

# THE MILITANT

INSIDE

**Becky Ellis: 45 years  
building proletarian party**

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A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

VOL. 79/NO. 14 APRIL 20, 2015

## Join ‘Militant’ subscription, fund drives to broaden reach

BY EMMA JOHNSON

“Seven striking union members working at Pacific Steel Casting in Berkeley, California, signed up for subscriptions to the *Militant* on the picket line and at a March 29 gathering outside the plant to vote on a new contract,” said Joel Britton, one of those in Oakland, California, helping to prepare for the opening of the *Militant*’s seven-week spring drive to win new subscribers and contributions to the Militant Fighting Fund. The members of Glass, Molders, Pottery, Plastics and Allied Workers Local 164B pushed back company takeaway demands in their one-week strike.

*Militant* supporters went door to door near the forge right after the proposed contract was approved, where two workers decided to sign up for the paper.

Participants in two meetings at the

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## White House pushes Iran deal in face of wide opposition

BY NAOMI CRAINE

President Barack Obama is working overtime to sell the draft nuclear agreement reached in negotiations between officials of Iran and the U.S., along with Britain, France, Germany, Russia and China. Announcing the deal April 2, Obama said it would “prevent [Iran] from obtaining a nuclear weapon” and “make our country, our allies, and our world safer.”

The tentative deal faces a firestorm of opposition, including from Israel, Saudi Arabia and other governments in the Middle East, Republicans and some Democrats in Congress.

It registers further unraveling of the imperialist order that has dominated in the Mideast for decades. The result is increasing instability and war, which will continue and deepen regardless of whether the agreement with Tehran goes ahead, until a work-

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## All out April 15 for \$15 and a union!

National actions grow, win support



Militant/Emma Johnson

Protest at McDonald’s in midtown New York April 2, day after company announced small wage increase for fraction of workforce. “It shows we’re winning,” said Katherine Cruz.

BY MAGGIE TROWE

Workers who are fighting for “\$15 and a union” are planning strikes and protests all across the country April 15. Workers at fast-food restaurants,

**JOIN PROTESTS FOR  
\$15 AND A UNION!**  
— Editorial, page 9

big-box retailers and other minimum-wage jobs will take part, along with growing numbers of unions and par-

ticipants in social protest actions. Demonstrations have taken place in many cities over the last two weeks aimed at boosting participation and support.

“We believe that we will win,” chanted 30 people picketing a McDonald’s in Houston April 2.

“I’ve been part of the protests for two years, and they’re growing stronger and stronger,” Carlton Warren, a 22-year-old Jack-in-the-Box worker, told the *Militant*. “The company vice

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## Protesters say ‘It’s got to stop’ after Georgia cops kill unarmed man



Militant

Nicholas Thomas’ previous arrest record “doesn’t give the cops the right to kill him,” said Huey Thomas, his father. Above, March 31 rally outside Smyrna, Georgia, City Hall.

BY SALI LATEEF

SMYRNA, Ga. — Some 500 people rallied outside City Hall here March 31 to protest the police killing a week earlier of Nicholas Thomas, an unarmed 23-year-old auto tire shop worker.

The rally, called by the NAACP and Southern Christian Leadership Conference, was marked by participation of workers — many towing along their children, others still in work clothes.

“This is sad that we have to keep coming out to protest this issue,” nurse Brenda Montgomery told the *Militant* at the rally. “Ferguson, New

York, now Georgia, it’s like it’s happening everywhere. But we can’t stop protesting. It’s got to stop.”

Thomas arrived for work at the Goodyear Tire Center March 24, a factsheet distributed by rally organizers said. The cops had informed his supervisor that they were coming to arrest Thomas. The cops confronted him as he was driving a vehicle into the shop for service.

Thomas was wanted because he had stopped going to monthly meetings with a probation officer, stemming from a domestic incident in which he pled guilty to obstructing an

Continued on page 4

## Oil strike for safety continues at Texas, Indiana, Ohio refineries

BY BOB SAMSON

PASADENA, Texas — Oil refinery workers remain on the picket lines at LyondellBasell here, Marathon Oil in Texas City and BP in Toledo, Ohio,

and Whiting, Indiana. For them the nationwide strike that started Feb. 1 continues until the companies accept the national pattern agreement reached between Shell and the United Steelworkers March 12 and settle local issues.

Some 3,800 USW oil refinery

Continued on page 3

## Capitalist morality at root of NY gas explosion, deaths

BY SETH GALINSKY  
AND NAOMI CRAINE

NEW YORK — As more information comes out on the March 26 gas explosion and fire in the East Village here, it’s clearer than ever that behind the disaster is the dog-eat-dog, look-out-for-number-one morality that bombards everyone who lives in capitalist society. The blast killed two people, injured 22, destroyed three buildings and left dozens homeless.

The “working theory is that one or more gas lines were surreptitiously

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—On the picket line, p. 5—

Bus drivers in Israel fight to raise pay, close wage gap

Vietnam shoe workers strike beats back attack on social gains



# Supreme Court justices: ‘Prison system is broken’

BY EMMA JOHNSON

Two Supreme Court justices have joined a growing number of public figures declaring the U.S. criminal justice system dysfunctional. In a congressional hearing March 23, Justices Anthony Kennedy and Stephen Breyer said they thought too many people are behind bars in the U.S. today and joined in opposing long-term solitary confinement and mandatory minimum sentences.

At a hearing of the House Appropriations Committee, ostensibly called to discuss the Supreme Court’s budget, Arkansas Republican Rep. Steve Womack asked the two justices for their views on prison and local jail overcrowding.

“In many respects I think it’s broken,” Kennedy said of the corrections system. Kennedy is often the swing vote in a divided Supreme Court and is well known for siding with law enforcement in criminal procedure cases.

The U.S. is home to 5 percent of the world’s population, but incarcerates 25 percent of the world’s prisoners. Currently 2.2 million people serve in the country’s prisons and jails, an increase of 500 percent in the last 40 years. An additional 4.8 million are on parole and probation. One-third of U.S. residents have a criminal record, often barring them from employment, housing and voting rights.

Kennedy said there are 187,000 people in jail in his home state of California.

Some 30,000 people in more than 40 states are held in solitary confine-

ment, locked up 23 hours a day.

“This idea of total incarceration just isn’t working,” Kennedy said. “It’s not humane. Solitary confinement literally drives men mad.”

The explosion of the prison population is a product of the bipartisan “war on drugs” launched in the 1980s. In 1984, Democratic Sen. Edward Kennedy and Republican Sen. Strom Thurmond were the driving force behind the Sentencing Reform Act, which set mandatory minimum sentences for low-level drug offenses at five and 10 years.

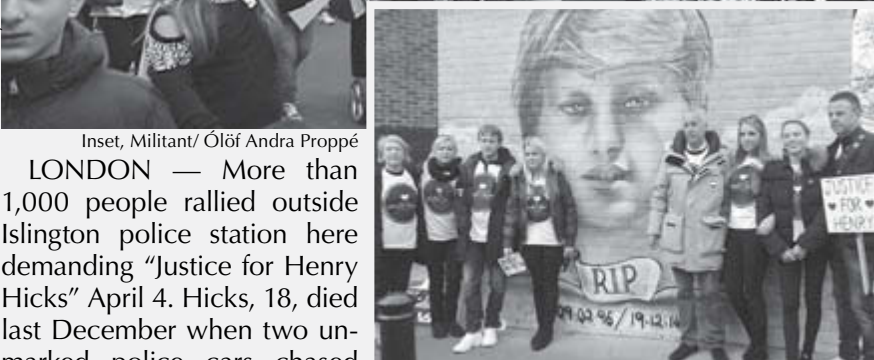
“I’ve said many times that I think that’s a terrible idea,” Justice Breyer said of mandatory minimums.

At the federal level more than half of inmates are serving time for drug convictions, disproportionately African-Americans. At the state level the number has increased 11 times since 1980.

Clarence Aaron got three life sentences for introducing two dealers to each other for a fee of \$1,500. When the other defendants pled guilty in a deal for a lesser sentence, fingering Aaron, he got life. Aaron has twice applied to have his sentence shortened through a presidential pardon. But he and countless others have had their petitions denied by the Barack Obama administration, which has used its federal clemency power less often than any other president in modern history.

Increasing numbers of political figures, judges and others connected to the so-called criminal justice system

## London march protests cop killing of Henry Hicks



Inset, Militant/ Ólóf Andra Proppé

LONDON — More than 1,000 people rallied outside Islington police station here demanding “Justice for Henry Hicks” April 4. Hicks, 18, died last December when two unmarked police cars chased him on his scooter and he collided with a car. The action took place after an Arsenal soccer match. Hicks was an avid Arsenal supporter.

Led by his family, protesters marched to the station from their home on Liverpool Street, going past a mural painted in his memory near the site of the crash.

“It’s important to show support to the family,” Sara Kalkan told the *Militant*. She, like many others on the march, lives in the neighborhood. “And it’s important that the police not be allowed to get away with this.”

The four Scotland Yard constables who were chasing Hicks have been told they are under investigation by the government’s Independent Police Complaints Commission, but all four remain on the job.

“If it had been members of the public chasing someone in cars which led to a death those people would have been arrested and locked up,” Claudia Hicks, 23, Henry’s sister, told the *Independent*. “There has always been a real ‘them and us’ feel with younger people and the police in Islington. Henry and his friends used to get bullied by police a lot.”

“More than three months after Henry’s death we are still waiting for answers — we still don’t know what happened that day,” she said.

— ÓLÓF ANDRA PROPPÉ

have spoken out on the need to cut the U.S. prison population. Many cite the explosion in costs to the government as a reason.

In August 2013, Attorney General Eric Holder ordered all federal prosecutors to stop filing charges that carry mandatory sentences against nonviolent drug offenders. Democratic Sen. Cory Booker of New Jersey and Republican Sen. Rand Paul of Kentucky have introduced bipartisan legislation aimed at reducing prison time and sealing juveniles’ criminal records. Other bipartisan initiatives are also

pending in Congress.

Hillary Clinton, a likely Democratic presidential candidate, said in December that “we have allowed our criminal justice system to get out of balance.” Former Florida Gov. Jeb Bush, expected to seek the Republican nomination, is among some 70 leading conservatives who have signed the Right on Crime initiative, calling for reform.

In recent years 17 states have started programs aimed at bringing down the number of prisoners, and figures have begun to decline.

## THE MILITANT

### Defend women’s right to abortion!

*Opponents of women’s rights are pressing to impose onerous requirements on abortion providers that limit the availability of safe, legal abortions. The ‘Militant’ covers the fight to defend abortion rights and explains why it’s a crucial issue facing the labor movement.*



Militant/Pat Starkey  
March 21 abortion rights action outside hospital in Wellington, New Zealand.

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



# Oil workers strike continues

Continued from front page

workers struck Feb. 1 after they failed to reach a contract agreement with oil bosses' lead negotiator Shell.

By Feb. 21 the strike had expanded to 12 oil refineries and three chemical plants involving almost 7,000 workers. It was the first national oil strike in 35 years. The main issue was the serious safety question of being forced to work long hours with few days off.

They were fighting for more hiring, shorter hours, increased rest time and safer working conditions; to bring more daily maintenance and other contract workers into the union; and to keep the "retrogression clause," which guarantees gains won in previous contracts would continue.

Steelworkers at 10 of the 15 refineries and chemical plants on strike approved both national and local contracts and have returned to work.

The remaining oil bosses are determined to go after concessions in their local agreements.

"We've held the line now for over two months," Juan Lerma, a process operator, told the *Militant* on the picket line at LyondellBasell here April 4. "And I for one am ready for two more if that's what it takes. They've backed us like cats into a corner. Earlier contracts included concessions like higher health care costs and reduced pensions. But we're determined to make improvements this time."

"We're looking to hang onto what we got," said process operator Michael Belz, who was picketing with Lerma and machinist Reuben Mendoza. "We're tired of giving stuff up. We're

not asking for outrageous pay raises and vacation. I'll be here till it's done."

Mendoza, who has worked at the refinery for a year, said the strike has been a learning experience. "You get paid for what you fight for. Solidarity. That's what the union is all about."

A sticking point for the 450 union workers at LyondellBasell is the company's insistence that premium pay be eliminated for workers required to work their scheduled days off when they haven't yet worked 40 hours. The refineries are notorious for forcing workers to work 12-hour shifts for weeks in a row.

LyondellBasell Executive Vice President Kevin Brown sent a letter to employees April 1 blaming the union negotiating committee for "not giving a clear picture of what the Company has offered." Brown said the company had offered to hire some new operators and maintenance workers, but wanted to maintain a "balance" of union members and contractors as a "good long-term investment."

"The fight over premium pay for overtime is really about forcing them to hire more people," said Lerma. "To them it's all about production; to us it's about safety. We need more workers to help make this and other refineries safer places to work."

"I'm back to work now," Clint Clark, who works at Shell's nearby Deer Park refinery, told the *Militant*. "But I also help out with the local on strike at LyondellBasell."

Members of Steelworkers Local 8-719 in Catlettsburg, Kentucky, voted 226 to 153 April 3 to approve a contract agreement with Marathon. "We will start the process of returning to work Monday and take the operations over on Saturday, April 11," Dave Martin, local vice president, told the *Militant* in a text message April 3. Martin said Marathon had finally dropped its effort to overturn the "no layoff" clause from the previous contract and one other concession. The executive board made no recommendation to the membership on how to vote.

"We have mixed emotions," Susan



Militant photos by Ilona Gersh

Strikers picket BP-Husky refinery near Toledo, Ohio, March 26. Boiler operator John Bellows signs up same day at union hall for picket duty.



Evans, an outside operator and member of Local 8-719 and co-chair of the local's Women of Steel committee, told the *Militant*. "Some union members didn't like the contract. Others did. The contract has 12-hour shifts, but the company removed a proposal to contract out our jobs during a layoff. Our local officers and members fought the fight, and we are stronger because of it."

Marathon's Texas City refinery is still on strike. In addition to organizing the 1,100 workers into round-the-clock picketing, the union continues to organize regular activities involving strikers, their families and supporters. One entire wall of the union hall is stocked with canned goods, cereal, beans, baby diapers and formula.

On March 31 union members from USW Local 750 in Louisiana brought a trailer full of groceries and cooked homemade jambalaya, a popular bayou

country Cajun dish, for the strikers' supper. The union sponsored an Easter egg hunt for strikers' children April 3.

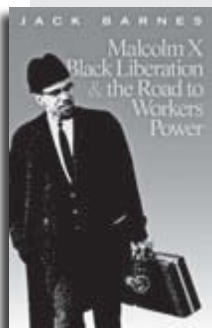
Members of Steelworkers Local 7-1 on strike against BP in Whiting, Indiana, continue to hold strong. Only seven of the more than 1,000 members have crossed the picket line. Unionists organize weekly spaghetti dinners in Masonic lodges in towns near the refinery to raise funds for strikers and their families.

*Mitchel Rosenberg, a member of USW Local 10-1 in Philadelphia, and Anne Parker in Chicago contributed to this article.*

## Correction

In the article "Toledo Oil Strikers Fight for Safety, More Union Power" in the April 13 issue, an error was introduced into the quote from Rudy Ramirez. It should have read, "Guys I used to work with thought we'd be going back to work after the national settlement with Shell. I told them, 'Nope, we'll go back after we've settled on local issues.'"

## Book specials for subscribers



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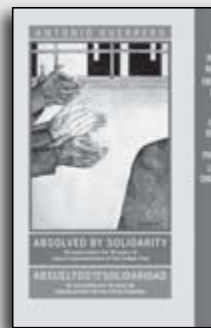
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## Join 'Militant' sales, fund drives

Continued from front page

University of California at Berkeley organized to get out the truth about 43 students who were "disappeared" in Mexico last year, picked up 22 copies of the paper. Caravans across the U.S. are building solidarity with this fight.

The bedrock of the campaign will be knocking on doors at workers' homes in big cities, small towns and farm communities. Participants will introduce the paper as they join in picket lines, demonstrations against police brutality, actions in defense of women's right to choose abortion and other social struggles.

Four Pathfinder Press books on revolutionary politics and perspectives are on special offer with a subscription.

*Militant* readers are using the paper to help build nationwide protests called for April 15 for "\$15 and a union." In New York construction workers who support the fight held a march and rally April 4. Two members of the Laborers' union decided to go for the introductory subscription, and one got *Malcolm X, Black Liberation, and the Road to Workers Power* — one of the books on special — and wants to get another copy at the April 15 actions for a friend.

The *Militant's* coverage of workers' struggles, social protests and key questions in world politics today are reinforced by communist candidates running election campaigns in the U.S., Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the U.K. On April 5, Seth Galinsky and Maggie Trowe, Socialist Workers Party candidates in New York, campaigned in the East Village neighborhood near the site of the March 26 natural gas explosion that killed two people.

Mary Dillard works at a pet supplies store and lives close to the building that exploded. She was one of seven people who bought copies of the paper.

"I talked about how the dog-eat-dog, take-care-of-number-one morality of capitalism affects workers," Trowe said. "I contrasted that with the values of solidarity workers gain through struggles, including the example of the Cuban Revolution. She agreed with me."

To publish every week the *Militant* depends on its yearly fund drive. The Militant Fighting Fund appeals to those who appreciate and respect the paper to contribute and help finance it.

"We depend totally on our readers," said business manager Lea Sherman. "The *Militant* is a working-class paper. It looks to the working class, and that's who keeps it going. That's how we pay the rent, printing, shipping and utilities."

"Keeping our generous introductory offer of \$5 for 12 weeks is very important," she said. "We want workers to try the paper out, knowing many will become long-term readers. They become the backbone of the fighting fund," Sherman said. "With the resistance around labor and social questions picking up, now is a good time to win new contributors. We should let anyone buying a single copy or a subscription know about the fund."

We call on readers to join in this effort to expand the reach of the socialist newsweekly far and wide. Contact a distributor listed on page 8. If you send in reports on your weekly progress by Monday morning, we'll share as many as possible in the next issue.



# 250 in Michigan protest cop assault against auto worker

BY ROBERT KISSINGER

INKSTER, Mich. — More than 250 people marched here April 3 to protest the brutal cop beating and frame-up of retired auto worker Floyd Dent.

Dent, 57, who is African-American and a Detroit resident, had just visited a friend in this predominantly Black town southwest of Detroit and was heading home in the evening of Jan. 28 when he was pulled over. Officer William Melendez put him in a chokehold and punched him 16 times in the face. Other cops cuffed Dent and used a Taser on him three times. The entire incident was caught on the cops' dashboard videocam.

Dent spent two days in the hospital being treated for injuries — a fractured left orbital bone, bleeding in his brain and four broken ribs.

Over the past year, killings and brutality against working people, disproportionately Black, have gotten more and more publicity and are increasingly being met with public protests across the country.

Melendez, who was a Detroit cop from 1993 until his resignation in 2009, was named in a dozen federal lawsuits accusing him of planting evidence, wrongfully killing unarmed civilians, falsifying police reports and other offenses.

Cops charged Dent, who has no previous criminal record, with assault, resisting arrest and possession of cocaine they claim to have found in his car. Dent's post-arrest drug test was negative.

Melendez, who is called "Robocop" by workers in the area, said he decided to pull Dent over because he had stopped to visit someone in a part of town known for drug problems.

After viewing the dashcam video at a preliminary hearing in March, a district court judge dropped all charges against Dent except drug possession. Dent pled not guilty April 1. Sixty people picketed outside police headquarters demanding the cops who beat Dent be fired.

"It's never appropriate ever to see that kind of brutality visited upon someone being arrested," Gregory Rohl, Dent's attorney, told the press. "I don't care if he's got a kilo of cocaine and two dead bodies in that car."

Both Dent and Rohl insist there were

no drugs in Dent's car before the police arrived.

"In the video, the officer seen throwing the punches, William Melendez, is seen pulling something from his pocket that looks like a plastic baggy with something inside it," the Detroit NBC News affiliate reported.

The case has received national press coverage. "So much about Dent's case is troublesome, and so he has become the latest touchstone in our coalescing conversation about the intersection of police forces and communities of color," columnist Charles Blow wrote in the *New York Times* March 30.

Following the April 3 march, a rally was held in the police headquarters parking lot. Speakers included representatives of the Inkster chapter of National Action Network; the Arab Center for Economic and Community Services in Dearborn, which brought a dozen young people to the protest; and the National Lawyers Guild. Participants included some three dozen members of the United Auto Workers union, many from UAW Local 600 at Ford's River Rouge plant where Dent worked; and a contingent from the American Postal Workers Union. Speakers vowed to keep the pressure on until all charges against Dent are dropped and the police involved are fired.

Dent's next court appearance is scheduled for April 15.

## UK communist: 'Learning comes from struggle'



Militant/Caroline Bellamy

MANCHESTER, England — Andrés Mendoza, Communist League candidate for city council here, addresses 60 students at a March 27 debate organized by Manchester Young Lives. Next to Mendoza, from left, are Philip Eckersley, United Kingdom Independence Party; Loz Kaye, Pirate Party; Kieran Turner-Dave, Green Party; and Lucy Powell, currently a Member of Parliament for the Labour Party. They are all candidates in the U.K. national and local May 7 elections.

"The path I have taken to advance in life through education is open to others," Powell said, when panelists were asked about their view on education. She called for cutting university tuition fees and guaranteed apprenticeships for young people, saying "the route to work is through education."

"Real education comes through joining fights such as the recent health workers strike. There I've learned about solidarity," Mendoza said. "The education you get through capitalism is all about how to climb the ladder in competition with your fellow students, it's all about dog-eat-dog values. The factory I work in has more apprentices, but they're put on a lower rate of pay than those they work alongside. The unions need to fight for them to get the same rate of pay."

A participant asked Powell why Manchester's Labour-run city council was cutting funds for youth services. "It would be nice if we didn't have to pay for such things. But Labour wants to balance the books in a fair way," she replied.

"These aren't our books, and the government deficit isn't workers' responsibility," Mendoza said. "Instead of looking to the bosses' government to protect us, we should look to fellow workers and how through our struggles workers can transform themselves, preparing to take political power."

— CAROLINE BELLAMY

# Georgia rally says killings by cops have 'got to stop'

**Continued from front page**  
officer, Fox News reported.

The cops claim Thomas drove the car around the shop several times in a "reckless" manner and, in fear of his life, Smyrna police Sgt. Kenneth Owens shot through the window, killing him.

"The cops' story doesn't hold water," truck driver Roderick Hamilton told the *Militant*. "They had the cops, a SWAT unit, dogs — all that force and they had to kill an unarmed man? It stinks."

"They messed with the wrong family this time," Felicia Thomas, Nicholas' mother, told the rally. "He didn't die in vain. His death will stand for change."

The family demanded the Georgia Bureau of Investigation take the case out of the hands of the cops. It's time for the police to stop investigating themselves, Thomas' mother said.

"You know the media and the police department have put out a whole lot of irrelevant stuff about my son," Huey Thomas, Nicholas' father, said, referring to extensive coverage on his son's previous arrest record. "None of that gave them the right to kill him."

"I am here to show solidarity with this family because I know the pain they are going through," said Delisa Davis, the sister of Kevin Davis, who was killed by DeKalb County cops last December. "We have all got to show our support every time this happens. The police have got to be held accountable."

"We will be with this family for as long as it takes and for whatever they need," said Deane Bonner, president of the local NAACP branch.

Two days after the rally, Cobb County District Attorney Victor Reynolds bowed to the demand of the family, saying his office and the county cops had requested the Georgia Bureau of Inves-

tigation take over the investigation.

Thomas was the second unarmed man to die at the hands of police in the Atlanta area last month. Anthony Hill, an Afghan war veteran who suffered from bipolar disorder, was shot and killed by a DeKalb County cop March 9. The bureau has also taken over the investigation of this shooting.

## Ultraleft call for guns weakens fight

While most speakers at the rally focused on demands that the cops responsible for killing Thomas be fired, one advocated responding with guns, an ultraleft course that would undermine the fight.

"We ain't talking about no 'Hands Up, Don't Shoot,'" said a representative of the National Coalition to Combat Police Terrorism. "We have the right to bear arms, so we say 'Arms up.'"

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## —MILITANT LABOR FORUMS—

### CALIFORNIA

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**What Next in the Fight for the Truth of the Disappeared Students in Mexico.** Speaker: Gerardo Sánchez, Socialist Workers Party. Fri., April 17, 7:30 p.m. 675 Hegenberger Road, Suite 250. Tel.: (510) 686-1351.

### WASHINGTON, D.C.

**Railroad Labor and Safety: Prospects for a Fighback Movement.** Speakers: Glenn Gales, president, Transportation and Communications Union Local 570; Fritz Edler, veteran union activist; Glova Scott, Socialist Workers Party candidate for D.C. City Council, Ward 6. Sat., April 18. Reception, 6 p.m.; program, 7 p.m. 143 Kennedy St. NW. Suite 15. Tel.: (202) 536-5080.

### CANADA

#### Montreal

**Return of Cuban 5 Opens New Stage in Defense of the Cuban Revolution.** Speaker: Beverly Bernardo, volunteer at Pathfinder stand at 2015 Havana International Book Fair. Fri., April 17, 7:30 p.m. 7107 St. Denis #204. Tel.: (514) 272-5840.

### NEW ZEALAND

#### Auckland

**Working-Class Voice in Australia Elections.** Speaker: Joanne Kuniansky, Communist League candidate for Parramatta. Sat., April 18, 7 p.m. Donation: \$5. 188a Onehunga Mall. Tel.: (09) 636-3231.



# —ON THE PICKET LINE—

MAGGIE TROWE, EDITOR

## Help make this column a voice of workers' resistance!

This column is dedicated to spreading the truth about the labor resistance that is unfolding today. It seeks to give voice to those engaged in battle and help build solidarity. Its success depends on input from readers. If you are involved in a labor struggle or have information on one, please contact me at 306 W. 37th St., 13th Floor, New York, NY 10018; or (212) 244-4899; or themilitant@mac.com. We'll work together to ensure your story is told.

—Maggie Trowe

### Bus drivers in Israel fight to raise pay, close wage gap

Some 800 drivers at the Egged-Taavura Ltd. bus company in Israel held strikes March 2 and 26, demanding higher pay and benefits and better work conditions.

"Workers are angry," Assaf Bondy, south region coordinator for the Koach La Ovdim (Workers Power) trade union, said by phone March 30. "New hires make only 32.60 shekels an hour [\$8.30]. Many drivers work 10 to 12 hours a day, to make ends meet."

About 60 percent of the drivers are Jewish, including some Russian immigrants. Most of the others are Palestinian citizens of Israel. A small number are Palestinians from the West Bank.

Some of the bus routes take passengers between Israel and the West Bank. "Drivers on those routes face challenges called stones and Molotov cocktails," Bondy said, referring to occasional attacks on buses by protesters opposed to the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territory. The union is demanding "extra pay for the higher risk."

Egged began as a cooperative in the 1930s. In the 1950s it began to hire other workers, paying them less than cooperative members. Egged — along with another bus cooperative in Tel Aviv — had a government-sanctioned monopoly on public bus transportation.

In 1999 the government started selling the right to operate competing bus lines to private companies. Egged-Taavura is a joint venture formed in 2004 as part of this process.

"The drivers were disappointed in the last contract," Bondy said, so about a two and a half years ago they left the Histadrut, Israel's largest trade union federation, and joined Koach La Ovdim. Long-time drivers make one-third more than recent hires. Workers are demanding a raise for lower paid workers that would narrow the gap.

Drivers had planned to let workers ride free on March 2, but when bosses caught wind of the plan they sent all the drivers home. "Drivers went on strike again March 26," Bondy said, "because management took a U-turn during the negotiations, refusing to recognize agreements reached at previous meetings."

—Seth Galinsky

### Crown Holdings can workers strike in Ontario wins support

TORONTO — Eighteen months into their strike against Crown Holdings, a major producer of beer cans, the 120 members of United Steelworkers Local 9176 are still fighting for a contract.

Crown has been operating with management and strikebreakers.

The local has been organizing "Days of Action" publicizing the strike and winning solidarity by leafleting at targeted provincial beer stores. The strikers are asking workers to buy beer in bottles instead of cans.

At the beer store in a working-class neighborhood on Toronto's east side March 28, a dozen workers, including five teachers, leafleted. Striker Steve McHugh, the main organizer of strike outreach, organized the action. Global TV news came by to do a story.

The response to the leafleting was positive and many workers made a point of showing the strike supporters the cases of bottled beer they had bought as they left the store.

Ontario Labour Minister Kevin Flynn appointed a mediator March 13.

The strike has received support from unionists in Canada, the U.S., Europe and Turkey. To express solidarity or contribute money to the strikers, go to the USW Local 9176 website: [www.bottlesnotcans.ca](http://www.bottlesnotcans.ca).

—Tony Di Felice

### Vietnam shoe workers strike beats back attack on social gains

After a week of strikes and protests, 80,000 workers at the Pou Yuen Vietnam shoe factory in Ho Chi Minh City have forced the government to withdraw planned changes in social insurance payments. The company makes shoes



Israeli bus drivers during one-day strike March 26 against Egged-Taavura Ltd. bus company. Jewish and Palestinian Israeli drivers want to close gap between wage tiers and raise all wages.

Courtesy of Koach La Ovdim

## 25, 50, AND 75 YEARS AGO



April 20, 1990

The "U.S. Hands Off Cuba" demonstration held in New York City April 7 was a historic victory for all those who oppose Washington's decades-long policy of aggression against Cuba. The protest through the streets of midtown Manhattan was the largest such action in the United States in more than 25 years. It took place at a time when Cuba faces the most serious threats and attacks since the 1961 Bay of Pigs invasion and the 1962 "missile crisis," during which Washington imposed a total blockade of Cuba and threatened nuclear war.

The fact that the action took place as planned and that participants stood up to threats and intimidation and did not let themselves be provoked by right-wing forces was also a big victory.



Striking Pou Yuen Vietnam shoe workers meet with labor officials in the Ho Chi Minh City factory March 31 during weeklong strike that pushed back government attack on social insurance.

for Nike and Adidas.

After the government announced the plans, thousands stopped work March 27 in protest. Over the following seven days they marched inside and outside the plant, blocking traffic on Highway 1, one of the country's two main national arteries.

Workers currently get a lump-sum payment whenever they leave a job, roughly 150 percent of a month's wages for every year of service. The new law, which was to go into effect in 2016, would replace the lump-sum with a monthly pension at retirement. The retirement age is 60 for men and 55 for women.

"When we can't work, we want to get our social insurance all at once, so we can build a house for the family," striker Nguyen Van Thu told Bloomberg News March 31. "We have to pay for all kinds of insurance and we're afraid we'll lose it under the new law." With a workweek

of 60 hours, workers fear they won't last the 20 years of service needed to qualify for the pension.

Many worry that the whole insurance system is insolvent and there will be no money left by the time they retire.

On March 31, the fourth day of the strike, the deputy labor minister met with the workers. The following day the government said it will propose to the National Assembly it amend the law to give workers a choice between taking the one-time payout or the monthly pension later.

Pou Yuen Vietnam is a subsidiary of the Taiwan-based Pou Chen Group, which employs more than 400,000 people in factories in China, Vietnam and Indonesia. In April last year 45,000 workers at its Yue Yuen factory in Dongguan in southern China conducted strikes and protests when they found out that the company had paid insufficient social welfare contributions. After 11 days of actions the Chinese government ordered the company to start paying the full installments immediately and to cover arrears for the previous four months.

There were close to 300 strikes in Vietnam in 2014, mostly directed against individual companies and centered on wage demands and working conditions. Strikes against government policies are rare.

Vietnam's booming textile, garment, and shoe and leather sector accounts for 16 percent of the country's gross domestic product. More than 3 million workers, 70 percent of them women, are employed at some 6,000 factories.

—Emma Johnson



April 19, 1965

APRIL 14 — Savage acts of Southern police brutality combined with Ku Klux Klan terrorism have increased rapidly since the conclusion of the Selma-Montgomery march and the hurried withdrawal of federal troops March 25. In Camden, Alabama, police continued to use smoke bombs and tear gas against civil-rights demonstrators through April 7.

Both in Bogalusa and in Jonesboro, Louisiana, 160 miles to the northwest, Negroes have formed armed self-defense organizations called the Deacons of Defense and Justice. Charles R. Sims, president of the Bogalusa Deacons, told an AP correspondent: "We are the defensive team. If they come here to hit us, they will get hit back."



April 20, 1940

AKRON Ohio April 14 — Two million pounds of crude rubber are jammed up in warehouses here as General Drivers Union, Local 348, AFL, refuses to go through the picket line of 1,400 CIO rubber workers on strike at General Tire and Rubber.

This is the first important strike in Akron's rubber factories since the militant strike struggles of two years ago. It was called in answer to the employers' constant chiseling on pay rates, refusal to adjust grievances, in some cases for as long as eleven months, and attempt to introduce the 40 hour week (8-hour 5 day week) in place of the prevailing 36 hour week (6-hour 6 day week) at a time when almost half of Akron's rubber workers are unemployed.



# Becky Ellis: Forty-five years building proletarian party

BY DAVID ROSENFELD

MINNEAPOLIS — Fifty people from across the Midwest and beyond gathered at the United Labor Centre here March 28 to celebrate the life and political contributions of Becky Ellis.

“She was a cadre of the Socialist Workers Party in eight branches of the party over 45 years,” Frank Forrestal told the gathering. “She was always pushing the party outward toward the opportunities.”

Members and supporters of the party, as well as area unionists and political fighters came to the meeting. SWP leader Tom Fiske, Ellis’ longtime companion, and members of both of their families from California and Alabama, came. Three of Ellis’ co-workers at the credit union where she worked until recently attended, as well as immigrant rights activists who had worked with Ellis and Fiske. People came from Omaha, Nebraska; Chicago; and New York.

Ellis, 67, died of a stroke March 20. The meeting was hosted by the Minnesota SWP.

Forrestal, who worked with Ellis in the Twin Cities branch over the last five years, described the party’s experiences as part of the fight to establish, build and defend the union at the Dakota Premium Foods beef slaughterhouse.

“Speedup, working while hurt, and firings led workers to organize a sit-down strike in 2000 — a *plantón*, as it was called in Spanish,” Forrestal, a former butcher at Dakota, said. In a few weeks, the workers won a union representation election, then fought a two-year battle for their first contract. “There were challenges each step of the way. The party was smack in the middle of these experiences.”

“The party campaigned to get subscriptions to the *Militant* at the plant, in working-class neighborhoods nearby and in the region,” he said. “We ran Becky as our candidate for U.S. Senate in 2000 as part of our effort to support the organizing drive.”

Rafael Espinosa, union representative for United Food and Commercial Workers Local 1189, the union of the Dakota workers, attended the meeting.

When Ellis joined the party in 1971 in Texas, Norton Sandler, a member of the SWP National Committee, told the meeting, she was deeply affected by the fight against the U.S. war in Vietnam and inspired by the Vietnamese revolutionary struggle. The Black struggle and the rise of the Chicano movement also had an impact on her.

“Just before Becky joined the Houston branch, the Ku Klux Klan bombed the party’s headquarters,” he said. The attack on the party was one of a number of Klan assaults, including one against the local Pacifica radio station. “Becky was part of the party’s efforts to build a broad defense campaign that pushed the Klan back and defended free speech.”

“As part of that campaign,” Sandler said, “the party ran Debbie Leonard for mayor of Houston.” Leonard debated the Grand Dragon of the Ku Klux Klan on television.

“These experiences steeled Becky,” he said.

Sandler noted that Ellis did stints as

an SWP branch organizer in Dallas, Miami, Atlanta and the Twin Cities. He read a message to the meeting from Lea Sherman in New York, who described meeting Ellis through their work together in the Dallas chapter of the National Organization for Women in the 1970s.

“She was unassuming, modest and set an example by doing,” Sherman wrote. “She was soft-spoken, but firm and clear. She didn’t raise her voice, but she held her ground. She had a great sense of humor. She was a home-grown Texan, a fighter, a worthy leader of the working class, standing up for what is right.”

Messages were displayed at the meeting from more than a dozen party members and supporters, former members, people who had worked with Ellis and members of Communist Leagues around the world.

“Becky was part of an important generation in the communist movement,” Sandler said, “a generation that advanced the struggle for a proletarian party, that pushed this course forward through the last 20 years of retreat of the labor movement.”

“Becky understood the importance of what is opening up today with increased labor resistance and widespread struggles against cop brutality,” he said. “She knew these are *our* struggles. She also understood how this same generation that she was part of, and those that came after, must act on what is opening up for the communist movement. What we do today is decisive to recruiting fresh forces to the communist movement.”

Maggie Trowe, SWP candidate for U.S. Congress in New York, described the party’s work in the Midwest to organize its members to join with other workers in the meatpacking industry fighting boss attacks, and to participate in labor battles and social struggles.

In the late 1990s, Trowe and several other SWP members worked at the Hormel slaughterhouse in Austin, 100 miles south of here. “Party members from Twin Cities would regularly come down to sell the *Militant* outside the plant at shift change, helping us get to know workers beyond the departments we worked in,” Trowe said. “They also joined us going door to door with the *Militant*. And we brought interested co-workers to Friday night forums in Twin Cities.”

“The collaboration of the party branches in the Midwest was crucial for turning toward working-class struggles in the region, and remains so today,” Trowe said.

Ellis worked as a sewing machine operator and a member of the party’s fraction in the garment workers unions for more than 30 years in Miami; Atlanta; New York; St. Louis; Portland, Oregon; and the Twin Cities.

At Columbia Sportswear in Portland in the 1980s she joined co-workers in a series of fights around contract questions and against the bosses’ decision in 1985 to close the plant.

She and other unionists traveled to Austin that year to back the hard-fought strike of union meatpackers against Hormel. Partly through her efforts, her union local sent a message of solidarity to revolutionary Nicaragua, and sought



Inset, Militant/Linda Avers

SWP leader Norton Sandler, inset, speaks at March 28 Minneapolis meeting to celebrate life of Becky Ellis, who worked as a sewing machine operator in party’s fraction in garment unions for 30 years. Ellis, fourth from right, and co-workers protested Columbia Sportswear plant closure in Portland, Oregon, in 1985.

to establish ties with workers there.

In a message sent to the meeting from London, Ögmundur Jónsson and Ólöf Andra Proppé recalled meeting Ellis and the Twin Cities branch in 1999. They were new to the communist movement and joined her and others in a car caravan to an SWP conference in Ohio, stopping to sell the *Militant* at shift change at Hormel packing plants in Austin and Beloit, Wisconsin.

“This was a new experience for us, and we were infected by comrades’ confidence that workers would be interested in, and needed, the *Militant*,” Jónsson and Proppé wrote. “Sure enough, a good number stopped their cars to pick up a copy of the paper or subscribe.”

August Nimtz, co-coordinator of the

Minnesota Cuba Committee, told participants how Ellis and the SWP were part of building a “jury of millions” that won freedom for the Cuban Five. “Here in the Twin Cities they worked with the Minnesota Cuba Committee on many events we held to publicize their case, especially the exhibition of paintings and cartoons of two of the Five, Antonio Guerrero and Gerardo Hernández.”

Many participants stayed after the program to talk, look at all the messages, and study a panel display on Ellis’ 45 years building the SWP. The ample spread of food and drinks prepared by SWP supporters added to the celebratory air of the event. An appeal raised \$1,763 for the Socialist Workers Party, a fitting way to salute Ellis’ life.

## Capitalist morality behind gas blast

Continued from front page  
tapped,” the *New York Times* said March 31.

The *New York Post* reported April 6 that a plumber working on the lines confessed “to rigging a gas-supply system for apartments” in the building, saying the landlord’s son ordered him to do it.

New York police and prosecutors are considering criminal homicide charges against the landlord, his contractor and workers involved in installing the pipes, the April 6 *New York Daily News* said.

Whatever caused this explosion, many residents in the neighborhood told the *Militant* that jury-rigged set-ups are not uncommon, where many buildings are more than 100 years old.

East Village resident Mary Dillard spoke to Maggie Trowe, Socialist Workers Party candidate for Congress in the 11th District, who visited the area April 5.

After the explosion Fire Department officials inspecting nearby apartments discovered that the line to a friend’s apartment was tapped, Dillard said.

Less than a week later, city officials issued an emergency stop-work order on renovations across the street from the destroyed buildings. After tenants called saying they smelled gas, the *Post* reported, Con Ed found that lines in the basement had been tapped.

Trowe returned April 6 with Naomi Craine, a *Militant* reporter who had lived just a block from the site of the explosion.

Some of the local residents Trowe spoke with said the problem is “greedy landlords.”

Danny Basevich, a house painter, said the problem is “corrupt contractors” who tap the gas lines.

Tito Mesa, a retired jewelry maker, told Trowe a lot of buildings have similar problems, “but there’s nothing you can do about it. The whole world works like this.”

“I think workers and our unions need to reject the dog-eat-dog values of this system,” Trowe said. “It’s true the bosses try to maximize their profits, and they push workers to cut corners and close their eyes to dangerous conditions. But a building super or plumber — or any worker — shouldn’t accept their values or agree to do something unsafe.”

“Through class-struggle battles workers become transformed, breaking from the me-first, all-others-be-damned mentality, and embracing human solidarity and self-sacrifice,” Trowe said. “Malcolm X said you had to find your self-worth. This is a bedrock for construction of a revolutionary movement to overthrow capitalism.”

“Striking oil refinery workers are setting an example,” the socialist candidate said. “Their fight is to be able to work safely and ensure the safety of everyone around them.”

### ‘People change, come together’

Mesa recalled that in the 1970s he was inspired by the fight of farmworkers to unionize. “Little by little they involved more people, and it changed people, they came together more,” he said. “That’s what we need today.”

Referring to widespread corruption  
Continued on page 7



# Nebraskans for Peace forum discusses Cuban Revolution

BY JACQUIE HENDERSON

LINCOLN, Neb. — Fifty-five people participated in a public forum and discussion on “What Will Changes With Cuba Mean for U.S.-Cuba Relations?” organized by the Lincoln chapter of Nebraskans for Peace March 31 at the Unitarian Church. The meeting was co-sponsored by the Black Cat House and the Unitarian Church of Lincoln.

The four panelists were Hendrik van den Berg, an economist and professor at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln; Frances Mendenhall, an Omaha dentist who recently visited Cuba on a tour organized by Code Pink; Dan Schlitt, a Quaker and longtime advocate for fair treatment for Cuba; and Rebecca Williamson, a leader of the Socialist Workers Party who participated in the Havana International Book Fair in February. Paul Olson, a veteran leader of Nebraskans for Peace, chaired.

“I have been watching the U.S. negotiations with Cuba closely and I have to say that I am highly suspicious of our intentions,” van den Berg said.

He described working with U.S. government agencies in Latin America for several years in the 1970s. “Every country we ‘helped’ there ended up with a military dictatorship promoting the interests of U.S. businesses.”

“Capitalism is a very powerful system,” van den Berg said. “It creates the idea that you can get rich, which of course is only true for the very few, at the expense of the lives of millions.”

“But I am worried. I hope Cuba negotiates very carefully, to protect what

they have accomplished over the past half century,” he said.

Cuba’s revolutionary leaders “are well aware that 11 U.S. administrations — from Eisenhower to Obama — have tried every means they could to wipe out the revolution made by Cuban workers and peasants in 1959 and defended by them ever since,” Williamson said.

“We should demand an end to the economic embargo against Cuba, the return of the Guantánamo Naval Base to Cuba, and oppose any attacks on Cuban sovereignty,” she said. She added that Nebraskans for Peace can be proud of its participation in the fight against the U.S. government frame-up and imprisonment of the Cuban Five, who are now free and working in Cuba to defend their revolution.

“Attacks against Cuba of various kinds have been going on for decades,” said Schlitt, who got involved in the Fair Play for Cuba Committee in Chicago in the 1960s. “This country organized an invasion of Cuba in 1961 in an attempt to overthrow the revolution.”

“As a Quaker I have followed the question of religious freedom in Cuba,” he said. “I think it is worth noting they don’t seem to have a policy of interfering in religious questions, but that not all the churches have always had a reciprocal policy.”

“I think we should concentrate on working with the religious communities here to help improve conditions for the people in Cuba,” Schlitt said.

Visiting Cuba was like “walking into a different kind of world where medical



Militant/Jacquie Henderson

“Cuba is a different world where health care is something everyone is entitled to,” said Frances Mendenhall, standing, March 31 at Nebraska panel on changes in U.S.-Cuban relations.

care is treated as something everyone is entitled to, where treatment is not related to the amount of money you have,” Mendenhall said. “This is something everyone in Cuba took for granted. They explain it has been this way since the beginning of the revolution.”

She pointed to the severe shortages of medical and other supplies and joined other speakers in demanding an end to Washington’s economic embargo.

“I don’t have enough time to tell you about the impact of Cuba’s medical aid throughout major parts of the world,” Mendenhall said in response to a question on Cuba’s international role. “Even before they sent hundreds of doctors and nurses to fight the Ebola epidemic, they already had doctors working throughout Africa. And not for financial gain, to help those most in need.”

“This is something that I agree with Rebecca on, this is selfless internation-

alism,” she said. “But the government in Cuba has much too much control. They have kept the Internet out of Cuba, and that is a problem.”

“The Cuban government is for Internet access,” Williamson replied. “Cuba has never acted in isolation from the world. It was the U.S. companies and government that cut off Cuba’s means of communications — cutting the phone cables, denying the right to travel to and from Cuba, cutting Internet access, putting Cuba on a ‘terrorist state’ list, trying to isolate them.”

Joel Gajardo, a Presbyterian minister, spoke in the discussion on how Cuba wiped out illiteracy. Commenting on several questions on religious freedom in Cuba, he said Fidel Castro’s government never aimed to limit religious or other freedoms, but only to prevent acts against the people carried out in the name of religion.

Matthew Gregory, a member of the Nebraska Farmers Union, asked what could be done to help farmers who are having difficulties selling their crops get more of a chance to work with Cubans in need of food products. Mark Welsch from the Omaha chapter of Nebraskans for Peace said that lifting the embargo would help farmers here and in Cuba.

The lively discussion continued for almost an hour after the meeting ended. The Grand Island chapter of Nebraskans for Peace has set April 26 to have a similar panel on Cuba.

## Bedouin demand Israel recognize Negev villages

BY SETH GALINSKY

“We don’t have electricity. We don’t have health care. It means no paved roads and in the winter they’re so muddy you can barely drive your car. The government can demolish your house any second,” Amir Abo-Kweder said by phone April 6, describing conditions in Al Zournog, where he lives, one of 36 unrecognized Bedouin villages of the Negev in southern Israel.

Abo-Kweder, an organizer with Shatil, which fights for civil rights in Israel, was one of hundreds who joined a march from the Negev to the house of Israeli President Reuven Rivlin in Jerusalem just days after the elections to

Israel’s parliament. The four-day march, demanding recognition of the villages and access to basic services, was initiated by Ayman Odeh, head of the Arab-based Joint List, which won third place in the elections.

When the State of Israel was formed in 1948 most of the up to 95,000 Bedouin living in the Negev were expelled or fled. While the 11,000 who remained were given Israeli citizenship, the government has systematically dispossessed them of the land they had lived on for hundreds of years.

“The state demanded all kinds of complex legal requirements,” Michal Rotem, a spokesperson for the Negev

Coexistence Forum for Civil Equality, who helped organize the march, said by phone from Beersheba March 30. “They made it impossible for the Bedouin to prove their land rights. The government then argued that since no one owned the land, it belongs to the state and built Jewish villages there.”

The Israeli government has tried to relocate the Bedouin, now numbering more than 100,000, to a handful of authorized townships. Entire villages have been repeatedly razed by the government and then rebuilt by the Bedouin.

“My late grandfather had 40 sheep and goat, it was an essential part of our identity,” Abo-Kweder said. “But now we have very little livestock.”

“Today we work as laborers in Israeli factories, in construction or on farms. In the last decade more of us have become teachers and government employees,” he said. “Some own small businesses.”

While the Bedouin villages, including 13 that were granted legal recognition, can’t get even basic water and electrical service, “you have prospering Jewish communities with electricity and granted subsidies for agriculture just a few minutes away,” Abo-Kweder said.

“I am Jewish,” Rotem said. “I’m happy that we held the march after the elections. I think the biggest problem is that not enough people in Israel are aware of the problem, that the Bedouin are without running water, that their children don’t have schools. The elections didn’t change anything on the ground.”

most deteriorated pipes in 2014 and plans to up this to 70 miles in 2016, company spokesperson Alan Drury told the *Militant* April 6. At this rate, it would take nearly 30 years to replace the pipes. Drury said Con Edison is “willing to further accelerate the pipe replacement pending future rate cases,” a euphemism for raising gas prices. In an April 7 note he added that some of the “old pipe in the ground ... is in excellent condition.”

“The bosses don’t start with how to save lives,” Trowe said after visiting the East Village. “They start with the bottom line. It’s part of the capitalist mentality. Working people have to take the opposite approach.”

## Capitalist morality behind gas blast

Continued from page 6

and bribery in the city, Dillard told Trowe, “New York is run on a handshake and a wink.” What’s missing, she added, “is a sense of community.”

Trowe agreed, “Workers need to look out for each other and the people around us. And fight to shut down any worksite that is unsafe.”

There are 6,300 miles of natural gas pipes underneath New York City streets, the *Times* reported, and there are thousands of leaks every year. Nearly half of the gas mains are more than 75 years old and more than half are made of cast iron, wrought iron or unprotected steel, prone to corrosion and cracking.

Con Edison replaced 60 miles of the

### For further reading ...

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# We fight ‘for the cause of the liberation of humanity’

The Bolivian Diary of Ernesto Che Guevara is one of Pathfinder's Books of the Month for April. It tells the story of the 11-month guerrilla campaign led by Guevara in 1966-67 to forge a continent-wide revolutionary movement of workers and peasants that could win the battle for land and sovereignty and open the road to socialist revolution in South America. The excerpt below is from "A Necessary Introduction," written by Fidel Castro in June 1968. Copyright © 1994 by Pathfinder Press. Reprinted by permission.

## BOOKS OF THE MONTH

BY FIDEL CASTRO

Che was a man never personally interested in posts, leadership, or honors. But he was firmly convinced that revolutionary guerrilla struggle was the fundamental form of action for winning the liberation of the peoples of Latin America, basing this conclusion on the economic, political, and social situation of nearly all Latin American countries. And he strongly believed that the military and political leadership of the guerrilla struggle had to be unified, and that the struggle could be led only from the guerrilla unit itself, not from the comfortable offices of bureaucrats in the cities. So he was not prepared to give up leadership of a guerrilla nucleus that, at a later stage



Ernesto Che Guevara, second from left, with guerrilla fighters in Bolivia camp, December 1966. "This type of struggle provides us the opportunity to become revolutionaries, the highest level of the human species. It enables us to emerge fully as men," Che told them.

of its development, was intended to develop into a struggle of broad dimensions in South America. And he certainly was not prepared to turn over such leadership to an inexperienced emptyhead with narrow chauvinist views. Che believed that such chauvinism, which often infects even revolutionary elements of various countries in Latin America, must be fought, because it represents reactionary, ridiculous, and sterile thinking.

"And let us develop genuine proletarian internationalism," he said in his Message to the Tricontinental. "Let the flag under which we fight be the sacred cause of the liberation of humanity, so that to die under the colors of Vietnam, Venezuela, Guatemala, Laos, Guinea, Colombia, Bolivia ... to mention only the current scenes of armed struggle — will be equally glorious and desirable for a Latin American, an Asian, an African, and even a European.

"Every drop of blood spilled in a land under whose flag one was not born is experience gathered by the survivor to be applied later in the struggle for liberation of one's own country. And every people that liberates itself is a step in the battle for the liberation of one's own people."

Along these lines, Che believed that fighters from various Latin American countries would participate in the

guerrilla detachment, that the guerrilla struggle in Bolivia would be a school in which revolutionaries would serve their apprenticeship in combat. To help him in this task, he wanted to have, together with the Bolivians, a small nucleus of experienced guerrilla fighters, nearly all of whom had been comrades of his in the Sierra Maestra during the revolutionary struggle in Cuba. These were men whose abilities, courage, and spirit of self-sacrifice were known to Che. None of them hesitated to respond to his call, none of them abandoned him, and none of them surrendered.

In the Bolivian campaign Che acted with his proverbial tenacity, skill, stoicism, and exemplary attitude. It can be said that, consumed with the importance of the mission he had assigned himself, Che at all times proceeded with a spirit of irreproachable responsibility. When the guerrilla unit committed an error of carelessness, he quickly called attention to it, corrected it, and noted it in his diary.

Adverse factors built up against him unbelievably. One example was the separation — supposed to last for just a few days — of part of the guerrilla detachment. That unit included a courageous group of men, some of them sick or convalescent. Once contact between the two groups was lost in very rough terrain, this separation

continued, and for endless months Che was occupied with the effort to find them. ...

It was the ambush in La Higuera — the sole successful action by the army against the detachment led by Che — that created a situation they could not overcome. In that action, the forward detachment was killed and several more men were wounded as they headed, in broad daylight, toward a peasant area with a higher level of political development — an objective not noted down in the diary, but known through the survivors. It was without doubt dangerous to advance by daylight along the same route they had been following for several days, with unavoidable contact with a large number of residents of an area they were passing through for the first time. It was obvious that the army would certainly intercept them at some point. But Che, fully conscious of this, decided to run the risk in order to help El Médico, who was in very poor physical condition. ...

Recalling the feat carried out by this handful of revolutionaries touches one deeply. In and of itself, the struggle against the hostile natural environment in which they operated constitutes an insurmountable page of heroism. Never in history has so small a number of men set out on such a gigantic task. Their faith and absolute conviction that the immense revolutionary capacity of the peoples of Latin America could be awakened, their confidence in themselves, and the determination with which they took on this objective — all these give us a just measure of this group of men.

One day Che said to the guerrilla fighters in Bolivia: "This type of struggle provides us the opportunity to become revolutionaries, the highest level of the human species. At the same time, it enables us to emerge fully as men. Those who are unable to achieve either of these two states should say so and abandon the struggle."

Those who fought at his side until the end became worthy of such honored terms. They symbolize the type of revolutionary and the type of men history is now calling on for a truly difficult task — the revolutionary transformation of Latin America.

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# Join protests for \$15 and a union!

All out for the April 15 national day of action for the Fight for \$15 and a union. Bring your co-workers, your family, your friends.

The protest will be a demonstration of growing confidence as the working class in the U.S. begins to transform itself through resistance to the bosses' attacks.

The fight has spread beyond fast-food and Walmart workers to other layers of the class who work for wages that don't pay the bills — from contract airport cleaners to home health care workers to carwashers.

The demand for a minimum wage of \$15 an hour has gone from a wish to a watchword for millions of workers, forcing big-box retailers and now McDonald's to announce wage increases that, while limited and inadequate, show workers that by fighting you can win. "The bosses are scared of us," they correctly say.

Layers of better-paid workers, including union laborers and janitors, are weighing in on the side of the lowest paid workers, whose persistence and confidence is inspiring. The Steelworkers union has set an example for militancy and taken the moral high ground in fighting for safety, both for oil refinery workers and those who live in surrounding communities. The growing refusal to accept police brutality and racist attacks is another sign of the changing consciousness

among millions of working people. The protests since grand juries let cops walk in Ferguson, Missouri, and Staten Island, New York, have reinforced the Fight for 15, and unionists are increasingly showing up at actions against police violence, from London to Smyrna, Georgia.

As they engage with others in struggle, workers broaden their scope and deepen their sense of solidarity. They see themselves differently, not as lone wolves condemned by "human nature" to battle other workers, all looking out for number one, but as members of a class and a movement that can win concessions on the road to ending the dictatorship of capital and building a society based on our morals, not theirs.

More workers will be attracted to the example of the Cuban Revolution, its internationalism and self-sacrifice, and repelled by Washington's 56-year effort to overturn it. And the rise of resistance in the bastion of the empire strengthens the Cuban Revolution.

The *Militant* is a weapon in the hands of those beginning to resist boss attacks. It tells the truth about their fights, lets them know about others fighting worldwide, discusses the key political questions facing humanity from the working-class point of view and draws the lessons of revolutionary struggles past and present. Join us to help expand the paper's circulation.

## White House pushes deal with Iran

**Continued from front page**

ing-class leadership capable of charting a way forward in the interests of the toilers is forged.

The talks did not end in a signed agreement, but rather with a list of "parameters" for an accord to be negotiated over the next three months. According to a White House press release, these include Iran's agreement to reduce the number of uranium enrichment centrifuges from 19,000 to 6,104 for the next 10 years; to not enrich uranium beyond the level used to generate nuclear energy for 15 years; and to reduce its stockpile of enriched uranium. This is supposed to increase the time it would take Tehran to produce the material for a nuclear bomb to one year, from Washington's current estimate of two or three months.

In addition, Iran's underground Fordow nuclear production facility would be converted to a research and development center, and the Arak reactor would be rebuilt to preclude production of weapons-grade plutonium.

The imperialist-imposed sanctions that have increasingly strangled Iran's economy over the last decade, with devastating effects on workers and farmers there, remain in place while the talks continue. U.S., U.N. and European Union nuclear-related sanctions — which have crippled everything from oil exports and auto production to food imports — would be suspended once the International Atomic Energy Agency certifies that Tehran has taken the steps agreed to. They would "snap back into place" if Tehran did not comply.

And "U.S. sanctions on Iran for terrorism, human rights abuses, and ballistic missiles will remain in place," according to the White House statement.

### 'Obama doctrine' riles allies

Since his 2008 election, Obama has sought to reduce Washington's military "footprint" around the world and cut back on arms spending. He looks to replace them with "diplomatic and moral persuasion," the *Wall Street Journal* said last year, seeking "resets" with Moscow, Syria and Iran.

*New York Times* columnist Thomas Friedman interviewed Obama April 4, asking him if there is "an Obama Doctrine," marked by the belief that "engagement is possible."

Obama made it clear that if things go sour, he is prepared to strike out, saying "engagement" must be combined with "a sense that we are powerful enough to test these propositions without putting ourselves at risk."

His course with Iran has been consistent with his belief that he can bring peace to the world by finding other "intelligent" leaders to have a dialogue with. This view is shared by like-minded academics,

staffers of nongovernmental organizations and similar meritocratic social layers in the U.S., Europe and elsewhere, including those who awarded Obama the Nobel Peace Prize in 2009.

This stands in stark contrast to social relations in a world where a crisis of capitalist trade and production is intensifying economic rivalries, political instability and social crises across the globe.

The sharp objections to negotiations with Iran by longtime U.S. allies in the region and in Congress are more than partisan bickering. The governments of Israel and Saudi Arabia are not only concerned about the possibility of Tehran developing a nuclear weapon but also the expanding economic, political and military role of Iran in the region, including its backing of Shiite-based militias in a number of countries.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said the agreement could "threaten the survival of Israel." In an April 3 speech he cited an Iranian paramilitary leader as saying, "The destruction of Israel is non-negotiable." Tehran is "accelerating the arming of its terror proxies to attack Israel," said Netanyahu.

The rulers of Saudi Arabia also fear expansion of Tehran's reach. Riyadh helped organize a meeting in Egypt March 26 where Arab League leaders initiated a regional rapid-response military force.

The Saudi monarchy is pressing its war against Iranian-backed Houthi forces that recently toppled the pro-U.S. government in Yemen. A dairy factory where 39 workers were killed April 1 was one of the targets of the Saudi-led bombardment, as well as other factories, medical facilities and a refugee camp. In addition to the airstrikes, which are backed by Egypt, Turkey and most of the Sunni Gulf state monarchies, there have been ground skirmishes on the border between Saudi troops and Tehran-backed rebel forces.

The Houthi militias, which are allied with military units loyal to Yemen's former dictator, Ali Abdullah Saleh, have taken control of parts of the port city of Aden, not far from the strategic Bab al-Mandab Strait, a major shipping channel. Washington has assisted the Saudi assault with intelligence information, but is not involved in the air assaults.

Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, which operates in central Yemen, has taken the opportunity to expand the area it controls.

Meanwhile, Iraqi government forces and Iranian-backed Shiite militias claimed victory April 1 over the Islamic State in the city of Tikrit. Washington has been in a tacit alliance with Tehran in fighting Islamic State in Iraq. As has happened in other predominantly Sunni areas, the capture of Tikrit has been accompanied by looting and burning of homes and attacks against residents by Shiite militia forces.

## April 15 actions

**Continued from front page**

president said we can't wear shirts or buttons supporting the fight. But I wear them anyway."

Workers are gaining confidence as their fight spreads. The April 15 national day of action promises to be the biggest yet.

McDonald's CEO Steve Easterbrook, saying "a motivated workforce" is good for business, announced April 1 that the company will raise wages to at least \$1 more than the local minimum wage and allow workers to accumulate vacation time up to five days per year after one year's service. But the changes apply only to the 90,000 workers directly employed by the company. The rest of the 750,000 McDonald's employees work at franchise restaurants and will get nothing. An April 1 *Fortune* magazine headline summed it up: "McDonald's pay raise helps only a fraction of workforce, may not motivate much."

Workers' reaction to the announcement was to hold protests at restaurants in 24 cities the next day.

"This is a victory for some, but not a win for all," Darius Cephas, 23, a McDonald's worker making \$9.25 an hour, told a Boston rally of 50. "We need \$15 an hour! We're going to make sure they hear us."

"What about the rest of us, aren't we all worth a raise?" McDonald's worker Katherine Cruz told a rally outside a Fifth Avenue restaurant in New York. "But it shows we are winning. They're scared of us."

The announcement by McDonald's came less than two months after Walmart raised starting wages to \$9 with plans for another increase next year in response to several years of organizing and protests by members and supporters of Organization United for Respect at Walmart (OUR Walmart). Retailers Target, Marshalls and TJ Maxx quickly followed.

In addition to a substantial wage increase and a union, the workers are bringing in other demands — a full 40-hour week, a regular schedule and safety on the job. McDonald's workers are speaking out against the high incidence of on-the-job burns from deep fryers and griddles.

### Support for fight broadens

The fight for \$15 and a union has intersected with the wave of protests against police brutality, especially after the Staten Island cop who killed Eric Garner in a chokehold last summer was allowed to walk.

Fast-food and Walmart workers have been joined by airport baggage handlers and cleaners, home health care workers and others who earn little more than the \$7.25 per hour federal minimum wage.

Construction workers organized by Laborers Local 79 in New York rallied April 4, extending solidarity to fast-food, home health care, and airport workers who joined the protest.

"Those fighting for \$15 an hour need someone to stand next to them," Local 79 organizer Dennis Lee told the protesters. The Local 79 Facebook post on the rally said, "Great Rally this past Saturday. The next one will be even better, April 15, 6am!"

In New York workers will rally at sites around the city. At 4 p.m. all supporters of \$15 and a union will come together at Columbus Circle for a citywide march and rally. SEIU reports members are coming from throughout the metropolitan area.

In Chicago, Fight for 15 organized an April 4 free showing of the movie "Selma." Hundreds attended and got information about the April 15 rally planned at the University of Illinois.

After the showing some 20 fast-food workers and supporters marched into a nearby McDonald's chanting and waving placards in English and Spanish to the delight of workers at the counter.

"I am still working for \$8 an hour and can't survive on that," Gloria Machuca, a mother of six who has worked at McDonald's in Houston for 15 years, told the rally there. "All they care about is get the food out and hurry up," she said to the *Militant*.

"An increase with a dollar an hour is OK, but we won't stop until we get \$15 and a union," said Carlton Warren, who has been burned at work. "The grease gets to popping. We have no first aid kit and no gloves when we clean the hot grill," he said.

*Danielle London in Houston; Jan Goldsmith in Boston; Emma Johnson, Tom Lewis and Caroline West in New York; and Anne Parker in Chicago contributed to this article.*