

THE MILITANT

INSIDE

Int'l Cuba solidarity conference set for July 24-27 in Venezuela
— PAGE 6

A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

VOL. 77/NO. 25 JULY 1, 2013

Subscription drive extended one week to push over top

BY LOUIS MARTIN

The *Militant* has extended the international campaign to win 2,800 subscribers by one week, through July 2. The Militant Fighting Fund, which is an integral part of the effort to expand the socialist paper's readership, has also been extended. During week six, 331 subscriptions were sold — bringing us to 2,249.

This adjustment is needed given the number of *Militant* campaigners who will be participating in a meeting of the Socialist Workers Party National Committee in New York June 22-23, what was the final weekend of the subscription effort.

The extension makes it possible for *Militant* supporters to make their local goals with a big collective effort and to organize celebrations of the drive's successful completion with all those who took part.

"I support the *Militant* and any-
Continued on page 3

Spring 'Militant' subscription campaign

May 4 - July 2 (week 6)

Country	quota	sold	%	2,800
UNITED STATES				
Twin Cities	140	139	99%	2249 Should be
Des Moines	140	131	94%	
Lincoln	25	23	92%	
Seattle	160	147	92%	
Los Angeles	175	158	90%	
Miami	90	81	90%	
Philadelphia	140	122	87%	
Chicago	180	156	87%	
San Francisco	180	156	87%	
Houston	140	108	77%	
Omaha	90	66	73%	
New York	425	310	73%	
Boston	65	42	65%	
Washington	90	57	63%	
Atlanta	160	91	57%	
Total U.S.	2200	1787	81%	
PRISONERS				
	15	8	53%	
UNITED KINGDOM				
London	160	136	85%	
Manchester	100	90	90%	
UK Total	260	226	87%	
CANADA				
	120	92	77%	
NEW ZEALAND				
	70	64	91%	
AUSTRALIA				
	80	72	90%	
Total	2745	2249	80%	
Should be	2800	2100	75%	

Coal miners determined to fight anti-union assault

Next rally called for July 9 in West Virginia



Miners and supporters rally June 17 in St. Louis against Peabody, Arch and Patriot coal companies' moves to tear up Mine Workers' contracts and walk away from retiree health obligations.

BY ALYSON KENNEDY AND BETSY FARLEY

ST. LOUIS — More than 1,500 retired and working miners and their supporters filled Kiener Plaza arena across from Peabody Energy here June 17. Coming from Alabama, Indiana, Illinois, Kentucky, Virginia, West Virginia, Pennsylvania and

Missouri, they turned out in a show of determination to fight the assault by Peabody, Arch Coal and Patriot Coal companies on their union, the United Mine Workers of America.

"This is the ninth rally in St. Louis," said Steve Earle, international vice president from District 12, welcom-
Continued on page 9

Socialist candidates in NY call for public works jobs program



Dan Fein (right), SWP candidate for New York mayor, speaks with Kirk Gammon in East New York, Brooklyn, June 16. "Stand firm. I support what you are doing," Gammon said.

BY JOHN STUDER

NEW YORK — "There are two New Yorks," Dan Fein, Socialist Workers Party candidate for mayor here, told Kirk Gammon while he and supporters of the SWP were campaigning in the East New York neighborhood of Brooklyn June 16. "There

are the bosses, capitalists, the owners, the propertied wealthy who have the Democrats and Republicans looking out for them.

"And then there are those of us who work for a living — the working class, whose interests the Socialist Workers
Continued on page 4

White House says it will send light arms to Syria opposition

BY SETH GALINSKY

The White House announced June 13 that the U.S. government will start sending light arms and ammunition to opponents of the Syrian government, claiming that Damascus had crossed "a red line" when it used chemical weapons back in March.

The *New York Times* noted that leading bourgeois figures in the U.S., from former President William Clinton to former Republican presidential candidate Sen. John McCain, had been pushing Obama to take action beyond "nonlethal" aid to help topple the regime.

But President Barack Obama "had to be almost dragged into the decision," the *Times* reported. "Obama expressed no confidence it would change the outcome, but privately expressed hope it might buy time to bring about a negotiated settlement."

In the end, the paper said, Obama left it to Deputy National Security Adviser Benjamin Rhodes to announce the shift, while Obama was addressing a gay pride event in the White House. The next day, Rhodes took further questions from the press about the move.

According to the *Wall Street Journal*, Obama agreed to the shift because of "growing U.S. concerns
Continued on page 7

Deaths in plant fires in Louisiana highlight bosses' drive for profit

BY STEVE WARSHELL

HOUSTON — Three people were killed and 85 injured in two separate explosions in chemical plants in Louisiana last week. The fatal blasts occurred as bosses in the U.S. petrochemical industry, concentrated
Continued on page 4

Also Inside:

- Why workers have no stake in gov't budget debates 6
- Turkish government steps up crackdown on protest actions 7
- Bankruptcy courts exist to protect bosses' interests 9

New Zealand: Workers' lives still devastated by 2011 quake

BY PATRICK BROWN
AND BASKARAN APPU

CHRISTCHURCH, New Zealand — More than two years after the Feb. 22, 2011, earthquake that took 185 lives and devastated much of the city, thousands of working people here are still living in damaged housing and waiting for insurance companies to settle their claims. The central city remains largely a wasteland.

The February 2011 quake, 6.3 in magnitude, was preceded by another destructive earthquake six months earlier and was followed by major aftershocks. The Reserve Bank of New Zealand estimated 150,000 homes — around three-quarters of Christchurch's housing stock — were damaged. Local newspaper *The Press* reported Feb. 20 that of the 18,500 homes with damage in excess of \$100,000, only one-third had received an insurance settlement and just 400 had been repaired or rebuilt.

"There are still some people without running water. Their communities haven't been fixed properly," said caregiver Ngaire Hira to *Militant* reporters May 18.

"Everyone naturally responded," Hira said, recalling the solidarity organized by residents of the working-class suburb of Shirley in the immediate aftermath. "We organized premises that provided shelter and running water. We took groups of elderly and disabled people to use the local rugby league club showers."

"It's worst in the east," which in-

cludes heavily working-class areas such as Aranui, New Brighton and Shirley," said Hira.

A *Press* survey published May 11 noted that people in the west "were more likely to have had their repair work completed than eastern residents."

Government buyout offers made to home owners in the east frequently value properties well below replacement costs, said Brent and Shirley Cairns of the Wider Earthquake Communities Action Network in a May 19 interview.

Landlords have ratcheted up rents by an average of 31 percent in greater Christchurch over the last two years, reported the Ministry of Business, Innovation, and Employment in March.

"I know a lot of people struggling to cope as prices of rentals, fuel, food and power go up," said Mary Scarrott, a former worker at a now-closed sewing factory who does homework for various garment manufacturers.

"It's a basic problem of supply and demand," Laura Garter of the Tenants Protection Association told the *Militant* May 19. "There are huge increases in people suffering hardship — people with rent increases, people looking for housing."

The government announced plans May 29 to close 10 primary and intermediate city schools by next year. Three will be merged into other schools and seven will be closed outright.

Demonstrations in Brazil protest transit fare hike



Some 5,000 demonstrators marched through the streets of São Paulo, Brazil, June 13 to protest the government's increase of bus and subway fares by 7 percent to about \$1.50 a ride. Police fired rubber bullets and tear gas to disperse protesters, injuring at least 55 and detaining dozens. A similar demonstration two days earlier attracted some 12,000 people, according to the *Wall Street Journal*. The protests, which have attracted many university students, have been organized by the group Movimento Passe Livre, which demands free public transportation.

Similar actions have taken place in Rio de Janeiro as well as Porto Alegre in the south, Goiânia in the central region and Natal in the northeast. The fare increase is being pushed amid rising prices of food and basic services, which have the greatest impact on working people.

On June 12, São Paulo state's Public Ministry proposed suspending the fare raise for 45 days to further evaluate it. A couple days earlier, a judge in Goiânia ruled against imposing a 10 percent fare increase in that city.

—BRIAN WILLIAMS

NZ residents resist eviction from gov't housing

BY ANNALUCIA VERMUNT

AUCKLAND, New Zealand — Despite ongoing protests from tenants in the working-class suburb of Glen Innes, the government is moving ahead with plans to begin evicting people from their state-owned houses in July. The plan is to demolish public housing and rebuild both private and public housing in its place on what is high-value coastal real estate.

These measures coincide with a bill introduced into parliament May 17 that aims to end long-term rental of state housing and privatize Housing New Zealand, a government-owned corporation that provides reduced-rent housing to people who meet the government's means-testing requirements.

State housing was a social gain won in the late 1930s as a by-product of struggles by working people in the face of depression conditions.

Some 20 people came to a public meeting in Glen Innes May 8 to discuss the tenants' anti-eviction fight.

"We have not let one home be removed without a fight," said Terri Campbell, 57.

Marion Peka told the meeting that her elderly neighbor has lived in the area for 60 years and feels Housing New Zealand is just waiting for her to die. "It's elder abuse," Peka said.

In September 2011 tenants in 156 state houses received letters saying they would be evicted with no guarantee of return. The evictions were delayed after tenants organized meetings and protests.

THE MILITANT

Fight for women's rights is key for int'l working class

The fight to defend a woman's right to choose abortion is a crucial issue for the working class worldwide. The 'Militant' covers the fights for women's rights from the U.S. to Indonesia to El Salvador. Don't miss an issue!

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Reuters/Ulises Rodriguez
Protest in El Salvador backing right to abortion for woman endangered by pregnancy.

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Submissions to the *Militant* may be published in the newspaper in print and digital format. By submitting, authors represent that their submissions are original and consent to publication in this manner.

Signed articles by contributors do not necessarily represent the *Militant's* views. These are expressed in editorials.

Subscription campaign

Continued from front page

one who supports the UMWA,” said Lorraine Cook from Oceana, W.Va., at a June 17 rally in St. Louis organized by the United Mine Workers of America against union-busting efforts by Patriot Coal. “People need to join this fight. They need to say what they think.” (See article on front page.)

Cook, who bought a *Militant* subscription at a June 4 UMWA-organized rally in Henderson, Ky., is the wife of a retired coal miner and had three cousins killed in the April 2010 explosion at the Upper Big Branch Mine in West Virginia that took the lives of 29 miners.

On her way back to Chicago from the St. Louis rally, Alyson Kennedy reported that 21 subscriptions, 25 single copies and three books were sold at the action, as well as going door to door the day before in Coulterville and Pinckneyville, two mining towns in southern Illinois. *Militant* supporters from Chicago; Houston; Montreal; Des Moines, Iowa; and Lincoln, Neb. took part in the effort.

“Through fellow inmates, I’ve heard and was fortunate enough to read one issue and, by that, I’ve become interested in a subscription,” one prisoner from Florida wrote us last week. We also received a renewal from an inmate in the same jail, bringing the total to eight on a goal of 15 to workers behind bars.

The Militant Prisoners’ Fund makes it possible for inmates, often with help from friends or family, to subscribe at a reduced rate of \$6 for six months. Subscriptions are also offered free of charge to those with no means to pay.

Eric Simpson wrote that *Militant* readers from San Francisco drove

to Salinas, Calif., June 10 where they joined with subscriber Oswald Cisneros, a field worker and member of the United Farm Workers union, in selling door to door. Salinas is a center for agricultural production and for the UFW. New subscribers that day included several farmworkers, meat packers, a house cleaner and a plumber.

“This system is about breaking spirits for a profit. It’s about everyman for himself, where you step on each other and then all fall down,” Carson Danneman, 22, a community college student who works washing dishes in a restaurant, told *Militant* supporters when they knocked on his door in Seattle June 15.

“I want to be a knowledgeable leader and a follower of socialism,” Danneman said as he bought a subscription.

“Supporters of the *Militant* and communist books published by Pathfinder



Office worker Jérémie Mittelhammer buys *Militant* subscription and French edition of *The Cuban Five* June 1 in Verdun, Montreal, from distributors Annette Kouri and Katy LeRougetel.

Press sold 26 *Militant* subscriptions and 62 books during the annual Printers Row Lit Festival in downtown Chicago, June 8-9,” Ilona Gersh wrote.

There is still time to join the inter-

national effort to expand the *Militant*’s readership among working people. Call distributors in your region (see directory on page 8) or contact us at (212) 244-4899 or themilitant@mac.com.

Best week in contributions to Militant Fighting Fund

BY LEA SHERMAN

The *Militant* received more than \$18,000 for the Militant Fighting Fund — the best week so far.

Jean Bernard, a long-term subscriber in Brooklyn, donated \$200 to the fund when he was contacted by Tamar Rosenfeld, who is organizing the effort in New York.

“I always read the *Militant*,” Bernard told her. “I appreciate the information from around the world. It touches base on every aspect, you don’t leave anything out. The fight always continues.”

New York has taken a goal of 50 new contributors to the fund. So far 38 have donated.

“In response to meetings, phone calls and letters, one *Militant* subscriber donated \$100 for the first time, another \$30, and several others made contributions ranging from \$10 to 45,” wrote Rosenfeld. “These are contributions from people who read the paper and value it, and when asked to support the *Militant* financially, are glad to do so.”

From Los Angeles Ellie García wrote, “Supporters of the *Militant* have a goal of winning 20 first-time contributors. So far 16 have contributed a total of \$115, including six workers who recently subscribed when *Militant* supporters came to their door. One of

these workers came to a Militant Labor Forum.”

The fund is being organized as an integral part of the subscription campaign. Both have been extended for one week through July 2. Fund contributions received in New York by July 9 will be counted on the final scoreboard.

More than \$2,000 was collected June 15 at a public meeting organized to raise money for the fund that was held at the Bethany United Church of Christ in Seattle. Next week’s article will include coverage of that event.

To contribute, contact distributors listed on page 8, or send a check or money order made out to the *Militant*, 306 W. 37th St., 10th Floor, New York, NY 10018.

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The Changing Face of U.S. Politics

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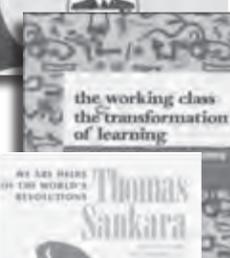


The Cuban Five

Who They Are, Why They Were Framed, Why They Should Be Free

from pages of the ‘Militant’

\$3 with subscription (regular \$5)



The Working Class and the Transformation of Learning

The Fraud of Education Reform Under Capitalism

by Jack Barnes

\$2 with subscription (regular \$3)



We Are Heirs of the World’s Revolutions

by Thomas Sankara

Speeches from the Burkina Faso Revolution 1983-87

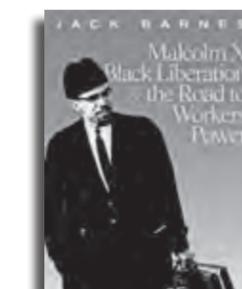
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Thomas Sankara Speaks

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\$10 with subscription (regular \$20)



Women and Revolution

The Living Example of the Cuban Revolution

by Asela de los Santos, Mary-Alice Waters and others

\$3 with subscription (regular \$7)

See distributors on page 8

Militant Fighting Fund

May 4 - July 2 (week 5)

Country	Quota	Paid	%
UNITED STATES			
Boston	\$3,500	\$2,740	78%
New York	\$20,000	\$14,546	73%
Des Moines	\$2,600	\$1,876	72%
San Francisco	\$13,500	\$8,278	61%
Seattle	\$8,500	\$4,465	53%
Philadelphia	\$4,300	\$2,185	51%
Omaha	\$600	\$300	50%
Los Angeles	\$8,500	\$4,174	49%
Twin Cities	\$5,500	\$2,610	47%
Atlanta	\$9,000	\$3,980	44%
Miami	\$3,000	\$1,144	38%
Lincoln	\$200	\$75	38%
Chicago	\$9,500	\$3,317	35%
Houston	\$4,000	\$787	20%
Washington	\$7,800	\$1,309	17%
Other		\$1,050	
Total U.S.	\$100,500	\$52,836	53%
CANADA	\$7,000	\$6,332	90%
NEW ZEALAND	\$5,500	\$4,920	89%
AUSTRALIA	\$1,500	\$1,535	102%
UNITED KINGDOM			
London	\$2,000	\$920	46%
Manchester	\$600	\$570	95%
Total U.K.	\$2,600	\$1,490	57%
FRANCE	\$350	\$279	80%
Total	\$117,100	\$67,392	57%
Should be	\$118,000	\$73,750	63%

3 killed in Louisiana plants

Continued from front page

in Texas and Louisiana, are ramping up production in response to the potential for profit from abundant new sources of natural gas from tar sands and fracking operations in North America.

The first blast occurred June 13 at the Williams Cos. Olefins propylene plant in Geismar, La., about 65 miles northwest of New Orleans. Nearly 840 people were on the site when the explosion occurred. Two were killed and scores more injured.

Workers at the plant found a propylene leak six months before this week's deadly explosion, officials told the media. The company confirmed June 14 that a visible leak was found in December at the plant, which leaked 514 pounds of flammable propylene chemical.

Williams Olefins has a history of dangerous incidents and is currently in negotiations with the Louisiana Department of Environmental Quality over penalties for previous leaks of propylene in 2008, the carcinogen benzene in 2009 and ethylene and volatile organic compounds in 2010. The company operates a transcontinental system of natural gas pipelines that stretches from the tar sands in Canada to the Gulf of Mexico.

On June 14 a nitrogen vessel burst at a fertilizer plant 20 miles downstream in Ascension Parish, killing one person and sending eight others to the hospital. Ronald "Rocky" Morris, a 55-year-old worker, died in the blast at CF Industries Donaldsonville Nitrogen Complex, where he worked for more than 30 years.

"It's getting worse and worse working around anything that has to do with natural gas," Abel Bocanegra, 36, a heavy equipment operator at Eagle Ford in Louisiana, said in a phone interview. Eagle Ford is the largest natural gas production field in the region.

"They had us working 'daylight' — from sun up to sundown as long as there's light, sometimes 18 hours per day," Bocanegra said. "Workers get hurt and get killed putting in hours

like that. I know they're pushing people hard in the processing plants, too. I'm sure that these conditions led to those people dying here."

In March a massive explosion involving similar chemicals at a fertilizer plant in West, Texas, killed 15 people and destroyed hundreds of homes.

In 2000 three workers were killed and eight injured in an explosion that occurred during maintenance operations at one of CF Industries ammonia plants. CF Industries, the world's second-largest nitrogen fertilizer producer, was fined less than \$150,000 by federal safety officials.

Socialist Workers candidates campaign in NY

Continued from front page
Party defends."

Fein and the rest of the SWP ticket in New York — John Studer for Comptroller, Deborah Liatos for Public Advocate, and Róger Calero, Seth Galinsky and Sara Lobman for Bronx, Queens and Manhattan Borough President — have been campaigning door to door and winning subscribers to the *Militant*, the campaign newspaper, in working-class neighborhoods throughout the city.

"I agree," Gammon responded as he signed up for a subscription to the *Militant*. "The teachers are mistreated and scapegoated. The unions are the backbone for poor people that raised the standard of living for workers. I support what you and your paper are doing. Stand firm."

As the candidates have campaigned, from Staten Island to the Rockaways, Little Italy in the Bronx to Harlem, they have asked working people to join them in solidarity with workers resisting attacks by the bosses on their wages, working conditions and dignity. Fein and Liatos traveled with campaign supporter Mario Ottoniel, a construction worker, to march with active miners and retirees in their June 4 protest in Henderson, Ky., against Patriot Coal's effort to use the bankruptcy court to gut the United Mine Workers contract and



Workers flee explosion at Williams Cos. Olefins propylene plant in Geismar, La., June 13.

slash health care and retirement.

Fein also joined the June 12 protest organized by the Municipal Labor Committee, a coalition of city workers' unions that organize some 300,000 transit workers, teachers, workers in the various city departments and others, who have been forced to work without contracts for years by the administration of Michael Bloomberg.

"The Socialist Workers Party campaign is not concerned with balancing the city government budget," Fein told Mitchell Singletary, a member of Communications Workers of America Local 1180, at the rally, "but rather the budget of workers who have seen their rent, food and transportation go up without receiving a pay raise for years."

Singletary signed up for a *Militant* subscription to follow the campaign and working class struggles and got a copy of *The Cuban Five: Who They Are, Why They Were Framed, Why They Should Be Free*. "I'm sure glad I ran into you here today," he told Fein.

On June 13 about 150 people participated in a forum for Queens Borough President candidates sponsored by the New York City South Asian Civic Engagement Coalition. On the panel were Democratic Party candidates Leroy Comrie, Melinda Katz and Peter Vallone, Republican Tony Arcabascio and Socialist Workers Party candidate Seth Galinsky. The forum was translated into Bengali and Nepali.

Forum moderator Annetta Seecharran gave each candidate a minute and half to respond to each of five questions, including what could be done to tackle "hate crimes" against South Asian and Guyanese-Indian immigrants.

The Democratic and Republican candidates all said they were for adding more hate crime laws to the books.

"Where do racism and violence

against immigrants come from?" Galinsky asked. "The deportations and scapegoating of immigrants by the government and claims that undocumented workers are stealing jobs create an atmosphere that encourages this.

"The labor movement should take the lead in calling for an immediate and permanent end to the deportation of workers without papers," he said. "We need to say that whatever language you speak, wherever you were born, whether you have papers or not, we should fight together against the bosses and we should demand that the government launch a public works program at union-scale wages to build the things working people need, from affordable housing to mass transit."

"I'm glad there was a socialist on the platform," college student Christine Rheem told Galinsky after the program. "You don't usually get a chance to hear that point of view."

Nancy Boyasko contributed to this article.

—MILITANT LABOR FORUMS—

MINNESOTA

Minneapolis

Civil War in Syria: What's at Stake for Workers and How It Affects Turkey, Lebanon. Speaker: Tom Fiske, Socialist Workers Party. Sat., June 22, 6:30 p.m. 416 Hennepin Ave., Suite 214. Tel.: (612) 729-1205.

NEW ZEALAND

Auckland

Workers, Youth in Turkey Demand Political Rights, Defy Police Attacks. Speaker: Felicity Coggan, Communist League. Fri., June 28, 7 p.m. Donation: \$5 waged, \$2 unwaged. 4/125 Grafton Road. Tel.: (09) 369-1223.

Come to July active workers conference in Ohio

Over the past four weeks, the *Militant* has quoted Kevin Cole, a postal worker in California; Gordon Rainer, a retired pipefitter in Alabama; and Mario Ottoniel and Virgen López, construction and office workers in New York; explaining why they decided to attend an active workers conference sponsored by the Socialist Workers Party that will be held July 19-20 in Oberlin, Ohio.

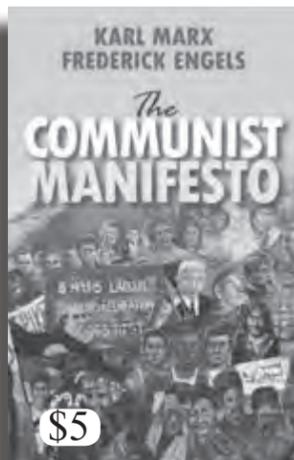
These workers will join with hundreds of members of the SWP and Communist Leagues in other countries, supporters of the communist movement from around the world and other workers who have been reading and helping to circulate the *Militant*, building solidarity with coal miners battling union-busting efforts by Patriot Coal, and other workers standing up to boss attacks, joining actions to free the Cuban Five and participating in other social struggles.

Presentations by party leaders and classes will focus on the world capitalist crisis unfolding today, the response of workers here and around the world, and the lessons of previous working-class struggles for political power, including the victorious 1917 Russian Revolution and the Cuban Revolution in 1959. They will discuss how millions of working people organized to maintain that power through the rapid and decisive transformation of social relations inherited from capitalism — transforming themselves in the process.

The conference will also discuss increasing the readership of the *Militant*, as well as the leverage of the books distributed by Pathfinder Press in nearly a dozen languages have in expanding the reach of revolutionary working-class politics.

If you are interested in the conference, call *Militant* distributors in your area (see page 8), or contact us at (212) 244-4899 or themilitant@mac.com.

—LOUIS MARTIN



"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."
—Karl Marx and Frederick Engels

Written in 1848, the Communist Manifesto explains why communism is 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."

www.pathfinderpress.com

ON THE PICKET LINE

Thousands in Greece protest closure of state TV, radio

ATHENS, Greece — Government officials announced June 11 that the state-owned TV and radio broadcasting company ERT here would be shut down by the end of the day and more than 2,600 workers laid off. Within hours, more than 6,000 workers assembled outside the company offices to protest the move.

Representatives of various unions addressed the crowd. Brief speeches went on throughout the night interspersed with mini-concerts by well-known musicians.

Among the crowd were metro workers, whose strike was broken by the government earlier this year; teachers; workers from state hospitals slated for closure; and city sanitation workers fighting layoffs.

“ERT is a characteristic case of unique opacity and unbelievable wastage. And that ends today,” government spokesperson Simos Kedikoglou said in a televised address through which the ERT workers found out they no longer had a job. “In its place will be established a modern television and audio broadcaster.” Former employees, he said, could reapply for positions in the much smaller operation.

The closure is part of the Greek rulers’ moves to slash their government expenses in face of mounting sovereign debt that started coming to a head in 2010 as part of a broader financial crisis in Europe.

ERT employees occupied the studios and continued broadcasting on the Internet after transmission towers were shut down.

“I would meet many people who lost their jobs and hear about companies who shut down, but nothing prepared me for this,” said Giorgos Giannatos with 25 years at ERT. “Now I know what I should have done, and how I should have stood by those others.”

Hundreds spent the night on the

grounds. Thousands of unionists, other workers and students rallied the next day and the day after, when union federations called a solidarity strike.

“I am here to fight for a better tomorrow,” said Dimitris Vamvakidis, 33, an unemployed TV technician. “Many of my colleagues in the private broadcast sector support the fight by the ERT workers, especially the younger workers. Many of us are unemployed, we know what that means.” Unemployment officially stands at more than 27 percent, among youth it’s 62.5 percent.

“We were here yesterday, we are here today in order to stand by the ERT workers,” said Giorgos Sifonios, union president at the Halivourgia steel mill. “We were out on strike for nine months last year. Our own fight is ongoing to win back the jobs of our fired coworkers.”

“The people who are rallying to the ERT building have themselves been hit hard. We are rediscovering how valuable is the weapon of solidarity, nationally and internationally,” said Tassos, a radio copy editor with 20 years at ERT.

—Natasha Terlexis and Georges Mehrabian

Meat packers fight for union contract in Montreal

MONTREAL — Forty workers, fighting for their first union contract as members of United Food and Commercial Workers Local 1991P, have been locked out since May 1 by Salaison Lévesque, a meatpacking company here. The workers voted to join the UFCW in late 2012.

Picket line signs highlighted some of the workers’ demands: “Lévesque stop paying us peanuts,” “End harassment on the job,” and “For better job security and respect for seniority.”

“Despite the company’s refusal to negotiate, we’re not going to retreat,” Michel Létourneau said on the picket line May 30.

“We’re demanding the company supply another refrigerator and more microwaves,” Jonathan, a mechanic who gave only his first name, told the *Militant* on the picket line a week af-



Militant/Bobbis Misailides

Thousands of workers rallied in Athens, Greece, June 13 to protest government’s decision to close state-owned TV and radio broadcast company ERT, laying off 2,600 workers.

ter the lockout. “We also need lockers installed — these are questions of respecting our dignity.”

—Beverly Bernardo

Locked-out chemical workers in Quebec win solidarity

BECANCOUR, Quebec — “We are on the picket line to keep what we’ve gained — the basics,” maintenance welder Robert Beaudoin said during a June 2 barbecue here by workers locked out by Silicium Québec. “They’re not just asking for concessions. They want the shirts off our backs.” The barbecue was attended by about 100 workers, their families and supporters.

Silicium Québec, owned by U.S.-based Globe Specialty Metals Inc., locked out some 145 chemical workers, members of Canadian Communications, Energy and Paper Workers Union Local 184, May 3 just a few days after the labor contract expired. The plant is 90 miles northeast of Montreal.

Local 184 president Jean Simoneau told the *Militant* the bosses want to impose a 20 percent cut in wages, cuts to retirement benefits and end a yearly bonus. Other concession demands, he said,

include contracting out up to 30 jobs and changing the retirement plan from defined benefits to a defined contribution plan. Wages currently average \$28 an hour.

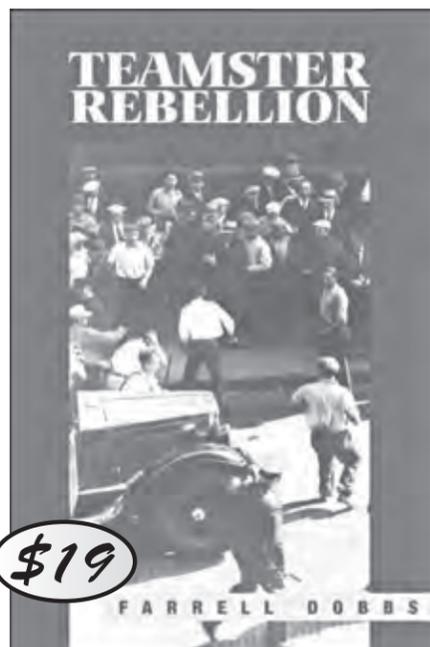
“There is good solidarity between the retired workers and the locked-out workers,” said Michel Boucher, president of the local’s retiree committee. “We are all in the same boat.”

Members of United Steelworkers Local 9700 at the ABI aluminum plant here decided to donate \$15,000 to the locked-out workers for the duration of the fight. Members of Paper Workers Local 167 at the Olin chemical plant are donating \$2,050 per week.

Globe Specialty is among the largest producers of silicon and silicon-based alloys in the world. Some production is continuing, mostly with management personnel, according to Radio-Canada. The Quebec Labour Relations Commission ordered the company May 31 to halt using eight replacement workers in violation of the province’s labor law.

The company did not respond to requests for comment from the *Militant*.

—John Steele and Annette Kouri



The 1934 strikes that built the industrial union movement in Minneapolis and helped pave the way for the CIO, as recounted by Farrell Dobbs, a central leader of that battle.

Teamster Rebellion is the first in a four-volume series that includes *Teamster Power*, *Teamster Politics* and *Teamster Bureaucracy*.

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25, 50, AND 75 YEARS AGO



July 1, 1988

NEW YORK — On June 15 Nelson Ramirez turned himself in to police officers at the federal courthouse in Brooklyn. He will serve a 15-month sentence. His crime? Refusing to cooperate with a grand jury.

“People will witness the incarceration of an individual who has not been charged with any criminal activity or committed any crime,” said Ramirez.

The 28-year-old emergency medical service technician and supporter of independence of Puerto Rico was approached by four FBI agents on May 23 as he was leaving work at Metropolitan Hospital.

“The United States government has no moral or legal right, being an occupying force in Puerto Rico, to ask me or any Puerto Rican questions pertaining to the independence movement,” said Ramirez. “I would never cooperate with them in the repression of that movement.”



July 10, 1963

YELLOW SPRINGS, Ohio — Students picketed the Antioch College administration June 17 to protest its collaboration with a witch-hunt investigation of a former student by military intelligence.

The picket line of about a dozen had an effect far beyond its size, because demonstrations have been so rare in the past against the “liberal” Antioch administration.

Large crowds of apparently sympathetic students were attracted by the picket line, where heated arguments took place between demonstrators and members of the faculty and administration.

The action made front-page headlines in the June 17 *Dayton Daily News*. Before it was all over, the military intelligence agent, who had planned to interview students, reportedly canceled all appointments and left in indignation.



July 2, 1938

LEXINGTON, Ky. — Two union men, one an American Federation of Labor organizer, were convicted of “confederating and banding together to intimidate” and sentenced to one year each in the penitentiary by a Fayette Circuit Court jury last week. The jury, unable after several hours of deliberation to reach a verdict, was forced by the judge to bring in the guilty verdict.

The defendants, Frank Kwalleck and Henry Brown, faced trial as the aftermath of a militant strike conducted last September by Teamsters’ Local 779 against the E.L. Martin wholesale grocery company. The indictment and conviction is a brazen attempt by the authorities to prevent the recurrence of effective strikes in this open-shop town.

The two men are guilty of only one crime: helping workers to organize into unions capable of protecting the interests of the workers.

Int'l Cuba solidarity conference set for July 24-27 in Venezuela

BY RÓGER CALERO

Participants from more than two dozen countries across the Americas, as well as from Africa and Europe, will come together in Caracas, Venezuela, July 24-27 for the Seventh Continental Conference in Solidarity with Cuba. The gathering is called by the Venezuelan-Cuban Mutual Friendship and Solidarity Association, together with the Cuban Institute for Friendship with the Peoples (ICAP).

The conference is being organized as the main international celebration of the 60th anniversary of the July 26, 1953, assault on the Moncada army garrison in Santiago de Cuba led by Fidel Castro. That attack — during which Castro and 27 other revolutionaries were captured and imprisoned, and more than 50 massacred — became the clarion call to mass revolutionary struggle against the U.S.-backed dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista.

Conference organizers expect more than 600 participants in Caracas. The sixth solidarity conference was held in Mexico City in October 2011.

In plenary sessions and workshops, participants will discuss organizing solidarity around the world with Cuba's socialist revolution. Several will focus on getting out the truth about Washington's unremitting campaign to undermine and overturn the political power established by Cuba's workers and farmers through the 1956-58 revolutionary war that overthrew the Batista tyranny in January 1959. This includes the economic and trade embargo imposed on Cuba for more than half a century. Other conference events will focus on the international campaign against the U.S. government's frame-up and imprisonment of the Cuban Five. (See "Who Are the Cuban Five?" on this page.)

Other topics will include the history and example of Cuba's socialist revolution and proletarian internationalist course, as well as imperialist subjugation of Latin America and the Caribbean.

The gathering in Caracas builds on the close relations between the govern-

ments of Venezuela and Cuba developed through extensive trade ties and by collaboration of tens of thousands of Cuban volunteers working on medical, education, agricultural and other social projects in Venezuela.

On the last day conference participants will join a solidarity march with other Venezuelans that will end with a vigil on the eve of what would have been the 59th birthday of former President Hugo Chávez, who died earlier this year.

Information and registration forms in Spanish can be found at: <http://solidaridadvenezuelacuba.org>. Anyone interested in attending can contact a *Militant* distributor near you listed on page 8.

Why workers have no stake in gov't budget debates

BY LOUIS MARTIN

Top labor officials and other forces claiming to speak in the interests of workers have been campaigning against so-called government austerity policies from Europe to North America. In face of the worldwide crisis of capitalism these forces have joined in chorus with "progressive" factions of the bourgeoisie arguing that "austerity" is the wrong government policy for promoting economic growth, and therefore bad for workers.

COMMENTARY

This issue raises important questions on the nature of capitalism and state power, as working people begin to resist and discuss how to effectively confront the deepening assault by the bosses and their governments.

Militant readers may have noticed that the paper has stopped using the term "austerity" in describing these assaults, which obfuscates the real opposing class interests.

This crisis is rooted in a slowdown of production, trade and employment. Among its financial manifestations, capitalist governments have been con-



Militant/Gerardo Sánchez

Participants in Sixth Continental Conference in Solidarity with Cuba, held in Mexico City, Oct. 6-9, 2011. Seventh conference, scheduled July 24-27 in Caracas, Venezuela, will celebrate 60th anniversary of July 26, 1953, attack on Moncada Barracks led by Fidel Castro, which set stage for 1956-58 revolutionary war that overthrew U.S.-backed dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista.

fronting budget deficits running too high in relation to production. This is a problem for the capitalists, as the situation poses currency devaluation and raising taxes — the latter ultimately acting as a drain on their profits.

The government of Greece, among the most stark cases today, has amassed debts it cannot sustain to wealthy individuals, banks and financial institutions that threaten to lead to government bankruptcy, collapse of the country's banking system and other immediate repercussions for capitalist stability in Greece and beyond. The rulers of Greece have been slashing government expenses and raising taxes, a course they call austerity. At the same time, they are reacting to the economic crisis with layoffs, wage cuts and union busting.

In the U.S., the bosses' two parties — the Democrats and Republicans — have come to consensus that under current conditions they should take steps toward decreasing their budget deficit. But they have been wrangling bitterly over how far and fast to go, what to cut, how to adjust their tax codes, and the use of fiscal and monetary schemes to "stimulate" their economy (which at best postpone some financial symptoms of the economic crisis).

This debate takes place under the false rubric of "austerity" vs. "stimulus," with all sides claiming their plan is the best road toward renewed economic growth — something that is not determined or affected by government policy of any kind.

And both sides appeal to working people for support and seek to convince us their budget is something that we should be concerned about, while both aim to defend and stabilize capitalist exploitation at our expense. In this, the "anti-austerity" camp led by the Democratic Party gets help from the top labor officialdom.

In some ways, tailing the liberal "anti-austerity" faction is most deleterious to the working class. It rests on the dangerous illusion that "the government" can be a force for good in reining in the excesses of finance capitalism, making "the economy" work, and "providing" services workers need — fostering attitudes of dependency on the propertied rulers' government bureaucracy as opposed to working-class solidarity, self-

confidence and combativity.

The logic of the "anti-austerity" campaign is the bigger the government, the better. Contrary to popular misconception, the view of the communist movement has always been the opposite, whether it's a government representing the state power of the capitalist exploiters or a revolutionary government of workers and farmers. Talking about the 72-day Paris Commune of 1871, the first workers government in history, communist leader Karl Marx wrote, "The Commune made that catchword of bourgeois revolutions, cheap government, a reality, by destroying the two greatest sources of expenditure — the standing army and the state functionarism."

"Financial austerity measures, like those taken by European nations, destroy jobs, increase inequality and likely feed the public's mistrust of government," AFL-CIO President Richard Trumka, said in Paris May 28 at an event sponsored by Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development.

According to the AFL-CIO Now report on the OECD forum, Trumka outlined a series of "policy alternatives to 'kick-start job-rich inclusive and sustainable growth.'" Among them were "fiscal and monetary policy focused on job creation and growth," and others proposals put forward by Obama in

Continued on page 9

Who are the Cuban Five?

Gerardo Hernández, Ramón Labañino, Antonio Guerrero, Fernando González and René González are Cuban revolutionaries who during the 1990s accepted assignments from the Cuban government to gather information on the activities of Cuban-American counterrevolutionary groups operating in southern Florida. These paramilitary outfits, organizing on U.S. soil with virtual impunity, have a long record of carrying out bombings, assassinations and other deadly attacks, both against targets in Cuba and supporters of the Cuban Revolution in the United States, Puerto Rico and elsewhere.

On Sept. 12, 1998, the five were arrested by the FBI. They were framed up and convicted on a variety of charges, which included acting as unregistered agents of the Cuban government and possession of false identity documents. Without a shred of evidence, three were charged with "conspiracy to gather and transmit national defense information."

Hernández was also convicted of conspiracy to commit murder based on the pretext that he bore responsibility for the Cuban government's 1996 shoot-down of two aircraft flown by the counterrevolutionary group Brothers to the Rescue that had invaded Cuban airspace in disregard of Havana's repeated warnings. He is serving two life terms plus 15 years. His wife, Adriana Pérez, is barred from entering the United States.

All but René González remain in prison. In October 2011 he began serving a three-year "supervised release." On the pretext of his dual citizenship, his request to return to Cuba had been denied until May 3, when Judge Joan Lenard finally agreed that if González renounced his U.S. citizenship, he could stay in Cuba.



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Turkish government steps up crackdown on protest actions

BY SUSAN LAMONT

Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan ordered riot police in Istanbul to clear anti-government demonstrations from Taksim Gezi Park during the night of June 15. In the days that followed, police detained dozens across the country, many of whom were taken from their homes.

Using water cannons and tear gas, police fought groups of protesters through the night June 15. Military police were called in to prevent demonstrators from regrouping and others from reaching Taksim Square.

The current wave of protests began in Istanbul May 31, when police attacked an occupation of Taksim Gezi Park by young people opposed to a government redevelopment project that would replace the park. The protests then swelled, drawing in an array of groups and individuals, mainly students and middle-class professionals, but also workers and unionists. Demands included an end to government repression, more democratic rights, protections for national and religious minorities and women, and more rights for workers and unions.

Hundreds were arrested over the June 15-16 weekend. Since the protests began, at least four people have been killed. The Turkish Medical Association reports almost 7,500 people have been wounded.

The Confederation of Progressive Trade Unions (DISK), Confederation of Public Sector Trade Unions (KESK), the Turkish Doctors' Union, the Union of Chambers of Turkish Engineers and Architects, and the Turkish Dentists Union issued a call for nationwide demonstrations and a strike June 17 to protest government repression.

"We walked to Taksim Square, but were turned back by police," said Samil Altan, 62, in a June 19 phone interview from Istanbul. Altan is a leader of the recently formed People's Democratic Party, which he described as a coalition of democratic and socialist groups, some pro-Kurdish, that fields candidates in elections.

Altan estimated 4,000 or more union members took part. "Groups of unionists gathered in different locations, but we were blocked by police from moving," he said. "There is a curfew in the city. Things are difficult, and we will have to discuss and decide what are the next steps."

About 10 percent of workers in Turkey are unionized, Altan said, and government laws make it difficult for unions to win recognition.

"There is an attempt to bring people to the streets through strikes and work stoppages. These will not be allowed," said Interior Minister Muammer Guler, according to Reuters. Guler threatened serious consequences for public workers participating in the strikes.

The strike slowed transportation, halted construction and shut banks, according to UPI news service.

Demonstrations by trade unionists also took place in Ankara, Eskisehir and other cities June 17 and were blocked by police.

Erdogan, after denouncing the protesters as "riff-raff," announced June 14 that he would wait for the outcome of a court case appealing the government plan to demolish Gezi Park. Even if the court upholds the plan, he said, he would put it to a plebiscite vote in Istanbul. He also met with several representatives of the protesters.

Erdogan and his ruling Islamist Justice and Development Party staged mass rallies in Ankara and Istanbul June 15, called "Respect for the National Will." The rallies, which drew hundreds of thousands, were aimed at isolating the protesters and reinforcing Erdogan's claims that his regime and the measures he has taken on behalf of Turkey's capitalist rulers have overwhelming popular support.

Erdogan, prime minister since 2003, is trying to polish his govern-



Reuters/Dado Ruvic

Supporters of the Confederation of Progressive Trade Unions (DISK) in Ankara, Turkey's capital, demonstrated June 17 during one-day strike demanding an end to government repression, following a weekend of police attacks against protesters throughout country.

ment's image — tarnished by his handling of the protests — as he leads Turkey's ongoing bid to join the European Union. German Chancellor Angela Merkel said June 17 that she

was "appalled" by the Turkish government's response to the protesters. Germany is Turkey's biggest trading partner, with \$35 billion in bilateral trade.

White House to send arms to Syria opposition

Continued from front page

about large-scale battlefield deployment of militants from the Iran-backed Lebanese militia Hezbollah — an appearance that alarmed Israel and caught the Americans by surprise — and President Bashar al-Assad's more recent battlefield gains."

On June 4 the Assad regime — with the aid of Hezbollah fighters and massive aerial bombardments — wrested Qusayr from opposition control, restoring a land link with Hezbollah bases in Lebanon. Syrian army forces also recently pushed rebel fighters from some neighborhoods in Aleppo, the country's largest city, although the opposition still has more than half the city under its control, Reuters reported June 16.

Since the start of the uprising in March 2011, the death toll in Syria has reached 93,000, more than 6,500 of whom were minors and 1,700 under 10 years old, according to U.N. figures.

So far Obama has opposed sending anti-tank and hand-held anti-aircraft missiles and has ruled out declaring a U.S.-enforced no-fly zone.

"A political settlement is still the

preferable outcome," Rhodes told the press. "There is a future for those in the Assad regime who are willing to accept the end" of Assad's reign.

Washington is also worried that some weapons funneled to the opposition could fall into the hands of anti-U.S. Islamist groups also fighting the Syrian government.

About three-quarters of Syria's population are Sunni; 12 percent Alawites, a branch of Shiite Islam; 10 percent Christians; 9 percent Kurds; and 3 percent Druze. The Syrian government is based on the privileged Alawite minority, but also has support from a layer of Christian and Sunni capitalists. Backed and armed by Moscow and Tehran, Assad has also held on to support by stirring up fears of a takeover by Islamist groups who would persecute minorities.

The mostly Sunni-based opposition is heterogeneous. It includes former officers in the Syrian army, as well as members of the Muslim Brotherhood and other Islamist groups. Three loose military groupings — the Free Syria Army, the Syrian Liberation Front and the Syrian Islamic Front — coordinate their operations through

a Supreme Joint Military Command. The Jabhat al-Nusra Front, allied with al-Qaeda in Iraq, is not part of the joint command.

The governments of Qatar and Turkey have been supporting the groups that are part of the Muslim Brotherhood, while the governments of Jordan, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates back competing factions.

Kurds try to stay out of the war

In an attempt to keep the Kurdish minority in Syria from uniting with the opposition, Assad, soon after the uprising began, granted Syrian citizenship to more than 200,000 Kurds who had been denied it on the grounds that they or their parents were not born in Syria. He also reversed the ban on teaching the Kurdish language in schools and pulled back army troops from parts of the Kurdish Northeast — bordering both Turkey and the Kurdish Regional Government in Iraq — and allowed de facto autonomy so that he could concentrate his forces against the Sunni opposition.

Taking advantage of this new space, Kurdish groups have sparked a renaissance of Kurdish culture.

Some Kurdish areas have been bombed by the Syrian air force. In early May Kurdish Popular Protection Units clashed with Jabhat al-Nusra and other Islamist groups in Al-Hasakah province.

While visiting Washington in April, Jordan's King Abdullah, trying to impress on Obama the dangers to U.S. imperialism of staying out of the war, showed the White House "a map of a hypothetical future Syria, splintered along ethnic lines," the *Journal* reported June 15. "An Alawite coast strip; a Sunni-dominated area that officials said the king called 'Sunnistan'; a Druze-controlled area near the border with Israel; a Kurdish zone in the northeast corner; and a large swatch of Syrian desert abutting Anbar province in Iraq dominated by Islamists."

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How 1930s class battles forged fighting union in Minneapolis

Below is an excerpt from Notebook of an Agitator: From the Wobblies to the Fight Against the Korean War and McCarthyism, a collection of writings by James P. Cannon and one of Pathfinder's Books of the Month for June. The piece below, appeared in the Aug. 18, 1934, issue of The Organizer, a daily strike bulletin put out by Teamsters Local 574 in Minneapolis. The local waged a series of strikes that year by truck drivers and helpers that won union recognition and a contract. Cannon was a leader of the communist movement in the U.S. following the Russian Revolution of October 1917 and founding member of the Socialist Workers Party in 1938. Copyright © 1958 by Pathfinder Press. Reprinted by permission.



Minnesota Historical Society

Methods of organization and forms of activity of Teamsters Local 574 went far beyond the traditional craft-union methods and ideas, Cannon said. Among these was the organization of Ladies' Auxiliary, shown above running commissary during 1934 strike in Minneapolis.

BOOKS OF THE MONTH

BY JAMES P. CANNON

The amazing vitality of the strike of Local 574, and its ability to survive the heaviest blows and come back fighting, are evoking continued amazement and admiration in the ranks of the general labor movement. The prestige of Local 574 extends far beyond the borders of Minneapolis.

This was strikingly demonstrated by the enthusiasm of the International Convention of the Hotel and Restaurant Workers International Alliance and Bartenders International League, and

its generous donation of \$1,000. This is a lot of money to donate to the strike of a local union in another trade, and could not have been possible if the delegates, coming from all parts of the country, had not been deeply stirred by the magnificent fight of our union.

Trade unionists, including many labor leaders of a more or less conservative tendency, have paid tribute to the fighting abilities of Local 574 and its methods of conducting the struggle against the heaviest odds. Even those who have taken part in important labor struggles and studied the history of others, recognize something new and different in Local 574's way of doing things, something which enables it to stand its ground and keep on fighting where an ordinary trade union would have folded up long ago.

What is the secret of this remarkable vitality and resourcefulness? What is "different" about Local 574?

The answer is, that almost everything is different. By its constitution and affiliation, Local 574 is an ordinary trade union, indistinguishable from thousands of others. But within the framework of the old-line trade-union movement, represented by the A.F. of L., our Local has evolved methods of organization and forms of activity which go far beyond the traditional craft-union methods and ideas.

The outward form is old-fashioned and "regular," but the inner content is modern and pulsating with new vigorous life. In one sense of the word it can be said that Local 574 represents a fusion of the new and the old at the moment when the American labor movement as a whole stands before the prospect of great changes to meet the modern needs of the workers. No single one of the distinct features of our strike can explain the full significance of Local 574 as the herald of this new movement evolving within the formal framework of the old. The new features and methods of work fit and supplement each other. They are combined by a unifying idea, and it is this combination that gives Local 574 its power and fighting capacity.

Nevertheless, each of the distinct features brought out in this strike has its own separate importance and deserves special study. Trade unionists who want to get at the heart of the whole method of 574, and learn its secret, ought to devote attentive study to each of these features separately.

One of the many distinct contributions made by Local 574 to the labor movement is the organization of the womenfolk of the strikers and their direct participation in the strike through the Ladies' Auxiliary. Even if this organization doesn't function perfectly, and still suffers from the weakness that

always goes with inexperience, it has shown itself to be a real power in this strike, as it already did in the May strike to a lesser extent. The Ladies' Auxiliary is so much a part of the strike and carries such heavy burdens, that it is taken for granted as an indispensable part of the union. Nobody even thinks of going on without it.

It is hard to realize that other unions go into struggle without such a valuable ally. Yet this is what happens in nearly every case. Local 574 is one of the very few local unions that have understood the necessity of organizing the women and making their organization a vital part of the strike machinery.

There is an idea behind this, also. Local 574 doesn't take any stock in the theory that capital and labor are brothers, and that the way for little brother labor to get a few crumbs is to be a good boy and appeal to the good nature of big brother capital. We see the issue between capital and labor as an unceasing struggle between the class of exploited workers and the class of exploiting parasites. It is a war. What decides in this war, as in all others, is power. The exploiters are organized to grind us down into the dust. We must organize our class to fight back. *And the women are half of the working class.* Their interests are the same as ours and they are ready to fight for them. Therefore: Organize them to take part in the class battle. This is the idea behind the wonderful organization of the Ladies' Auxiliary, and its effective cooperation with the union in the struggle.

Of course, Local 574 cannot claim to be the pioneer in grasping this idea and carrying it into practice. There have been numerous examples of attempts along this line on the part of other organizations, although seldom has it been done as effectively. The greatest example of effective organization of women—one that did much to inspire us—belongs to the Progressive Miners of Illinois.

This organization carried on some heroic struggles during 1932–1933 and needed extraordinary resources to survive. One of these resources, which played a decisive part in keeping the union alive and beating back its enemies, was the Women's Auxiliary of the Progressive Miners.

June BOOKS OF THE MONTH

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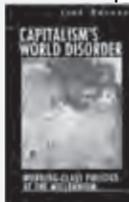
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WASHINGTON: Seattle: 5418 Rainier Ave. South. Zip: 98118-2439. Tel: (206) 323-1755. E-mail: seattleswp@qwestoffice.net

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Sydney: 1st Flr, 3/281-287 Beamish St., Campsie, NSW 2194. Mailing address: P.O. Box 164, Campsie, NSW 2194. Tel: (02) 9718 9698. E-mail: cl_australia@optusnet.com.au

CANADA

QUEBEC: Montreal: 7107 St. Denis #204 H2S 2S5. Tel: (514) 272-5840. E-mail: clc_can@bellnet.ca

FRANCE

Paris: P.O. 175, 23 rue Lecourbe. Postal code: 75015. Tel: (01) 40-10-28-37. E-mail: milpath.paris@laposte.net

NEW ZEALAND

Auckland: 4/125 Grafton Rd., Grafton. Postal address: P.O. Box 3025, Auckland 1140. Tel: (09) 369-1223. E-mail: clauack@xtra.co.nz

UNITED KINGDOM

ENGLAND: London: First Floor, 120 Bethnal Green Road (Entrance in Brick Lane). Postal code: E2 6DG. Tel: (020) 7613-2466. E-mail: clondon@fastmail.fm
Manchester: Room 301, 3rd floor, Hilton House, 26–28 Hilton St. Postal code: M1 2EH. Tel: (016) 1478-2496. E-mail: clmanchr@gmail.com

Coal miners rally in St. Louis

Continued from front page
ing everyone to the rally. “We will not stop rallying, not stop marching and speaking out against this injustice.”

In a well-calculated scheme, Peabody Energy created Patriot in 2007 by spinning off many of its mining operations in West Virginia and Kentucky, including all of its union mines east of the Mississippi.

The spinoff included a number of Peabody mines with contract obligations to retired miners. A year later Patriot bought Magnum Coal, a similar spinoff created by Arch Coal. Ninety percent of the miners whose benefits will be slashed never worked for Patriot.

“They told me that if I stayed for 20 years I would have a pension and medical care,” Wayne Lodge, a retired miner who worked at Peabody’s Baldwin Mine in Marissa, Ill., told the *Militant*. “Now they’ve turned around and we get nothing and they get everything.”

Lodge, who has been to every rally, said, “Peabody closed the Baldwin Mine after the ’93 strike during the week of Christmas.”

With sanction from U.S. bankruptcy Judge Kathy Surratt-States, Patriot said it intends to rapidly eliminate its funding for retiree health benefits and tear up the UMWA contract for working miners.

The bankruptcy judge gave the green light to replace the current health care fund with a Voluntary Benefit Association. The ruling also backed Patriot’s proposal to make cuts in the wages and benefits in the UMWA contracts at the Patriot mines “to a level consistent with the regional market.” The court ruled that Patriot can begin imposing these conditions July 1.

This affects the lives of 23,000 retired miners and their dependents and some 1,650 UMWA miners at the Hobet 21, Federal No. 2 and Guyan mines in West Virginia and the Highland No. 9 mine in Kentucky.

“I came to stand up for our rights and to support the miners and everyone fighting what Patriot is doing,” said John Kirby, 21, who works at Consol’s McElroy Mine in West Virginia.

“The bankruptcy judge didn’t seem to care too much when she said it was just the breaks if retirees had to decide between medical care and food,” said Charles Sutton, 77, a retired miner from Eagle No. 2 in Shawneetown, Ill. “Well I don’t think much of what she said, and I don’t want to have to make a choice between food and medicine.”

UMWA officials continue to negotiate with Patriot for “a workable alternative to the severe terms Patriot asked for last spring and that were approved by the bankruptcy court,” according to a statement issued by the union.

On June 12, UMWA President Cecil Roberts said the company walked out of negotiations the day before.

“The union had agreed to more than \$400 million in savings for the company over the life of the current contract, which gave them the money they say they need to survive. But that still wasn’t

enough for them,” Roberts said.

Patriot officials said they took a two-day recess to conduct “a financial analysis.” Negotiations have since resumed.

“The government stands by and watches all this happen,” said Terry Wilson, a ram car operator at the Patriot mine in Waverly, Ky. “But if it comes down to a fight, it’s a fight we’re going to give them.”

Some 30 members of Communications Workers of America Local 6300 came to the rally to give their support. “The reason we are at this rally today is the UMWA by the thousands stood witness in our fight against Verizon when they sold off home phone lines,” explained Mike Burbon, 49, vice president of CWA Local 6300.

Peabody and Arch Coal “made billions from the sweat and hard work of our members, and if these executives think we’re going to sit idle while they abandon their promises and put our members at risk — well, then they don’t really know or understand the United Mine Workers of America,” UMWA President Roberts told the rally.

In addition to Roberts, rally speakers included CWA Chief of Staff Ron Collins; SEIU Local 1 Vice President Nancy Cross; Lew Moye, president of



Ron Collins, Communications Workers of America chief of staff, addresses June 17 miners rally.

the St. Louis chapter of the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists; Kevin Kern, chief of staff to Rep. Bill Enyart from Illinois; Jeff Roorda of the St. Louis Metropolitan Fraternal Order of Police; Rev. Donna Blythe from the Sunfield United Methodist Church of Christ in Du Quoin, Ill.; UMWA International Vice President James Gibbs; and Robert Soutier, president of the St. Louis Labor Council.

Brianna Price, 20, came with a group of 10 fast-food workers. Their campaign for higher wages, better conditions and respect is called “St. Louis can’t survive on \$7.35,” the state’s minimum wage. “The miners joined us when we protest-

ed here on May 9, so we’re here to help them too,” she said.

The union has called another protest rally for July 9, tentatively set for the football stadium at Fairmont State College in Fairmont, W.Va.

“We have to let other people know about this fight, we have to get more support,” said Carol Smith of Coulterville, Ill. Carol and her husband Sonny, a miner from 1969 until 2004, were part of the UMWA strike against Peabody in 1993. “If we can get the information out they will come.”

John Hawkins and Joe Swanson contributed to this article.

Bankruptcy courts exist to protect bosses’ interests

Miners battling Peabody, Arch and Patriot coal companies today are witnessing how the bosses use bankruptcy courts to advance their anti-union assaults on workers. Many workers — from Hostess Brands in 2012 to Eastern Airlines in 1989 — have faced similar attacks.

The Pathfinder book *The Eastern Airlines Strike: Accomplishments of the Rank-and-File Machinists* by Ernie Mailhot, Judy Stranahan and Jack Barnes records the experience of the 22-month determined strike by Machinists against Eastern Airlines in 1989-91 that defeated owner Frank Lorenzo’s attempts to smash the union and forced him out of the airline business. Below is an excerpt from the book that deals with the role of the bankruptcy courts. Copyright © 1991 by Pathfinder Press. Reprinted by permission.



Lorenzo hoped that by getting protection in the bankruptcy court he could restart the grounded airline. Hit hard by ferocious competition in the airline industry, Eastern had already lost millions of dollars in previous years. With Eastern’s operations now brought to a halt by the strike, the company’s losses were mounting even more.

The carrier’s owners were also hoping to get the strikers and working people in general to turn their attention toward the deliberations of the court and away from the strike. They sought to convince workers that decisions about the strike would be made elsewhere than on the picket lines, and that they could not affect those decisions. ...

The job of the bankruptcy court is a narrow one, more restricted than that of most courts in the United States. Rulings made by the bankruptcy judge are aimed at protecting the social capital — in this case the planes, equipment, computer systems, terminals, and hangars of Eastern — in the interests of a company’s owners, creditors, and ul-

timately the capitalist class as a whole. The court has nothing to do with the interests of organized labor or of working people in general. ...

While initially many strikers were drawn into following every aspect of the proceedings of the bankruptcy

court, this attitude soon dissipated. As rulings came down that went against the interests of the unions, strikers quickly began to learn that the courts were not neutral. The Machinists pressed forward, keeping the strike firm and continuing to win broader solidarity.

Government ‘austerity’ debate

Continued from page 6

his Inaugural Address and State of the Union speech earlier this year — none of which have or could create a single job.

Textbook definitions of government austerity lack historical or class content — the governments “tightening their belts” are apparatuses of bourgeois state power, not working-class families trying to make ends meet.

Since their inception in Europe and North America, capitalist governments have financed budget deficits by selling bonds and other debt to ruling families, big banks and other capitalist creditors.

Interest from these loans serves as a huge source of enrichment for a layer of the big capitalist families. In fiscal year 2014 alone \$223 billion was allocated by Washington for interest payments. Similar payments are carried out at state and municipal levels.

The purpose of the bourgeois state is to maintain and defend capitalist social relations — above all private property in the means of production — against capitalist competitors in other countries and against those at home whose labor is exploited by these social relations, us. That’s why such a substantial portion of state budgets go to the cops, courts, jails, military and other instruments of repression. Working people have no interest in telling the capitalist rulers how they should run *their* governments.

Many “social services” workers use represent concessions wrested from

the capitalists by working people in struggle, however watered down and contradictory they may be in practice. Every cent is “paid for” by wealth created through our labor. We are supposed to feel “grateful” and dependent on the diminishing crumbs dispensed by a bloated government bureaucracy.

What is most needed is a class-struggle course of working-class political action, independent of the bosses’ parties. It’s through common experiences in struggle that working people can strengthen our unity, organization, self-confidence, class consciousness and political clarity — and come to recognize the bosses’ government as an instrument of class repression that cannot be reformed any more than capitalism can be made to serve the economic and cultural needs of toiling humanity.

Along this road, working people can develop into men and women capable of leading a revolutionary movement of millions to wrest political power out of the hands of the propertied class, establish a government of workers and farmers and use it to transform social relations on the basis of working-class solidarity, not profit.

What will replace the capitalist government is not a socialist version of a big “benevolent” state, but a cheap government that defends the interests of workers and their allies against the reimposition of capitalist rule in a period of transition toward the withering away of government altogether.

‘Militant’ Prisoners’ Fund

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