December to 10.2 percent today. The *Post* reported that “other recent research by the agency [USDA] has found that most families in which food is scarce contain at least one adult with a full-time job, suggesting that the problem lies at least partly in wages.”

Those described as facing “very low food security,” about 17.3 million people, had to skip meals, cut portions, or forgo food for a few days seven or eight months out of the year, according to the USDA.

Many have depended on visits to food banks, soup kitchens, and food stamps. More than 36 million people received food stamps in August, the eighth month in a row that enrollment set a record, according to Reuters.

President Barack Obama, who has promised to end childhood hunger by 2015, released a statement while traveling in Asia, saying the report’s findings are “particularly troubling.”

THE MILITANT

Defend workers’ rights

From coal miners on strike in New Zealand, to postal workers fighting layoffs in the United Kingdom, to hotel workers striking for health care in San Francisco, the ‘Militant’ covers these fights. Don’t miss a single issue!



Militant/Mike Fitzsimmons
Nursing home workers march for contract in Jersey City, New Jersey, October 17.

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The Militant

Vol. 73/No. 46

Closing news date: November 18, 2009

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Published weekly except for one week in January and one week in July.

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Correspondence concerning subscriptions or changes of address should be addressed to the Militant, 306 W. 37th Street, 10th floor, New York, NY 10018.

Periodicals postage paid at New York, NY.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to the Militant, 306 W. 37th Street, 10th floor, New York, NY 10018.

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Appeals court upholds Lynne Stewart conviction

BY CINDY JAQUITH

NEW YORK, November 17—A federal court of appeals here today upheld the conviction of civil liberties attorney Lynne Stewart and ordered the judge who sentenced her to consider imposing a longer prison term.

Stewart was convicted four years ago for “conspiracy to provide material aid to terrorist activity” and “defrauding” the government. She has been out on bail awaiting the outcome of appeals. As of this writing she remains free, but Pat Levasseur of the Free Lynne Stewart Committee said the judge could send her to prison at any time to begin serving her original sentence.

Speaking to supporters and the press outside the federal courthouse here in lower Manhattan, Stewart said she had done nothing illegal. The Court of Appeals decision “sends a warning to lawyers” to not represent defendants accused by the U.S. government of “terrorism,” she said. The ruling came four days after Attorney General Eric Holder announced that five 9/11 suspects imprisoned at Guantánamo will be brought to New York for trial in federal court.

Stewart was convicted for distributing a press release from an imprisoned client, Sheik Omar Abdel-Rahman. He had been sentenced in 1996 to life in prison plus 65 years, framed up on charges of “seditious conspiracy” based on alleged links to the bombing of the World Trade Center in 1993. In

Subscriptions

Continued from front page

Seattle brought home four subscriptions tonight, reports Mary Martin. “Two were sold to previous subscribers. The other two were from people in the neighborhood of our campaign hall who had told us to call back.”

Discussing with potential subscribers the *Militant’s* special Spanish-language supplement containing the introduction to the forthcoming Pathfinder book *Malcolm X, Black Liberation, and the Road to Workers Power*, by Jack Barnes, national secretary of the Socialist Workers Party, has been a boost in the final week. In several areas across the United States distributors sold more than 20 subscriptions this past week.

Highlights from the final week include a report from Dave Ferguson in Atlanta where supporters of the *Militant* sold 20 subscriptions—14 of them in trailer parks in nearby Mableton, an area where many Mexican-born workers live.

In Philadelphia 21 subscriptions were sold over the last weekend, the big majority in working-class areas.

Emily Paul reports that 38 subscriptions were sold during the three-day Miami International Book Fair. A range of Pathfinder books were sold

Continued on page 7

prison, officials had imposed draconian restrictions on Abdel-Rahman’s ability to communicate, give interviews, or even call his family.

Stewart put out the press release in 2000. It was not until 2002—on the heels of the 9/11 attack on the World Trade Center—that then attorney general John Ashcroft announced the indictment of Stewart. She, her Arabic translator Mohammed Yousry, and Ahmed Abdel Sattar, a paralegal for Abdel-Rahman, were tried in 2005. Much of the evidence was based on wiretaps of conversations between Stewart and Abdel-Rahman and videotapes of their meetings in prison, a blatant violation of attorney-client privilege.

The government asked for a 30-year sentence for Stewart. Judge John Koeltl sentenced her to 28 months. Yousry was sentenced to 20 months, and Abdel Sattar, who faced additional charges, to 24 years.

The U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit upheld the convictions of all three. By a 2-1 majority that court ordered Judge Koeltl to consider a higher sentence for Stewart, particularly if it was determined she committed perjury at trial.

Health-care bill aims to cut social wage

Continued from front page

Benefits Advisory Council” would propose a minimum plan everyone must have and that large companies would have to offer. Nothing in the bill would require insurance companies to provide that minimum level at a price that working people can afford.

Supporters of the reform say that it will insure 30 million additional people,

Coal miners strike in New Zealand



Militant/Mike Tucker

HUNTLY, New Zealand—“We are here for the long haul,” Bruce Berryman told the *Militant* on the picket line at the Rotowaro mine here November 16. Almost 1,000 coal miners, members of the Engineering, Printing & Manufacturing Union, are taking strike action for a new national contract.

The 160 workers at Rotowaro were locked out October 27. Miners at three other coal mines responded to the lockout by going on strike.

The four mines, two here in Huntly and two on the West Coast of the South Island, are run by the state-owned coal company Solid Energy or companies it contracts to. “We’ve been negotiating for seven months,” Berryman said. “It’s about conditions and the cost of living.”

—MIKE TUCKER

Judge John Walker dissented from the majority ruling, saying it did not go far enough in imposing a higher sentence on Stewart. Walker called the 28-month

term Stewart got “breathtakingly low.” Judge Koeltl has scheduled a consultation on the resentencing of Stewart for December 2.

ple, many through expanding Medicaid coverage to those earning up to 150 percent of the official federal poverty level.

As part of financing the project, proponents of the bill estimate collecting \$33 billion in fines from those who don’t obtain insurance in the first 10 years of the program.

The fines would be collected by the Internal Revenue Service, which has the power to charge those who don’t pay up with a misdemeanor. Penalties could include up to a year in jail.

The Senate version of the bill steeply taxes so-called Cadillac health insurance plans, that is, plans offered by some companies, often as a result of union contract negotiations, that provide more substantial benefits and medical care.

The House and Senate bills promise to extract billions of dollars in savings from Medicare and Medicaid by cutting costs, discouraging many medical treatments and procedures, slashing fees paid to health-care providers, and making health-care workers increase “productivity,” a code word for speedup.

A November 13 report by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, an agency similar to the Congressional Budget Office, notes that if payments are reduced, some hospitals and doctors will refuse to accept Medicare patients.

Obama: ‘Take painkillers’

Answering charges in June that the reform would mean some treatments would not be available, President Barack Obama said, “Maybe you’re better off not having the surgery, but taking the painkiller.”

A November 12 column in the *Wall Street Journal* by Andrew Heinze, who describes himself as a writer and “registered Democrat living in New York City,” said that after seeing the

health-care reform bill, “I’m preparing for life without health insurance.”

He notes that he currently cannot afford even the least expensive HMO plan, about \$13,000 a year for an individual. So instead he has opted for a hospitalization plan—also known as catastrophic insurance because it pays for almost nothing except a major medical emergency. Heinze’s plan covers only hospital expenses, not doctors’ fees.

Heinze argues that if he has to pay a fine for not buying the required plan, he might not even be able to afford the bare bones catastrophe insurance.

What will ‘minimum’ plans cover?

Exactly what medical services the minimum required plan would include, and how large a deductible workers may have to pay before the insurance kicks in, won’t be set until after the bill becomes law. Some plans currently offered by companies large and small, exclude coverage for routine medical checkups, mammograms, physical therapy, and mental health.

The debate over a “public option,” a government-owned and run insurance, received widespread publicity after it was included at the last minute in the House bill. The text says that premiums would be set to “fully finance” the cost of medical treatment under the plan.

Under the main versions of the bills currently in Congress, insurance companies will still be allowed to charge higher fees to smokers and the elderly.

Whether some version of health-care reform is passed or not, capitalist corporations will continue to rake in profits. Already in the last year, pharmaceutical companies have jacked up the prices of brand-name prescription drugs by more than 9 percent.

'Militant' Subscription Drive			
Sept. 12 – Nov. 17, 2009			
Final Results			
Country	Quota	Sold	%
UNITED STATES			
Seattle**	100	111	111%
Philadelphia	75	80	107%
Des Moines, IA	110	116	105%
New York	230	242	105%
Twin Cities, MN*	145	152	105%
Washington, D.C.	100	104	104%
Chicago*	115	118	103%
Newark, NJ*	80	82	103%
Los Angeles*	105	107	102%
Miami	110	112	102%
Atlanta	130	132	102%
Boston*	65	65	100%
Houston	90	85	94%
San Francisco	150	126	84%
Other		5	
TOTAL	1605	1624	101%
UNITED KINGDOM			
Edinburgh	35	40	114%
London**	90	97	108%
TOTAL	125	137	110%
Canada	100	85	85%
New Zealand	65	67	103%
Australia	50	50	100%
Sweden*	30	32	107%
Total	1975	2008	100%
Should be	2000	2000	100%
*increased quota **increased quota twice			

5 Guantánamo inmates to be tried in N.Y. for 9/11

BY CINDY JAQUITH

The announcement November 13 by Attorney General Eric Holder that five 9/11 suspects will be tried in a civilian court in New York City has provoked sharp debate among capitalist politicians.

Holder said the Justice Department intends to try five men accused of “conspiring to commit the 9/11 attacks” in a federal court “just blocks from where the twin towers stood.” They are Khalid Sheikh Mohammed, Walid Bin Attash, Ramzi Bin al-Shibh, Ali Abdul-Aziz Ali, and Mustafa Ahmad al-Hawsawi.

During interrogations while in detention, Mohammed was subjected to waterboarding 183 times. Waterboarding involves pouring water over the prisoner’s face, which is covered with some sort of cloth or cellophane, while the prisoner is bound to an inclined board. The practice is meant to simulate drowning. That method of torture and other examples of abuse of prisoners at Guantánamo discred-

ited the U.S. government around the world, leading the majority of U.S. rulers to conclude the camp was a political liability. President Barack Obama pledged he would close the prison within a year of taking office.

Democrats have argued that in order to more effectively fight terrorism, measures carried out under President George W. Bush—many considered to be torture—should be scaled back. Obama suspended the military tribunals set up under Bush that allow hearsay and evidence obtained from torture, as well as the withholding of evidence from the defendant. Five others in Guantánamo, however, will be tried in military tribunals, Holder said.

Republican Rudolph Giuliani, who was mayor of New York City at the time of the attack on the World Trade Center, sharply disagreed with holding the trial in a New York federal court. “This was an act of war,” he said on Fox News November 13. The defendants should be “treated as war criminals,” and prosecuted by a military tribunal.



U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York. Khalid Sheikh Mohammed and four other defendants accused of conspiracy to commit 9/11 attacks will be brought to New York for trial in federal court. The five are imprisoned at U.S. Navy base at Guantánamo Bay, Cuba.

Giuliani said he also disagreed with the Obama administration’s refusal to describe the shooting of 13 soldiers at Ft. Hood November 5 as an “Islamic terrorist attack.” “Why this administration has trouble figuring that out when the man yelled out, ‘Allahu akbar’ when he was murdering people, as a former prosecutor I find frighten-

ingly incompetent,” he said.

New York City mayor Michael Bloomberg, on the other hand, said, “It is fitting that 9/11 suspects face justice near the World Trade Center site where so many New Yorkers were murdered.”

Former attorney general Michael Mukasey said Holder’s plan “seems to abandon the view that we are involved in a war.” He said trying the men in a civilian court risks disclosure of intelligence secrets and would give al-Qaeda a platform to expound its views.

While most of those speaking out against the trial in New York are Republicans, New York governor David Paterson, a Democrat, said, “We’re still having trouble getting over” the World Trade Center attack. “We have still been unable to rebuild that site, and having the terrorists tried so close to the attack is going to be an encumbrance on all New Yorkers.” Paterson was flatly told by Obama some months ago he is not welcome on the Democratic ticket in 2010.

Secretary of State Hillary Clinton supported the civilian trial, but without enthusiasm. “I’m not going to second guess the attorney general,” she told ABC News November 15.

Obama told NBC and CNN November 18 that those offended by a civilian trial for Mohammed won’t think it’s offensive “when he’s convicted and when the death penalty is applied to him.”

Party-building fund goes over top at \$100,000

Continued from front page

economic depression marked by rapidly increasing unemployment. Those who do have jobs are working fewer hours, facing speedup and deteriorating, unsafe working conditions.

Workers are being confronted with the consequences of the dictatorship of capital and its drive to defend the interests of the wealthy bondholders, bankers, and industrialists. The Socialist Workers Party explains that working people need to confront the dictatorship of capital with a revolutionary movement that explains that workers must take political power out of the hands of the capitalist class to organize a socialist society that functions in the interests of the vast majority.

More and more workers are looking for answers to the roots of the economic depression they are living through. That has broadened the appeal of the fund, noted Dean Hazlewood, fund organizer in Los Angeles, where \$9,242 was raised.

“We had 57 people contribute to the fund here. The participation in the drive was broader this time than in previous years. Fund supporters also

got more contributions from coworkers on the job than in the past. We also saw an increase in participation from people who had been contributors but had not participated in the last several fund drives. The new political situation has brought them back around,” stated Hazlewood.

Joel Britton, the fund organizer in San Francisco, reports that \$13,506 was raised for the fund there. “We had 80 contributors this time. This enabled us to raise our goal \$500 above the one we had originally set,” he said. A highlight of the drive is that fund supporters in San Francisco were able to be on schedule every week. “The number of contributors is a real sign of the times and what is possible,” Britton stated.

Over the course of the drive seven areas raised their quotas above the ones they had originally set. Kevin Dwire wrote, “We started out with a

quota of \$2,800, based on what we had done in the past few fund drives. Then we raised it to \$3,200 after seeing the response the fund was getting. And then in the final days we ‘had’ to raise it again, to \$3,600, as the pledges and payments kept coming. By the end we went over that quota, collecting \$3,703. In going over the records, this is the largest amount raised in Boston in two years.”

“I think the response to the fund drive shows the confidence that people attracted to the party have as we respond to the growing economic and political crisis of imperialism,” continued Dwire. “They see the need to support the proletarian party as we use all our tools from the distribution of the *Militant*, to books by Pathfinder, to our election campaigns to put forward the need for working people to take political power.”

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Party-building fund Fall 2009 ♦ Final results

City	Quota	Paid	%
Twin Cities, MN	\$6,600	\$7,370	112%
Seattle*	\$7,800	\$8,509	109%
Des Moines, IA	\$2,400	\$2,610	109%
Houston	\$2,700	\$2,858	106%
Miami*	\$3,300	\$3,491	106%
Washington, D.C.*	\$6,500	\$6,850	105%
Boston**	\$3,600	\$3,703	103%
Atlanta*	\$8,500	\$8,701	102%
Newark, NJ	\$3,000	\$3,065	102%
New York	\$16,000	\$16,131	101%
Los Angeles	\$9,200	\$9,242	100%
Chicago	\$9,500	\$9,528	100%
Philadelphia**	\$4,000	\$4,005	100%
San Francisco*	\$13,500	\$13,506	100%
Other		\$600	
TOTAL	\$96,600	\$100,169	105%
SHOULD BE	\$95,000	\$95,000	100%
*raised quota ** raised quota twice			

N.Y. campus press covers socialist’s bid for office

The following article on the election campaign of Tom Baumann, the Socialist Workers Party candidate for Manhattan borough president, appeared in the November 11–24 issue of the *Envoy*, a newspaper at Hunter College in New York. The article, titled “From Hunter College to the Streets of New York: Hunter College Student Places Third in Race for Manhattan Borough President,” was written by the paper’s managing editor.

BY TRACY NEIMAN

Tom Baumann, Hunter undergrad and president of the College’s Young Socialists club, has taken politics beyond the campus.

Over the past months, Baumann successfully secured the Socialist Workers Party nomination to run for Manhattan Borough President, collecting over 2,000 signatures from Hunter College students and staff to ensure his place on the ballot. On Nov. 3, this past Election Day, his campaign culminated in 3,789 votes, representing 1.7 percent of the electorate, with over 80 percent of the vote going to incumbent Scott Stringer. Baumann placed third in the race behind Republican David Casavis.

“My campaign was a victory and I celebrate it,” Baumann said. “Tens of thousands took campaign literature, hundreds bought copies of our campaign newspaper, and scores were interested enough to purchase subscriptions to our press.” In addition, Baumann stressed that his final vote count represents a small but significant following, and is a “good base to work from.”

The election is over, but the campaign is not. “The fact remains,” Baumann emphasized, “that the only way to solve the economic crisis is for the working class to take political power.”

He stressed, “I will continue fighting along working people to advance their struggles.”

Though the election is over, Baumann still plans to address the problems he ran on over the past months. “The main issue we address is the fact that we live under the dictatorship of capital,” Baumann said. “My campaign placed immediate demands on the capitalist class to protect working people from the devastation in store for us.

Baumann cites government-guaranteed universal healthcare, guaran-



teed employment compensation, free education, and abortion rights, as being at the core of his continued campaign.

In addition, now that the election is over, he will be turning his focus to instituting a Cuban student academic exchange in the Spring 2010 semester, in which two Cuban students will be invited to tour the United States and speak at universities across the country. “It will be an opportunity

for students to hear firsthand from their peers in Cuba—a country that the U.S. government will not let you travel to,” Baumann said. Interested students may contact Baumann at tom.baumann@gmail.com.

This project reflects the heart of Baumann’s ongoing campaign, which cites the Cuban Revolution as an example on which to base our own working class revolution. Education and healthcare, Baumann emphasized, are both free for all living in Cuba. “There is not much wealth,” he said, “but there is no class that lives off the exploitation of others.”

He stressed, “There has never been a greater need for a revolutionary party to join these issues and explain how only with a socialist revolution in the United States could working people use state power to reorganize society from top to bottom, to meet the needs of the vast majority.

“The campaign has put me in contact with workers and young people who want to organize along these lines,” he said.

“The campaign has made me a more effective candidate and if asked, I would happily accept the nomination to run again.”

Missouri: UAW, Ford settle during strike vote

BY DAVID ROSENFELD

DES MOINES, Iowa, November 15—Workers at Ford Motor Company’s Kansas City, Missouri, Assembly Plant were in the midst of voting to authorize a strike when company officials announced they had reached an agreement with officials of the United Auto Workers (UAW) union.

Preliminary results showed overwhelming support for the authorization to call a strike at the facility, which employs 3,500 workers. No details of the settlement were available.

The strike authorization vote came in response to rising anger and frustration with speedup and unsafe working conditions in the plant. Ford management had recently implemented what they euphemistically called a “rebalancing” of the workforce to improve plant efficiency.

Plant worker Mike Gorski told *KMBC News* just what that meant. “They’re cutting jobs out on the line and wanting that work [to be done] by other people . . . and you’re just non-stop running. You don’t have time, like I said, you don’t have time to get a drink of water or scratch your nose. You’re just constantly running.”

“I voted yes to authorize a strike for us,” union member Moses Key told *Fox 4 News*. “I think the company is not treating us fairly and so it’s time. I think we’ve given up enough concessions.”

The strike authorization vote came less than two weeks after Ford workers nationally rejected a concessions contract by a wide margin. Seventy percent of production workers and 75 percent of those in skilled trades voted no. Ninety-two percent of workers at the Kansas City plant voted the concessions down.

According to UAW Local 249 president Jeff Wright, the company filed more than 200 disciplinary reports

against workers in the weeks leading up to the vote on the concessions.

Company and UAW officials had touted the concessions as necessary to keep Ford competitive with General Motors and Chrysler. The concessions rejected included a wage freeze for new hires, a ban on strikes over wages and benefits until 2015, job combinations, and more leeway for management to move workers around. Workers would have received a \$1,000 bonus in March 2010.

As voting on the contract was finishing up, Ford posted a third quarter profit of \$997 million.

25, 50, AND 75 YEARS AGO



November 30, 1984

WASHINGTON—Terrorist opponents of women’s rights struck again when bombs ripped through a women’s medical center and a Planned Parenthood office near here early on the morning of November 19.

At 6:15 a.m. a powerful bomb exploded at the back door of the Metropolitan Medical and Women’s Center in Wheaton, Maryland. The center provides women’s medical care and abortions. The back of the clinic was blown apart, and windows in the front of the building were shattered by the force of the blast. The two-alarm fire triggered by the bomb destroyed the clinic. Police estimated the damage at \$350,000.

Five minutes later a second bomb exploded at the back door of the Randolph Medical Center a mile away in Rockville, Maryland. Planned Parenthood has an office on the third floor of the building and provides contraceptive information and counseling there.



November 30, 1959

Shouting “Yankees, go home,” hooting and jeering at its “disclosures,” the Puerto Rican people gave the House Un-American Activities Committee the hottest reception of its infamous history. In fact, the witch-hunters concluded the hearings abruptly with four witnesses yet to go.

“The Committee’s effort to produce sensations met with laughter on the part of the crowded hearing,” reports the Emergency Civil Liberties Committee in a Nov. 20 release.

“Pickets marched and chanted outside. Forty outstanding citizens signed a protest which was carried as an advertisement in papers. Sixty-nine members of the faculty of the University of Puerto Rico issued a concurring statement, joining the protest, and political demonstrations against the Committee’s intrusion were held throughout the island.”



December 8, 1934

The first mass meeting held by the Workers Party drew twelve hundred workers as, winding up a week of conventions, the Party made its first public appearance at Germania Hall Sunday night.

Addressing the largest group of workers brought together by a political program in recent years outside the reformist and Stalinist ranks, representative leaders reflected in their appearance and addresses a cross section of the proletarian foundations of the Workers Party.

Vincent R. Dunne, one of the three brothers all of whom were leaders of the Minneapolis drivers in their victorious strikes earlier this year, told of the rising progressive movement in the labor unions throughout the Minnesota district. The need to include in the ranks of the revolutionary working class movement the decisive sections of the twelve million Negro masses was brought to the fore by three leading Negro delegates.

For further reading...

The Changing Face of U.S. Politics
by Jack Barnes

A handbook for those seeking the road toward effective action to overturn the exploitative system of capitalism and join in reconstructing the world on new, socialist foundations. Also available in French, Greek, Spanish, and Swedish. **\$24**

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Book by Chinese-Cuban generals discussed in UK

Explains Cuban Revolution's blow against racism

BY ÖGMUNDUR JÓNSSON

LONDON—Some 30 people, most of them students, attended a discussion on the Cuban Revolution October 19 at Goodenough College. The meeting featured presentations on the Pathfinder book *Our History Is Still Being Written: The Story of Three Chinese-Cuban Generals in the Cuban Revolution*.

The book tells the stories of Armando Choy, Gustavo Chui, and Moisés Sío Wong, who joined in the Cuban revolutionary struggle as teenagers in the 1950s and carry central leadership responsibilities to this day.

On the panel initiating the discussion were Stephen Fay, a graduate student in Latin American studies at the University of Nottingham, and Jonathan Silberman, director of Pathfinder Books in London.

“From the beginning Cuba’s island character was of second order,” Fay said. “It was never insular in that sense. There was a constant in- and outflow of migrants.” He pointed out that Native Americans from Florida, the Orinoco Delta, and other Caribbean islands originally settled Cuba.

After 1492, European settlers came mostly from a Spain that was “still in formation” and included many nationalities. Slaves were brought from different parts of Africa. “Each group made a contribution to Cuban identity, without giving up their own particular heritage,” he said.

Following Fay’s presentation a clip was shown from the award-winning documentary *Ancestors in the Americas: Coolies, Sailors and Settlers*, by Loni Ding. The film portrays the inhuman conditions faced by Chinese indentured laborers, also called “coolies,” who were taken from China to the Americas, as well as their resistance and unblemished record in the Cuban wars of independence against Spain in the 19th century.

Silberman explained that hundreds of thousands of Cubans identify with the story told in *Our History Is Still Being Written*. As teenagers, the three generals “were members of that generation of Cubans who stood up to the tyranny and oppression of the imperialist-backed dictatorship led by Gen. Fulgencio Batista.

“Working people in Cuba didn’t start out to organize a revolution,” he said, “but with each new challenge they kept

driving ahead. In doing so, they opened the socialist revolution in the western hemisphere.”

Silberman pointed to how today’s economic crisis and spreading wars are affecting the living standards, rights, and health and safety of working people the world over. “The clearer it becomes that this global crisis has barely begun, that this is the world that we’re going to be confronting for decades, the more working people and youth become interested in Cuba’s revolutionary alternative,” he said.

A lively discussion period followed the presentations. Questions included whether there had been immigration of Chinese to Cuba in recent decades, what challenges were involved in producing an “oral history” book such as *Our History*, and how it’s distributed in Cuba.

In response to a question on whether there was a Chinatown in Havana, Fay said that in recent years there has been a rejuvenation of Havana’s Chinatown, partly in relation to tourism. He noted that a layer of Chinese had left Cuba following the 1959 revolution. Silberman pointed out that the response to the revolution had been class-divided. As part



Militant/Ólöf Andra Proppé

October 19 meeting at Goodenough College on *Our History Is Still Being Written: The Story of Three Chinese-Cuban Generals in the Cuban Revolution*. Panelists, from left, Jonathan Silberman of Pathfinder Books, and Stephen Fay, graduate student at University of Nottingham.

of the revolutionary struggle Chinese-Cuban workers had organized the José Wong brigade, which helped to bring an end to gambling and prostitution in Chinatown.

“Do the generals describe themselves as Chinese-Cubans, Cuban-Chinese, or just Cubans?” Silberman was asked.

For many years, Silberman said, especially in the 1970s, there was little discussion on the heritage of Chinese or Blacks in Cuba. As an example he mentioned the Independent Party of Color, formed in 1908 by Afro-Cubans who had fought in the independence wars. The party was wiped out in a massacre of 3,000 of its members in 1912.

Until recently, this history was virtually unknown in Cuba, but in 2007 the Communist Party set up a commission charged with reviving it.

“As Sío Wong says in the book, the revolution transformed the lives of Blacks and Chinese-Cubans, but many challenges remain. The revolution is the most powerful instrument working people have to confront these challenges,” Silberman said.

“Today people are encouraged to be proud of their Chinese ancestry,” said Silberman. “For example, Sío Wong says he’s a Matancero [a Cuban from Matanzas] made from Chinese raw materials.”

White House stalls on Afghan war decision

Continued from front page

its strategy in the increasingly difficult war in Central Asia, which has now lasted more than eight years. In late August, Stanley McChrystal, the top U.S. general in Afghanistan, submitted a report outlining his proposed counterinsurgency strategy. The report says that while U.S. forces face “enormous challenges,” a new approach, including deploying 40,000 additional troops, is the only way to win the war.

The war has accelerated rapidly this year with more military and civilian deaths than any previous year. So far 290 U.S. troops have been killed in 2009 compared to 155 in all of last year. With increased use of aerial drone strikes by U.S.-led NATO forces, civilian deaths have mounted. According to a UN report, more than 1,000 civilians died in the first six months of the year and many speculate the pace has increased in subsequent months.

Currently there are 65,000 U.S. troops in Afghanistan and that level is set to reach 68,000 by the end of the year. With about 124,000 troops in Iraq, the combined force is at an all-time high.

Some administration officials are not convinced that the United States should send more troops to the front. Earlier this month U.S. ambassador to Afghanistan Karl Eikenberry communicated to Washington that he is dubious about sending additional troops given the instability and lack of credibility of the Afghan government headed by President Hamid Karzai.

In a meeting in the White House Situation Room November 11, Obama pressed Eikenberry and others in the president’s war council as to how long it would take to see results and withdraw.

“He wants to know where the off-

ramps are,” one official with knowledge of the meeting told the *New York Times*.

Eikenberry was selected by Obama as ambassador to Afghanistan in January. He served as the top U.S. commander there from 2005 to 2007, as well as heading the building and training of the Afghan security forces from 2002 to 2003. He is among many in Washington who have expressed concern over the reliability of the Karzai government, especially after recent elections marked by charges of fraud and corruption.

The *Times* reports that the White House is considering sending only 10,000 to 15,000 troops—far short of what McChrystal says is needed. The bulk of the additional forces would go to training the Afghan army, with a smaller number focused on combat with insurgents.

General McChrystal’s plan for Afghanistan has garnered support within some sections of the ruling class. U.S. senators Dianne Feinstein, a Democrat, and Republican John McCain have both expressed support for a rapid increase in troops.

An editorial appeared in the November 11 *Weekly Standard* by Frederick Kagan of the American Enterprise Institute and Kimberly Kagan of the Institute for the Study of War, two Washington think tanks, titled “The Cost of Dithering.” The authors call on the Obama administration to meet McChrystal’s recommendations on troop reinforcements as well as preparing Afghanistan’s infrastructure for “a

large and rapid surge of U.S. forces.”

Supporters of McChrystal’s request for additional troops often compare it to the “surge” of troops in Iraq under the George Bush administration in 2007. As a result Washington has made substantial progress towards its goal of setting up a stable regime in Iraq that will serve as a regional ally, at least in the short term. Compared to Afghanistan today, the military policy under the Bush administration is seen by more and more as a success for the ruling class.

The paralysis of the Obama administration in deciding on a course in Afghanistan makes it more difficult to get Washington’s imperialist allies in Europe to make further commitments to the war. Despite U.S. government efforts to get Germany to deploy additional troops, Berlin recently decided that only 120 more would be sent. There are currently 4,200 German troops in Afghanistan. They’re based in the more secure northern province of Kundus. The extra infantry company will arrive in mid-January.



U.S. Marine Corps/Sgt. Christopher R. Rye

U.S. Marines operate howitzer in southern Afghanistan

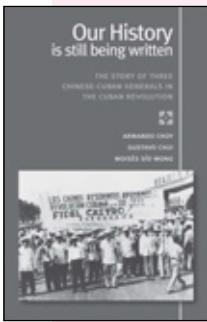
Our History Is Still Being Written

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

Through the stories of these three generals, we see how millions of ordinary men and women like them changed the course of history, becoming different human beings in the process.

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Venezuela Int'l Book Fair spreads access to culture

BY RÓGER CALERO

CARACAS, Venezuela—The fifth annual Venezuela International Book Fair opened here in this capital city November 13. Since September 30 the book fair has traveled to 200 municipalities in the 24 states of the country.

More than 200 exhibitors from 14 countries, including more than 100 Venezuelan publishers, are participating in this year's fair. It is taking place in the centrally located Luis Mariano Rivera-Los Caobos Park. The program includes more than 420 activities—forums, book presentations, conferences, concerts, movies, and educational activities for the thousands of children expected to visit.

This year the fair's honored country is Bolivia. Visitors can enjoy a large exhibit about that Andean country's music, dance, literature, and cultural traditions. The fair is also honoring the 50th anniversary of the publishing house Casa de las Américas of Cuba, created in the opening years of the Cuban Revolution.

Venezuelan president Hugo Chávez was the featured speaker at the fair's opening ceremony, along with Héctor Soto, the Venezuelan minister of culture; María Estela Vargas, Bolivia's vice minister of culture; José Luis



Pavilion of the National Book Platform of Venezuela. Fifth annual Venezuela International Book Fair opened in Caracas November 13. Fair has more than 200 exhibitors from 14 countries.

Briceño Guerrero, the honored Venezuelan writer of this year's fair; and Rosa Angela Orozco, representing the "Revolutionary Reading Plan," an effort by Venezuelan government

institutions to expand the population's access to literature.

"What is important for us is stimulating reading, not selling books," said Soto. He noted that in the last three

and a half years some 18 million copies of 2,600 titles have been published in Venezuela, contrasting that to the 374 titles published in the second half of the 1990s, under the previous government.

Chávez said that the main question is not just the production of books, but "to what end are we reading?" Paraphrasing Venezuelan historical figures, he said that reading was part of the long process of obtaining a political understanding of society.

The Venezuelan president called attention to Washington's moves to have greater use of military bases in neighboring Colombia as an attempt to use that country as a launching pad for military operations in the region. Early in November, in response to these moves, the Venezuelan government ordered the mobilization of additional troops to towns bordering Colombia.

The Colombian government claims that the increased U.S. military presence is aimed at fighting drug trafficking and guerrilla groups, and denies it is a military threat to Venezuela.

The same day the fair opened thousands marched in the streets of Caracas to denounce Washington's threats. Participants at the opening ceremony joined in chanting slogans against the use of the bases as the march passed near by the Los Caobos Park during Chávez's presentation.

Pathfinder Press has participated in Venezuela book fairs for the last six years, offering an array of revolutionary books and pamphlets. The Marxist magazine *New International*, with articles explaining the worldwide capitalist economic crisis and working-class resistance in the United States to attacks by the bosses and their government, has found a receptive audience among fair participants, as have similar Pathfinder titles.

In the first four days of the fair more than 150 copies of *New International* were purchased, as well as 97 copies of the Spanish edition of *Is Socialist Revolution in the U.S. Possible?* a booklet based on talks by Socialist Workers Party leader Mary-Alice Waters at the 2007 and 2008 Caracas book fairs. Fourteen fair goers picked up *Capitalism's World Disorder*.

Iran: Pathfinder book explains class society

A reader in New York City has sent us the following letter he received this month from a friend in Iran. The friend reports the response of a worker he knows there who has recently read the Farsi translation of *The Working Class and the Transformation of Learning* by Jack Barnes, one of some 35 Pathfinder Press books and pamphlets now available in Farsi in Iran from a number of publishers. More than 1,200 copies of *The Working Class and the Transformation of Learning* in Farsi have been sold in Iran since its publication in 2003.

Since the rise of demonstrations and other protests against the fraudulent June 12 elections in Iran earlier this year, 3,800 Pathfinder books produced by one of the Farsi-language publishers have been bought by working people, youth, and others there. The top three sellers are *Capitalism's Long Hot Winter Has Begun* by Jack Barnes; *The Communist Manifesto* by Karl Marx and Frederick Engels; and *Feminism*

and the Marxist Movement by Mary-Alice Waters.



November 14, 2009
Dear Farhad,

I recently talked with Javid about the content of Pathfinder books available in Farsi. Javid doesn't read English. He told me one of his favorites is the Farsi translation of *The Working Class and the Transformation of Learning* by Jack Barnes.

He said reading that booklet clarified for him, for the first time, how capitalism uses university diplomas as a basis to build the structure of class society—how this is used as a tool to convince workers to accept our low living standards and submit to the false idea that we ourselves are to blame for those conditions. To try to get us to accept that workers are responsible for our low standard of life.

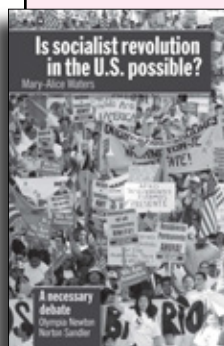
Javid also emphasized that through reading the booklet, he recognized the

source of the big difference—something he had always felt but could not understand where it came from—between the intellectuals who admire Pathfinder literature and agree with its content and other intellectuals; how they have a very humble and equal relationship with workers. Because of his job, Javid said, he knows many authors and translators, but they never treat him as an equal in their personal and intellectual relations with him. He said how outstanding it has been for him to experience the unwavering relationship of equals he has had with those who work with Pathfinder literature.

The important part for him is that those who work with Pathfinder not only identify with its literature but act on it as well.

Best wishes,
Soheil Farrokhi

For further reading...



Is Socialist Revolution in the U.S. Possible?

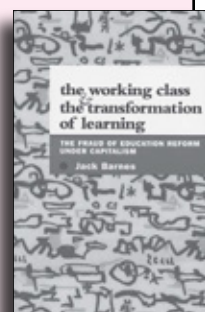
by Mary-Alice Waters

Waters explains why revolutionary struggles by working people are inevitable, initiated not by the toilers, but forced upon us by the employing class's crisis-driven assaults on our living standards and job conditions—on our very humanity. —\$7

The Working Class and the Transformation of Learning

The Fraud of Education Reform under Capitalism
by Jack Barnes

Until society is reorganized so that education is a human activity from the time we are very young until the time we die, there will be no education worthy of working, creating humanity. —\$3



Subscription drive success

Continued from page 3

along with subscriptions. Pathfinder book sales totaled more than \$800.

Supporters of the paper in Des Moines, Iowa, and Twin Cities, Minnesota, teamed up to sell 14 subscriptions in Worthington, Minnesota, an area where many Latino packing-house workers live. Twin Cities supporters added another eight subscriptions going door-to-door in St. James,

Minnesota. Seven subscriptions were sold to students at Iowa State University in Ames by a team from Des Moines that spent a day on campus recently.

A consistent highlight of this drive has been subscriptions sold to industrial workers. In addition to the 30 new readers of the *Militant* who are members of United Food and Commercial Workers Local 789, 24 workers at the American Apparel garment plant and the Farmer John meatpacking plant in Los Angeles subscribed during the drive. At the JBS Swift meatpacking plant in Marshalltown, Iowa 17 new readers have signed up to receive the paper.

Visit us online!

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Drop charges against Stewart!

Working people should join those who demand that the convictions and sentences against civil liberties attorney Lynne Stewart and her codefendants be overturned. The ongoing attempt by the federal government to jail them with draconian sentences represents a serious attack on democratic rights.

Stewart, translator Mohammed Yousry, and legal aid Ahmed Abdel Sattar were tried in 2005. Stewart was convicted of “conspiracy to provide material aid to terrorist activity” for distributing a press release from an imprisoned client, Sheik Omar Abdel-Rahman, who had been framed up on charges of “seditious conspiracy” to bomb the World Trade Center in 1993 and other city buildings.

Their trials were characterized by gross violations of their rights. Much of the evidence was based on wiretaps and video recordings of Stewart’s meetings with Abdel-Rahman in prison, trampling on the constitutional right to meaningful access to legal counsel and freedom of speech.

The moves by the federal government against

Stewart and the others comes as the Obama administration is planning to try five people accused of “conspiring to commit the 9/11 attacks.” Capitalist media outlets in New York and nationwide have been on a drive to use the controversial trial as a way to rationalize the U.S. rulers’ course against the democratic rights of working people.

As Stewart has said, these convictions and sentences send a clear warning to attorneys, legal aids, translators, or anyone considering defending those accused of “terrorism”: You could be next!

Wiretapping and other police surveillance and violations of attorney-client privileges are not aimed primarily at lawyers, but at working people. Many of the 7.3 million people in U.S. jails, prisons, or on parole or probation know how these attacks make it harder for workers and others to defend themselves from government prosecution.

Working people should join in demanding an end to these attacks on our rights. Drop the charges against Lynne Stewart and her codefendants!

Foreclosures rise as crisis deepens

Continued from front page

on their monthly payments, reported the *Washington Post*. Many will owe more than their homes are worth.

The Federal Housing Administration (FHA), the government agency that insured \$360 billion of single-family mortgages in the United States last year, announced November 12 that its insurance reserves had fallen below its congressionally mandated threshold to their lowest level ever.

As of the end of September, the FHA’s capital reserve fund fell to \$3.6 billion, down 72 percent from a year earlier and just 0.53 percent of the \$685 billion in loans the agency insures. Congress has mandated that the FHA’s funds-to-loans ratio must go no lower than 2 percent. The ratio was 6.4 percent in 2007.

The FHA and the government-sponsored housing agencies Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac provide about 90 percent of all new mortgages on housing in the United States. Fannie Mae in early November announced its ninth consecutive quarterly loss—\$19.8 billion—and for the fourth time requested federal funds to remain solvent. Both Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac were given a \$200 billion government bailout in September 2008.

Crisis in shipping industry

The contraction of capitalist production and the resulting decline in world trade are having a big impact on workers employed in the shipping industry, where a number of companies face bankruptcy and foreclosure. After Eastwind Maritime went bankrupt this summer, the company’s ships, which are a main mover of Chiquita Brands fruits and vegetables, were left stranded in open water and in one case no funds were provided for food and water for the crew, according to the *New York Times*.

The proportion of the container fleet remaining idle could rise up to 20 percent over the next year, according to Glen Lodden, a shipping analyst for DnB Nor, a Norwegian investment bank.

Banks in Europe, which have made more than \$350 billion in loans to the shipping industry, face the prospect of having to write them off as “toxic assets.”

U.S. bank failures

So far this year, 120 U.S. banks have failed, virtually depleting the funds the Federal Deposit Insurance Company (FDIC) has on hand to reimburse depositors at failed banks. As of the end of the second quarter, the fund, which insures \$4.8 trillion in U.S. bank deposits, had just over \$10 billion on hand, a 0.22 percent reserve ratio.

At a banking conference in New York November 10, FDIC chairperson Sheila Bair said the economy would decline further without increased access to credit, reported Associated Press. She said the agency’s upcoming quarterly report will show that the biggest banks aren’t doing much lending. Instead, they’re taking advantage of near-zero interest rates to borrow dollars cheaply and buy higher yielding assets like stocks or commodities. “It used to be you take deposits and you lend out money. We’d like to see more of that,” she said.

Meanwhile, with official unemployment levels at 10.2 percent, President Barack Obama announced plans to hold a “jobs summit” in December. Those invited will be business executives, economists, financial experts, and union officials, the president said. Obama did admit that not much will be accomplished there. It is “important we don’t make any ill-considered decisions even with the best of intentions, particularly at a time when our resources are so limited,” he stated.

LETTERS

‘Get the ‘Militant’ inside’

I was reincarcerated two months ago. An inmate brother slipped me this flyer [SWP campaign flyer]. I know brother Osborne. We were together on an agency job. He said he was standing for office. Showed me the *Militant* paper. Your paper gets passed in the library. When we have supper, some Muslim brothers and Puerto Rican brothers get it.

When my sister came for visitation today I said put some money with the flyer to get your paper to brothers inside.

If you see brother Osborne, I will check him when I get back outside. I have parole evaluation

in July. Peace.
*A prisoner
Pennsylvania*

Complimentary issues

I’ve received the two most recent issues of the *Militant*, along with the special supplement. I was

‘Militant’ Prisoners’ Fund
The Prisoners’ Fund makes it possible to send prisoners reduced rate subscriptions. To donate, send a check or money order payable to the Militant and earmarked “Prisoners’ Fund” to 306 W. 37th St., 10th Floor, New York, NY 10018.

very pleased. Thank you. I understand there is a one-time three-month complimentary subscription offer. In three months time I will have put aside enough for either a 6- or 12-month subscription.

Sincerely and in great appreciation,
*A prisoner
Florida*

The letters column is an open forum for all viewpoints on subjects of interest to working people. Please keep your letters brief. Where necessary they will be abridged. Please indicate if you prefer that your initials be used rather than your full name.

Moves against Iran

Continued from front page

having passed without Tehran accepting the Geneva proposal, Obama signed an order renewing U.S. sanctions against Iran for another year. The same day the U.S. government filed a federal complaint in preparation for seizing the land where mosques in four U.S. states are located and the 36-story Piaget Building in New York City, all of which are owned by the Alavi Foundation. Washington accuses the foundation of having financial dealings with Tehran.

Condemning both moves, Ali Larijani, the speaker of the Iranian parliament, said, “After a year of empty speeches and slogans, the behavior and conduct of this president in practice is no better than the actions of his predecessor.” Larijani rejected the idea of enriching Iran’s uranium in another country, calling the proposal “unimportant” and “irrational.”

When Obama was elected, Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad sent him a letter of congratulations. It was the first such letter sent by an Iranian head of state to a U.S. president since Washington broke relations with Tehran in 1980. Obama, promising to open a dialogue, then sent video greetings in March to the Iranian people on the occasion of their New Year, which were broadcast on Iran’s state-run media.

But in a speech in Istanbul November 10 Ahmadinejad declared Obama now had to choose between Israel and Iran. “The support of both Israel and Iran can’t go hand in hand,” he said.

The most powerful political figure in Iran, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, said earlier in November that when Obama was elected “the Islamic Republic of Iran decided . . . not to prejudge and to instead consider the slogan of ‘change.’ But what we have witnessed in practice during this period of time has been in contradiction” to Obama’s promises, Iran’s Press TV reported.

In another development, Tehran announced November 9 that three U.S. citizens arrested in Iran in July when they crossed the border from Iraq have been charged with espionage. The death penalty can be applied in cases of espionage. Families of the three said they were hiking and crossed the border by accident.

Debate in Iran

Inside Iran debate continues over what kind of relationship to seek with Washington and other imperialist powers. At Tehran University Friday prayers November 13, Ayatollah Ahmad Jannati said, “The flag of the struggle against America should always stay hoisted.”

Fars News Agency quoted Alaeddin Boroujerdi, head of the parliament’s National Security and Foreign Policy Commission, saying, “Iran is not to give any of its 1,200 kilograms of fuel to the other party.”

Iranian armed forces chief of staff Gen. Hassan Firouzabadi, on the other hand, argued, “We won’t suffer from an exchange of fuel,” reported Mehr News. He sits on Iran’s National Security Council.

The IAEA has now made a new proposal, that Tehran ship its uranium to Turkey for about 15 months, while Russia produces more enriched uranium to fuel a reactor in Tehran. An aide to Ahmadinejad said November 14 the president had made no decision yet.

With Russian president Dmitry Medvedev at his side during a November 15 news conference in Singapore during the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit, Obama declared, “We are now running out of time.” He said, “Iran appears to have been unable to say yes to what everyone acknowledges is a creative and constructive approach.” Medvedev added that while he still hopes Tehran decides to send its uranium to Russia for enrichment, “other options remain on the table,” a reference to his earlier statement supporting more sanctions against Iran.

Ahmadinnejad’s response came the next day, when he told the Iranian parliament, “Iran is a great world power whose strength is unlimited and on whom no other state would dare impose sanctions.”

In a further signal to Iran to retreat, Sergei Shmatko, Russia’s energy minister, announced November 16 that the nuclear plant being built with Russian aid in the southern Iranian city of Bushehr will not open this year, as had been planned. Completion of the plant, slated for 1999 originally, has been repeatedly postponed by Moscow as part of pressuring Tehran on its nuclear program.