French govt’s passes retirement age hike
Workers anticipate more attacks

BY JONATHAN SILBERMAN
AND DEREK JEFFERS
PARIS—Claiming a victory for “the French people,” President Nico-
las Sarkozy welcomed the adoption of the government’s anti–working class
pension “reform” by both houses of parliament October 27. The govern-
ment and union leaders alike were startled when millions of workers took to the streets in recent
weeks to oppose the proposal to raise the minimum retirement age from 60 to 62 for those who have worked 41.5 years. Those who have less time
working will have to wait until they are 67 to get benefits. Besides hik-
ing the retirement age, the new law includes a 2.7 percent increase in the retirement pension tax for government employees, effectively a 2.7 percent wage cut.

Dock laborers, rail workers, garbage handlers, those in oil refineries, and others struck for weeks against government moves. Seven separate
days of actions were called, which in-
volved strikes by many workers who had never taken such action before. Millions of workers took part in hundreds of demonstrations. They
were joined by students and youth of Arab descent impacted by 50 percent
Continued on page 9

Washington expands Yemen operations, ‘security’ checks

BY CINDY JAQUITH
U.S. and European officials have stepped up “counterterrorism” op-
erations aimed at working people in response to reports that two packages containing explosives were recently shipped from Yemen, addressed to
Chicago-area synagogues.

Authorities said the packages—one shipped by FedEx and the other by UPS—contained printer cartridges packed with explosives and were in-
tercepted in Dubai and the United Kingdom respectively, October 29. U.S. Homeland Security secretary Janet Napolitano said the packages were the “hallmarks of al-Qaeda, particularly al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP),” which is based in
Yemen.

U.S. “anti-terrorism experts” ar-
rived in Sana’a, Yemen’s capital, No-
Vember 1 to join a military offensive against AQAP in two provinces, Xin-

hua reported. Sana’a has been reluct-
ant to wage an all-out war against AQAP because such Islamist groups have helped keep in check indepen-
dence forces in the south of the coun-
try and Houthis rebels in the north who face government discrimination. Meanwhile, a Yemeni court began the trial in absentia of Anwar al-Aw-
laki, a U.S. citizen alleged to be an AQAP leader in Yemen. He is charged
with conspiring to kill foreigners.

President Barack Obama had earlier ordered his assassination. The Yemeni government arrested, then released, a woman in Sana’a who
was charged with mailing the packages. She was freed after fellow students at Sana’a University, many of them women, demonstrated to protest her innocence. Government officials then
said it appeared her ID had been used by another person. Hundreds marched
Continued on page 6

Many costs rise, but not Social Security

BY CINDY JAQUITH
Although the costs of food, fuel, and medical care continue to rise, there will be no cost-of-living increase in Social Security checks in 2011. For the second year in a row the government has decided to freeze benefits. This is the first time since the cost-of-living allowance (COLA) was added to So-
cial Security that monthly checks re-
mained flat for two consecutive years. Recipients last got a cost-of-living in-
crease in 2008, when they received an insulting $24 per month.

Further attacks on Social Security can be expected in December when the Bipartisan National Commission on Fiscal Responsibility and Reform
issues its report. That body was set
Continued on page 9

Elections in 2010 signal no change for workers

BY PAUL MAILHOT
November 3—Reams are being written, and hours of airtime are be-
ing filled, about the outcome of the 2010 U.S. midterm elections. With most votes now counted, Republicans are the new majority in the House of Representatives, having taken some 60 additional seats. In the Senate, Re-
publicans took at least six additional seats, leaving them in the minority.

Widely touted as a “rebuke” of Pres-
ident Barack Obama’s policies and the majority Democratic Party Congress over the past two years, the results of the elections signal no change for the working class. For the most part the politicians who won elections in 2010 campaigned on
Continued on page 3

‘Workers Power,’ subscriptions sold at factories and protests

BY ANGEL LARISCY
Although the costs of food, fuel, and medical care continue to rise, there will be no cost-of-living increase in Social Security checks in 2011. For the second year in a row the government has decided to freeze benefits. This is the first time since the cost-of-living allowance (COLA) was added to So-
cial Security that monthly checks re-
mained flat for two consecutive years. Recipients last got a cost-of-living in-
crease in 2008, when they received an insulting $24 per month.

Further attacks on Social Security can be expected in December when the Bipartisan National Commission on Fiscal Responsibility and Reform
issues its report. That body was set
Continued on page 9

Also Inside:
Florida forum discusses crisis in Haiti since quake 2
‘Moderates rally’ held in D.C. ahead of elections 4
Boston students march against beating by cop 5
Washington’s 50-year economic war on Cuba 6
Florida forum discusses crisis in Haiti since quake

BY DEBORAH LIATOS
MIAMI—Ten months after a devastating earthquake left 300,000 people in Haiti dead, 1.5 million people are still living in make-shift camps, a few under tents, but most sleeping under tarps or even bed sheets.

The deplorable living conditions there are worsened by the recent outbreak of cholera. Haiti and the rest of the Caribbean have not seen cholera, which can dehydrate and kill rapidly, for at least 50 years. Though deadly, cholera can easily be treated if those who have contracted the bacteria are quickly rehydrated with water containing salts and sugars. As of October 31 the waterborne bacterial infection has killed 330 Haitians and infected more than 4,700.

The conditions in Haiti were the subject of a lively discussion at the Militant Labor Forum held here October 23 titled, “After the Earthquake: What Road Forward for the Haitian People?” The forum was held in English and Creole.

One of the speakers was Jean Louis Fadinier, a worker who recently returned from a trip to Haiti. He is a long-time fighter for peasant and democratic rights there, and now lives in Florida. “Even though the Haitian people won independence in 1804, they are not really independent,” he said. At that time the majority Black population overthrew French colonizers and abolished slavery, but Washington and Paris have continued to dominate and exploit the island.

For 29 years the U.S.-backed Duvalier family, which killed tens of thousands of political opponents, ruled Haiti. A popular uprising ousted the Duvaliers in 1986, but the country has remained wracked by poverty and political instability. In 2004 Washington helped force elected President Jean-Bertrand Aristide into exile, replacing him with a government more to Washington’s and Paris’ liking.

When the earthquake struck, there were 9,000 United Nations troops in Haiti. “I came not just to talk about what is going on in Haiti,” said Fadinier, “but about what is needed so the Haitian people can finally achieve their liberation. A lot of international aid was promised to get people out of tents and rebuild, but the government has no plan to improve the situation.”

“Many doctors went to Haiti soon after the earthquake,” continued Fadinier, “but didn’t stay long. The United States, which is the country that exploits us, hasn’t sent doctors to do the work the Cuban doctors have. Cuban doctors not only give health care, but train other doctors who can continue their work when they go. These doctors work anywhere. If they finish their shift and you knock on their door they will help you.”

“The U.S. government is responsible for the situation in Haiti today,” said Bernie Senter, speaking for the Socialist Workers Party. “The plunder continues to this day. Everything Washington does is to reinforce exploitation and class divisions. After the earthquake the U.S. government granted TPS [Temporary Protected Status] to Haitians who could prove they lived in the United States before the quake struck. At the same time, Washington has stepped up efforts to prevent Haitians from emigrating here when they need has become the greatest.”

One forum participant, also from Haiti, said, “On January 12, the day the earthquake struck, President René Préval didn’t say one word. When the U.S. deployed 8,000 troops, they primarily stayed in the airport. The Haitian people organized themselves to dig each other out.”

“The biggest challenge for the working class, like in other countries around the world is to build a party to lead the workers to take power,” stated Senter. “That party was built in Cuba through the mobilization of millions of working people to take control of their country. The revolutionary capacity of the Haitian workers and peasants has been demonstrated many times throughout its history. It will play a decisive role in the future of Haiti, like in Cuba.”

6,000 protest loyalty pledge to Israel as Jewish state

BY SETH GALINSKY
Some 6,000 people marched in Tel Aviv October 16 to protest a proposal by the cabinet to require non-Jews seeking to become naturalized citizens to pledge loyalty to Israel as a “Jewish and democratic state.”

Under the slogan “Together against racism—Arab and Jewish March for Democracy,” many demonstrators carried signs that combined the Israeli and Palestinian flags. Both Jewish and Arab citizens of Israel were on the speakers’ platform.

“Arabs constitute 20 percent of the population, yet make up roughly 6.5 percent of all public service employees,” wrote Ahmad Tibi in Jedidh Aronoth, a major Israeli newspaper. “There is almost no area of life where equality between Arabs and Jews prevails.” Tibi is a deputy speaker of the Knesset, the Israeli parliament, and chairman of the United Arab List.

The Israeli cabinet approved the amendment to the citizenship law by a vote of 22 to 8 at the behest of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Three members of Netanyahu’s Likud Party voted against the measure as did five Labor Party ministers who are part of the coalition government.

The amendment still has to be voted on in the Knesset. But the pro-Israel legal center Arab Minority Rights in Israel, explained that the loyalty oath bill “specifically targets Palestinian Arab citizens of Israel.” Arab citizens of Israel often marry Arabs from Israeli-occupied territories or other Arab countries and face obstacles getting permission for their spouse to move to Israel, much less be granted rights of citizenship.

In a transparent maneuver to blunt criticism that the loyalty proposal is racist, Netanyahu said he would modify the bill to require anyone seeking to become a naturalized citizen, including Jews from around the world, to sign the oath.

Volunteer doctors from Cuban-Haitian medical brigade treat a woman and her child in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, February 15, one month after the earthquake.
Socialist candidates in Iowa advance solidarity

BY MARGARET TROWE

DESmOINES, IOWA—The last leg of the Iowa Socialist Workers Party campaign was busy and rewarding. On October 27 WWHO radio here held a panel of “the other guys”—the four candidates excluded from the gubernatorial debates between Democratic incumbent Cheri Jondreau and Republican challenger Terry Branstad. SWP candidate David Rosenfeld joined Jonathan Narcisse of the Iowa Party, Libertarian Eric Cooper, and Cathy Hughes, who calls herself the “Poor Party” candidate.

Narcisse laid out his perspective of strengthening family and religious faith, tax breaks for business investment in Iowa, and voting out the judges who overturned a state ban on same-sex marriage. Hughes attacked judges who enforce child support laws. Cooper called for letting the “free market” lower the minimum wage to solve unemployment.

In response, Rosenfeld said that Cooper “must not have a whole lot of acquaintance with the life of workers. Try to propose to my coworkers the idea we should be making less than $7.25 an hour? It’s more than the poverty rate.” These are poverty wages. You want to turn them into starvation wages. . . . The question is what we can do to strengthen our unions. Our watchword has to be solidarity.”

Rosenfeld addressed a candidates forum at the Islamic Center in Cedar Rapids, sponsored by the Council on American-Islamic Relations Iowa Chapter. “The economic crisis has spawned long-term unemployment, massive cutbacks in social services and wages in Iran, Afghanistan,” Rosenfeld said. “Among the political consequences of this crisis has been a rise in demagogic scapegoating for immigrants and Muslims. These appeals are daggers aimed at the heart of working people.”

Rosenfeld and this correspondent, who is writing in front of the Family Dollar store in the Black community here, met Janna Bragg, who said, “I can’t come to support their families, but some that sell drugs,” he said. “It is a confusing issue I grew up in a downtrodden area, and elsewhere.”

Rosenfeld addressed a candidates forum at the Islamic Center in Cedar Rapids, sponsored by the Council on American-Islamic Relations Iowa Chapter. “The economic crisis has spawned long-term unemployment, massive cutbacks in social services and wages in Iran, Afghanistan,” Rosenfeld said. “Among the political consequences of this crisis has been a rise in demagogic scapegoating for immigrants and Muslims. These appeals are daggers aimed at the heart of working-class unity.”

The candidates’ support for the legalization of undocumented workers led to some debate. Forrest, a freshman, questioned why undocumented workers don’t apply for legal citizenship. “I think some come to support their families, but some sell drugs,” he said. “If you find a situation I have to think about,” Forrest said he had doubts about the ability of workers in the United States to make a revolution. “I grew up in a downtrodden area, with poor housing on one side of the tracks and grand houses near the shore,” said Kevin, a student from Bayshore, Long Island. “I’m glad to hear from people noticing this division.”

“Under capitalism everyone feels they have to fight to keep their jobs and get rights a clear alternative. . . . His anachronistic, ‘dictatorship of capital’ rhetoric is sure to turn off liberal voters otherwise amenable to a left-wing candidate.”

Margaret Trowe was the SWP candidate for Iowa secretary of agriculture.

N.Y. students discuss possibilities for revolution

BY HARRY D’AGOSTINO

NEW PALTZ, New York—The Young Socialist club at the State University of New York here hosted a meeting October 27 where Socialist Workers Party candidates discuss issues facing working people and youth. The speakers were Willie Cotton, SWP candidate for U.S. Senate in Michigan, a freshman here and the party’s candidate for lieutenant governor. Student Callie Miasoulis chaired the meeting of 10 people.

Cotton condemned Washington’s war in Afghanistan and Pakistan. He pointed to the example of Cuba, where working people overthrew the tyranny of a sitting vice president in the United States to take political power. The candidates’ support for the legalization of undocumented workers led to some debate. Forrest, a freshman, questioned why undocumented workers don’t apply for legal citizenship. “I think some come to support their families, but some sell drugs,” he said. “It is a confusing issue I have to think about,” Forrest said he had doubts about the ability of workers in the United States to make a revolution. “I grew up in a downtrodden area, with poor housing on one side of the tracks and grand houses near the shore,” said Kevin, a student from Bayshore, Long Island. “I’m glad to hear from people noticing this division.”

“Under capitalism everyone feels they have to fight to keep their jobs and get rights a clear alternative. . . . His anachronistic, ‘dictatorship of capital’ rhetoric is sure to turn off liberal voters otherwise amenable to a left-wing candidate.”

Margaret Trowe was the SWP candidate for Iowa secretary of agriculture.

Outcome of 2010 elections

continued from front page

what they are against. Rand Paul, Re- publican Party victor in the U.S. Senate race in Kentucky who is closely associated with the tea party, de- scribed the elections as a message: “The American people are unhappy with what’s going on in Washington.” The Wall Street Journal put that in perspective in its editorial, admitting, “voters still view the GOP as skepti- cally as they do Democrats, a sign of the overall sour public mood.”

With millions out of work for years, falling real wages, and deteriorating social conditions for the great majority, a greater loss than usual for incumbents is to be expected. The middle class es- pecially, and large numbers of workers, are frightened by a present and future that seems increasingly out of control. President Obama’s campaign message that the economic blows would have been worse for working people without his policies was not convincing.

Candidates from both parties avoid- ed discussion of what they would do to change those conditions, and they avoided nearly all mention of the un- ending wars in Afghanistan and north- west Pakistan funded by hundreds of billions of troops that remain in Iraq, and the es- calating military operations in Yemen and elsewhere. Much of the media focus on the Re- publican victory has been about the anticipated race between the Obama White House and the incoming Re- publican majority. Wide publicity has been given to a statement by Rep. John Boehner, the likely new speaker of the House, that as far as Obama’s agenda is concerned, “We’re going to do ev- erything—and I mean everything we can do—kill it, stop it, slow it down, whatever we can.” But Obama has already appealed to Boehner, in a telephone call congratulating him fol- lowing the election, to begin working together “to find common ground.”

Between the factional discourse and appeals for compromise, the twin capi- talist parties will continue to find com- mon ground in their drive against the standard of living and rights of working people, as they attempt to shore up the profit rates of the ruling capital-ists. Plans for cutting Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, and other social programs in order to rein in the mas- sive federal budget deficit are at the top of the list for both Democrats and Republicans.

The government has no plans for a public works program or any other plan that could provide jobs. The owners of industry have no plans to increase pro- ductive capacity and put people back to work. Aside from the Socialist Workers Party candidates who ran in 33 races in 11 states and the District of Columbia, workers had little voice during the elec- tions. The union officialdom continued its policies of throwing away resources by backing the campaigns of Demo- cratic Party “friends of labor.” Only in the sporadic mobilizations of workers on the picket lines, in fights for legal- ization of undocumented workers, and other such battles were the interests of working people advanced in the course of these elections.

The outcome of the 2010 elections did not change what working people continue to face with the world capital- ist depression and ongoing imperi- alist wars abroad; neither did it change the political space that continues to exist for workers to organize and fight for their class interests, overcome di- visions, and gain confidence along the road toward conquering political power.
`Moderates rally’ held in D.C. ahead of elections

BY DOUG NELSON

A “Rally to Restore Sanity and/or Fear” called by political satirists Jon Stewart and Stephen Colbert jam-packed the National Mall in Washington, D.C., October 30.

For many the three-hour rally/entertainment show was a response to the August 29 “Roshon Honor” event organized in Washington by conservative talk show host Glenn Beck. “We want to outdo Glenn Beck,” said Karl Kreiner, a young accountant from Alexandria, Virginia.

Among the participants were large numbers of professionals, small business people, and other middle-class layers, as well as office workers and students. “Well over 200,000 people” turned out for the event, according to an unofficial account by the Parks Service. The day set a new record for use of Washington’s Metrorail system with 825,000 trips—475,000 more than an average Saturday. Some 10,000 came from New York City on free buses provided by the Huffington Post.

The event was sponsored by Comedy Central, a division of Viacom, which broadcast the event live. The comedy duo pitched the event as the fusion of Stewart’s “Rally to Restore Sanity” and a tongue-in-cheek “counter rally” led by Colbert’s mock-on-conservatism personality called “March to Keep Fear Alive.”

Stewart dubbed the event as a non-partisan “Million Moderates March.” One of many handmade signs seemed to capture this spirit: “What do we want? Moderation. When do we want it? In a reasonable time frame.”

But held two days ahead of mid-term elections, the action was aptly characterized as “a Democratic rally without a Democratic politician,” by New York Times columnists.

A number of people dressed up as tea bags or other costumes directed against tea party Republicans. (Thou-sands were simply wearing various Halloween costumes.)

“This is a pro-Democratic rally,” said Maureen Mckinney, a political science major. “People here want sanity, not hate. The right is spreading lies about our president.”

Most organized political groups working the crowd were pro-Democratic Party, such as NARAL Pro-Choice America and Barack Obama’s Organizing for America. Among them, however, were campaigners for the Socialist Workers Party candidates, who received a wide range of responses, reflecting a heterogeneity of political views and outlooks.

“Did you listen to the speaker?” commented one passerby. “This is a rally for moderates.” Several others made similar remarks. Dozens were interested in the socialist campaign, and stopped to talk, subscribe to the Militant, and buy books on revolutionary politics. (See article on front page.)

Workers Power and ‘Militant’ sales

BY TOM FISKE

Supporters of the Socialist Workers Party have had their best week to date in the party-building fund drive, raising more than $20,600 towards the goal of $98,000 for the communist movement. At the end of the sixth week a total of $73,985 has been collected.

A meeting for the fund was held October 30 in Miami. Twenty-four people participated in a wide-ranging political discussion about world politics, following talks by Maureen Shrivani from the SWP in New York and Jean Baptiste Silas from the SWP in Miami.

Contributions totaling $1,169 gave a big boost to the $3,000 goal in Miami. “Why the Working Class Needs a Revolutionary Party to Confront the Capitalist Economic Crisis” was the topic of an October 30 fund meeting in Los Angeles. Rebecca Williamson, SWP candidate for U.S. Congress in Iowa, was the featured speaker.

“The party utilizes tremendous resources to get where we need to go, to show what a revolutionary party stands for,” explained Williamson. “Each contribution makes a difference.” More than $500 in new pledges were made and $2,005 collected.

The fund ends on November 9. All last two weeks of the drive, every area can organize to go over their local targets.

It’s not too late to join in the final push! Sign up a coworker or friend or call distributors (on page 8) to ask how you can help in the final days of the campaign.

Socialist Workers Party campaigners at “Rally to Restore Sanity and/or Fear” in Washington. At right is Cleve Scott, who was SWP candidate for D.C. delegate to House of Representatives.

Many expressed frustration with the Democratic Party, President Barack Obama, or the state of the economy. “We thought Obama was going to do something different on the war, for immigrants,” said Tanya Tinsley, 47, a physical therapist and among the small percentage of Blacks at the rally. “He should move a little more to the left and he would get some support.”

“We need Obama to be what he said he would be,” said Tinsley’s friend Na-dine Brown, 48, from Queens, New York, who was an event planner before she lost her job. “I want to go back to work, but I don’t want to go from $100,000 to $20,000 a year.”

“It’s hard to find a job today. I would like to go to graduate school and become a librarian,” said Carrie McCarr- thy, 23, who recently graduated college with an English major and works part-time at Best Buy for $9 per hour.

A common thread was aversion to the coarsening of political discourse and factionalism in bourgeois politics, as well as the interest in reactionary conspiracy theories—manifestations of the deepening economic and social crisis of capitalism. “We need to take it down a notch,” said Ali Arman, a tele-communications engineer. “Politics has gotten ugly.”

One handmade sign simply read, “Relax, everything will be O.K.” But what seemed to lay under the facetious tone and mockery that marked the rally was unease about the future and idle hope that it will all stop, turn around, and everything will be as it was.
Boston students march against beating by cop

By Sarah Ullman

Boston—"We’re from the community. When we found out what happened, we had to do something about it!" said Kanisha Hartfield, a first-year student at Roxbury Community College (RCC).

She and her friend India Cox organized a protest at this majority black school after viewing a seven-minute video posted on YouTube about a sixteen-year-old being beaten by police during his arrest on campus October 22.

In the video Boston police officer Michael McNanus is seen repeatedly raising his fist and pounding the youth, then slamming his knee into him again and again, while at least six other cops pin him down. After his arrest he was treated at the hospital for a head wound and released to the police.

Because of the wide publicity and reaction among many workers and students, city officials promised an investigation. McNanus has been placed on desk duty, for now.

McManus was among police officers exonerated in the 2008 death of 22-year-old David Woodman, a student at Emmanuel College. The city paid $3 million to Woodman’s family and community to settle a civil rights lawsuit, after an independent panel ruled there were "missteps" by the Boston police during Woodman’s arrest.

Some three dozen mostly RCC students and faculty gathered on the campus October 29, then marched a half-mile to the Boston police headquarters, chanting, "Come one! Come all! United we stand! Divided we fall!"

Once there, a spirited rally demanded justice and an end to police brutality.

That same day some 2,000 people attended a memorial service at the Boston Convention and Exposition Center for Danroy Henry Jr., 20, a football player from Massachusetts who was attending Pace University in Pleasantville, New York. He was killed by New York cops on October 17.

The police say he tried to hit them with his car. Witnesses say a cop jumped on the hood and shot him as he was responding to a police order to move the car out of the fire lane, where he was waiting for friends.

By Farrell Dobbs

TEAMSTER POLITICS

Tells how rank-and-file Teamsters led the fight against antunion frame-ups and assaults by fascist goons; the battle for the CIO; the drive for recognition for all; and efforts to advance independent labor political action.

Third book in series.

Also available from Pathfinder Press: Teamster Power and Teamster Bureaucracy

All four books for $65

PathfinderPress.com

The following is a short message and article sent to the Militant from a locked-out worker at the Roquette America, Inc., plant in Keokuk, Iowa.

I wanted to put some thoughts down about how the lockout at Keokuk is affecting the town, my family, and the workers at Roquette. I also wanted to thank many of you for visiting our picket lines and Labor Temple. Good luck to David, Helen, Margaret, Rebec- cia, and Laura [Socialist Workers Party candidates in Iowa and Illinois] in the elections.

Just two months ago our union, Local 485 of the Bakery, Confectionery, Tobacco Workers and Grain Millers (BCTGM) had 5 to 10 members attending our biweekly meetings out of 239 members.

Since our employer Roquette America (a French-owned company) offered us a late hour, throw down, take it or leave it, union-busting contract, we have awakened.

As Roquette tried to put its stranglehold on our community, the people have decided Keokuk wasn’t for sale.

Many businesses have refused to cater to the company while putting union signs in their windows and providing discounts or special solidarity days for the pickets.

The following is a short message and article sent to the Militant from a locked-out worker at the Roquette America, Inc., plant in Keokuk, Iowa.

I wanted to put some thoughts down about how the lockout at Keokuk is affecting the town, my family, and the workers at Roquette. I also wanted to thank many of you for visiting our picket lines and Labor Temple. Good luck to David, Helen, Margaret, Rebecca, and Laura [Socialist Workers Party candidates in Iowa and Illinois] in the elections.

Just two months ago our union, Local 485 of the Bakery, Confectionery, Tobacco Workers and Grain Millers (BCTGM) had 5 to 10 members attending our biweekly meetings out of 239 members.

Since our employer Roquette America (a French-owned company) offered us a late hour, throw down, take it or leave it, union-busting contract, we have awakened.

As Roquette tried to put its stranglehold on our community, the people have decided Keokuk wasn’t for sale.

Many businesses have refused to cater to the company while putting union signs in their windows and providing discounts or special solidarity days for the pickets.

We have slapped pickets up at six entrances to the plant, picketed their offices, the scabs’ hotels, and company officials’ homes.

People drive by and honk and show their fist in support. We are actually shouting the words “Union” and “Solidarity now!” a total turnaround from a couple months ago.

It’s heartening to see children being educated about the union while they are holding signs shouting “Scabs go home” as they walk beside their parents.

My kids were educated 25 years ago when we went through another lockout when this plant was owned by the H.J. Heinz company.

Now my daughter is a proud UFWC [United Food and Commercial Workers] member and brought my granddaughter to march with her. The company will come to their senses and get the scabs out of there. What do we want? Con- tract! Who are we? UNION!! Not mat- ter what happens I am very proud of my family, my town, and my union.

In Solidarity, Buddy Howard BCTGM 485

The Militant  November 15, 2010  5
Workers of revolutionary Cuba's militia guard Esso oil refinery after Havana nationalized U.S.-owned refineries following Washington's refusal to process oil from Soviet Union. U.S. president Eisenhower retaliated, canceling imports of Cuban sugar. President John Kennedy banned all trade with Cuba.

BY SETH GALINSKY

October 19 marked the 50th anniversary of the start of Washington’s economic embargo of Cuba. Begun under the administration of President Dwight Eisenhower to punish the Cuban people for having made a revolution that overthrew a U.S.-backed dictatorship, it continues to this day.

Prior to the revolution, Cuba was little more than a sugar colony. Sixty-one of Cuba’s 165 sugar mills, the source of more than half the island’s sugar production, were owned by U.S. capitalists.

Like much of the semicolonial world, Cuba was a supplier of raw materials for U.S. imperialism and a market for its finished goods. Although it had rich agricultural land, Cuba imported most of its rice and beans from the United States; famous for its tobacco, Cuba imported U.S. cigarettes; even though it exported sugar, Cuba imported candy.

In January 1959 working people in Cuba’s sugar mills, during the 26th Movement, overthrew the dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista. Washington hoped that the changes would be cosmetic, and that whatever government replaced the old regime would continue business as usual.

Instead, the revolutionary government began an agrarian reform that distributed land to small peasants and confiscated the holdings of large landowners, outlawed racial discrimination, reduced rents and electric rates, and created mili- tias with thousands of workers and peasants to defend these gains, opening the road to a socialist transformation.

On June 7, 1960, when U.S.-owned refineries refused to process a shipment of crude oil from the Soviet Union, massive mobilizations of workers and peasants accompanied nationalization of the refineries.

U.S. economic war on Cuba begins

In retaliation, Eisenhower canceled Cuba’s sugar quota for exporting to the United States for the year. The quota was permanently ended by President John Kennedy. This marked the beginning of Washington’s economic war against Cuba.

On Oct. 19, 1960, Washington banned all exports to Cuba except for some food and medical supplies it needs, an outright embargo. Under the administration of President Ronald Reagan, the U.S. government has refused to allow Cuba access to under- water Internet cables just 20 miles from Havana. Cuba hopes to complete the installation of underwater fiber optic lines with the aid of the Venezuelan government by mid-2011, greatly increasing the island’s telecommunications capacity.

Although the UN voted 187-2 calling for an end to the embargo, some governments, including members of the European Union, voted mainly in opposition to Washington’s interference in their trade policies. Belgium’s representative to the UN General Assembly, speaking on behalf of the European Union, said, “We cannot accept that unilaterally imposed measures impede our economic and commercial relations with Cuba.”

“This blockade is an act of economic war,” Cuban foreign minister Bruno Rodriguez said at the UN. Washington would like “to install a pro-yankee government in Cuba. That is not going to happen.”

BY DOUG NELSON

November 1—In the latest example of Washington’s continued to escalate war in Afghanistan among Euro- pean powers, French defense minister Herve Morin announced October 28 that U.S. troops will begin drawing down in early 2011.

Morin said the French forces would be pulled out from Sarobi District of Kabul Province, east of the capital, where most of its 3,500 troops are deployed. The dis- trict is “a zone in which we hope we can transfer responsibilities to the Afghans during 2011,” Morin told the press.

French officials denied that the announcement had anything to do with the release one day earlier of an apparent message from Osama bin Laden. In an audio tape broadcast by Al Jazeera a man identifying himself as Bin Laden threatened to kill French citizens in retaliation for French involvement in the war and a recently passed law in France banning Muslim women from publicly wearing a burqa or niqab, which covers the face. The law is scheduled to go into effect in early 2011.

An undisclosed number of French troops stationed in the adjacent Kapisa Province to the northeast of Kabul are to remain, according to the Daily Telegraph.

The Dutch government officially ended its Afghan mission in early August, with a complete withdrawal scheduled for the end of the year. Its troop presence has declined from 1,600 to about 380.

The Dutch withdrawal was announced after the Labor party left the coalition government in protest over proposals to continue its military mis- sion in Afghanistan. At the same time Prime Minister Mark Rutte said in mid-October that his government would soon consider a request from NATO to help train Afghan police.

The Canadian government confirmed in March that it will withdraw its 2,800 troops some time next year. Several weeks ago, Italian foreign minister Franco Frattini said 1,300 Italian troops would begin to draw down next summer and completely withdraw by 2014.

There are some 92,000 U.S. troops in Afghanistan, according to Army Times. About 40,000 troops are deployed from 45 other countries, according to official NATO figures. Only 13 govern- ments have more than 500 troops in the country. Deployments range from 9,500 from the United Kingdom to 3 from Austria.

BY DOUG NELSON

After the most recent events U.S. Special Forces had already increased their numbers in Yemen, CNN re- ported, and the White House was considering “the possibility of hav- ing the CIA mount a drone operation in Yemen similar to the one in Paki- stan.” Washington’s “counterterrorism” funding for Sana’a rose to $150.5 million in 2010, more than double the 2009 figure.

Inside the United States, Napolitano announced “enhancements” that would increase the militarization of the airports. Some, like increased use of dogs and frisking, would be visible, she said, while other steps are “not measures that we are making public.”

The U.S., Canadian, French, Dutch, and British governments imposed a ban on shipments from Yemen. The government in Germany also banned passengers from Yemen.

Articles appearing in the big-busi- ness press hint at the way the Yemen events will be used by both employers and he government against workers rights. The Boston Globe editorial- ized that “even legitimate companies can be infiltrated by untrustworthy employees.”
Below we continue our installments from the recently published book Malcolm X, Black Liberation, and the Road to Workers Power. By Jack Barnes, national secretary of the Socialist Workers Party. This week we reprint the third and final part of an interview with Malcolm X in January 1965 that originally appeared in the Young Socialist magazine. The interview was conducted by Barnes, then national chairman of the Young Socialist Alliance, and Barry Shopppard, a staff writer for the Militant. Copyright © 2009 by Pathfinder Press. Reprinted by permission.

YOUNG SOCIALIST: What is your opinion of the Democratic Party?

MALCOLM X: The Democratic Party is responsible for the racism that exists in this country, along with the Republican Party. The leading racists in this country are Democrats. Goldwater isn’t the leading racist—he’s a racist but not the leading racist! The racists who have influence in Washington, D.C., are Democrats. If you check, whenever any kind of legislation is suggested to mitigate the injustices that Negroes suffer in this country, you will find that the people who line up against it are members of Lyndon B. Johnson’s party. The Dixiecrats are Democrats. The Dixiecrats are only a subdivision of the Democratic Party, and the same man over the Democrats is over the Dixiecrats.

Young Socialist: What contribution can youth, especially students, who are disgusted with racism in this society, make to the Black struggle for freedom?

MALCOLM X: Whites who are sincere don’t accomplish anything by joining Negro organizations and making them integrated. Whites who are sincere should organize among themselves and figure out some strategy to break down the prejudice that exists in white communities. This is where they can function more intelligently and more effectively, in the white community itself, and this has never been done.

Young Socialist: What part in the world revolution are youth playing, and what lessons may this have for Americans?

MALCOLM X: If you’ve studied the captives being caught by the American soldiers in South Vietnam, you’ll find that these guerrillas are young people. Some of them are just children and some haven’t yet reached their teens. Most are teenagers. It is the teenagers abroad, all over the world, who are actually involving themselves in the struggle to eliminate oppression and exploitation. In the Congo, the refugees point out that many of the Congolese revolutionaries are children. In fact, when they shoot captive revolutionaries, they shoot all the way down to seven years old—that’s what is reported in the press. Because the revolutionaries are children, young people in these countries the young people are the ones who most quickly identify with the struggle and the necessity to eliminate the evil conditions that exist. And here in this country, it has been my own observation that when you get into a conversation on racism and discrimination and segregation, you will find young people are more incensed over it—they feel more filled with an urge to eliminate it.

I think young people here can find a powerful example in the young simbas [lions] in the Congo and the young fighters in South Vietnam.

Another point: as the dark-skinned nations of this earth become independent, as they develop and become stronger, that means that time is on the side of the American Negro. At this point the American Negro is still hospitable to his problems, he will become completely disillusioned, disenchanted, and disassociate himself from the interest of America and its society. Many have done that already.

Young Socialist: What is your opinion of the worldwide struggle now going on between capitalism and socialism?

MALCOLM X: It is impossible for capitalism to survive, primarily because the system of capitalism needs some blood to keep its strength. It used to be like an eagle, but now it’s more like a vulture. It used to be strong enough to go and suck anybody’s blood whether they were strong or not. But now it has become more cowardly, like the vulture, and it can only suck the blood of the helpless. As the nations of the world free themselves, then capitalism has less victims, less to suck, and it becomes weaker and weaker. It’s only a matter of time in my opinion before it will collapse completely.

Young Socialist: What is the outlook for the Negro struggle in 1965?

MALCOLM X: Bloody. It was bloody in 1963, it was bloody in 1964, and all of the causes that created this bloodshed still remain. The March on Washington was designed to serve as a vent or valve for the frustration that produced this explosive atmosphere. In 1964 they used the civil rights bill as a valve. What can they use in 1965? There is no trick that the politicians can use to contain the explosiveness that exists right here in Harlem.

And look at New York Police Commissioner Murphy. Murphy is coming out in headlines trying to make it a crime now to even predict that there’s going to be trouble. This shows the caliber of American thinking. There’s going to be an explosion, but don’t talk about it. All the ingredients that produce explosions exist, but don’t talk about it, he says.

That’s like saying 700 million Chinese don’t exist. This is the same approach. The American has become so guilt-ridden that he’s filled with fear that instead of facing the reality of any situation, he pretends the situation doesn’t exist. You know, in this country it’s almost a crime to say there’s a place called China—unless you mean that little island called Formosa. By the same token, it’s almost a crime to say that people in Harlem are going to explode because the social dynamite that existed last year is still here.

So I think 1965 will be most explosive—more explosive than it was in ’64 and ’63. There’s nothing they can do to contain it. The Negro leaders have lost their control over the people. So that when the people begin to explode—and their explosion is justified, not unjustified—the Negro leaders can’t contain it.

1. In the 1964 presidential election, the Republican candidate Barry Goldwater was defeated by Democratic incumbent Lyndon B. Johnson.
2. The “Dixiecrats” were the openly segregationist wing of the Democratic Party dominant at the time in most of the U.S. South.
3. The August 28, 1963, March on Washington drew more than 250,000 people for a rally at the Lincoln Memorial. The march called for passage of civil rights legislation then pending in Congress. Malcolm X opposed the political perspectives of the leadership of the march, but he participated in the action. That evening, speaking with a Militant reporter covering the demonstration in D.C., Malcolm, at the rally and the leadership spokesmen for the Nation of Islam, said that while march leaders were “talking about a civil rights revolution,” the truth is that revolution is not a halfway process. “You are either free or not free.” (The Militant, September 16, 1963.)
4. The Civil Rights Act of 1964, signed into law by President Johnson, barred discrimination in voting, public facilities, schools, and employment.
5. On January 10, 1965, New York Police Commissioner Michael J. Murphy sharply condemned Black leaders such as Malcolm X who had pointed to growing frustration among Blacks and predicted outbreaks of resistance. Such statements, Murphy implied, were causing the trouble.
6. Until the early 1970s, the U.S. government refused diplomatic recognition to the People’s Republic of China, maintaining that the capitalist government of Taiwan (Formosa) represented China.
7. In what the government and big business press called a “retreat,” the anger of Blacks in Harlem and the Brooklyn neighborhood of Bedford-Stuyvesant had exploded into the bloodiest five days in July 1964, in the aftermath of the cop killing of a fifteen-year-old Black youth, James Powell. The uprising was sparked by the actions of New York police. The cops had broken up a demonstration demanding the arrest of the officer who had killed Powell. They arrested protest organizers and then staged a cop riot, beating and arresting Harlem residents and killing one.

Matter of time before capitalism collapses
Part 3 of January 1965 interview with Malcolm X for ‘Young Socialist’

‘Chí lang village youth volunteer in anti-U.S. war of national salvation,’ reads banner at demonstration in Vietnam, 1960s. ‘It is the teenagers abroad who are actually involving themselves in the struggle to eliminate oppressors and exploitation,’ ATX said. ‘Young people here can find a powerful example in the young fighters in South Vietnam.’

1. In the 1964 presidential election, the Republican candidate Barry Goldwater was defeated by Democratic incumbent Lyndon B. Johnson.
2. The “Dixiecrats” were the openly segregationist wing of the Democratic Party dominant at the time in most of the U.S. South.
3. The August 28, 1963, March on Washington drew more than 250,000 people for a rally at the Lincoln Memorial. The march called for passage of civil rights legislation then pending in Congress. Malcolm X opposed the political perspectives of the leadership of the march, but he participated in the action. That evening, speaking with a Militant reporter covering the demonstration in D.C., Malcolm, at the rally and the leadership spokesmen for the Nation of Islam, said that while march leaders were “talking about a civil rights revolution,” the truth is that revolution is not a halfway process. “You are either free or not free.” (The Militant, September 16, 1963.)
4. The Civil Rights Act of 1964, signed into law by President Johnson, barred discrimination in voting, public facilities, schools, and employment.
5. On January 10, 1965, New York Police Commissioner Michael J. Murphy sharply condemned Black leaders such as Malcolm X who had pointed to growing frustration among Blacks and predicted outbreaks of resistance. Such statements, Murphy implied, were causing the trouble.
6. Until the early 1970s, the U.S. government refused diplomatic recognition to the People’s Republic of China, maintaining that the capitalist government of Taiwan (Formosa) represented China.
7. In what the government and big business press called a “retreat,” the anger of Blacks in Harlem and the Brooklyn neighborhood of Bedford-Stuyvesant had exploded into the bloodiest five days in July 1964, in the aftermath of the cop killing of a fifteen-year-old Black youth, James Powell. The uprising was sparked by the actions of New York police. The cops had broken up a demonstration demanding the arrest of the officer who had killed Powell. They arrested protest organizers and then staged a cop riot, beating and arresting Harlem residents and killing one.

Special offer
Malcolm X, Black Liberation, and the Road to Workers Power
by Jack Barnes

This is a book about the dictatorship of capital and the road to the dictatorship of the proletariat. A book about the last century and a half of class struggle in the United States—from the Civil War and Radical Reconstruction to today—and the unimpeachable evidence it offers that workers who are Black will comprise a disproportionately weighty part of the ranks and leadership of the mass social movement that will make a proletarian revolution.

Available for only $15
Or $10 with a subscription to the Militant from one of the distributors listed on page 8. (Include $3 for shipping if ordering from the Militant.)

PathfinderPress.com
‘Two-party face’ of capitalism’s ‘one-party system’

Below is an excerpt from Capitalism’s World Disorder: Working-Class Politics at the Millennium by Jack Barnes. The French edition was one of Pathfinder’s Books of the Month for November. Barnes, national secretary of the Socialist Workers Party, helps explain ‘how the working world in which we live came to be, how it was imposed on us, and how we can overturn it and build something new.’ This excerpt is from the section “So Far from God, So Close to Orange County: The Deflationary Drag of Finance Capital.” It is based on a talk presented to a regional socialist educational conference in Los Angeles over the 1994–95 New Year’s weekend. Copyright © 1999 Pathfinder Press. Reprinted by permission.

By Jack Barnes

Those of us who grew up in the postwar years are familiar with what has been known as the Democratic Party “labor–liberal” coalition. It grouped together—under the political assumption that the things that are doable—two forces, the AFL-CIO officemanship, the leadership of the NAACP and other major civil rights groups, and executives, officials of public and private welfare agencies. Today, that coalition is scarcely a shadow of its former self. Nor does it have the appearance of any substantial weight in bourgeois politics. For the Communist Party and the rest of the petty-bourgeois left in the working-class movement in the United States, this is cause for great sorrow and lamentation. But for communist workers, it is grounds for celebration.

The so-called labor–liberal–civil rights coalition was never a fighting alliance of workers and youth. It was never an alliance of the ranks of the massive battles that built the industrial unions in the 1930s and then advanced Black rights in the 1950s and 1960s. It was a coalition of apparatchiks and of functionaries who derived their authority from the concessions those working-class struggles had won. It was a coalition of those who sat on top of the unions and civil rights organizations and prevented them from effectively defending or extending those gains. It was a coalition that blocked all advancement toward political activity independent of the party structures that serve the exploiters and oppressors. As such, it was very useful to the capitalist parties and political apparatus.

This so-called coalition was built on the lie that if working people in struggle would support this or that wing of the exploiters, staying within their two-party system, then a way could be found to make progress and improve conditions of life for workers and farmers. So long as the postwar capitalist expansion gave the rulers a margin for concessions, that class-collaborationist illusion could be portrayed by the labor officialdom as having some basis in reality. To give capitalism its current deflationary conditions, however, the bureaucracy finds it harder and harder to produce on that lie. But with the help of parts of the left, growing sections of the officialdom will work overtime to try to give that coalition an appearance of renewal.

The fight for jobs and class unity

The cadres of a revolutionary working-class movement will not come out of the breakup of the “labor–liberal coalition” in the Democratic Party. They will not emerge around the edges of bourgeois politics and institutions. Radicalized working-class currents will begin to develop only as a conscious, fighting labor movement grows. Only the actions and combat experience of workers, and the self-confidence such activity brings, can make working-class radicalization and propel the emergence of new leadership from the ranks of those who are fighting.

Class-conscious workers must never fall for the bourgeois propaganda that makes progress and improves conditions of life for workers and farmers. So long as the postwar capitalist expansion gave the rulers a margin for concessions, that class-collaborationist illusion could be portrayed by the labor officialdom as having some basis in reality. To give capitalism its current deflationary conditions, however, the bureaucracy finds it harder and harder to produce on that lie. But with the help of parts of the left, growing sections of the officialdom will work overtime to try to give that coalition an appearance of renewal.

The so-called labor–liberal–civil rights coalition was never a fighting alliance of workers and youth. It was never an alliance of the ranks of the massive battles that built the industrial unions in the 1930s and then advanced Black rights in the 1950s and 1960s. It was a coalition of apparatchiks and of functionaries who derived their authority from the concessions those working-class struggles had won. It was a coalition of those who sat on top of the unions and civil rights organizations and prevented them from effectively defending or extending those gains. It was a coalition that blocked all advancement toward political activity independent of the party structures that serve the exploiters and oppressors. As such, it was very useful to the capitalist parties and political apparatus.

This so-called coalition was built on the lie that if working people in struggle would support this or that wing of the exploiters, staying within their two-party system, then a way could be found to make progress and improve conditions of life for workers and farmers. So long as the postwar capitalist expansion gave the rulers a margin for concessions, that class-collaborationist illusion could be portrayed by the labor officialdom as having some basis in reality. To give capitalism its current deflationary conditions, however, the bureaucracy finds it harder and harder to produce on that lie. But with the help of parts of the left, growing sections of the officialdom will work overtime to try to give that coalition an appearance of renewal.

The fight for jobs and class unity

The cadres of a revolutionary working-class movement will not come out of the breakup of the “labor–liberal coalition” in the Democratic Party. They will not emerge around the edges of bourgeois politics and institutions. Radicalized working-class currents will begin to develop only as a conscious, fighting labor movement grows. Only the actions and combat experience of workers, and the self-confidence such activity brings, can make working-class radicalization and propel the emergence of new leadership from the ranks of those who are fighting.

Class-conscious workers must never fall for the bourgeois propaganda that makes progress and improves conditions of life for workers and farmers. So long as the postwar capitalist expansion gave the rulers a margin for concessions, that class-collaborationist illusion could be portrayed by the labor officialdom as having some basis in reality. To give capitalism its current deflationary conditions, however, the bureaucracy finds it harder and harder to produce on that lie. But with the help of parts of the left, growing sections of the officialdom will work overtime to try to give that coalition an appearance of renewal.

The fight for jobs and class unity

The cadres of a revolutionary working-class movement will not come out of the breakup of the “labor–liberal coalition” in the Democratic Party. They will not emerge around the edges of bourgeois politics and institutions. Radicalized working-class currents will begin to develop only as a conscious, fighting labor movement grows. Only the actions and combat experience of workers, and the self-confidence such activity brings, can make working-class radicalization and propel the emergence of new leadership from the ranks of those who are fighting.

Class-conscious workers must never fall for the bourgeois propaganda that makes progress and improves conditions of life for workers and farmers. So long as the postwar capitalist expansion gave the rulers a margin for concessions, that class-collaborationist illusion could be portrayed by the labor officialdom as having some basis in reality. To give capitalism its current deflationary conditions, however, the bureaucracy finds it harder and harder to produce on that lie. But with the help of parts of the left, growing sections of the officialdom will work overtime to try to give that coalition an appearance of renewal.

The fight for jobs and class unity

The cadres of a revolutionary working-class movement will not come out of the breakup of the “labor–liberal coalition” in the Democratic Party. They will not emerge around the edges of bourgeois politics and institutions. Radicalized working-class currents will begin to develop only as a conscious, fighting labor movement grows. Only the actions and combat experience of workers, and the self-confidence such activity brings, can make working-class radicalization and propel the emergence of new leadership from the ranks of those who are fighting.

Class-conscious workers must never fall for the bourgeois propaganda that makes progress and improves conditions of life for workers and farmers. So long as the postwar capitalist expansion gave the rulers a margin for concessions, that class-collaborationist illusion could be portrayed by the labor officialdom as having some basis in reality. To give capitalism its current deflationary conditions, however, the bureaucracy finds it harder and harder to produce on that lie. But with the help of parts of the left, growing sections of the officialdom will work overtime to try to give that coalition an appearance of renewal.
Join fight for a socialist world

The 2010 elections are over, but the candidates of the Socialist Workers Party, the only voice for the working class in this election, have not stopped campaigning. They and their supporters plan to continue joining union picket lines; marching in demonstrations against the U.S.-led wars in Afghanistan and Iraq; picketing abortion clinics from right-wing attacks; and speaking out on behalf of working farmers.

They will continue to demand a massive public works program to provide jobs at union scale, legalizing of undocumented workers, improved lifetime medical care for all—demands that unite the working class in the face of the deepest economic and social crisis in living memory.

Socialists continue to join with their counterparts on the job in fights against speedup, safety violations, race and sex discrimination, and pay cuts. They will support and help build protests against cutbacks in education and health care, police brutality and frame-ups, and the U.S. embargo on Cuba.

The SWP is a revolutionary working-class party. Its candidates did not—and will not—tell working people that fundamental social change can be achieved by voting for one or another candidate. The roots of the current crisis is the profit system, and workers need to build a revolutionary movement that can fight to overturn capitalist rule and take political power.

That will give working people the most powerful weapon—mass action to stop war and sex discrimination, end wars, and replace the dog-eat-dog world of class exploitation with one based on working-class solidarity. A major step along this road for workers to fight from the Democrats and Republicans and fight for a labor party.

Socialists are circulating the Militant newspaper at plant gates, in working-class neighborhoods, and on campuses to get the truth about resisting by working people to the employers’ attacks and the history of past struggles workers can learn from. Along with the paper, they will introduce readers to the book, Malcolm X: Black Liberation, and the Road to Workers Power by Jack Barnes, which explains the need to replace the dictatorship of capital with the dictatorship of the proletariat.

We urge our readers to join the fight for a socialist world.

France: Refinery strikers win solidarity

BY HUGO WILS

The police were granted a court injunction October 22 ordering individual workers who fuel the petrol tankers—on pain of prison sentences if they refused—to end their strike in the interests of “national security.”

Pickets blocking the oil depot were dispersed by some 200 loads of militarized police.

Workers at the refinery were boosted by solidarity from other workers. The union received around 5,000 messages of support and hundreds joined their contingent during a national day of action in Paris.

Many prices rise, but not Social Security

Continued from front page

up in February by President Barack Obama to make proposals on how to cut the federal budget. “For far too long, Washington has avoided the tough choices necessary to solve our fiscal problems,” the president said at the time.

One proposal being considered by the commis sion is raising further the age at which workers can start collecting Social Security benefits. House Republican Leader John Boehner and Democratic Majority Leader Steny Hoyer both favor this, as does Democrat Ergsine Bowles and Republican Alan Simpson, co-chairs of the fiscal commission.

Currently workers can begin collecting benefits at age 62, but they get only 75 percent of what they would receive if they waited until age 66. Despite this, most workers are taking the benefits at age 62, a little more than three-fourths of all those filing for Social Security last year took early benefits, a measure of the severity of the capitalist economic crisis.

At the same time the number of people re- estimate that increasing the eligibility age from 65, which was set in 1935, to 67, which will take effect in 2022, reduces lifetime benefits for a retiree by $28,000. If the age gets pushed to 70, the government will be stealing another $63,573, said Economy Minister Christine Lagarde.

Refusing to pay a cost-of-living increase is another way of cutting benefits. When Social Sec urity was first won in the 1930s, there was no cost-of-living clause. That was won as a by-product of the Black rights struggle in the 1960s and 1970s, which also led to establishing Medicare, Medicaid, and benefits for those with disabilities regardless of age.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics justifies the de nial of COLA by claiming that prices only went up 1.1 percent in the last year, not enough to qual ify for an increase in Social Security checks. But COLA figures are rigged in several ways.

The government no longer includes the cost of food or fuel in determining the Consumer Price Index. Over the past year food prices rose 1.4 percent; the energy index increased 3.8 percent, with gasoline prices up 5.1 percent. The energy index increased 3.8 percent, with gasoline prices up 5.1 percent.

The figures used to decide if Social Security should go up are also not based on the expenses of older retirees, but on those of younger people who are still working, whose medical expenses are far lower. According to the Wall Street Journal, people over 65 spent 5 percent more on health care in 2009 than they did in 2007.

Actions in France

Continued from front page

unemployment. A 33-day walkout at Fos-Lavera—the world’s third largest oil terminal and port, near Marseille—and blockades of some 20 fuel depots were at the center of the opposition to the government’s measures.

The day after parliament approved the retirement law, hundreds of thousands of workers again went on strike October 28, with demonstrations in 269 cities. According to police estimates, 560,000 took part in those marches, the smallest day of action to date.

On September 29 workers voted to return to work at the last of the 12 oil refineries that had been shut down by strikes. Workers at Fos-Lavera, who had been on strike against both the retirement law and substantial changes in their work conditions, also voted to go back to work after port authorities made some concessions. Their strike had left 82 boats, including 38 oil tankers, stranded, some for weeks.

The government stood firm in the face of workers’ opposition. It ordered aggressive police action by spe cialized riot police to clear the blockaded fuel depots, and issued a legally binding order to striking refinery workers at Grandpuits, near Paris, to return to work.

“If France had retreated from reforming [the retire ment system] in the midst of social protests, this would have put it in a bad position in the financial mar kets,” said Economy Minister Christine Lagarde.

Attacks on workers’ social wage

Through massive class battles over decades, workers in France have established a social wage that they consider their right. Previous attempts to cut it have been repelled by strikes and protests, like in 1995 against the plan put forward by Socialist Prime Minister Alain Juppé. Many workers are assessing what is different this time around.

France has the second largest economy in Europe after Germany, and is a nuclear power with a signifi cant military. To continue competing with imperial istic rivals, the French rulers must offload the effects of the economic crisis onto the backs of working people. France spends proportionately more on pensions and health than any other European country and faces an 8.2 percent budget deficit this year.

The government has been emboldened by the signals it received from trade union leaders. In negotiations at the Elysee Palace, union leaders indicated that they “understood the pensions quandary” and were “pre pared for the usual French face-saving social kabuki: after some pre-planned tactical retreats, a bit of sym bolism to save face and take on implementation, a few exceptions made for women and manual labourers, the bill would have been accepted,” reported the Daily Telegraph.

Instead, workers fed up with making concessions pushed their union into fighting a strike that went way beyond their intentions. Socialist Party leader gave support to the protests in an effort to make gains in the 2012 presidential and legislative elections. But the SP ended up taking the government’s main argu ments, while offering schemes to raise taxes and make workers stay on the job longer in hopes of eventually rolling back the retirement age to 60.

‘Pensions not final attack’

Strikers at the Grandpuits refinery told Militant reporters that governments across Europe are today cutting benefits already won into social programs that went way beyond their intentions. Socialist Party leaders gave support to the protests in an effort to make gains in the 2012 presidential and legislative elections. But the SP ended up taking the government’s main arguments, while offering schemes to raise taxes and make workers stay on the job longer in hopes of eventually rolling back the retirement age to 60.

Unions have urged Sarkozy to not sign the bill and have called for demonstrations November 6.

The Militant November 15, 2010 9