

THE MILITANT

INSIDE

Black nationality forged in victorious struggles

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A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

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Unsafe practices by BP led to Gulf oil disaster

BY ANGEL LARISCY

June 2—As more details emerge on BP's unsafe practices leading up to the April 20 explosion of the Deepwater Horizon platform in the Gulf of Mexico, the ensuing oil spill has grown to be the largest in U.S. history.

The explosion killed 11 of the 126 crew members on board and unleashed gushing oil that has still not been contained.

After many failed attempts to stop the oil leak, BP began a procedure May 31 to contain some portion of the oil in a dome and pump it to a tanker on the surface. The plan carries a potential risk of increasing the oil flow.

Adm. Thad Allen, National Incident Commander, told a news conference there is no longer a hope of plugging the well, so the effort is now focused

on containment. The measure is a temporary solution until a relief well can be built, which the company says will take until August.

Scientists now estimate the leak at 12,000 to 19,000 barrels a day, up from earlier claims of about 5,000 barrels.

Hearings in Louisiana and Washington, D.C., have shed more light on the extent to which BP disregarded safety in its drive to rapidly finish work at this well to move the platform to a new location for more exploratory drilling.

BP was tapping an oil deposit reported to be the second largest in the world, a mile below the surface. The site also contains large deposits of natural gas.

In a speed-up drive for profit, BP
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Strikers win wage increase at Honda factory in China



Reuters/Bobby Yip

Auto workers in Foshan, China, May 31 outside Honda Auto Parts factory clash with officials of government union federation who came to urge strikers back to work.

BY DOUG NELSON

Workers at a Honda auto parts factory in China won a pay increase after a two-week strike that brought the company's entire operations in the country to a standstill.

About 1,900 workers at the Honda Auto Parts plant in the southeast coastal city of Foshan in Guangdong Province walked off the job May 17, demanding higher wages. After returning to work briefly, workers rejected the company's offer of a 55-renminbi (\$8) monthly increase and resumed their strike May 21.

"Regular" workers make about 1,540 renminbi per month (\$225). At the lowest end of the pay scale, several hundred "interns" are paid a few hundred renminbi monthly as a "living allowance" with no social security benefits.

Workers went on strike demanding wage increases of more than 50 percent, about 800 renminbi.

Other demands included annual wage increases and annual raises. The city's

legal minimum is 920 renminbi.

Work resumed at the plant June 2 amid government pressure and a company offer to raise wages by 24 percent. Negotiations are ongoing.

Workers are in a relatively good position.
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Massey coal mine where 29 died was 'ticking time bomb'

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

Massey Energy's Upper Big Branch Mine was a "ticking time bomb," said Stanley Stewart, a miner who has worked there for the past 15 years, at a congressional "field hearing" in Beckley, West Virginia, May 24.

Twenty-nine miners were killed in a massive explosion at the mine in early April, the worst mining disaster in the United States in 40 years.

Graphic testimony presented by

20,000 rally against anti-immigrant law

Arizona march defends undocumented



Militant/Naomi Craine

Demonstrators in Phoenix May 29 march behind banners for legalization of immigrant workers and condemn state law SB 1070. Participants came from many states.

BY DEAN HAZLEWOOD

PHOENIX—More than 20,000 people converged on this city May 29 to protest Arizona's anti-immigrant law known as SB 1070. They far outnumbered supporters of the law who rallied that evening.

The new law instructs cops to check the immigration status of anyone they stop who they "suspect" is not in the United States legally. It is due to take

effect on July 29.

In addition to Arizona, participants came from California, Washington, Texas, Mississippi, Maryland, Illinois, and elsewhere to protest the law. A van organized by the Providence New Student Movement in Rhode Island made the 52-hour trip.

"It was my first march," said Vanessa Martinez, who drove with four

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9 are killed as Israeli military seizes ships bound for Gaza

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

Challenging the three-year Israeli blockade of the Gaza Strip, a flotilla of six ships carrying aid to Gaza were halted in international waters about 75 miles from the coast May 31.

Israeli commandos boarded the largest of these ships, the *Mavi Marmara*, descending by ropes from he-

licopters in the middle of the night. Fierce fighting ensued. Commandos killed nine passengers and injured about 20 more. Seven Israeli soldiers were injured.

All six seized ships, carrying some 10,000 tons of supplies, were forced to sail to the Israeli port Ashdod. After a couple days of detention, the Israeli

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Australia: Rally defends right to choose abortion

BY JOANNE KUNIANSKY AND LINDA HARRIS

SYDNEY, Australia—Chanting “Support the Cairns couple! Drop the charges now!” 150 supporters of abortion rights marched here May 29. Organized by the Women’s Abortion Action Campaign, the march and rally reflected new support for the campaign to defend a young couple charged under Queensland’s anti-abortion laws.

In December 2008 Tegan Leach used the abortion drugs RU486 and misoprostol at her home in Cairns, North Queensland. Leach obtained the drugs from her partner Sergie Brennan’s relatives in Ukraine. In April 2009 police charged the couple under sections of the Queensland criminal code dating from 1899, despite common law decisions which made abortion widely available. A court ruled in September 2009 they be tried, though no date has been set.

The action was the first rally for abortion rights in New South Wales (NSW) in more than 10 years. “Time to get active!” read the thousands of leaflets distributed explaining, “now is the time as abortion rights are under attack both in Australia and overseas.”

A broad range of endorsers of the action included unions, student groups, and women’s organizations.

Eurydice Aroney from ProChoice NSW opened the rally, describing her personal experience of learning her family had concealed her grandmother’s death from an illegal abortion.

Outside state parliament house,

Penelope Sharpe from the Australian Labor Party and Lee Rhiannon representing The Greens, both members of the NSW legislative council, called for repeal of anti-abortion sections of the Crimes Act in NSW and Queensland.

The rally was a good start to building a strong united movement to defend abortion rights, said Australian Services Union organizer Gabe Kavanaugh.

Kathy Newnam from the Queensland ProChoice Action Collective spoke of the importance of stepping up national support for the Cairns couple. She called on everyone to work to build rallies in their defense as part of a national day of action on the Saturday before the trial, when the date is set.



Christine Smith

Supporters of abortion rights march in Sydney, Australia, May 29. Demonstrators demanded dropping of charges against couple accused of using RU486 to induce abortion.

Cabin crew workers walk out at British Airways

BY ÓLÖF ANDRA PROPPÉ AND ALEX XEZONAKIS

LONDON—The second in a series of five-day walkouts by cabin crews at British Airways began here May 30. This follows a strike in March in response to company moves to cut crew numbers from 15 to 14 on long-haul flights and other attacks on working conditions. The workers are members of the UNITE union.

Spirited picket lines are up at four locations around Heathrow Airport. At Hatton Cross roundabout, recently visited by *Militant* correspondents, picketers were waving flags and chanting slogans along with music. Many passing drivers beeped their horns in a sign of solidar-

ity. Chants included, “I would rather be a picket than a scab” and “I would rather lose my travel than my pride,” referring to flight concessions that BA has withdrawn from those taking strike action.

The walkout had been condemned by the previous Labour Party administration before the recent election and also by the new Conservative–Liberal Democrat coalition government. Since the dispute began BA has suspended 55 cabin crew members for alleged disciplinary offenses.

In December the airline bosses through the courts averted a 12-day strike by cabin crews. At the time UNITE joint general secretary Derek Simpson told GMTV that the union negotiating team’s proposed strike was “unusual” and “probably over the top.” BA won a court injunction against this latest strike action, but it was overturned in an appeal a few days later.

Visiting the picket line on her day off between flights last week was Carol Ng, a Hong Kong–based BA cabin crew member and chair of the BA Hong Kong International Cabin Crew Association. She said she was happy to be joining colleagues in London on their picket “demanding dignity and respect.” She described the ongoing fight over the past several years against attempts

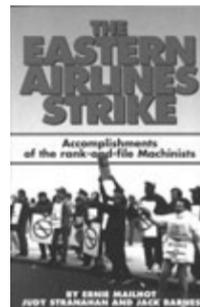
by BA to sack Hong Kong–based cabin crew workers who are more than 45 years old.

BA claims that 70 percent of long-haul flights and 55 percent of European routes are flying despite the strike. This was contested by picketers, who told the *Militant* that BA is using pilots and managers with some crew members to keep planes flying.

The last of the three five-day walkouts is due to begin June 5, after which the union may be forced by law to conduct a new ballot for further strike action. UNITE has said it may do so.

The Eastern Airlines Strike Accomplishments of the Rank-and-File Machinists

The story of the 686-day strike in which a rank-and-file resistance by Machinists prevented Eastern’s union-busting onslaught from becoming the road to a profitable non-union airline.



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Defend workers’ rights

As the capitalist economic crisis deepens, the bosses and their government are stepping up assaults on workers’ rights. The ‘Militant’ covers the response, from coal miners fighting for safety to British Airway workers striking against cut-backs. Don’t miss an issue!



Militant/Olöf Andra Proppé
British Airway workers in London on picket lines May 24 during five-day strike.

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Many in S. Korea oppose hostility against North

BY SETH GALINSKY

New measures taken by the South Korean government in collaboration with Washington against North Korea are proving to be unpopular among many inside South Korea.

Seoul cut off much of its trade with North Korea on May 24, after announcing it had proof that North Korea was responsible for the sinking of the South Korean warship *Cheonan* March 26. Forty-six soldiers died in the explosion, which Seoul charges was caused by a torpedo launched by a North Korean miniature submarine. The North Korean government says the charges are false.

North Korean merchant ships have been banned from using South Korean shipping lanes and South Korean president Lee Myung-bak has threatened to restart propaganda broadcasts along the demilitarized zone (DMZ) that separates the North and South.

The South Korean government is also planning further provocative joint naval maneuvers with U.S. forces over the next few weeks, in the same area where the ship sank. Adm. Michael Mullen, chairman of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, said that the exercise was part of a larger strategy to detect, track, and counter miniature submarines.

S. Korean business with North

On May 28 representatives of the South Korean companies that operate factories in the Gaeseong Industrial Complex in North Korea near the DMZ held an emergency meeting to propose alternatives to the sanctions.

“Our production activities have already been hit by the South’s latest measure reducing the number of employees by half as well as by the shrinking orders,” one businessman complained to Seoul’s *Korea Herald*.

More than 110 South Korean companies operate in Gaeseong, employing some 1,000 South Koreans and 42,000 North Korean workers. Operations are continuing there in spite of increased tensions.

Another businessman told the *Herald*, “We will urge the government to suspend its planned anti-Pyongyang broadcasts.”

Even though recent polls say that 60 percent of people in South Korea support tougher measures against the North, actions that could lead to war with the North are not popular.

The *Los Angeles Times* noted that a large anti-North Korea rally in Seoul May 27 was made up “almost entirely of people in their 60s and 70s. There were

widened veterans in full-dress uniform.” One speaker called for action to “knock off the mastermind, Kim Jong Il,” the central leader in the North.

But many others in South Korea reject actions that could lead to war.

“We must be softer towards North Korea; we shouldn’t push them to the edge,” Oh Seul Gi, a biology student, told *USA Today* while meeting her boyfriend, a South Korean soldier. “Instead of strong action, I want flexibility.”

The Democratic Party, the main capitalist opposition in South Korea, has accused President Lee of exploiting the sinking of the warship to bolster his party’s showing in local elections, scheduled to take place June 2.

Washington pressures North Korea

Last year, Washington pushed resolutions through the United Nations tightening draconian sanctions against the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, allegedly for conducting an underground nuclear test. Since then it has stepped up the pressure, including inspecting North Korean ships on the high seas. In December the Thai government, at the instigation of Washington, seized a North Korean plane and its cargo and arrested five crew members, claiming there were 35 tons of weapons on board.

There are about 28,500 U.S. troops based in South Korea today and some 32,500 U.S. military personnel stationed across the Korea Strait in Japan. The



USFK photo by SSG Nicholas Salcido

U.S. general Walter Sharp, commander of UN and U.S. forces in Korea, visits DMZ between North and South Korea May 28. Washington has about 28,500 troops in South Korea.

English-language *Korea Times* notes, “U.S. stealth bombers are on a standby at Japanese and Guam airbases, ready for a strike on any point in the North within one hour.”

The North Korean government takes the threat of a possible U.S. attack seriously whatever the immediate intentions of Seoul and Washington.

During the 1950–53 Korean War, U.S.-led forces fighting under the United Nations banner conducted a brutal bombing campaign that leveled nearly every building in North Korea. Some 3 million Korean civilians, half a million North Korean soldiers, tens of thousands of Chinese volunteers, and 100,000 South Korean and United Na-

tions soldiers, including 54,000 from the United States, were killed during the U.S.-organized war.

To block future U.S.-led aggression, North Korea has built up a large military force, much of it concentrated near the DMZ, including long-range artillery that can reach Seoul.

Washington has not been successful in getting China, North Korea’s largest trading partner, to back the latest measures.

Instead, after two days of talks with South Korean and Japanese officials, Chinese premier minister Wen Jiabao said, “Most urgent is to dispel the impact of the *Cheonan* incident, gradually ease tension, and especially avoid a clash.”

Overflow crowd attends Cuban 5 art show

BY JAMES HARRIS

VENICE, California—A weekend of solidarity with the Cuban Five was held here May 22–23. The events featured the artwork of Antonio Guerrero, one of five Cuban revolutionaries who have been unjustly held in U.S. prisons for more than 11 years.

The central feature of the weekend was the opening of an exhibit of Guerrero’s paintings and drawings titled “From My Altitude.”

Ships to Gaza Strip blocked

Continued from front page

government announced it was deporting most of the nearly 700 passengers. About 50 would still be held for further investigation, reported AP.

In response to the ship seizures, the Turkish government, which has cooperated closely with the Israeli government on trade and military matters, canceled three joint military exercises scheduled with Israel. More than 200 of the passengers aboard the flotilla ships were from Turkey.

The White House expressed “regret at the loss of life,” but did not condemn the Israeli government’s actions. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton called the situation in Gaza “unsustainable.”

The sealing off of the Gaza Strip to any aid except that authorized by the Israeli government has had a devastating impact on the 1.5 million people living there. With food shortages and unemployment at more than 50 percent, “four in five Gazans are dependent on humanitarian aid,” according to an Amnesty International report.

The International Committee for the Freedom of the Cuban Five hosted the event, cosponsored by art institutions and civil libertarians in southern California, among them Social Public Art Resource Center (SPARC), Beyond Baroque, Venice Arts Council, KPFK radio, and Southern California Americans for Democratic Action.

More than 120 people attended, with an overflow crowd standing outside and viewing it from a video projection.

Alicia Jrapko, national coordinator for the International Committee for the Freedom of the Cuban Five, opened the proceedings. Also speaking was actor Edward Asner. Actor Danny Glover participated by video.

The Cuban Five were arrested in 1998 in Miami and convicted on phony conspiracy charges. They were in Florida monitoring the activities of right-wing Cuban American groups that have carried out violent attacks on Cuba. Guerrero, Gerardo Hernández, Ramon Labañino, Fernando González, and René González have been held in prison since then, under harsh conditions.

Guerrero was originally sentenced to life in prison. The international campaign to win freedom for the five forced the courts to reduce his sentence, as well as those of Labañino and Fernando González.

Guerrero learned to paint and draw while in prison with the aid of other prisoners, an inspiring process he describes in one of the exhibits. Included are portraits of the mothers of the Cuban Five, Che Guevara, seascapes, and colorful pictures of birds and animals.

The May 22–June 11 showing of Guerrero’s art is being held at the former Venice jail, which was converted into an art space by SPARC. The prison setting adds a grim authenticity to the exhibit.

A fund-raiser the following day featured the film “Women Behind the Cuban 5” and a presentation by Dolores Huerta, a founder of the United Farm Workers union.

Huerta spoke about the U.S. government’s denial of visas to the wives of Hernández and René González, Adriana Pérez and Olga Salanueva respectively.

—MILITANT LABOR FORUMS—

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U.S. Hands Off Korea! Speaker: Andrea Morell, Socialist Workers Party. Fri., June 11, 7:30 p.m. 5482 Mission St. Tel.: (415) 584-2135.

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Europe Debt Crisis Shows Instability of World Capitalism. Speaker: Mike Fitzsimmons, Socialist Workers Party. Fri., June 11, 8 p.m. 307 W. 36 St., 10th Fl. (use north elevators). Tel.: (212) 736-2540.

Mississippi catfish workers reject cutback contract

Catfish workers at Delta Pride in Indianola, Mississippi, overwhelmingly rejected the company's "final offer" May 26 after more than a year of contract negotiations. The next day workers at the Country Select catfish plant in Isola also voted down the contract. The two are partner companies operated by Consolidated Catfish Producers.

The more than 350 workers in Indianola, and 450 in Isola, most of whom are Black women, are represented by United Food and Commercial Workers Local 1529. They haven't had a pay raise since 2006, making an average of \$8 to \$9 per hour.

Company demands include a seven-day workweek, doubling the probationary period for new hires to six months, tripling worker contributions to company health insurance over three years, and eliminating severance pay if the plant closes.

Workers at Delta Pride won their first strike in 1990 after three months on the picket line, during which the company hired scabs and workers were arrested, beaten, and shot at. The strikers reached out and won solidarity from labor unions and civil rights organizations.

—Jacquie Henderson

Unionists strike Mott's plant in New York

Some 300 workers at Mott's apple juice plant in Williamson, 20 miles east of Rochester, New York, walked out May 23 after rejecting concessions demanded by the company. The contract offer calls for a \$1.50 an hour wage cut, eliminating pensions for future employees, and reducing company 401(k) contributions.

Mott's unilaterally began implementing these terms after the previous union contract expired April 15. The workers, organized by Local 220 of the Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union, responded by going on strike.

Mott's is owned by Dr. Pepper Snapple Group. It reported profits of some \$550 million last year, according to union officials. The bosses are attempting to operate the plant with temporary workers and company staff, according to the *Rochester Business Journal*.

—Brian Williams

N.Y.C.: Co-op City workers picket over wage freeze

With the company demanding a four-year wage freeze, 500 workers employed at the Co-op City apartment buildings in the Bronx, New York, set up picket lines June 1. The workers were locked out by RiverBay

Corporation as their contract expired at 12:01 a.m. that morning. The pact covers porters, and maintenance, sanitation, and grounds workers who are members of Service Employees International Union Local 32BJ.

"It's a slap in the face to hear RiverBay say we don't deserve cost-of-living wage increases," said Courtney Lumley, a resident and 15-year maintenance worker at Co-op City, according to a union news release. Co-op City, where 55,000 people live across 35 high-rise buildings, is the largest housing development in the country.

—Brian Williams

Protest actions in France oppose raising retirement age

Hundreds of thousands of workers conducted a one-day strike in France May 27 to protest government plans to raise the retirement age above 60. According to the CGT union, 176 separate protests took place across France that day. A government spokesperson said the actions involved about 13 percent of public sector workers nationwide.

Paris is considering upping the retirement age to 62 or 63 and extending the number of working years required to receive a full pension from 40.5 to 42, according to Reuters. Workers won a reduction in the retirement age in 1983 when it was cut from 65 to 60.

—Brian Williams

Sweden: Cafe meeting discusses Malcolm X



Militant/Dag Tirsén

STOCKHOLM, Sweden—"Malcolm X is the authentic voice of the coming third American revolution," responded Anita Östling to a question on the relevance of Malcolm X today at a May 19 panel discussion here to commemorate Malcolm's 85th birthday.

The event took place at the Café Pan Africa. Panelists from left to right are: Fatima Doubakil, Committee for Human Rights for Muslims; Samson Thomas, Eritrean Student Association; Östling, Communist League; and moderator Kitimbwa Sabuni, Café Pan Africa.

Thomas stressed Malcolm's personal development from misery and prison. "He went from being a 'victim of Americanism' to become an articulate, knowledgeable man with a strategy against those who have power. He's an example for Africans today of what you can become." Doubakil said Muslims in Europe can learn a lot from Malcolm and should not "turn the other cheek" in response to government anti-immigrant campaigns against Muslims after Sept. 11, 2001.

The panel was preceded by showing Malcolm in a TV debate as well as giving a speech. At the end of the program, Sabuni opened the microphone to the 30 plus participants in the audience. One pointed out that Malcolm's description of the Democratic and Republican parties in the United States as a wolf and a fox was applicable to the coming elections in Sweden this fall.

—CATHARINA TIRSÉN

Massey coal mine was 'ticking time bomb'

Continued from front page

mine months prior to the explosion.

The bosses "never fully addressed the air problem," he said. When inspectors cited violations, "they would fix it just good enough to get us to load coal again, but then it would be back to business as usual." Last summer, Stewart said, the company eliminated miners' two-week vacations for not meeting production goals.

Steve Morgan, whose 21-year-old son Adam died in the Upper Big Branch explosion, said his son told him every week of dangerous levels of methane underground. He spoke at the hearing about highly explosive "float coal dust" that at times was so thick he couldn't see, reported the *Charleston Gazette*. "Ventilation was so bad he was sent home early several times, including once about a week before the explosion, because they weren't getting enough air," Morgan testified.

"MSHA inspections at Massey did little to protect miners," said Gary Quarles, a miner for 34 years now employed at a nearby Massey mine, whose son Gary Wayne Quarles was killed in the blast. The agency "has let us down many times." He said that MSHA focuses its inspections on day shift, neglecting nights and weekends.

When MSHA inspectors arrive "code words go out 'we've got a man on the property,'" said Quarles, and "all effort is made to correct any deficiencies or direct the inspector's attention away from any deficiencies." Only company people accompany MSHA inspectors when they come to a Massey mine, he noted.

"When I worked at union mines," Quarles said, "workers at the mine

would accompany the MSHA inspectors . . . pointing out areas of concern. Moreover, as a union miner I was able to refuse work in unsafe conditions without fear of retaliation."

"When MSHA is not present, there is no thought of doing anything other than producing coal," Quarles stated. "The miners are not allowed to hang curtains or conduct any other safety operations if they would interfere with or delay the production of coal."

Mine in 'good condition'?

Several days before the House hearing, the Senate Appropriations Committee held a mine safety hearing in Congress. Testifying there was Massey CEO Don Blankenship. He "testified

that MSHA inspectors visited the Upper Big Branch mine several days before the explosion, and that they said it had 'no outstanding major safety issues' and was in 'good condition,'" reported the *Wall Street Journal*.

Joe Main, head of MSHA, testified that the agency received two anonymous complaints about Massey mines in late March, before the explosion took place, about inadequate ventilation systems and high levels of coal dust.

West Virginia senator Robert Byrd said MSHA "has much to explain," asking why the agency waited until after the Upper Big Branch mine blast before doing "inspection blitzes" of 57 other mines that had a pattern of safety violations.

Bill to compensate Black farmers for discrimination goes to Senate

BY SUSAN LAMONT

WASHINGTON—The U.S. House of Representatives passed a \$79 billion tax and spending bill May 28 that includes \$1.15 billion to compensate Black farmers for long-standing claims of discrimination by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). In order to become law, the bill must still be approved by the Senate.

Organizations representing Black farmers have been calling on Congress to act on the commitment made earlier this year by the administration of President Barack Obama to provide funds to settle farmers' claims of discrimination by the USDA. In addition to the \$1.15 billion in the House bill, the 2008 farm bill allocated \$100 million for payments to Black farmers.

"Every delay means the likelihood of more farm foreclosures and more black farmers who will not live to see the day they receive the payments they have waited for and deserve," said John Boyd, Jr., president of the National Black Farmers Association, in a May 28 press statement.

As many as 80,000 Black farmers could receive funds.

"We're talking about much more than the money," Ralph Paige, executive director of the Federation of Southern Cooperatives, told a Washington press conference in April. "We are talking about remedying past discrimination." On May 25 the Obama administration offered \$1.3 billion to settle similar class-action suits brought against the USDA by female and Latino farmers.

The Changing Face of U.S. Politics

Working-Class Politics and the Trade Unions



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.

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How SWP leaders answered 1941 gov't frame-up

Printed below are excerpts from *Socialism on Trial*, one of Pathfinder's Books of the Month for June. It contains the testimony of James P. Cannon, then national secretary of the Socialist Workers Party, at the trial in 1941 of 18 leaders of the SWP and the Minneapolis Teamsters union. They were found guilty of "conspiring to advocate the overthrow of the U.S. government" under the Smith "Gag" Act. The government's aim was to prevent the building of opposition to Washington's entry into World War II and block the charting of a class-struggle course for the labor movement. Questions below are by Albert Goldman, attorney for the defendants, and answers by Cannon. Copyright © 1969 by Pathfinder Press. Reprinted by permission.



Six of the defendants immediately after they were convicted of "conspiring to advocate the overthrow of U.S. government," Dec. 1, 1941. Seated from left, Albert Goldman, Grace Carlson, Felix Morrow. Standing, Farrell Dobbs, James P. Cannon, Vincent R. Dunne.

BOOKS OF THE MONTH

Q: Define the term "dictatorship of the proletariat."

A: "Dictatorship of the proletariat" is Marx's definition of the state that will be in operation in the transition period between the overthrow of capitalism and the institution of the socialist society. That is, the workers' and farmers' government will, in the opinion of the Marxists, be a class dictatorship in that it will frankly represent the workers and farmers, and will not even pretend to

represent the economic interests of the capitalists.

Q: What form will that dictatorship take with reference to the capitalist class?

A: Well, you mean, what would be the attitude toward the dispossessed capitalists?

Q: Yes, how will it exercise its dictatorship over the capitalist class?

A: That depends on a number of conditions. There is no fixed rule. It depends on a number of conditions, the most important of which is the wealth and resources of the given country where the revolution takes place; and the second is the attitude of the capitalist class, whether the capitalists reconcile themselves to the new regime or take up an armed struggle against it.

Q: What is the difference between the scientific definition of dictatorship of the proletariat and the ordinary use of the word dictatorship?

A: Well, the popular impression of dictatorship is a one-man rule, an absolutism. I think that is the popular understanding of the word dictatorship. This is not contemplated at all in the Marxian term dictatorship of the proletariat. This means the dictatorship of a class.

Q: And how will the dictatorship of the proletariat operate insofar as democratic rights are concerned?

A: We think it will be the most demo-

cratic government from the point of view of the great masses of the people that has ever existed, far more democratic, in the real essence of the matter, than the present bourgeois democracy in the United States.

Q: What about freedom of speech and all the freedoms that we generally associate with democratic government?

A: I think in the United States you can say with absolute certainty that the freedoms of speech, press, assemblage, religion, will be written in the program of the victorious revolution.

Q: Now, what is the opinion of Marxists with reference to the change in the social order, as far as its being accompanied or not accompanied by violence?

A: It is the opinion of all Marxists that it will be accompanied by violence.

Q: Why?

A: That is based, like all Marxist doctrine, on a study of history, the historical experiences of mankind in the numerous changes of society from one form to another, the revolutions which accompanied it, and the resistance which the outlived classes invariably put up against the new order. Their attempt to defend themselves against the new order, or to suppress by violence the movement for the new order, has resulted in every important social transformation up to now being accompanied by violence.

Q: Who, in the opinion of Marxists,

initiated that violence?

A: Always the ruling class; always the outlived class that doesn't want to leave the stage when the time has come. They want to hang on to their privileges, to reinforce them by violent measures, against the rising majority and they run up against the mass violence of the new class, which history has ordained shall come to power.

Q: What is the opinion of Marxists, as far as winning a majority of the people to socialist ideas?

A: Yes, that certainly is the aim of the party. That is the aim of the Marxist movement, has been from its inception. Marx said the social revolution of the proletariat—I think I can quote his exact words from memory—"is a movement of the immense majority in the interests of the immense majority." He said this in distinguishing it from previous revolutions which had been made in the interest of minorities, as was the case in France in 1789.

Q: What would you say is the opinion of Marxists as far as the desirability of a peaceful transition is concerned?

A: The position of the Marxists is that the most economical and preferable, the most desirable method of social transformation, by all means, is to have it done peacefully.

Q: And in the opinion of the Marxists, is that absolutely excluded?

A: Well, I wouldn't say absolutely excluded. We say that the lessons of history don't show any important examples in favor of the idea so that you can count upon it.

Q: Can you give us examples in American history of a minority refusing to submit to a majority?

A: I can give you a very important one. The conception of the Marxists is that, even if the transfer of political power from the capitalists to the proletariat is accomplished peacefully—then the minority, the exploiting capitalist class, will revolt against the new regime, no matter how legally it is established. I can give you an example in American history. The American Civil War resulted from the fact that the Southern slaveholders couldn't reconcile themselves to the legal parliamentary victory of Northern capitalism, the election of President Lincoln.

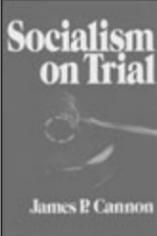
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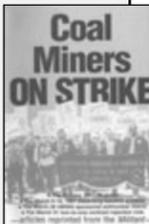
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Iran readers seek books on revolution in U.S.

‘I want something to broaden my mind’

BY TONY HUNT

TEHRAN—The 23rd Tehran International Book Fair concluded May 15 with hundreds of thousands attending over 11 days, attracted to the variety of books on offer from hundreds of Iranian and overseas publishers. The largest cultural event in Iran, the fair is described by the Frankfurt Book Fair organization—which itself has a stand at the fair—as “the biggest general public and sales fair in Central Asia and the Middle East.”

Pathfinder Books from the United Kingdom participated in the event for the 18th time with sales similar to 2009, which had been a significant increase over previous years. The top seller this year was *Malcolm X, Black Liberation, and the Road to Workers Power*, by Jack Barnes, with 43 people picking up the title. In addition a Tehran distributor bought 17 copies to sell during the year.

While some fairgoers had heard of Malcolm X as a result of the Spike Lee Hollywood film, many, particularly younger people, did not know about the U.S. revolutionary leader but nevertheless wanted to buy the book after hearing a short explanation of its contents, browsing through it, and looking at the excellent photographs. The author’s explanation of the relevance of Malcolm’s revolutionary legacy to today’s working-class struggles was attractive to many. One was a young woman studying sciences in high school, accompanied by her mother. She said she wanted to read about politics and bought this book and two other titles on the struggle for women’s equality.

The second highest seller at the Pathfinder stand was *Is Socialist Revolution in the U.S. Possible?* by Mary-Alice Waters. Eighteen copies were sold, including one in French. A high school student who bought the book said, “I want something short to read in English that will broaden my mind.” Other high sellers were *Is Biology Woman’s Destiny?* by Evelyn Reed, the recently issued second edition of *Lenin’s Final Fight*, the pamphlet version of *Malcolm X Talks to Young People*, *The Communist Manifesto*, and *Problems of Women’s Liberation*, also by Reed.

According to Press TV—an Iranian satellite channel—more than 2,000 publishers, 1,100 Iranian and some 900 international from 80 countries, participated in the fair this year, exhibiting 200,000 books. The large Farsi section of the fair—housed in the ornate Shabestan building, part of a mosque that is under construction—was always crowded.

The same building housed a section for international publishers selling mostly academic textbooks and scientific and technical manuals where prices were subsidized by the government. Alongside this were stands from various countries including Azerbaijan, Egypt, France, Germany, Japan, South Korea, Russia, Turkey, and the Kurdish Regional Government in Iraq. There were also sections for children’s books and for publishers of Arabic titles from nearby countries.

Pathfinder, which sold 239 books and pamphlets this year, exhibited in the unsubsidized direct sales section of the fair



Annual Tehran book fair is largest in Central Asia and Middle East

for international publishers alongside local distributors for publishers such as Oxford University Press, John Wiley, Longman, and Macmillan.

Legacy of 1979 revolution

The annual event is one legacy of the 1979 revolution by workers and farmers in Iran, who overthrew the Washington- and London-backed monarchy and opened the road to reading and culture for broad sections of the population. That brutal bourgeois regime had been brought to power in 1953 by a coup engineered by the U.S. government with support from the UK rulers, for whom Iran had been a semicolony for most of the previous half-century, with the country’s oil wealth siphoned off into British capitalist coffers.

Books on the fight for women’s liberation were among Pathfinder’s popular titles. A college lecturer bought five such titles, including *Woman’s Evolution* by Evelyn Reed, saying they were needed to present the historical case, outlined in Reed’s works, for the existence of patriarchy in early human soci-

eties. This person also bought *The Communist Manifesto*. Another academic needed books on Marxism and bought *Introduction to the Logic of Marxism* by George Novack, *Problems of Everyday Life* by Leon Trotsky, and *Malcolm X, Black Liberation, and the Road to Workers Power*.

One young man, who had bought Pathfinder books three years in a row at the fair, said, “I really like your books.” He picked up issue no. 7 of *New Internationalist* with the lead article “Opening Guns of World War III,” by Jack Barnes, about the 1990–91 imperialist assault on Iraq.

Afghan, Kurdish readers

Visitors also came from among the Afghan and Kurdish population in Iran. A young Kurd bought *Two Speeches by Malcolm X*, *The Long View of History*, and *Che Guevara Talks to Young People*. A 19-year-old Afghan, born in Iran, bought *Is Socialist Revolution in the U.S. Possible?*, *Genocide Against the Indians*, and the pamphlet version of *Malcolm X Talks to Young People*.

Two Iranian publishing houses that between them have published around 30 copyrighted translations of Pathfinder titles are regular exhibitors at the fair. A large poster advertising the second and concluding volume of a translation of *Woman’s Evolution* was prominent at the stand of Golâzin publications. That book was for sale alongside several other translations of Pathfinder titles.

Also present was Talaye Porsoo, a publisher that reported it has sold some 400 copies this year of translations of Pathfinder titles, with *The Communist Manifesto* its top seller. Talaye Porsoo reported that its Farsi translation of *Is Socialist Revolution in the U.S. Possible?* will soon be coming off the press.

Workers protest for jobs in Iranian port city

BY CINDY JAQUITH

Workers in the southern port city of Khorramshahr, Iran, interrupted a speech by President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad May 24 to shout, “We are unemployed!”

The president was addressing a gathering of several hundred to commemorate the 1982 liberation of Khorramshahr from Iraqi troops during the eight-year Iraq-Iran war. The Iraqis occupied Khorramshahr for 18 months

before their expulsion, a turning point in the war.

The population of Khorramshahr is half Arab. The city was devastated by the Iraqi occupation and has never recovered economically.

As workers insistently chanted about the need for jobs, Ahmadinejad did not respond directly to them, but kept on promising that the government will uproot unemployment in Khorramshahr and Khuzestan Province “with the help

of young people of the province.”

The Iranian media focused its coverage of the event on a new water supply system inaugurated in Khorramshahr by the president, which will provide potable water to 21 cities in the region.

Kaleme, the Web site of Mir Hossein Mousavi, who ran against Ahmadinejad in last year’s elections, reported May 24 that a year ago Ahmadinejad also traveled to Khorramshahr and promised to end unemployment and improve the quality of the drinking water. “But nothing has come out of it,” the Web site commented.

While the Iranian government says unemployment throughout the country is 11 percent, most estimates place it closer to 25 percent. Inflation also runs very high. The impact of the world capitalist economic crisis and of UN and U.S. sanctions that hinder much of Iran’s trade is cushioned somewhat by government subsidies put in place after the 1979 revolution that significantly affect basic necessities like fuel, food, and transportation.

On September 23, however, the government is cutting \$20 billion in subsidies, leading to predictions that prices will rise anywhere from 15 percent to 60 percent. The government is promising low-income Iranians they will receive a cash payment to help cope with the higher prices.

Iranian filmmaker released from jail

Iranian filmmaker Jafar Panahi won release from jail May 25. The internationally known director posted \$200,000 bail and will face charges for making an “anti-regime” film about the protests for democratic rights that swept Iran following last year’s June 12 elections. Panahi has won awards for such films as *Offside*, about Iranian women who disguise themselves as men in order to get into a soccer match; *The Circle*; and *The White Balloon*.

Arrested in February, Panahi began a hunger strike May 16. His case won broad international support, but also public support inside Iran, where defense cases of those jailed for their political views are rarely given publicity.

Mehdi Karroubi, one of the candidates in last year’s presidential elections and a prominent leader of the bourgeois liberal opposition to the regime, visited Panahi after he was released and called for the freedom of all political prisoners in Iran. The “White Scarves,” a group of Iranian women who campaign to win the right of women to watch public sports events of their choice, also visited Panahi.

Meanwhile, the Tehran police chief announced that the government would deal harshly with any “illegal” protests to commemorate the June 12 anniversary. Both Karroubi and Mir Hossein Mousavi, also part of the bourgeois opposition, have applied for a permit to march that day.

—CINDY JAQUITH

Is Socialist Revolution in the U.S. Possible?

A Necessary Debate

By Mary-Alice Waters

Why a socialist revolution is not only possible but 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. —\$7



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Black nationality forged in victorious struggles

The following is the 21st in a series of excerpts the *Militant* is running from Pathfinder Press's latest book, *Malcolm X, Black Liberation, and the Road to Workers Power*, by Jack Barnes, national secretary of the Socialist Workers Party.

We encourage our readers to study, discuss, and help sell the book. This selection, from the chapter "Black Liberation and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat," takes up Radical Reconstruction, a period following the U.S. Civil War when the exploited producers—led by formerly enslaved Blacks and backed by Union troops—took strides toward establishing popular democratic governments that advanced the class interests of all freedmen, small farmers, and other working people.

These governments implemented laws barring race discrimination, establishing free public schools, taxes on large landholders, universal male suffrage, expanded rights for women, and public relief. The withdrawal of the Union army from the South in 1877 led to bloody crushing of these popular regimes. Copyright © 2009 by Pathfinder Press. Reprinted by permission.



BY JACK BARNES

If Radical Reconstruction *had not been defeated*, of course, and if the fight for "forty acres and a mule" *had succeeded*, then it wasn't foreordained that the freed slaves would have emerged as an *oppressed* nationality by the late 1800s. That's true. They would have been part of a vast, fighting proletarian social movement of workers, free farmers, and former slaves.

But what forged the Black nationality in the United States was not what Farrell [Dobbs] had accurately called "the worst setback" in the history of the U.S. working class! The Black nationality was forged not by a defeat but by the capacities, the vanguard class-struggle activity, and the social and political consciousness of the emancipated slaves. It was forged as they *used* their freedom to transform themselves from slaves into vanguard workers and farmers, into makers of history, into those who *act*.

The smashing of Radical Reconstruc-

tion was a bloody counterrevolution carried out by armed rightist gangs such as the Ku Klux Klan, Knights of the White Camelia, and others. Following adoption of the Reconstruction Acts of 1867, federal troops were stationed throughout the South in order, among other things, to enforce the citizenship and voting rights of freed slaves under the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments. By the mid-1870s these federal forces initially began being ordered not to intervene to defend elected Reconstruction state governments, and by 1877 the troops were withdrawn altogether.

That defeat not only closed the door to any further radical, popular, plebeian extension of the American bourgeois revolution deepened by the Civil War and the elimination of slavery; it threw the gears into reverse for nearly a century.

Don't forget, we have always recognized the Civil War, together with Radical Reconstruction, as the Second American Revolution. By the closing years of the 1800s, however, it was already too late in the United States for any additional successful advances of the bourgeois revolution. With the growth of capitalist monopolization and the rising dominance of finance capital during the three decades following the Civil War, the United States emerged as an imperialist power by the end of the century. What is called in the United States the Spanish-American War was the world's first imperialist war. From that point forward, further advances in the struggle for Black rights—despite repeated defaults and betrayals by the class-collaborationist officialdom of the unions and misleaders of social democratic and Stalinist organizations—have been inextricably bound up with the line of march of the working class toward the conquest of power and establishment of the proletarian dictatorship.

Record of accomplishments

Coming out of the Civil War, toilers who were Black fought to stop the reimposition of slavery-like contract gangs in the fields across the South. They fought for land. They waged battles during Radical Reconstruction for schools, for suffrage, for cheap



Election campaign meeting in Reconstruction South, 1868. Reconstruction governments, representing interests of toilers, had large Black representation. South Carolina legislature in 1868 had 50 Blacks and 13 whites. By 1873, Mississippi State Congress was 42 percent Black. This was reduced to zero for most of next century following 1877 bloody defeat.

credit and agricultural extension services, and other needs of the toilers as a whole. They organized armed resistance to violent rightist assaults on the Reconstruction state governments.

The capitalist rulers try to hide the history of Radical Reconstruction, just as they try to hide the history of labor battles in this country. In school most of us were taught little more about Reconstruction than tales of the scandalous "scalawags" from the South and notorious "carpetbaggers" from the North. They want to hide the truth because it explodes every racist and anti-working-class notion about what Blacks can accomplish, about the potential of fighting alliances between toilers who are Black and white, and much more. That falsification only began to be undone on a broad scale by the rise of a mass proletarian movement led by Blacks.

Radical Reconstruction also marked the high point of the fight to recognize Asian immigrants—especially the large numbers of Chinese laborers brought here to build the transcontinental railroad—as human beings, worthy of the same rights to citizenship and property as those whose skin was black, white, or any other shade in the spectrum. Political equality for Asian workers too was set back for nearly a century by the defeats of 1877. (The publication of *Our History Is Still Being Written [The Story of Three Chinese-Cuban Generals in the Cuban Revolution]* should remind us of how the U.S. rulers also hide the true story of the accomplishments and oppression of immigrant Chinese labor in this country, as they have falsified history with regard to Native Americans and Mexicanos for many decades too.)

Small farmers and wageworkers who were white became involved in the struggles that marked Radical Reconstruction as well. The social conquests of the most advanced Reconstruction regimes, as in South Carolina, were extremely popular among toilers, whatever their skin color. Many working farmers and wageworkers in the mountains and elsewhere throughout the South had never supported slavery. They resisted the Confederacy during the Civil War, including sometimes by refusing conscription and payment of

special taxes. After the war, they recognized they had never *had* local governments like many that arose during Reconstruction. They had never *had* governments that provided free public education, that helped them obtain low-interest loans, that set up agricultural schools and sent itinerant farming consultants into rural areas. All this was very popular.

After the defeat of Radical Reconstruction, Blacks waged countless skirmishes—during the 1880s and 1890s, and on into the twentieth century—against the imposition of Jim Crow segregation and racist terror across the South. They fought to hold onto their land, and continue to do so. And they have been in the vanguard of all the proletarian-led social and political struggles of the twentieth century that we've pointed to.

This *record of struggle* is what initially forged the Black nationality. It was the product of a positive political conquest, not a great historic defeat. The Black nationality was carved out of these *accomplishments*, not out of its own *oppression*. It was a registration of consciousness of political *worth*.

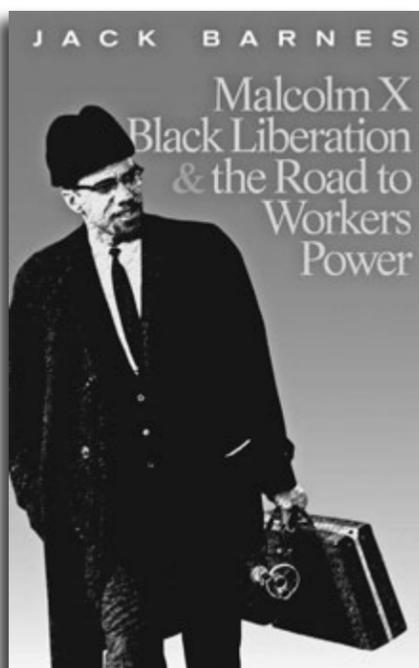
We have to recognize both pieces of what happened. We need to understand the defeat of Radical Reconstruction, which laid the basis for the bloody imposition of Jim Crow terror and segregation. That was when the oppressed character of the Black nationality was settled, something that will not be undone short of a successful proletarian revolution. But we must also see the struggles before, during, and since Radical Reconstruction that forged a nationality that has produced generation after generation of vanguard militants in the weightiest, the most plebeian, social and political struggles in this country.

We need to be clear when we talk about the forging of the Black nationality. Because what toilers in this country, Black and white, laid the historic foundations for during the Civil War and Radical Reconstruction, the Second American Revolution, is one of the great pledges of what mass proletarian and popular movements can achieve when working people establish governments that truly act in the interests of the exploited and the oppressed.

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Malcolm X, Black Liberation, and the Road to Workers Power

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BP, gov't to blame for oil disaster

BP and the U.S. government are responsible for the April 20 explosion of the Deepwater Horizon oil rig in the Gulf of Mexico that killed 11 workers and continues to contaminate the waters with no end in sight. The disaster provides a graphic example of how, as Karl Marx explained in 1867, capitalism advances the growth of humanity's wealth only "by simultaneously undermining the original sources of all wealth—the soil and the worker."

Since 2001 there have been 69 deaths, 1,349 injuries, and 858 fires and explosions in the offshore oil industry in the Gulf alone. Like the Massey coal bosses responsible for the recent deaths of 29 miners, the BP oil barons portray offshore drilling as inherently dangerous. They defend their safety records. They want us to accept the lie that some workers have to die.

The bosses always seek to conceal their drive for profit as the source of industrial "accidents" that kill or maim workers and ravage the environment. They blame workers, technology, "acts of god," bad luck—whatever they can sell. But facts show BP cut corners—knowing the risks involved—in order to

save time and money. The company encountered little resistance from government agencies responsible for maintaining safety conditions. BP never had a plan to deal with the real possibility of an uncontrolled blow-out, nor did the government require it.

The many reports now coming out of the dangerous conditions on the BP oil rig prior to the explosion show how crucial the fight for safety on the job has become. It is inseparable from social and political struggles the union movement must take the lead on to combat the capitalists' contamination of the food we eat, shoddy and dangerous manufacture of goods we need, and fouling of the earth, waters, and skies.

The BP disaster is another costly reminder of why the working class must organize to take political power away from the exploiters. Workers power and the transfer of the means of production into the collective hands of the working class opens the way to overturning the destructive social order that today dominates the earth. It opens the way to building a socialist world that operates to meet the needs of humanity, not reap profits for a few.

China: Honda strikers win pay raise

Continued from front page

tion to wrest gains. The strike coincides with a labor shortage in the region and comes just as Honda announced plans to increase its annual productive capacity from 650,000 vehicles to 830,000 over the next year and a half in response to expanding domestic demand. Last year China became the world's biggest auto market, with more than 13.6 million automobiles sold.

The parts plant feeds Honda's assembly plants, which, like the rest of the industry, have adopted a "just in time" mode of production—a method that has become a standard manufacturing practice as increasingly stiff competition has driven companies to find every avenue for shoring up their declining profit margins.

Strikers have leveraged this as well. A shortage of engine and transmission parts immediately halted work at two Honda assembly factories. Two other assembly plants were forced to shut down May 26. Three of the four operate as joint ventures with Chinese companies and supply autos for the domestic market.

The workforce is largely in their teens and 20s, the *Times* said. They work 72-hour weeks with one day off. Like many other large factories, they are housed in company dormitories and eat in company cafeterias.

The strikers organized themselves independent of the official and only legal All-China Federation of Trade Unions. The government labor federation has functioned as a government intermediary.

As the company made its 24 percent increase offer, local officials sent trade union officers to the plant June 1 to urge strikers back to work, government sources told Xinhua. While many workers reportedly left the picket line, union officials scuffled with dozens of workers at the factory.

Representatives visited several plants June 3 to apologize for the scuffle, reported state media.

During the first week, the strike against the Japanese auto giant was given unusually prominent and somewhat favorable coverage by state media, but then receded in the last several days. A lead editorial in *China Daily* May 28 faulted government ministries for dragging their feet in coming up with a promised amendment to the federal wage laws.

The coverage reflects a debate within the government and Communist Party on wages, according to the *Times*, with some arguing that higher incomes for workers will help pacify unrest and boost economic growth by expanding the domestic market.

Arizona anti-immigrant law protest

Continued from front page

other students from Cal State University at Bakersfield. They are members of a new campus group called Unite Now for Immigrant Rights.

The day's events began with an early morning rally. Aaron Salazar, 29, who grew up in Phoenix, said, "I'm here for my family." Some of his relatives are undocumented, he said, and this profoundly affects the way they live their lives, staying indoors and keeping to themselves. "Many of my friends were brought to the U.S. as young children and grew up here," he added. "But because they are undocumented they have a tough time trying to find a job."

The crowd included many high school and college students. Bernice Albarrez, who attends Glendale Community College near Phoenix, said this "affects my family, because we're Mexican, whether we have papers or not."

After about two hours participants began the five-mile march to the Capitol. There were contingents of workers from the Service Employees International Union, United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW), and the Laborers International Union.

Librado Lopez marched as part of the UFCW Local 99 contingent with coworkers from the JBS Swift meatpacking plant near Phoenix. Lopez said that he was protesting because under the new law "you are supposed to act like an immigration agent if you give someone a ride, and that is not right."

He was referring to a provision in the law that makes it illegal to knowingly transport those without documents. "We have to work, we have to eat. This law is bad for us, both Hispanic and non-Hispanic," he said.

Among the keynote speakers at the Capitol was Richard Trumka, president of the AFL-CIO. Other labor officials and politicians also spoke.

Many people held handmade signs or banners reading "Legalización," "When Injustice Becomes Law, Resistance Becomes Duty," "Dignity Sin Condiciones" (Dignity Without Conditions) and "BP—the Real Criminals," referring to the oil spill disaster in the Gulf of Mexico.

Lori Thomas Riddie, who is Native American, said she attended the rally to support immigrants "who are just here to try and make a life." She explained she was once surrounded on a lonely road by Border Patrol cops who pointed their guns at her. "I don't believe we need to give more authority to the police. They stop anyone with a brown skin," she said.

That evening supporters of SB 1070 held a rally at Diablo Stadium in nearby Tempe. More than 5,000 attended, according to the *Arizona Republic*. The event, billed as "Stand With Arizona," was organized by several "tea party" groups.

"Can you hear us now, Mexico?" asked rightist Atlanta radio host Larry Wachs at the rally. "Because this land is not *your* land. It is *our* land. . . . We have our credentials. Where are yours?"

Gulf oil explosion

Continued from front page

cut back on standard measures used to prevent a surge of explosive gas like the one that caused the rig explosion.

At congressional hearings in Washington, Stephen Stone, a worker on the rig, said that four times in the previous 20 days crews had to stop pumping drilling mud into the well—the primary means of controlling the pressure of oil and gas while drilling—and instead pumped heavy-duty sealant to stop cracks that were developing in the well foundation.

Doug Brown, the engine room's acting second engineer, told a joint U.S. Coast Guard and Minerals Management Service hearing in Kenner, Louisiana, there was a "skirmish" between BP and Transocean employees only hours before the explosion. BP decided to use lighter saltwater instead of heavier drilling mud before temporarily plugging the well with cement. Heavier fluid has a greater capacity to counteract higher pressures of oil and gas and prevent it from surging upwards.

Behind schedule and over budget, "BP made choices over the course of the project that rendered this well more vulnerable to the blowout," the *Wall Street Journal* stated. BP cut short one procedure that detects gas in the well and removes it. The company also skipped a quality test of the cement barrier around the well, which serves as a buffer against high-pressure gas.

In BP documents obtained by the *New York Times*, the company described the "best economic case" for using a less expensive type of well casing that provided less protection against gas leaks. Equipment readings hours before the explosion indicate gas was bubbling into the well, a sign of an impending blowout.

Once the explosion happened, workers report a chaotic and confused scene with no clear directions from those in charge. Andrea Fleytas, 23, one of three women on the crew, sent out a distress signal for the Coast Guard when she realized none had been given. In a *Journal* interview Fleytas said the rig captain reprimanded her for her actions. The paper reports there was no clear evacuation plan and some workers resorted to jumping into the ocean 75 feet below.

BP officials keep mum

Robert Kaluza, a BP official aboard the Deepwater Horizon when it exploded, refused to testify at hearings, citing his Fifth Amendment right against self-incrimination.

After weeks of criticism for lack of action, President Barack Obama stated at a May 27 press conference, "The federal government has been in charge of the response effort," from the beginning. He said Secretary of Energy Steven Chu has brought together "a brain trust, some of the smartest folks we have at the National Labs and in academia to essentially serve as an oversight board with BP engineers and scientists."

Oil has hit more than 125 miles of Louisiana coastline and penetrated some of the marshes. In deep sea much of the oil hovers in plumes of fine oil droplets instead of laying on the surface of the water or making it to land. Scientists from the University of South Florida said they found a plume six miles wide and 20 miles long reaching from the surface down to 3,200 feet.

Seven cleanup workers in Louisiana were hospitalized May 26 after complaining of nausea, dizziness, and headaches.

BP continues to use a chemical dispersant called Corexit, even though the Environmental Protection Agency has demanded the company use something less toxic to break up the oil.

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