

# THE MILITANT

INSIDE

Union power key to defend life and limb from bosses' profit drive  
—EDITORIAL, PAGE 9

A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

VOL. 75/NO. 47 DECEMBER 26, 2011

## Rally slams Manitowoc Cranes' union busting

Striker: 'If we don't stop it here, it will spread'



Militant/Tony Lane

Rally in Manitowoc, Wis., Dec. 10 backs 200 Machinists at Manitowoc Cranes who went on strike Nov. 14 after voting down bosses' contract demands to make plant an "open shop."

BY BETSY FARLEY

MANITOWOC, Wis.—About 700 steelworkers, laborers, construction workers, autoworkers and others joined a Dec. 10 rally and march here backing members of the International Association of Machinists on strike against Manitowoc Cranes.

Two hundred members of IAM Local 516 walked out Nov. 14 after voting down a contract proposal the company calls "freedom of choice"—an open shop in which each worker decides whether or not to join the union.

"Our members went out to stop the company from busting the union,"

## US gov't stats give glimpse of grind on workers

BY EMMA JOHNSON

The grinding, long-term effects of the unfolding capitalist economic crisis on the lives of working people is poking through the surface of government statistics.

One source of the grind is persistent long-term unemployment. Some 5.7 million people have been out of work for 27 weeks or more. In November, those unemployed for more than 99 weeks rose by 143,000 to 2 million, approaching a record.

At no time in 60 years has long-term unemployment been so high for so long. The average duration without a job is 40.9 weeks. That is just

Continued on page 5

said Bob Gleichnew, Local 516 shop chairman.

The 800 workers at Manitowoc Cranes, which produce gigantic crawler cranes used in construction and other industries, are members of several unions. Many who are not IAM members are still working in the plant, a number of whom joined the

Continued on page 9

## 1,700 McGill Univ. strikers win, now 'together, stronger'

BY ANNETTE KOURI

MONTREAL—The 1,700 support staff at McGill University are back at work after more than 1,250 voted Dec. 5 by a 72 percent margin to approve a contract that included wage increases



Militant/Katy LeRougetel

Picket line by workers at McGill University in Montreal Dec. 2, three days before strikers approved contract with wage increases. Fight won support from students and other unions.

## EU summit: Berlin takes reins, presses austerity

BY JOHN STUDER

A feverishly anticipated European Union Summit, dubbed in the business press buildup as "10 days to save the euro," took place Dec. 8-9. While the hype had kicked off a temporary two-week rise in world stock prices, the gathering of European rulers failed to do any more than possibly postpone the splintering of the European Union and full reckoning of the capitalist economic and social crisis.

Germany's rulers successfully bludgeoned the indebted countries of Europe to accept tighter control over their budgets, accompanied by demands for stepped-up austerity measures.

The European Central Bank—which indebted governments and bankers

Continued on page 9

## Congress pushes military custody for 'terrorism' suspects on US soil

BY JOHN STUDER

The draft \$662 billion U.S. war budget contains provisions that would give the Pentagon the power to detain all "terrorism" suspects, including

## Locked-out tire workers in Ohio build support rally

BY OMARI MUSA

FINDLAY, Ohio—Members of United Steelworkers Local 207L here remain solid in their fight against Cooper Tire and Rubber Company. The 1,050 workers were locked out after voting down the bosses' "last and final" contract proposal Nov. 27 by a 2-1 margin.

The union local has called a "Rally to Support Local Workers" on Dec. 17 at 1 p.m. The leaflet invites others to "bring family, friends and neighbors to show support for local jobs and learn more about Cooper Tire's lock-out from members of United Steelworkers Local 207L."

The company is using replacement workers and salaried personnel to keep up production. "Cooper Tire's

Continued on page 6

U.S. citizens taken on U.S. soil.

In addition, alleged "terrorists" would be denied basic rights and could be held indefinitely without trial.

Based on the congressional Authorization for Use of Military Force, passed three days after the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon, the bill applies to "a person who was a part of or substantially supported al-Qaeda, the Taliban, or associated forces that are engaged in hostilities against the United States or its coalition partners, including any person who has committed a belligerent act or has directly supported such hostilities in aid of such enemy forces."

Two slightly different versions of the bill, one approved by the Senate and another by the House, were reconciled by a joint committee Dec. 12, and a final bill is being brought for

Continued on page 3

## Also Inside:

Women discuss fight for abortion rights in Indonesia 2

Rallies in Florida demand civil rights for ex-prisoners 3

Calif. workers, students fight firing of immigrants 3

UK campus forum discusses book on Cuban Revolution 6



# Women discuss the fight for abortion rights in Indonesia

BY LINDA HARRIS

SYDNEY, Australia—The need for access to safe abortions was a topic of debate at the 6th Asia Pacific Conference on Reproductive and Sexual Health and Rights, held Oct. 19-22 at Gadjah Mada University in Yogyakarta, Indonesia. Around 1,200 participants from 53 countries in the Asia-Pacific region took part.

“The issue of abortion cannot be excluded from women’s health,” said Martha Dewi in a phone interview with the *Militant*. Dewi attended the conference representing SAMSARA, a women’s rights organization based in Yogyakarta.

Nearly 5 million women worldwide suffer from temporary or permanent disability caused by unsafe abortions each year. According to the U.N. World Health Organization, about 98 percent of an estimated 21.6 million unsafe abortions occur annually in “developing” countries, half of those in Asia.

An estimated 2 million women have illegal abortions every year in Indonesia, according to a 2000 University of Indonesia Centre for Health Research survey. Women who cannot afford a doctor’s fee are forced to seek the help of unlicensed doctors or traditional healers, who use a variety of unsafe methods. Outside of the main cities up to 84 percent of abortions are carried out in this way, reported a 2007 joint Health Ministry and WHO report. About 30 percent having abortions in Indonesia are teenagers, said a University of Indonesia study.

In 2005 some 30 different women’s rights groups in Indonesia formed a coalition to campaign for changing abortion laws. One of these was Kalyanamitra, which was founded in 1985.

“Every half an hour there is a woman who dies in Indonesia because of complications related to pregnancy,” Kalyanamitra Director Rena Herdiyani told the *Militant* by phone. Abortion statistics are not reported by the Ministry of Health, she said. But according to research carried out by the Women’s Health Foundation, 21 percent of maternal deaths are due to infection or abortions carried out by unauthorized health workers. The number of deaths in Indonesia from unsafe abortions is the highest in the Southeast Asia region, Herdiyani pointed out.

In 2009 Kalyanamitra held a seminar in Jakarta to campaign for women’s right to safe abortion. A new health law was introduced in September of that year that decriminalized abortion in cases of medical emergency or rape. “The new law doesn’t protect women who want to get an abortion for other reasons,” Herdiyani explained.

In early 2009 police raided abortion clinics in Jakarta, arresting doctors and assistants. In May of this year a doctor and a woman were arrested in eastern Java on abortion charges.

Doctors convicted of carrying out illegal abortions face a maximum prison sentence of 15 years. Women who get the procedure can be impris-



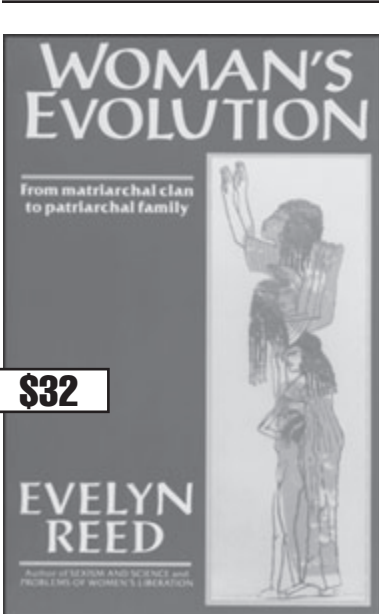
Reuters/Supri Supri

Rally against high food prices in Jakarta, Indonesia, on International Women’s Day, March 2008. October conference in Indonesia discussed fight for women’s right to abortion.

oned for four years.

“Abortion is a business in Indonesia,” Dewi told the *Militant*. “Doctors who carry out backstreet abortions have to bribe the police and then they charge up to 10 million rupiah” (US\$1,106), about 10 times the average monthly wage in Indonesia.

Dewi is working to expand an abortion hotline, which was initiated at the beginning of 2011 by Asia Safe Abortion Partnership. It provides a 24-hour service to give information about medical abortions. “We want to get out as much information about safe abortion as possible,” she said. “Many Indonesian women don’t know that abortion can be performed safely. And it is important to emphasize that is a woman’s choice.”



\$32

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## White House restricts emergency contraception

The Barack Obama administration overruled the Food and Drug Administration’s decision to remove the age restrictions for emergency contraception.

The morning-after pill, as it’s commonly called, is available over the counter for women 17 and older, but those younger need a doctor’s prescription.

Two years ago a district court ordered the removal of the age restriction, finding it was motivated solely by politics. The FDA recently complied, but the decision was blocked Dec. 7 by Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius. The move represents the first time a U.S. health secretary has publicly overruled the FDA, according to the *New York Times*.

The FDA’s reason for removing the age restriction was straightforward, according to the *Times*, “Women can decide on their own when they need to take it, the drug is effective and its risks are minimal.”

—EMMA JOHNSON

## The Militant

Vol. 75/No. 47

Closing news date: December 14, 2011

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Published weekly except for one week in January, two weeks in June, and two weeks in August.

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

Periodicals postage paid at New York, NY.

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

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## THE MILITANT

### Legalization for undocumented workers!

*The ‘Militant’ builds solidarity with the struggles of immigrant workers. This fight is crucial for the unity of the working-class and our ability to resist the crisis-driven assaults of the bosses and their government on our jobs, working conditions, organizations and dignity.*



Militant/Sam Manuel

Nov. 19 protest against state anti-immigrant law in Montgomery, Ala.

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# Rallies in Florida demand civil rights for ex-prisoners

BY NAOMI CRAINE

FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla.—More than 80 people marched in the heart of the Black community here Dec. 10 as part of a statewide day of actions calling for the restoration of civil rights of people convicted of felonies. Actions also took place in Tampa, Orlando, Tallahassee and Jacksonville.

Under new regulations imposed earlier this year, anyone convicted of a felony must wait a minimum of five years after serving their sentence, including any probation time, before they can apply for restoration of suspended rights. That application can then take years to process, according to Desmond Meade, president of the Florida Rights Restoration Coalition. In the meantime, the person cannot vote, serve on a jury, hold public office or hold many jobs requiring licenses.

“This has an effect on jobs, housing, everything,” Meade told the *Militant*. “Various housing associations prohibit those who haven’t had their rights restored from renting or owning a home.”

“The change is effective immediately and potentially affects anywhere from 100,000 to 300,000 felons,” reported Associated Press. Between 1993 and 2007, the number of prisoners in Florida rose from 53,000 to more than 97,000. Blacks are incarcerated at over four times the rate for whites in the state.

Speaking at the rally, Meade denounced new rules that allow county sheriffs to house juveniles in adult jails, as well as the “outsourcing of prisoners as slave labor at \$2 per

day” in private industry. “They don’t want ex-prisoners to have a voice. They don’t want immigrants to have a voice,” he said.

Other speakers included State Rep. Barbara Watson, who called for electing more Democrats to the state legislature. Candidates for county sheriff and school board also spoke, along with participants in the Occupy Fort Lauderdale and Occupy Miami protests.

“Once you’ve served your time you should be done, you shouldn’t have to serve time for the rest of your life,” said Vivian Williams, when asked why she came to the rally. Williams has been out of work for two years, after being laid off from a department store, and her unemployment benefits just ended. She said she has no confidence in either the Republicans or Democrats to solve the deepening economic and social crisis. “It’s going to take people sticking together,” she said.

Jessica Chippone told the *Militant* that she had an application pending to restore her rights when the rules changed, and now she has to wait to start over. Since getting out of prison, she has finished law school but can’t even apply to take the Florida bar exam until she has her rights reinstated. Chippone said it’s important to “raise awareness of the collateral consequences of pleas. I had no idea when I accepted a plea bargain” what the lifelong implications would be.

“So many people have given up hope,” said Lewis Smith, who works in a nursing home. “I want to spark a light in the people who’ve given up hope. They should be able to get a job and vote.”



Militant/Francisco Cambero

March in Fort Lauderdale, Fla., Dec. 10 demands restoration of rights for those convicted of felonies. Ex-prisoners “should be able to get a job and vote,” said marcher Lewis Smith.

## Military custody for ‘terrorism’

Continued from front page  
a vote.

The two original bills established mandatory military custody for those with alleged ties to al-Qaeda and suspected of planning an attack, unless the suspect is a U.S. citizen, in which case military detention is at the Pentagon’s discretion.

President Barack Obama had said he might veto the bill if the provision is not revised, but not out of concern for the disregard of constitutional rights and legal protections. “Any bill that challenges or constrains the President’s critical authorities to collect intelligence, incapacitate dangerous terrorists, and protect the nation would prompt the President’s senior advisers to recommend a veto,” said a Statement of Administration Policy in November.

Opposition to the provision on the grounds that it would weaken the prerogatives of the executive branch also was voiced by Defense Secretary Leon Panetta, FBI head Robert Mueller, and Director of National Intelligence James Clapper.

In a move to deter a veto, the joint committee added a new clause asserting that nothing in the bill would affect access to such persons by “the FBI or any other domestic law enforcement agency,” even if still held in military custody.

In addition, the president is permitted to waive military custody, if he says doing so is based on “national security.”

All the attacks on constitutional rights, including indefinite detention without trial, remain.

“When they say, ‘I want my lawyer,’ you tell them: ‘Shut up,’” Republican Lindsey Graham, argued in the Senate debate.

Republican Sen. Rand Paul presented some of the strongest protest. “A civilian could be grabbed from a breakfast nook in Pasadena, hustled though a closed hearing where a soldier asserts suspicions of terrorism, and then locked away for life in some Saudi rat hole, awaiting the chance to mount a defense against charges that never come,” he stated.

The Senate voted 99-1 for an amendment by Dianne Feinstein, which is retained in the final bill, saying it does not change current U.S. law concerning detention of people who are citizens or legal residents. However, politicians don’t agree on what “current law” says.

Both Sens. Graham and Democrat Carl Levin, who helped write the provision, “insisted that the Supreme Court had already approved holding Americans as enemy combatants, even people arrested inside the United States,” the *New York Times* reported.

“If you’re an enemy combatant, at that point you’re kept until the war is over,” Levin told a press conference when the final bill was announced Dec. 12, “When’s the war over? Nobody knows.”

## Calif. workers, students fight firing of immigrants

BY JAMES HARRIS

CLAREMONT, Calif.—One hundred fifty workers, students, trade unionists and immigrant rights activists demonstrated at Pomona College here Dec. 2 in support of 17 college employees fired for not providing documentation on their immigration status. Many of the workers had been employed by the southern California college for years.

The firings took place as workers

are fighting to organize a union called Workers for Justice.

Some of the strongest support for the union is in the kitchen “where most of the firings took place,” Christian Torres, a chef who worked in the college dining hall for seven years, told the *Militant*. “When we decided to fight a lot of students decided to join us.

“Many people don’t know that working in a kitchen is heavy and

dangerous,” Torres said. He rolled up his sleeves and showed this reporter burn scars on both arms.

Pomona College officials claim the firings have nothing to do with the unionization drive. They say that most were in response to a complaint earlier this year accusing College President David Oxtoby and his administration of illegal hiring practices.

The demonstration began at the Frary Dining Hall. Workers and students marched in, demanding those terminated be allowed to return and chanting, “We are here to work.” They were turned away by managers.

Demonstrators then marched to an intersection close to Oxtoby’s home. Fifteen activists sat down in an intersection and were arrested when they refused to leave. The protesters wore T-shirts with the picture and name of a fired worker they represented as well their years of employment.

“I am here because this is wrong,” said Arielle Zionts, a sophomore at nearby Pitzer College. “It is divisive. The university is doing this while at the same time they have a scholarship program for undocumented students. It’s hypocritical.”

The fight to win the workers’ jobs back is winning broader support, including from the American Civil Liberties Union and the Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund.



Dec. 2 action supporting 17 workers fired by Pomona College, which claims they didn’t provide documentation on immigration status. Workers are in midst of fight to organize union.

**THE MILITANT**  
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# Illinois miners win court ruling in fight for union

BY JOHN HAWKINS

EQUALITY, Ill.—Workers at Peabody's Willow Lake Mine in southern Illinois broke through some government red tape imposed by the bosses' dragging the miners' fight for a union into court. On Dec. 1 Judge Jeffrey Wedekind rejected Peabody's petition to overturn the workers' May vote to join the United Mine Workers of America and upheld nearly all the unfair labor practice charges brought against the company.

Wedekind, an administrative law judge for the National Labor Relations Board, ruled that on numerous occasions, before and after the election, Willow Lake management violated the National Labor Relations Act.

The judge ordered Willow Lake to reinstate Wade Waller, an outspoken union supporter fired on false pretenses, and pay him back pay with interest. "There is strong circumstantial evidence that the Employer's antiunion animus motivated the decision to discharge Waller," the judge wrote.

Judge Wedekind also ordered Willow Lake management to cease and desist "threatening mine closure, job loss, or other unspecified reprisals because employees support the United Mine Workers of America; promising employees benefits if they oppose the UMWA"; or "discharging or otherwise discriminating against employees" to discourage union activity.

Willow Lake management will have to post at the mine site a "Notice to Employees" stating the company violated federal labor law and affirming workers' rights to engage in union activity.

The ruling also recommends that the NLRB certify the UMWA as the collective bargaining agent at the mine.

While the ruling was overwhelmingly in favor of the union, the miners' fight for union recognition, likely including the court battle, is not over. Peabody has announced plans to appeal.

"Unfortunately, that could drag the legal process out for years," UMWA attorney Art Traynor told the *Militant*. "We fully expect the NLRB will follow the judge's recommendation. But the company will probably wait until the last minute to file its appeal. That's why we're a bit disappointed in the final part of the decision where the judge denied our request for a bargaining order," which would have legally obliged the company to negotiate with the union.

The question of safety, and in particular the right to a union safety committee, is among the top concerns driving the workers' unionization effort.

More than 400 workers are employed at Willow Lake. Since 2008 Peabody has been cited and fined hundreds of thousands of dollars for dangerous conditions at the mine, including inadequate roof support and excessive coal dust.

In June 2010, two months after the

## Greece: 1,500 rally to back striking steelworkers



Militant/Malcolm Mehrabian-Terlexis

ATHENS, Greece—More than 1,500 steelworkers, other unionists and their families rallied Dec. 4 in front of the Elliniki Halivourgia steel mill in Aspropyrgos outside the city here. Workers went on strike Oct. 31 against the company's attempt to reduce the workday to five hours, which means a 40 percent pay cut. The workers are demanding that 16 workers who were fired at the beginning of December as well as 34 previously fired be rehired.

—GEORGES MEHRABIAN

disaster at Massey Energy's Upper Big Branch Mine in West Virginia, where 29 miners were killed, the Mine Safety and Health Administration threatened legal action against Big Ridge Company, which runs the Willow Lake Mine, and its owner Peabody, citing many instances of unsafe practices. A

month later a supervisor at the mine was killed when a shuttle car hauling coal struck him.

Now the struggle by the miners—members of UMWA Local 5929—to force Willow Lake bosses to recognize and deal with their union enters the next phase.

## Bosses get off easy in 2010 death of 29 W.Va. miners

BY ALYSON KENNEDY

Everyone knows mine bosses were entirely to blame for the massive explosion and deaths of 29 miners April 5, 2010, at Massey Energy's Upper Big Branch Mine in Montcoal, W.Va. One year and eight months later, the Mine Safety and Health Administration issued its report, detailing the mine owners' blatant profit-driven disregard for workers' lives and flagrant cover-up of evidence.

Alpha Natural Resources, which acquired Massey in June, bought immunity from criminal charges by paying \$210 million in civil penalties in an agreement reached with the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Southern District of West Virginia and the Department of Justice.

This includes \$35 million in MSHA penalties assessed to Massey, \$10.8 million of which is for the man-made Upper Big Branch disaster. Some \$80 million is to be invested in safety and mining infrastructure for the company and \$48 million for a mine health and safety trust fund. The remaining \$46.5 million, reportedly for victims' families, includes \$16.5 million already agreed upon to settle lawsuits. The other \$30 million is to be set aside for future possible settlements, in effect capping the amount families can claim.

"It was an act of murder," said Clay Mullins, whose brother Rex was among those killed, in an interview with the Associated Press. "They murdered 29 men, and I'm not satisfied one bit."

Gene Jones, whose twin brother died in the blast, told AP, "These people don't care. They're all wondering who they can pay off. I want to see people go to jail because this was preventable."

MSHA concluded that the 29 miners died in a massive coal dust explosion that started as a methane ignition as a result of "unlawful policies and practices implemented by PCC [Performance Coal Company] and Massey as the root cause of the explosion."

This included the intimidation of miners who say or do anything about unsafe conditions; giving mine management advance notice of MSHA inspections so they could conceal safety violations; and maintaining two sets of books, one recording hazards for the company and another omitting them for the safety inspectors.

MSHA said that "a small amount of methane, likely liberated from the mine floor" ignited and mixed with dangerous and excessive amounts of coal dust to create a gigantic coal dust explosion. In the weeks leading up to the explosion, the company did not perform required tests for methane.

In the days following, the *Charleston Gazette* and West Virginia Public Radio reported that MSHA knew that the Upper Big Branch Mine had

a history of methane problems and ignitions and did nothing to enforce safety. Methane explosions occurred at the mine in 1997, 2003 and 2004.

During the investigation Massey CEO Don Blankenship and other company officials refused to testify. Massey announced Blankenship's retirement in early December 2010. On Jan. 12 Blankenship started a new company, McCoy Coal Group, Inc., although it has yet to seek a mining permit.

There was no union or union safety committee at the mine.

Two surface coal miners were recently killed in early December—Jeff Bishop, 57, at the Oxford Mining #3 in Ohio and Richard Yonts, 49, at Fairbanks Coal Company, Inc. in Virginia. Also in early December stone miner Scott Armstrong, 41, was killed in the Knife River stone mine in Milaca, Minn. These most recent deaths, bringing the total number of miners killed this year to 36, highlight why miners need to exercise control over safety free from company intimidation.

### Any more out there?

*Below is a request from one of the Militant's long-term subscribers, to get a weekly bundle for sales in the southern West Virginia coalfields where she lives, and a response from the paper's business manager. The Militant invites other readers to do the same.*

We read the editorial [Back Workers' Lockout Battles, Strikes] in the new *Militant* [last week] and fights are popping up all over the place, including here in West Virginia and we need a bundle.

How much would it be to add four more *Militants* to our weekly mailing for a total of five? We can start with that and if we know of an event coming up, increase it accordingly.

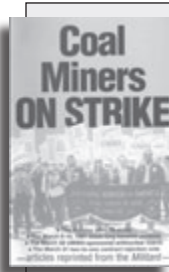
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Lea Sherman  
Business Manager



### COAL MINERS ON STRIKE

by Andy Rose, Nancy Cole

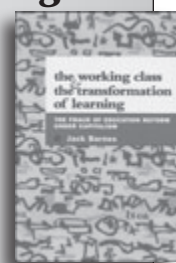
Articles on the 111-day 1977-78 miners' strike, the 1981 strike and contract rejection vote, and the fight for health benefits and compensation to black lung victims, and more. —\$7

### The Working Class & the Transformation of Learning

*The fraud of education reform under capitalism*  
by Jack Barnes

"Both life and limb of workers in the United States are being sacrificed on the altar of sharpening competition for markets among U.S. capitalists, and between them and their rivals worldwide." —\$3

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# Minn. tank trailer workers strike against ‘outsourcing’

BY FRANK FORRESTAL

OPOLE, Minn.—“We had about 150 on the picket line Dec. 5,” said Steve Brewer, a member of International Association of Machinists Local 165 on strike against Polar Tank Trailer in this town of less than 100 people, about 90 miles northeast of Minneapolis.

The union previously went on strike there for 16 days in 2005.

“We knew the company planned to start bringing in scabs, so the union organized a big picket line,” said Brewer.

Strikers said a few vanloads of replacement workers crossed the picket lines that morning. As well, about 35 union members out of more than 350 have crossed the picket lines and returned to work.

“We heard the company is using Strom Engineering to bring in scabs,” said Loren Mroska, while picketing near the plant. Strom Engineering is a scab-herding outfit based in Minnetonka.

Strom was hired by American Crystal Sugar to bring in more than 1,000 replacement workers in its lockout that began Aug. 1. More recently, Strom is bringing in scabs to replace unionists at Cooper Tire in Findlay, Ohio, where more than 1,000 Steelworkers are locked out.

Twice in the past few months, unions have organized protests outside Strom headquarters in solidarity with 1,300 members of the Bakery, Confectionery, Tobacco Workers, and Grain Millers locked-out by American Crystal at its five plants in northern Minnesota and North Dakota, and two smaller plants in Chaska, Minn., and Mason City, Iowa.

The replacement workers in Opolé are working 12-hour shifts. Strikers are picketing 24 hours a day.

## Gov’t stats

Continued from front page

a notch under the all-time high of 41 weeks set in September this year.

Officially, 13.3 million are unemployed, a rate of 8.6 percent. Not included are 8.5 million who can find nothing other than part-time work and 2.6 million labeled “marginally attached” to the labor force, because, according to government bureaucrats, they haven’t looked for work in the past four weeks. Including these people, the rate of those without full-time work is near 20 percent, according to the Labor Department.

A more objective measure is the percentage of the population that has a job. Between January 2008 and January 2010 this figure dropped from 62.9 percent to 58.5 percent, the farthest and steepest drop since 1948, when these figures first began. Today it remains 58.5 percent. It hasn’t been that low since the early 1980s, when the proportion of women who work was more than 10 percent less than it is today.

Less than half of those officially unemployed get government compensation. In the hardest hit states, Congress has extended unemployment benefits for up to 99 weeks. Other states range from 60 to 93 weeks. With government budgets in worsening shape—and top priority given to paying interest to the holders of gov-

Continued on page 9

Workers at Polar Tank went on strike Dec. 1, after rejecting by a large margin the bosses’ five-year contract proposal. That day, company President Frank Lukacs sent a letter to strikers in which he announced Polar Tank was cutting off their medical benefits and asserted the company’s “right to hire replacement employees.” The letter also said that by law the company “does not have to terminate replacements to make room for strikers who later want to return to work.”

The company is demanding the right to “sub-contract work as it deems appropriate.” In a Dec. 9 letter to union members, Polar Tank Trailer representatives said, “We need to outsource some of our assembly processes and raw material inventory to move towards a ‘just in time’ process. We proposed that as a result of outsourcing, no jobs would be lost for at least 30 days after the outsourcing.”

Negotiations resumed Dec. 9. On Dec. 12 workers rejected a revised company contract and voted to maintain their strike.

Donations and letters in support of the strikers can be sent to IAM Local 623, 1903 4th St. North, St. Cloud, MN 56303.

## Licorice workers in fight ‘for long haul’



Militant/Eric Simpson

UNION CITY, Calif.—Francisco Ramirez brought his horse to help strengthen the picket line here Dec. 10 outside the American Licorice Company plant. Local 125 of the Bakery, Confectionery, Tobacco Workers and Grain Millers International Union is fighting to maintain their health care benefits.

“We have worked hard so that the company could grow. Now they want to make money by taking away our benefits,” said Ramirez, who has worked at the plant for 17 years.

“We are here for the long haul,” said Rene Castillo, vice president of BCTGM Local 125. “We are staying strong. We are going to spend Christmas Eve here. We hope all of the other unions can come out and support us.”

The pickets are up 24 hours a day and are being reinforced by family members and supporters from other unions. A strike kitchen has been set up.

—ERIC SIMPSON

## Striking limestone workers receive solidarity

BY CARL WEINBERG

OOLITIC, Ind., Dec. 10—Since Nov. 16, 50 members of Millworkers Local 8093 on strike at the Indiana Limestone mill and quarry here have maintained daily picket lines at all four company gates. They walked off the job after voting to reject the company’s “last and best” offer, which included concessions on seniority rights and other provisions that would make it easier for the bosses to fire workers for minor infractions.

Members of the International Association of Machinists and the Journeyman Stonecutters Association of Indiana—both employed at the mill—continue to honor the picket line. But the company has started up limited production with a skeleton crew of managers and a small group of scabs and members of the Laborers union who work in the quarry.

On Dec. 2 a scab driving a pickup

truck into the plant hit striker Danny Stephens, sending him to the hospital. Stephens has filed a criminal complaint, and the union is urging speedy prosecution of the case.

On Nov. 29 members of United Auto Workers Local 440 from the GM plant in nearby Bedford joined millworkers for an expanded picket line rally.

Community members and several local pizza restaurants have started regular donations of food and drinks. Occupy Bloomington has sent weekly caravans to bolster the picket line. And passing cars continue to honk up a storm in support of the strike.

A Dec. 10 strike support summit in Bedford attracted two dozen people, including leaders and members of Communications Workers of America Local 4730 at Indiana University, UAW Local 440, Journeyman Stonecutters, Bloom-

ington Jobs with Justice, United Way of Monroe County Community Services, and Democracy for America.

“I am proud to be here today. It warms your heart to come into a place like this and see all the local people together,” Scott Moore, president of the Bedford UAW local, told meeting participants.

Also present were two members of United Steelworkers Local 7-30 who work at C&M Conveyor in Mitchell where workers voted for the union four months ago and are now fighting for their first contract. Rex Smith, a member of the union’s bargaining committee, announced that workers there would be holding a union rally at the plant gate on Dec. 21 and invited groups to attend.

Donations to the strike fund can be sent to Rick Watson, Local 8093 secretary-treasurer, 6601 State Road 158, Bedford, IN 47421.

## 25, 50, AND 75 YEARS AGO



December 26, 1986

BELL GLADE, Fla.—Nearly 300 Caribbean cane cutters returned home rather than continue working under the conditions imposed by the Okeelanta Sugar Corporation here. In mid-November, workers at the Shelton Land Co. and the Atlantic Sugar Association put down their machetes to demand higher wages. In both cases the British West Indies Labour Organisation intervened and negotiated higher pay for the cutters.

But when 300 workers at Okeelanta went on strike, the owners called in the local police. Hundreds of cops arrived in the labor camp and attacked the workers.

Almost all of the striking workers decided to fly home rather than continue working under existing conditions.



December 25, 1961

The recent AFL-CIO convention began with a speech by President John F. Kennedy. It was an appeal for support from the union leaders for the administration’s program of putting U.S. business in a better competitive position with the European Common Market economies. An essential part of this program, according to Kennedy, is “restraint” in wage demands on the part of unions.

Kennedy said that if more European trade were lost, the government would have to withdraw its troops from foreign bases in order to stop the drain on U.S. gold reserves.

AFL-CIO president George Meany took the floor after Kennedy finished to say, “Don’t worry about us. We will cooperate one thousand percent.”



December 26, 1936

Early settlement of the maritime strike on terms complying with the basic demands of all the unions was forecast this week by the agreement offered to the Sailors’ Union of the Pacific.

The sailors’ agreement, which has already been informally approved by a membership meeting attended by 2,000 union members, will be sent out for a coast-wide referendum, with all indication of a virtually unanimous vote of approval. The agreement will not be formally signed until satisfactory agreements are concluded with all the striking unions. This is the solidarity principle of the Federation.

In the last analysis the picket line decides the issue of a strike. Negotiations only formally ratify it.



# UK campus forum discusses book on Cuban Revolution

Panel presents ‘Our History Is Still Being Written’

BY JULIE CRAWFORD  
AND CATHARINA TIRSÉN

MANCHESTER, England—The Centre for Latin American and Caribbean Studies at the University of Manchester together with other campus groups and Pathfinder Books in Manchester organized a panel here Nov. 25 on *Our History Is Still Being Written: The Story of Three Chinese-Cuban Generals in the Cuban Revolution*.

The book, published by Pathfinder Press, presents the Cuban Revolution through the experiences of Armando Choy, Gustavo Chui and Moisés Sío Wong. As young rebels of Chinese-Cuban ancestry, the three became combatants in the 1956-58 revolutionary war that brought down the U.S.-backed military dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista in Cuba and opened the door to socialist revolution in the Americas. Each became a general in Cuba’s Revolutionary Armed Forces.

In the book the generals talk about the historic place of Chinese immigration to Cuba, as well as more than five decades of revolutionary action and internationalism, from Cuba, Angola and Nicaragua to Venezuela today.

The book relates the experiences of generations of Chinese in Cuba and their heroic contribution to the struggle for national independence from Spanish and U.S. domination.

Par Kumaraswami, codirector of the Centre for Latin American and Caribbean Studies, chaired the meeting. Presentations by Aaron Moore from the Centre for Chinese Studies at Manchester University; Raquel Ribeiro, a specialist in Angola at the University of Nottingham; and Jonathan Silberman from Pathfinder Books in London were followed by a lively discussion with the 55 participants, mainly university students.

“Sío Wong explained it was the socialist revolution, and the uprooting of capitalist property relations that perpetuate social inequalities and discrimination, that changed the situation for Chinese in Cuba,” said Silberman.

“This book explains why 375,000 Cuban volunteers served in Angola to defeat the invading apartheid forces,” said Ribeiro. It “was an experience that marked a whole generation of Cubans.”

Moore pointed to the experience of Sío Wong to illustrate how the Chinese community in pre-revolutionary Cuba was class divided.

Since its publication in 2005, more than 100 meetings on five continents have been organized to discuss the book. This was the 13th such event in the U.K. Fourteen copies of *Our History Is Still Being Written*, including two in Chinese, were sold leading up to and at the meeting. Participants milled



Militant/Dag Tirsén

Nov. 25 meeting at University of Manchester discussed book *Our History Is Still Being Written: The Story of Three Chinese-Cuban Generals in the Cuban Revolution*. From left: Jonathan Silberman, Pathfinder Books; University of Nottingham professor Raquel Ribeiro; university professor Par Kumaraswami; and Aaron Moore from university’s Centre for Chinese Studies.

around afterwards to talk and 15 continued the discussion at a nearby Chinese restaurant.

Silberman was interviewed the previous Sunday by Ben Peng on BBC

Radio Manchester’s “Chinatown,” a program directed towards the Chinese community in Manchester, where he spoke about the book and the upcoming meeting.

## Cooper Tire lockout in Ohio

Continued from front page

proposal is a slap in the face,” Luby Lee told the *Militant* on the picket line.

Pay for most jobs in the plant is based partially on piece work. “They expected us to sign a contract where we don’t know how much we’ll make and what will be our conditions until 14 months from now,” said Lee, who has worked in the plant for 32 years. “Would you give the company a blank check like that? We said hell no. Put the rates on the negotiating table so we can see now. It’s just a way of increasing the rates and making us work harder for less pay.”

The company’s offer includes a proposal for five wage tiers. Many workers noted that in the last three-year contract, in 2008, workers gave concessions totaling more than \$30 million, about \$10,000 a year for the average worker.

“The work is very repetitive, hard labor with heavy lifting,” Jim Black, a tire builder who has worked at the plant for more than 23 years, told the *Militant*. “I’ve had two neck surgeries and two shoulder surgeries. The doctor recommended that I take permanent disability, but the company would fight it. It’s the

piece rate. That’s why people get hurt.”

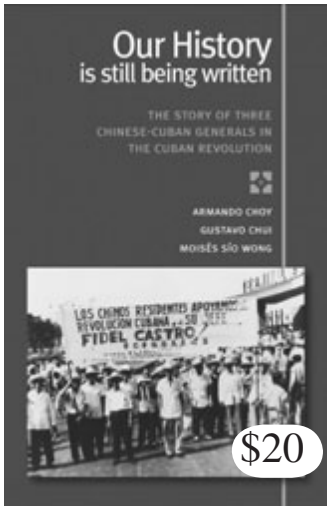
USW Local 207L recently took out a full-page ad in the *Findlay Courier* titled, “How About Some Simple Facts About the Current Situation at Cooper Tire?” The ad said the company locked the workers out “after we rejected its last proposal, even though we never took a strike vote and offered to continue to work and to continue negotiations.”

“Workers are getting lots of support from the community,” said Laurie Miller, who has worked at Cooper Tire for 19 years. She said the union hall was lined with contributions of food and other necessities. While she was being interviewed, two representatives of United Auto Workers Local 1033 at Triumph Thermal in nearby Forest came by with \$583 from a plant collection.

Messages of support and donations can be sent to USW Local 207L, 1130 Summit St. Findlay, Ohio 45840. Phone: (419) 422-4224. Contributions for Christmas presents should be earmarked “Christmas Fund.”

Candace Wagner and David Rosenfeld contributed to this article.

### Recommended reading



\$20



\$10

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### Havana: 15,000 university and high school students march to defend gains of the Cuban Revolution



Militant/Arnold Weissberg

HAVANA—University students led by the Union of Young Communists march behind banner that reads “Down With Yankee Imperialism.” They were part of a demonstration of some 15,000 medical, university and high school students here Nov. 27 to commemorate eight medical students executed by the Spanish colonialists in 1871 and to express support for the 1959 Cuban Revolution and the unbroken course of its leadership and revolutionary government today.

While students elsewhere are demanding decent free education, we are here to

defend it, Lisara Corona, a medical student speaking at a rally before the march, told the crowd. Leading the march behind a banner reading “We Young People Will Not Fail,” medical students were joined by professors and health professionals wearing white jackets, while thousands of high school students carried a banner declaring, “Long Live Fidel and Raúl [Castro].” The march began from the steps of the University of Havana, the long-time center of revolutionary student politics.

—MATILDE ZIMMERMANN



# Pa. Steelworkers return to jobs with heads held high

BY JANET POST

LANCASTER, Pa.—Workers at the Armstrong World Industries plant in nearby Marietta voted Dec. 9 to accept a contract proposal. The plant, one of the company's 31 factories worldwide, makes ceiling tiles.

The 260 workers, including some 220 organized by United Steelworkers Local 285/441, were locked out July 17 after voting down a concession contract.

For five months the workers organized a spirited 24/7 picket line at the plant gate. They garnered solidarity from area workers and farmers and joined Verizon picket lines. In September the union organized a mass rally at Armstrong's corporate headquarters here.

Almost all Armstrong workers speaking with the *Militant*, both before and after the vote, expressed displeasure with the new contract, which is similar to the "take it or leave it" proposal they rejected in September.

"I don't think anybody's happy. This is the worst contract I've seen in 28 years at Armstrong," said Barry Groff, a production worker. "But we put up a good fight and I'm proud of our solidarity."

"We stood together," said Shannon McAlexander. "In the meeting I told everyone how proud I was of their effort."

"We know this is a bad contract, but our backs are up against the wall," said Brian Wilson, a line coordinator for the union's picket line.

Wilson explained that in the Dec. 6 negotiating session, which included a federal mediator, the company said they were ending the lockout. Workers would be brought back under the old contract, but then after a brief period, a "bargaining impasse" would be declared and the company would implement the new

pact. Armstrong declared they would hire permanent replacements and no longer recognize the union if the workers went on strike at that point.

Wilson also said they lost some leverage when their "coalition fell apart." During the lockout, workers at three Armstrong plants—in Lancaster, Macon, Ga., and Pensacola, Fla.—approved concession contracts.

Former locked-out worker Dan Walters said he was most bothered by how Armstrong and other companies are leveraging the economic crisis to hire scabs for little wages and no benefits.

The three-year agreement includes an annual wage increase of 2.5 percent, cuts health insurance benefits from a 90/10 plan to an 80/20 plan, and replaces company pensions with a 401(k) plan for all new hires, reported Chuck Davis, a representative of USW Local 285/441. Armstrong had retracted any signing bonus but then added a \$1,500 over 18 months "performance incentive" to ramp up productivity.

Workers have been on eight-hour shifts, but after a "transition period," Armstrong will implement 12-hour rotating shifts, with a 30-minute mealtime and two 15-minute breaks. This will include a mandatory "on call" system where workers will be called on their days off as needed.

Production worker Cindy Staples said that "during the 'transition period,'" which she thought would last until spring, "the company can pretty much put us where they want us."

"Some of the bigger concessions involve shop floor issues like seniority, bidding and overtime," Jim Shanley, USW Local 285/441 recording secretary, told the *Militant*. The union pushed



Militant/Janet Post

Rally at Armstrong World Industries headquarters in Lancaster, Pa., Sept. 22 to support locked-out workers. Steelworkers voted to accept contract Dec. 9 and return to work. "We put up a good fight and I'm proud of our solidarity," said production worker Barry Groff.

back one concession, where the company would have recognized no grievances for the first 90 days workers were back in the plant.

Workers will begin their return to the factory Jan. 9, and "should all be back by Jan. 25," according to Tom Jones, a USW District 10 representative. But Armstrong does not have to implement their return by seniority, and plans to

keep some replacement workers hired during the lockout.

After the vote, Walters pointed to his sleeve and said, "The company wanted to show us their 'stripes.' But we showed them ours. They had better treat us like the human beings that we are."

"When we go back in, we have to look out for one another now," said another worker Tom Houser.

## McGill: 'together, stronger'

Continued from front page

gether, stronger!" Workers who spoke to the *Militant* echoed that sentiment.

"This has been a life-changing experience," said Martha Elvir. "If I see someone on strike now, I would look at them differently and show them support."

"Going on strike was the only way to stand up against the administration," said Lam Luday, who has worked 23 years in the biochemistry department. "We didn't have a choice and we are stronger now."

Lisa Mayes, a young worker at McGill, said the experience had "strengthened the individual. We became stronger in our self-awareness, what we are capable of doing. You could definitely see how important it is to have a union. Over the next five years we'll be paying attention to whether McGill honors the agreement."

The support staff are members of the McGill University Non-Academic Certified Association, which has ties to the Public Service Alliance of Canada. They include IT technicians,

clerical workers and library assistants. They had been working without a contract since November 2010 with salaries and conditions inferior to other universities in Quebec.

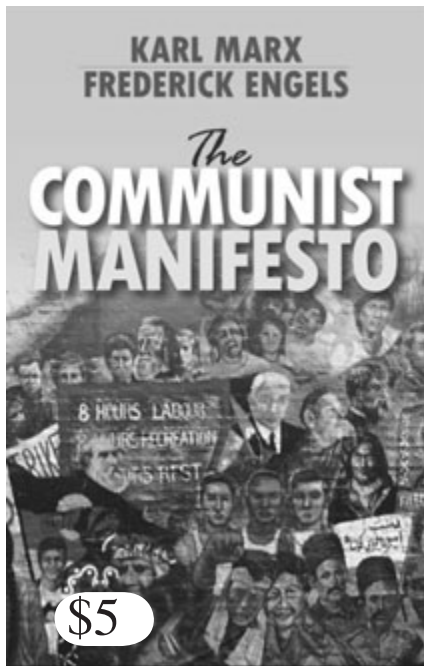
Early on in the strike courts granted McGill injunctions banning picketing within 80 feet of many campus locations and picketing at any off-campus events.

"The court injunctions really got people mad," said Jo-Ann Bader, with 40 years in the medical department.

The struggle won support among students on the campus, a number of whom wrote articles backing it. Students from across Quebec welcomed hundreds of strikers when they participated in a 20,000-strong student demonstration against tuition hikes Nov. 10.

Several unions organized solidarity picket line visits. Construction workers at the new hospital site, which will be part of university facilities, refused to cross a one-day picket line organized near the worksite by the McGill University Non-Academic Certified Association.

## Recommended reading



"Now and then the workers are victorious, but only for a time. The real fruit of their battles lies, not in the immediate result, but in the ever expanding union of the workers."

—Marx and Engels

Written by Marx and Engels in 1848, the Communist Manifesto explains why communism is not a set of preconceived principles but the line of march of the working class toward power, "springing from an existing class struggle, a historical movement going on under our very eyes."

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### 'Keep covering our struggles'

I read where a subscriber was concerned that the *Militant* might be sleeping through the revolution, because they chose to have the 1,300 workers locked out by Crystal Sugar on the cover instead of "Occupy Wall St."

I assure you it's not the *Militant* that is sleeping through anything. Even the lame corporate media will cover the big events in New York or Oakland.

The *Militant* realizes the workers of industry and the workers that feed the country are being slapped around by the kings of capitalism. Our families are being attacked and our benefits that we fought for for years are being destroyed.

I plead with the *Militant* to keep covering struggles like the Crystal Sugar workers in North Dakota, Iowa and Minnesota; the Steelworkers in Pennsylvania; the Millworkers in Texas; the Longshoremen in Washington; the Steelworkers in Ohio; the Millworkers in Indiana; etc. etc.

We also need to know about courageous campaigns like the Jimmy John's workers, the Hyatt hotel workers, the newly organized coal miners in Illinois and the Hershey intern workers.

In the past the *Militant* informed us about the Delta Airlines workers and kept us posted on the Steelworkers in Metropolis, Ill., and BCTGM Local 48G in Keokuk, Iowa (which I had a first hand look at).

Not to forget the postal workers and every public sector worker in nearly every state. And our brothers and sisters in courageous struggles around the world from Canada to Greece to the Middle East.

These workers read about each other's struggles in the *Militant* and then contact each other and share stories and take part in each other's events, including the "occupy movement."

Now that sounds like how you would start a movement toward the working class taking power.

—Buddy Howard

Howard was one of 237 members of the Bakery, Confectionery, Tobacco Workers and Grain Millers International Union Local 48G locked out from September 2010 to July 2011 by Roquette America at its corn processing plant in Keokuk, Iowa. He was a leader in that struggle. The letter he refers to appeared in the letters' column of the Oct. 31 issue. —Editor.

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# ‘Workers are most vital force created by capitalism’

*Below is an excerpt from The Long View of History by George Novack, one of Pathfinder's Books of the Month for December. This Marxist introduction to history is based on talks given in September 1955. Copyright © 1960 by Pathfinder Press. Reprinted by permission.*

## BOOKS OF THE MONTH

BY GEORGE NOVACK

How and why did capitalism originate?

Once money had arisen from the extension of trading several thousand years ago, its use as capital became possible. Merchants could add to their wealth by buying goods cheap and selling them dear; moneylenders and mortgage holders could gain interest on sums advanced on the security of land or other collateral. These practices were common in both slave and feudal societies.

But if money could be used in pre-capitalist times to return more than the original investment, other conditions had to be fulfilled before capitalism could become established as a separate and definite world economic system. The central condition was a special kind of transaction regularly repeated on a growing scale. Large numbers of propertyless workers had to hire themselves to the possessors of money and



AP Photo/Gurinder Osan

**Sit-down strike at Maruti Susuki plant in Manesar, India, Oct. 13. Struggle against capitalist exploitation by army of workers capitalism has created is today “driving force of history.”**

the other means of production in order to earn a livelihood.

Hiring and firing seem to us a normal way of carrying on production. But such peoples as the Indians never knew it. Before the Europeans came, no Indian ever worked for a boss (the word itself was imported by the Dutch), because they possessed their own means of livelihood. The slave may have been purchased, but he belonged to and worked for the master his whole life long. The feudal serf or tenant was likewise bound for life to the lord and his land.

The epoch-making innovation upon which capitalism rested was the institution of working for wages as the dominant relation of production. Most of you have gone into the labor market, to an employment agency or personnel office, to get a buyer for your labor power. The employer buys this power at prevailing wage rates by the hour, day, or week and then applies it under his supervision to produce commodities that his company subsequently sells at a profit. That profit is derived from the fact that wage workers produce more value than the capitalist pays for their labor.

Up to the twentieth century, this mechanism for pumping surplus labor out of the working masses and transferring the surpluses of wealth they create to the personal credit of the capitalist

was the mightiest accelerator of the productive forces and the expansion of civilization. As a distinct economic system, capitalism is only about 450 years old; it has conquered the world and journeyed from dawn to twilight in that time. This is a short life-span. . . .

This speeding up in social progress is due in large measure to the very nature of capitalism, which continually revolutionizes its techniques of production and the entire range of social relations issuing from them. Since its birth, world capitalism has passed through three such phases of internal transformation. In its formative period, the merchants were the dominant class of capitalists because trade was the main source of wealth accumulation. Under commercial capitalism, industry and agriculture, the pillars of production, were not usually carried on by wage labor but by means of small handicrafts, peasant farming, slave or serf labor.

The industrial age was launched around the beginning of the nineteenth century with the application of steam power to the first mechanized processes, concentrating large numbers of wage workers into factories. The capitalist captains of this large-scale industry became masters of the field of production and later of entire countries and continents as their riches, their legions of wage laborers, social and political

power, swelled to majestic proportions.

This vigorous, expanding, progressive, confident, competitive stage of industrial capitalism dominated the nineteenth century. It passed over into the monopoly-ridden capitalism of the twentieth century, which has carried all the basic tendencies of capitalism, and especially its most reactionary features, to extremes in economic, political, cultural, and international relations.

While the processes of production have become more centralized, more rationalized, more socialized, the means of production and the wealth of the world have become concentrated in giant financial and industrial combines. So far as the capitalist sectors of society are involved, this process has been brought to the point where the capitalist monopolies of a single country, the U.S., dictate to all the rest. . . .

The spokesmen for capitalism say that nothing more remains to be done except to perfect their system as it stands, and it can roll on and on and on. . . .

Socialists give a completely different answer based upon an incomparably more penetrating, correct, and comprehensive analysis of the movement of history, the structure of capitalism, and the struggles presently agitating the world around us. . . .

Capitalism has produced many things, good and bad, in the course of its evolution. But the most vital and valuable of all the social forces it has created is the industrial working class. The capitalist class has brought into existence a vast army of wage laborers, centralized and disciplined, and set it into motion for its own purposes, to make and operate the machines, factories, and all the other production and transportation facilities from which its profits emanate.

The exploitation and abuses, inherent and inescapable in the capitalist organization of economic life, provoke the workers time and again to organize themselves and undertake militant action to defend their elementary interests. The struggle between these conflicting social classes is today the dominant and driving force of world and American history, just as the conflict between the bourgeois-led forces against the pre-capitalist elements was the motivating force of history in the immediately preceding centuries.

December

BOOKS OF THE MONTH

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8

The Militant December 26, 2011



# Union power key to defend life and limb

Recent issues of this paper reflect an uptick in labor resistance against the bosses’ assaults on our wages, working conditions, unity and dignity. Several articles this week point to the need to use union power to preserve life and limb. This will be posed ever sharper as the bosses’ competition becomes increasingly cut-throat in response to the deepening economic and social crisis of capitalism.

More than 4,500 workers were reportedly killed on the job last year. Based on “official” figures, nearly 4 million were injured or contracted job-related illnesses. And every worker knows what statistics don’t show: that the bosses’ relentless drive for profit at the expense of safety is matched by their campaign to conceal the inevitable results.

In Findlay, Ohio, 1,050 Steelworkers, already scarred by Cooper Tires’ injurious piece-rate system, are standing up to company demands to ramp it up as a way of “making us work harder for less pay,” as one worker put it.

The government’s top mine safety bureaucrats finally released their report on the April 2010 callous murder for profit of 29 workers at Massey’s Upper Big Branch Mine. The bosses’ government then sold those lives and immunity from prosecution.

Massey was allowed to intimidate workers into risking their lives and to cook their books to cover it up. But the problem is not a few bad bosses. It’s the course of the propertied owners, who take calculated

risks on workers’ lives and limbs. On any particular day at any one place maybe no one gets hurt. But this is repeated over and over, day after day, in workplace after workplace, inevitably leading to major unpredicted “accidents.”

Karl Marx, a founder of the modern communist movement, explained in talks he gave in 1865, contained in a pamphlet titled *Value, Price and Profit*, that there are two standard ways capitalists extract more surplus value from our labor. One is to make us work longer, the other is to intensify our work—to have us produce more during the same amount of time.

This is what’s reflected in recent government figures on “productivity”—the capitalists are producing as much, if not more, with less workers working longer and harder. At the same time unemployment remains high, providing the bosses with a lever to increase competition among workers, which we must answer with spreading working-class solidarity.

At Willow Lake Mine in southern Illinois, workers have been fighting for seven months, and are still fighting, to make the bosses recognize their democratically elected union so they can press for better conditions and have their own safety committee. This is exactly what is needed. Only workers’ collective power can protect our health and very lives under capitalism. And this is essential in order to be able to effectively fight the bosses multifront assault.

## Crane factory strike fights union busting

Continued from front page

Saturday rally and march.

Matt Ward, a member of the Boilermakers union, was laid off by Manitowoc after the strike began along with more than 150 other members of his union. “Now the state says we can’t collect unemployment because we’re out of work due to a strike,” he said. “But the company laid us off, not the union! We are 100 percent behind our brothers and sisters in the IAM.” The Boilermakers had one of the largest contingents at the rally and march.

Joe Vreeke, president of Boilermakers Local 443, said some members of that union have been called back to work, but “we are only doing our jobs. The company has been trying to get us to do the IAM jobs, but we are refusing.”

According to Ben Elizondo, IAM Local 516 business agent, the company has brought 20 to 30 temporary replacement workers into the plant.

On Dec. 9 the company announced the shipment of some of its crane products will be delayed into the first quarter of next year due to “supplier delivery issues with certain hydraulic components” as well as the Machinists’ strike.

“If we don’t stop this attack here it will spread,” said Julie Gaultier, a regular on the picket line

whose husband is on strike. She said members of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers in the plant face a contract fight in March, and workers at Manitowoc Ice, a division of the same company, have a contract expiring April 1. “We’re the guinea pigs, and we have to stop it here.”

“I’ve been on strike here in 1973 for 13 weeks, in 2003 for four days and now we’ve been out for four weeks,” said Leon Gaultier, who operates the outside crawler cranes. “We’re not going back until we’re done.”

Members of the teachers union, United Steelworkers, Firefighters, Communications Workers of America, Laborers, hotel workers, American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, United Food and Commercial Workers and many other unions each spoke for a couple of minutes at the rally. Several presented contributions from collections taken at their workplaces to help the striking workers and their families.

Contributions can be sent to the Strike Assistance Fund: MCI Strike Fund c/o Machinists Local 516, PO Box 222, Manitowoc, WI 54221-0222. Food and toy donations can be sent to IAMAW District Lodge 10, 1650 S 38th St., Milwaukee, WI 53215-1726.

## Stats show glimpse of grind on workers

Continued from page 5

ernment bonds—unemployment extensions increasingly become a target for politicians. If Congress does not renew them at the end of the year, as many as 2.2 million more could be cut off by February.

Labor Department figures on labor “productivity”—a calculation of the average “output” squeezed from each worker—shows the other side of the same coin. Productivity rose at an annual rate of 2.3 percent during the third quarter of 2011. The biggest growth was in manufacture, particularly the durable goods

sector where it increased by 9.5 percent. At the same time, real income, which accounts for inflation, has declined 2.3 percent over the last year, the largest decline since statistics began in 1948.

Government statistics on “poverty” are designed above all to mask the real effects of this multi-faceted grind—and limit the number of people in need who are eligible for government aid. In 2006, 12.3 percent of the population were classified as in “poverty.” The figure has steadily risen to 15.2 percent of the population in 2010—46.6 million people.

The official poverty threshold for a family of four is an annual income of \$22,350, a mere \$300 more than two years ago. When the poverty threshold—a completely arbitrary figure—was set in 1963, it was equal to nearly 50 percent of the median income. Today it’s at 30 percent of the median income, which itself is declining in real terms. About 100 million people in the U.S., about one in three, subsist at 150 percent of the official poverty line—which is \$645 a week for a family of four.

## Europe austerity

Continued from front page

holding their debt had beseeched to open up its vaults and make extensive purchases of distressed government bonds, leading to devaluation of the euro, to reduce the pressure—announced “steady on the course,” no shift in policy.

This was the “latest in a string of much-bally-hooded summits at which they repeatedly promise big reforms to their rules to save the single currency,” the *Economist* wrote Dec. 10.

“Global investors drove down stocks, bonds and the euro,” the *Wall Street Journal* wrote after markets opened Dec. 12, the first business day after the summit. “Greece still teeters on the brink of default, and yields on debt of Italy and Spain are near unsustainable levels.”

This broad consensus on the summit by the “market”—the financial press’s term for the capitalist class—is that it barely scratched out a short breathing spell for the relentless economic crisis tearing apart the eurozone.

Moody’s Investment Service announced Dec. 12 it is considering downgrading the credit ratings of a number of eurozone countries. The agency added that the lack of any decisive move at the summit to release substantial funding increases the likelihood of “multiple defaults by euro area countries” that would involve “exits from the euro area.”

Moody’s also announced it was placing eight Spanish banks on the list for possible downgrades, on top of announcing last month that 87 other banks across Europe faced similar review.

Over the last year, depositors in Greece have withdrawn some \$53 billion in deposits from the nation’s banks, equal to 17 percent of the country’s gross domestic product.

Berlin, the continent’s dominant power and main exporting nation, took the helm as the driving force for summit decisions, bullying indebted nations and others, including France, into supporting its proposed mix of “intrusive” control of other nation’s finances, deep austerity and refusal to allow the European Central Bank to massively increase the euro supply.

Anatole Kaletsky, editor-at-large for the London *Times*, said, “German policy is trying to achieve in Europe the characteristic objectives of war: the redrawing of international boundaries and the subjugation of foreign people.”

All governments present at the summit except the United Kingdom’s buckled under to Berlin’s demands, just as the rulers of Greece and Italy did in November, when they removed their elected leaders and installed “technocratic” regimes to push deeper attacks on working people.

Seeking exemption from a proposed financial transactions tax, British Prime Minister David Cameron alone voted against the summit pact.

At the conclusion of the meeting, French President Nicolas Sarkozy refused to shake his hand.

Production in virtually every European country, including Germany, has declined in recent months. New orders taken by eurozone companies have contracted for the last four months, meaning manufacture will continue to shrivel as demand dries up.

In the 10 weaker eurozone economies, the number of people out of work has doubled since the outset of 2007. It has tripled in Ireland and Spain.

The opening of 2012 will bring big challenges for Europe’s rulers. Eurozone member states need to repay over \$1.1 trillion in government debt, with the bulk of it due in the first six months. European banks, which are locked in a dance of death with their governments, hold massive amounts of their debt, with \$665 billion due by June.

“European bonds, once freely traded and viewed as risk-free,” the *New York Times* wrote Dec. 7, are now “semi-poisonous hot potatoes.”

### Correction

In the article “Berlin Seeks Control Over Indebted EU Governments” printed in the Dec. 19 issue, the presidential candidate backed by the French Communist Party is Jean-Luc Mélenchon, not Mélençon.

### ‘Militant’ holiday schedule

The next issue of the *Militant*, mailed out on Dec. 22, will be a two-week issue, as we will be taking a one-week break for the holidays.