

THE MILITANT

INSIDE

Havana book fair panel on fight against political repression in U.S.
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A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

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Capitalist crisis breeds smoldering depression

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

Declining industrial production and slowing trade on a world scale are creating depression conditions that wreak havoc on the lives of workers and farmers. The capitalist rulers' schemes to try to reverse this — the latest is negative interest rates — only exacerbate the crisis, which is rooted in the basic workings of capitalism.

The European Central Bank and several central banks in Europe have held key interest rates below zero for more than a year now. The Bank of Japan joined them Jan. 29. Essentially, this means commercial banks pay a fee to park funds in the central bank, which is supposed to encourage productive investment.

But the reason the bosses don't invest in expanding productive capacity and hire workers is because it's not profitable to do so. Average industrial profit rates have been declining for decades. That's why years of "stimulus measures" and "quantitative easing" haven't produced a stable economic expansion.

Instead, the big capitalists hoard cash or speculate on stocks, bonds, derivatives and other paper values where the rate of return is much higher.

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Woodfox is finally free after decades in solitary

Use victory to fight against prison barbarism!



Albert Woodfox, right, last of the Angola 3 Black Panther political prisoners, leaves prison Feb. 19 with his brother after more than four decades in solitary confinement. Left, September 2014 rally in Oakland, California, backs prisoners protesting isolation in Security Housing Units.

The following statement was issued Feb. 23 by Alyson Kennedy, Socialist Workers Party candidate for U.S. president.

Socialist Workers Party campaign statement

The Socialist Workers Party celebrates the release of Albert Woodfox, one of the Angola 3, after more than 40 years in solitary confinement, and calls on workers to use this vic-

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BY EMMA JOHNSON

When Albert Woodfox walked out of prison Feb. 19, his 69th birthday, he had spent more than 43 years fighting his frame-up conviction for murder, isolated in a 6-by-9-foot cell for 23 hours a day.

"I can now direct all my efforts to ending this barbarous use of solitary confinement and will continue my

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Washington, Moscow talk 'truce' as Syria slaughter grows

BY MAGGIE TROWE

For the second time this month, Washington and Moscow announced agreement Feb. 22 on a "cessation of hostilities" to go into effect soon in Syria. At the same time Russian warplanes, along with ground forces from Hezbollah, Iranian special forces and troops of Syrian dictator Bashar al-Assad, continued to pummel areas held by Assad's opponents. Building on their nuclear accord with Tehran, the Barack Obama administration has charted a course toward a longer-term bloc with Moscow and Tehran in an effort to achieve some stability to uphold U.S. imperialism's interests in the region, at whatever cost.

Secretary of State John Kerry said Moscow was playing a "constructive" role. To facilitate the deal, Washington cut support for Syrian opposition forces it was backing, saying they were not successful in pressuring Assad.

The previous cease-fire deal was scheduled to go into effect Feb. 19. However, Moscow, Assad and their

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Teamster airline mechanics say no to United's concession demands



United Airlines Teamster mechanics rally with supporters at San Francisco airport Feb. 19 after voting down concession contract demands. Another national day of action is set for Feb. 26.

BY GERARDO SÁNCHEZ AND JIM ALTENBERG

SAN FRANCISCO — As part of a national day of action, some 400 Teamster airline mechanics and supporters rallied Feb. 19 by the United Airlines maintenance base here against company concession demands.

Nine thousand mechanics across the country rejected United's "final offer" by a vote of 93 percent Feb. 16. Their contract expired three years ago.

The protest here was organized by a volunteer action team of 103 workers, said Teamsters Local 856 Vice Presi-

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Cuba says, 'Return Guantánamo!' as Obama plays politics on prison

BY SETH GALINSKY

When President Barack Obama visits Cuba March 21-22, the Cuban government will raise two "key outstanding matters," Josefina Vidal, head of the North America Bureau of Cuba's Foreign Ministry, told the press Feb. 18. "Lifting the embargo and the return to Cuba of the territory illegally occupied by the Naval Base at Guantánamo."

At a Feb. 23 news conference President Barack Obama, in the name of offering "a plan" to close the notorious U.S. prison at Guantánamo Bay, in fact made clear he has no intention of shutting it.

"I've been working for seven years now to get this thing closed," the president complained. He blamed the Republican majority in Congress for blocking him from carrying out his 2008 campaign pledge to close the prison during his very first year in the White House.

"If we don't do what's required now," Obama said, "I think future generations are going to look back and ask why we failed to act."

The president neglected to mention that during his first two years in office the Democratic Party had wide majorities both in the House of Rep-

resentatives and the Senate.

Since January 2002, 780 alleged "enemy combatants" have been sent to Guantánamo, captured or kidnapped by U.S. allies often in exchange for a U.S. bounty.

Obama's "plan" would still keep at least 56 of the 91 remaining prisoners at Guantánamo languishing in prisons in the United States, "subject to military commissions" or federal courts, he said.

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Steelworkers at Quebec cement plant strike to defend pensions U.S. Steel contract freezes wages, ups health costs

Australia: Actions condemn 'offshore' refugee detention

BY RON POULSEN

SYDNEY — Thousands of people have joined a series of protests around the country in the wake of a Feb. 3 High Court ruling upholding Canberra's indefinite "offshore" detention of refugees. The judgment cleared the way for 267 asylum-seekers who were in Australia for medical treatment to be returned to the Pacific island of Nauru.

Since 2012 the Australian government has detained refugees arriving here by boat at "processing" camps on Nauru or on Manus Island in Papua New Guinea. If they are granted asylum, they are forced to stay in those countries or resettle in Cambodia.

The refugees currently facing deportation, most of whom are from the

Middle East and South Asia, include more than 90 infants and other children, several of whom were born in Australia.

"The High Court decision settled nothing," Ian Rintoul, an organizer for the Refugee Action Coalition, told some 500 outside the Immigration department offices here Feb. 4. Denouncing off-shore refugee processing as "ethically and morally wrong," he said the ultimate decision would be made not "in the High Court but on the streets."

Common slogans at the rallies were "Let them stay!" and "Not in my name!" While some placards focused solely on the issue of children in detention, others read "Close Manus and Nauru! Not fit for children, not fit for anyone!"

The detention center on Manus Island was declared legal by the High Court in 2014. Papua New Guinea is one of the most underdeveloped countries in the world, in spite of vast mineral wealth extracted mainly by Australian mining conglomerates. It was a colony of Australia until 1975.

Nauru, with a population of just 10,000, gained formal independence in 1968. "Australian companies ripped the phosphate out of Nauru and profited from it," Rintoul reminded the protesters. The recent doubling of Australian government "aid" to Nauru "has gone to the detention center. The people of Nauru have seen nothing," he added.

Responding to Canberra's



Militant/Ron Poulsen

Feb. 4 rally in Sydney demands end to government detention of refugees on Pacific islands of Nauru and Manus.

New Zealand: Protect Maori land from developer!



Militant/Baskaran Appu

AUCKLAND, New Zealand — "Take a stand, save the land!" chanted 80 protesters outside an Auckland City Council hearing on a proposed housing development on Maori ancestral land at Ihumatao near Auckland Airport.

The Feb. 3 rally was part of a campaign by Save Our Unique Landscape, a group initiated by Maori at Ihumatao, to incorporate the land into an adjacent historic public reserve instead of permitting Fletcher Residential to construct 480 houses on it.

The area was polluted by sewage ponds until recently. The Maori village there was among the last in this city to receive sewage, electricity and other government services. The cleanup of the sewage plant has now put the land in the sights of capitalist developers.

Backers of the residential development claim it will provide houses for local Maori to buy. However the \$500,000 price (US\$332,000) is unaffordable for the majority of working people from Ihumatao.

The site's landscape includes lava caves used as Maori burial grounds. Fletcher's lawyer acknowledged Maori have lived there since "at least the middle of the 14th century." The area was confiscated in 1863 during the land wars waged against Maori by the New Zealand government.

— JANET ROTH

claims that detainees are now able to freely move about Nauru, Rintoul pointed out, "Nauru is a very small island, about the size of Melbourne airport. There is nowhere to go."

Speakers told several thousand who rallied here Feb. 8 about dangerous conditions at the detention centers, including violence by security guards and other physical and sexual abuse. Refugees in Nauru have reported conditions can be even worse outside the camps.

Following the High Court ruling, Liberal Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull declared he would proceed with the deportations in the name of discouraging "people-smugglers."

Protesters picketed the New South Wales Labor opposition's state conference Feb. 13 protesting federal Labor's support to the government's course. The Manus and Nauru centers were set up by the former Labor government.

Teachers, students and others have rallied outside a school in Victoria where some refugees are studying. Staff and others kept up a vigil against the deportations at a Brisbane hospital where a baby born in Australia, known as Asha, is being treated. On Feb. 21, in an effort to defuse the protests, Immigration Minister Peter Dutton announced that Asha and her family would be released into temporary "community detention."

THE MILITANT

Free Puerto Rican fighter Oscar López!

The fight to free Puerto Rican independence fighter Oscar López, framed up in U.S. prisons for more than 34 years, is gaining support worldwide. The 'Militant' gets out the facts about this and other fights to free political prisoners, and lets you know how to join in.



34 Women New York City X Oscar "34 Women for Oscar" hold monthly action Nov. 29 in New York at Times Square.

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Join March 2 rally in DC to defend abortion access

BY MAGGIE TROWE

A range of groups supporting women's rights are organizing a "Rally to Protect Abortion Access" on the steps of the Supreme Court in Washington, D.C., March 2, from 8 a.m. to noon. That day the court hears *Whole Woman's Health v. Hellerstedt*, a case challenging a Texas law that places strict requirements on abortion clinics and doctors. If upheld, it would force all but 10 clinics in the state to close and set a precedent for more attacks on the right to choose abortion.

This is the first abortion-related case the high court has heard in nearly a decade. During that time women's access to abortion has been increasingly eroded through state laws imposing onerous regulations on abortion providers, short-

ening the time to seek an abortion, and requiring parental consent, mandatory counseling and waiting periods.

"This is an important rally and long overdue," Alyson Kennedy, Socialist Workers Party candidate for president, told the *Militant* Feb. 24. "I will be there with supporters and I am encouraging everyone in the labor movement to go. Women's access to abortion is a key question for the working class."

Organizations building the March 2 rally include NARAL Pro-Choice America, the Center for Reproductive Rights, the National Institute for Reproductive Health and the American Civil Liberties Union. Buses to the rally are being organized in New York, Philadelphia, Cleveland and other cities.



Rally counters anti-abortion demonstrators outside clinic in McAllen, Texas, Jan. 30. Law challenged before Supreme Court would force all but 10 abortion providers in Texas to close.

Albert Woodfox finally free after decades in solitary

Continued from front page

work on that issue here in the free world," he said in a statement.

Woodfox, Herman Wallace and Robert King became known as the Angola 3 as a result of a decades-long international campaign for their freedom. In the early 1970s all three were part of one of the first prison chapters of the Black Panther Party. They organized hunger and work strikes for better conditions at the notorious Louisiana State Penitentiary in Angola.

Woodfox and Wallace were placed in solitary in April 1972, following a riot in which prison guard Brent Miller was killed. They were framed up and convicted in 1974 for Miller's death, despite a lack of evidence and several witnesses who said they were not at the murder scene. With the exception of a three-year period for Woodfox, the men were kept in solitary for the entire time.

A district judge in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, overturned Wallace's conviction Oct. 1, 2013, and granted his immediate release. Three days later Wallace died of liver cancer. King's separate conviction for killing a fellow inmate in 1973 was overturned in 2001 and he was released after spending 28 years in solitary.

Over the course of four decades, Woodfox's conviction has been overturned three separate times for a host of constitutional violations. In June last year Federal Judge James Brady or-

dered his immediate release. An appeals court reversed that order in November. That ruling was on appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court when the news about Woodfox's release broke.

"Although I was looking forward to proving my innocence at a new trial, concerns about my health and my age have caused me to resolve this case now and obtain my release with this no-contest plea to lesser charges," his statement said. He pled no contest, which is not an admission of guilt, to charges of manslaughter and aggravated burglary and was freed on time served.

The three men always maintained their innocence and pointed to the political nature of their frame-ups.

"They pinned it on us, because we were militants, we were fighters, we were members of the Black Panther

Party," King told the *Militant* after Wallace's death. "We wanted to bring consciousness to our fellow prisoners that we are protected by due process, the 14th Amendment and other constitutional grounds."

In a 2008 deposition, Angola warden Burl Cain stated why he thought Woodfox should remain in solitary. "The thing about him is that he wants to demonstrate. He wants to organize. He wants to be defiant. ... I would not want him walking around my prison because he would organize the young, new inmates."

"I thought my case, then and now, was noble," Woodfox said in an earlier statement on the Angola 3 website. "They might bend me a little bit, they may cause me a lot of pain, they may even take my life, but they will never be

able to break me."

Along with King and Wallace, Woodfox brought a civil lawsuit in 2000, which is still pending, challenging the constitutionality of the state of Louisiana's use of indefinite solitary confinement.

In September last year a settlement was reached in a class-action lawsuit initiated by a group of prisoners against the state of California. The prisoners were leaders of three hunger strikes against indefinite solitary confinement that included up to 30,000 inmates and put the national spotlight on the conditions prisoners face. If fully implemented the settlement will substantially reduce the number of prisoners in isolation. At any one moment 80,000 people are held in solitary confinement in the U.S. prison system.

Calif. cop who killed Andrew Thomas charged after protests

BY ERIC SIMPSON

OAKLAND, Calif. — On Feb. 10, Butte County District Attorney Michael Ramsey bowed to pressure from protests and charged Paradise cop Patrick Feaster with involuntary manslaughter in the shooting death of Andrew Thomas. The Police Department in Paradise, a small town north of Sacramento, fired Feaster two days earlier.

"It is a victory — so far," said Gwen Nordgren of the Ridge Coalition for

Peace and Justice in Paradise. "But we are not going to rest because we don't want this to be swept under the rug."

Feaster shot Thomas, 26, in the neck as he emerged from a car wreck Nov. 25, almost completely severing his spinal cord. Thomas died three weeks later. His wife, Darien Ehorn, 23, was thrown from the vehicle and died at the scene. Feaster did nothing to aid her. He did not even tell other cops that he had fired his gun until 11 minutes after they arrived.

A police dashcam video that shocked viewers around the world shows Feaster walking by Ehorn, who is lying on the pavement, then pulling his gun and shooting Thomas. Ramsey initially refused to file charges against the cop, and instead planned to charge Thomas with drunk driving and vehicular manslaughter for Ehorn's death.

Friends of Thomas rapidly organized protests demanding that Feaster be fired and charged. Nordgren is part of this loose coalition. "We do believe we influenced the outcome," she said in a phone interview Feb. 19. "We'll continue to pursue this. We'll attend every court hearing. We'll do everything we can to ensure justice in this case."

After Feaster's arrest, Thomas' friends organized a pot luck celebration at a public park near both the police station and the street corner where the accident occurred.

Feaster was charged with involuntary manslaughter while armed with a

firearm and released on his own recognition. Ramsey said the shooting was accidental but Feaster was negligent for the act of pulling and discharging his pistol, since the cop was trained "to keep his finger off of the trigger until a conscious decision is made to fire the weapon." The charges carry a total maximum sentence of five years in jail.

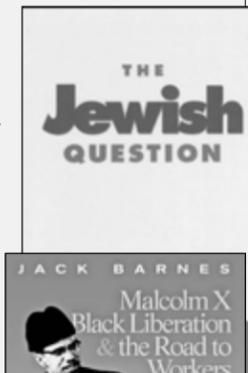
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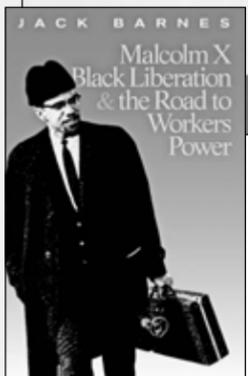
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Slaughter grows in Syria

Continued from front page

allies stepped up murderous assaults against opposition forces in Aleppo and Homs in the north, in Daraa in the south and in Kansabba in Assad's home Latakia province. Russian military spokesmen said they bombed 1,593 "terrorist" targets that week.

Russian jets hit hospitals in Idlib province operated by Doctors Without Borders, killing more than two dozen patients and medical personnel. Representatives of the group and opposition spokespeople say hospitals, schools and bakeries have all become targets, with the goal of terrorizing the population.

Speaking for the Assad regime, Bashar al-Jaafari said Doctors Without Borders was a branch of French intelligence and was responsible for the bombing because "they did not consult with the Syrian government."

Washington will let all this pass if the result is a stronger government with control over more of the country.

The latest "cessation," announced by Kerry and Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, is set to go into effect Feb. 27. Assad said he would go along, but continue to attack "terrorists." The opposition forces' High Negotiations Council said Feb. 22 it accepted the deal.

Washington pivoted its Mideast policy to a bloc with Moscow and Tehran — turning away from traditional allies in Ankara, Riyadh and Tel Aviv — as the old "world order" in the region, put together by the imperialist victors in World Wars I and II, came apart.

Looking for ways to reassert their interests, the rulers of Saudi Arabia and Turkey have pushed for opening ground operations in Syria against the Assad regime. But they recognize they have little power without Washington's assent. Riyadh began military exercises this week with Arab Gulf state allies, Egypt, Sudan, Morocco, Jordan, Nigeria, Pakistan and Malaysia.

The price paid by the Syrian people for decades of brutality by the Assad regime and the recent maneuvers of imperialism and Moscow are enormous. Nearly half a million Syrians have been killed. More than half the population has been uprooted from their homes.

Kurds fight for a homeland

Syrian Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG) have taken advantage of Russian airstrikes to seize territory from al-Qaeda and other Islamist forces in northern Syria, advancing the Kurdish people's fight for a homeland. They have

been shelled by the government of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who aims to prevent establishment of a Kurdish state on Turkey's border. This increases tensions between Ankara, a member of the U.S.-led NATO alliance, and Washington, which backs the YPG with airstrikes in its battles against Islamic State.

The Turkish government warned Moscow after a Feb. 17 deadly suicide bombing that killed 28 people in Ankara, and accused the YPG of carrying it out. The YPG denies this slander.

The Kurdistan Freedom Hawks, a split-off from the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) in Turkey, claimed responsibility for the bombing.

The imperialist powers who carved up the Mideast after World War I, creating new countries under their domination, consciously denied a homeland to the oppressed Kurdish people, who number some 30 million in Iran, Iraq, Syria and Turkey.

The Erdogan government has been waging an assault on the Kurds, in the name of fighting "PKK terrorism." The PKK launched an armed struggle against the government in 1984. Its Stalinist-trained leadership carried out bombings and other acts targeting civilians, causing unnecessary casualties, weakening support for the group and giving a series of Turkish regimes the pretext to attack the broader Kurdish population. Tens of thousands were killed over three decades.

A 2013 PKK-initiated cease-fire ended in July. Ankara has since launched a "synchronized war on terror" in the country's Kurdish southeast. Turkish forces have put cities under siege, killed hundreds, including many civilians, and displaced several hundred thousand.

Islamic State

As "Arab Spring" popular mobilizations brought down Middle East regimes from Egypt to Tunisia in 2011 and opened the civil war in Syria, there was no revolutionary working-class leadership to chart a course to power. The exhaustion of any capacity for leadership from bourgeois nationalist forces — from Baathist parties in Syria and Iraq to the Palestine Liberation Organization and Hamas — and the crippling effects of decades of class-collaborationist mis-

Washington, Beijing jockeying heats up in S. China Sea



Left, U.S. Navy Photo/Mahlon K. Miller

Simmering tensions over the South China Sea flared after U.S. officials said satellite photos, right, showed the Chinese government had stationed surface-to-air missiles on the beach of one of the Paracel Islands, which are controlled by Beijing but also claimed by the governments of Vietnam and Taiwan. "China has been deploying national-defense facilities" on the islands for decades, foreign ministry spokesman Hong Lei responded Feb. 18.

Over the recent period the U.S. military has carried out a series of provocative moves against Chinese-controlled territory in the region. On Jan. 29, navy destroyer USS Curtis Wilbur, left, sailed within 12 nautical miles of the Paracels, just days after Secretary of State John Kerry visited Beijing for talks with Chinese leaders. The previous month a B-52 bomber flew within 2 nautical miles of a reef in the Spratlys, in what the Pentagon claimed was an error.

The U.S. Navy's supremacy over the South China Sea — with its vital trade routes, potential energy reserves and proximity to allies and rivals — was among Washington's most cherished spoils in its bloody victory in World War II. The rulers in China are seeking a political and military role in the region commensurate with their economic strength and increasingly pose a challenge to U.S. imperialism in the region.

— EMMA JOHNSON

leadership by Stalinist currents such as the Syrian Communist Party, have left a vacuum of leadership. In this context, Islamic State, a reactionary current that aims to establish a caliphate ruled by Sharia law, has had room to seize large areas in Iraq and Syria.

Kurdish forces have succeeded in pushing IS back, including retaking Kobani, Syria, in a bloody battle last year.

Islamic State has been unable to wipe out all resistance in territory they control. Opponents of Assad whose territory has been occupied by Islamic State

founded "Raqqa is Being Slaughtered Silently," in IS's self-proclaimed capital in Syria.

They document the horrors of IS victims burned to death or beheaded, the enslavement of women and other forms of barbaric oppression. And they report on resistance in IS-controlled territory.

"Western powers have held a lot of meetings, made speeches and done nothing," Abdalaziz Alhamza, a 24-year-old leader of the group, told the *New York Times* Feb. 20. "We do not believe the West will help."

FBI demand to hack iPhone is part of attack on political rights

BY MAGGIE TROWE

Waving the banner of the fight against terrorism, the FBI got a court order Feb. 16 demanding Apple Inc. disable security measures on an iPhone to let government agents search its contents. So far, company executives have refused.

Seeking to gain access to data on the phone of Syed Rizwan Farook, one of two self-proclaimed supporters of Islamic State who carried out a terror attack that killed 14 people in San Bernardino, California, last December, the court said Apple must assist FBI agents to "bypass or erase the auto-erase function" on the phone.

IPhones can be set to erase all data after 10 failed password attempts, a protection against theft or intrusion.

Apple CEO Tim Cook condemned the court order Feb. 16, calling it "an overreach by the U.S. government."

If the government can force Apple to unlock an iPhone, Cook said, it "could extend this breach of privacy and demand that Apple build surveillance software to intercept your messages, access your health records or financial data, track your location, or even access your phone's microphone or camera without your knowledge."

Federal court proceedings Feb. 23

revealed the Justice Department is demanding Apple unlock at least nine other phones, and Apple is fighting the demands on at least seven of them.

This is part of efforts by Washington, Paris and other imperialist powers to use revulsion against Islamic State terror assaults to erode the political rights of working people, as well as step up spying and harassment of Muslims and mosques.

Government agencies have already ramped up surveillance of phone and Internet communication.

"Stop saying the world is ending," FBI Director James Comey wrote in a Feb. 21 press release. The case "is about the victims and justice," he said. Some technology "creates a serious tension between two values we all treasure — privacy and safety. That tension should not be resolved by corporations that sell stuff for a living."

Apple has complied with thousands of court orders to release data backed up on its iCloud, but refuses to create a way to disable the iPhone's security feature.

The American Civil Liberties Union and Amnesty International defended Apple. Facebook executives also said such government demands "create a chilling precedent."

— CALENDAR —

CALIFORNIA

Richmond

Has U.S. Policy Towards Cuba Really Changed? Join a discussion with Miguel Fraga, First Secretary of Cuban Embassy in Washington D.C. Fri., March 11, 7 p.m. Community Room, Public Library, 325 Civic Center Plaza. Tel.: (510) 219-0092. Sponsors: International Committee for Peace, Justice and Dignity, Richmond; CA Regla; Cuba Friendship Committee; and Marin Task Force on the Americas.

WASHINGTON

Seattle

Imagining New Paths for US-Cuba Relations. Keynote presentation by Miguel Fraga, First Secretary of Cuban Embassy in Washington, D.C. Sat., March 5, 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Seattle University School of Law, Sullivan Hall C-6. Sponsors: Seattle Cuba Friendship Committee, Seattle University, National Lawyers Guild, US Women and Cuba Communities, Vancouver Committees in Solidarity With Cuba. **The Cuban Five Return: An Entire Country Celebrates.** Opening of a Photographic Exhibit. Fri., March 4, 6:30-9:30 p.m. El Centro de la Raza, 3rd Floor, 2524 16th Ave. S.

—MILITANT LABOR FORUMS—

CALIFORNIA

Oakland

Defend Women's Right to Choose Abortion. Speaker: Carole Lesnick, Socialist Workers Party. Fri., March 4, 7:30 p.m. 675 Hegenberger Road, Suite 250. Tel.: (510) 686-1351.

UNITED KINGDOM

Manchester

'Joint Enterprise' Verdict Can Overturn Unjust Convictions — A Victory for Working People. Speakers: Jan Wilson, Joint Enterprise: Not Guilty by Association campaigner; Pete Clifford, Communist League. Sat., March 5, 6:30 p.m. Hilton House, 26-28 Hilton St., Room 301, M1 2EH. Tel.: (161) 478-2496.

—ON THE PICKET LINE—

MAGGIE TROWE, EDITOR

Help the *Militant* cover labor struggles across the country!

This column gives a voice to those engaged in battle and building solidarity today — including workers fighting for \$15 and a union; locked-out ATI Steelworkers; Verizon workers opposing concessions; construction workers demanding safe conditions. I invite those involved in workers' battles to 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

Steelworkers at Quebec cement plant strike to defend pensions

ST. CONSTANT, Quebec — After twice voting down a contract gutting their pension plan, 68 members of United Steelworkers Local 6658 went on strike at the Lafarge cement plant here Feb. 6.

"They want to cut pensions by 25 percent and eliminate pensions after we turn 87," shipping worker Julio Capilla told the *Militant* Feb. 18. "They want to penalize us for living longer."

Lafarge produces construction materials in 61 countries.

The company won a court injunction limiting the number of picketers and prohibiting them from blocking traffic.

Strikers told the *Militant* the plant is being run at about 60 percent capacity by management personnel. The union maintains 24-hour picket lines and is vigilant making sure Lafarge does not use strikebreakers.

—Beverly Bernardo

Minneapolis janitors, union and nonunion, hold protest strikes

MINNEAPOLIS — Janitors here held a one-day strike Feb. 17, picketing office buildings across the metro area and at the airport. The strikers, members of SEIU Local 26, have been working without a contract since Dec. 31. The union is demanding an immediate \$1 an hour increase for all workers,

United mechanics

Continued from front page
dent Rudy Gonzalez.

Workers say the main issue is the company demand for a two-tier wage scale. The workers have not received a pay raise in four years, according to Teamsters business representative Mark Desangles, and the company is demanding steep increases in health costs.

Workers also want a defined pension. In the 2002 United bankruptcy their pension was replaced with a 401(k) plan.

"Supporting the mechanics to win a good contract benefits all workers," Patricia Hernández, a janitor and member of Service Employees International Union Local 87, told the *Militant*. "The union is the power. That is why 80 of us are here." The rally also drew workers from the Amalgamated Transit Union, UNITE HERE Local 2, International Association of Machinists, flight attendants and others.

"There were a lot of IAM guys out there" said Robert Rubio, a forklift driver at the United maintenance base and member of the Machinists. "Our contract is also up. A lot of IAM people are looking at the Teamster action as an example."

Another national day of action will occur Feb. 26 at eight U.S. airports.

Eric Simpson contributed to the article.

and a total raise of \$3 an hour by the beginning of 2018, as well as \$15 an hour for part-time workers by the end of the three-year pact. Full-time janitors currently make \$14.62 an hour, part timers \$11 to \$13.

As several hundred strikers rallied here, Jorge Garcia, who works for Aramark cleaning offices at General Mills, told the *Militant* janitorial companies want to cut some full-time workers to part time. "I could lose my benefits, seniority and vacations. It would be like tossing 10 years of work in the trash."

"I think you have to have leverage to get a good deal," said Bruce Peterson, who works at ABM cleaning the Wells Fargo Center here. This is his first strike.

"It is a big workload with low pay," said Nepal-born Padma Kattel. "We

U.S. Steel contract freezes wages, ups health costs

BY BETSY FARLEY

GARY, Ind. — Members of the United Steelworkers voted 2 to 1 to approve a three-year concession contract with U.S. Steel covering 18,000 workers. Although full details have not been released, the union and company officials have said the contract freezes wages at the current level and raises health care costs for active and retired workers.

Claiming losses of \$1.5 billion in 2015, U.S. Steel, the largest steel producer in the United States, put thousands out of work, closing mills in Granite City, Illinois, and Fairfield, Alabama, and cutting jobs elsewhere. The worldwide contraction of capitalist trade and production, including falling oil prices and a slowdown in China, have contributed to a sharp decline in demand for steel.

USW officials have hitched their wagon to steel company owners, campaigning together against what they call "illegally low-priced" imports from China and elsewhere, demanding tariffs and



Militant/Beverly Bernardo

United Steelworkers members picket Lafarge cement plant Feb. 18 in St. Constant, Quebec. They are striking against company proposal to cut pensions 25 percent and end them at age 87. "They want to penalize us for living longer," said striker Julio Capilla.

want more sick days and more rights. We have to win or we will strike again."

Andrew Conway works for contractor Marsden, which offered 20 cents the first year and 10 cents for the next two years. "That's nothing!" he said. "I got a union job because I thought things would be better."

Nonunion janitors who clean retail stores and are organized by Centro de Trabajadores Unidos en la Lucha (The

Center of Workers United in Struggle) held a one-day strike the next day, kicked off with an early morning rally and march in downtown Minneapolis that tied up rush hour traffic. Earlier in the week the group announced a \$425,000 settlement for several hundred workers in a 2015 federal lawsuit against Capital Building Services Group for underpaying workers.

—Kevin Dwire

other restrictions on imported steel.

U.S. Steel bosses used the layoffs and threats of more job cuts to pressure workers to take concessions. Company demands initially included a two-tier structure for new hires and increased health care costs.

Steelworkers at steel producer ArcelorMittal and iron ore miners at Cliffs Natural Resources face similar concession demands and continue to work day to day under expired contracts.

The USW contract with U.S. Steel expired Sept. 1. Union officials organized several large protest rallies in Pittsburgh; Gary and Burns Harbor, Indiana; and on the Minnesota Iron Range. Thousands of Steelworkers and their supporters showed their determination to fight the companies' attacks at these and other actions. But no large protests have been organized recently.

Locked out for six months, Steelworkers at Allegheny Technologies Inc. maintain picket lines and continue to

reject company demands for two-tier wages and benefits, mandatory 12-hour shifts, and steep cuts in medical benefits. There are some 2,200 ATI workers at 12 plants in six states.

Talking with workers at the Gary Works plant gate here Feb. 15, some agreed with USW officials' Feb. 3 statement that the contract "was by far the best agreement we could hope for in this environment." Others explained why they voted against it.

"No raise for three years? This contract didn't do anything for us," said Michael Ames, a steel pourer. "They say we'll get profit sharing, but that depends on what they report."

The economic crisis means there are many more retired workers than active ones, and companies seek to cut costs at the expense of retired workers' benefits.

"You can't do that to people who worked for 30 years and broke their backs for these companies," Ames said. "All this wasn't built yesterday."

25, 50, AND 75 YEARS AGO



March 8, 1991

Working people and defenders of women's rights should oppose the attempts by numerous state governments to push back and curtail a woman's right to choose abortion.

Participants at the recent Young Feminist Conference registered the scope of this assault and pointed to the need to defend abortion rights through visible protests.

The fact that more than 700 people, most of them young, attended the conference is one reflection of the potential to fight the attacks and push them back.

Gains made in limiting access to abortion not only constitute a setback for women, but the working class as a whole.



March 7, 1966

The purge launched by Indonesia's reactionary generals in their efforts to crush the Indonesian Communist Party has virtually drenched the country in blood. Consider the report in the Jan. 29 London *Economist*:

"Estimates of the number of killings since October range from 87,000 — officially admitted by the president — to gossip of 350,000. Ghoulis rumours of log-jams of bodies in the rivers of Solo and Malan have reached Jakarta but there is no official confirmation or denial. Army sources estimate the deaths of between 185,000 and 250,000. In the East Java district of Malan a welfare organization has registered 400,000 children orphaned since October."



March 8, 1941

Militant strike action has brought victory to the workers at the huge Lackawanna plant of Bethlehem Steel. It shows that the workers, through militant action, can defend their rights against the whole caboodle of bosses.

This victory, as well as the Allis-Chalmers strike, the International Harvester strike, and many other battles now going on in the war industries, show that the workers have not been overly impressed by the patriotic ballyhoo of the bosses. These strikes show that millions of workers have already grasped the fundamental idea that the government's war preparations are no reason why the workers should forego their right to strike to improve their conditions.

Book on US class struggle has ‘many lessons’

Havana International Book Fair event presents ‘50 Years of Covert Operations in the US: Washington’s Political Police and the American Working Class’

BY JONATHAN SILBERMAN
AND OSBORNE HART

HAVANA — Amid heightened interest here in politics in the United States, one of the presentations at this year’s Havana International Book Fair featured the new Pathfinder Press book, published simultaneously in English and Spanish, *50 Years of Covert Operations in the US: Washington’s Political Police and the American Working Class*.

Speaking at the Feb. 13 event were long-time Cuban revolutionary leader Ramón Sánchez-Parodi and Mary-Alice Waters, president of Pathfinder and a member of the National Committee of the Socialist Workers Party in the United States. Sánchez-Parodi headed the Cuban Interests Section in Washington, D.C., for 12 years from its opening in 1977. He writes often in the Cuban press on U.S.-Cuban relations.

50 Years of Covert Operations in the US, by Larry Seigle, Farrell Dobbs and Steve Clark, traces the expansion of the U.S. rulers’ political police and the struggle against it. It focuses especially on the period from the 1930s labor battles and Washington’s preparations to enter World War II through the Watergate crisis, which exploded in 1973, and the Socialist Workers Party’s successful lawsuit against the FBI and other political police agencies.

Sánchez-Parodi said *50 Years of Covert Operations in the US* contains “many lessons, many explanations of the political situation in the United States.”

He emphasized the significance of the 1973 SWP lawsuit against FBI spying and harassment. “The Socialist Workers Party wasn’t defending itself

against government charges,” which is more often the situation confronted by the workers’ movement. In this case, a communist workers organization “was accusing the government — accusing it of violating the U.S. Constitution.”

“Even more interesting,” Sánchez-Parodi added, is the fact that, “after more than 12 years, the [federal court] judge ruled in favor of the Socialist Workers Party.”

Fight for political space

Sánchez-Parodi said “this is a good lesson of what can be done — of the battle that must be waged to win space and protect yourself against political repression by the dominant sectors in the United States.”

In 1987, he noted, the federal court with jurisdiction over the case issued an injunction that “prohibited any use of documents and other information obtained surreptitiously and unconstitutionally by the FBI and other U.S. police agencies. It declared unconstitutional [the use of agents] infiltrating the party, spying on it, and burglarizing its headquarters and the homes of its members.”

Judge Thomas Griesa “also ordered the government to pay financial compensation for damages caused and costs incurred, setting a precedent that has been used in many other cases.”

Sánchez-Parodi said that despite Washington’s claims to be a champion of liberty and equality, the U.S. rulers have always sought to protect their class interests by attacking the



Feb. 13 presentation at Havana International Book Fair. From left, Róger Calero, who chaired; Ramón Sánchez-Parodi, head of Cuban Interests Section in Washington, D.C., from 1977 to 1989; and Mary-Alice Waters, president of Pathfinder Press and member of Socialist Workers Party National Committee.

rights of working people.

50 Years of Covert Operations in the US describes how, during the Great Depression of the 1930s, the Franklin Roosevelt administration “took steps to suppress the growing influence of the workers’ movement and unions,” he said. “As inter-imperialist contradictions sharpened and [the second world] war was imminent, the Roosevelt administration needed to crack down on any movement of social protest by workers.”

The Cuban leader highlighted the federal government’s first use of the infamous 1940 Smith “Gag” Act to frame up and imprison leaders of the Teamsters union and the Socialist Workers Party. Washington’s goal was to silence the labor vanguard in the workers’ movement that opposed the goals of U.S. imperialism in World War II.

During the postwar witch-hunt, Sánchez-Parodi added, the Smith Act was also used to frame up leaders of the U.S. Communist Party in 1949. As the U.S. government waged an anti-labor offensive at home, it used its military to defend imperialist interests around the world, from backing Fulgencio Batista’s 1952 military coup in Cuba to its wars against the Chinese, Korean and Vietnamese revolutions.

He noted that for several weeks in 1952 Washington did not recognize the Batista regime, until it publicly announced it had broken its ties with the pro-Moscow Popular Socialist Party and with the Soviet government

Since the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks and the subsequent U.S. wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, he said, Washington has used the Patriot Act and other measures to vastly expand the use of its political police.

US gov’t target: labor movement

Waters noted that *50 Years of Covert Operations in the US* was one of three books Pathfinder was presenting at the Havana book fair, each of them about the class struggle in the United States. The other two were the Spanish translation of *Teamster Politics* by Farrell Dobbs and a new title in both English and Spanish, *The Cuban Five Talk About Their Lives Within the US*

Working Class. (The full text of Waters’ remarks is printed on the facing page.)

Discussing *50 Years*, Waters said the book explains how in the late 1930s Washington targeted the Minneapolis Teamsters union and the Socialist Workers Party because they were helping lead “the expanding strength and rising political consciousness of a component of the industrial union movement centered in the upper Midwest.” Within a few years the union had organized a quarter million truck drivers and warehouse workers across an 11-state region. The ruling class was alarmed about this development and the success of the working-class vanguard in organizing political opposition within the labor movement to Washington’s imperialist war aims.

Like Sánchez-Parodi, Waters underscored why the questions taken up in this book are important for today.

“The U.S. national security apparatus has undergone a massive expansion over the 15 years since 9/11” and its intrusion into every aspect of our lives “is hated by the working class,” said Waters. “And there’s nothing reactionary about that.”

In fact, she noted, that is “one of the elements driving support for the presidential candidacy of Donald Trump.” He plays on “the anxiety and fear generated by the smoldering depression conditions U.S. workers have known for almost a decade,” the insecurity generated by the unraveling of the imperialist world order, and the policies of the Obama administration that serve the interests of the giant insurance companies and other capitalist financial institutions.

Waters concluded that communist workers in the United States and other countries welcome the opportunity — “in the streets, in the factories, and on the picket lines” — to join in the growing debate and search for answers among working people in face of this capitalist crisis.

Sánchez-Parodi agreed, saying, “The struggle continues. And this book offers many ideas and experiences that need to be studied, discussed and applied in today’s context.”

For further reading ...

50 Years of Covert Operations in the US: Washington’s Political Police and the American Working Class

by Larry Seigle, Steve Clark, Farrell Dobbs

Includes “Imperialist War and the Working Class” by Farrell Dobbs \$12

Teamster Politics

by Farrell Dobbs

Dobbs, a central leader of the labor battles and debates recorded here, tells how in the 1930s the leadership of Teamsters Local 544 in Minneapolis fought to lead workers across the Midwest onto an independent working-class political course. \$19

A Packinghouse Worker’s Fight for Justice: The Mark Curtis Story

by Naomi Craine

The story of the victorious eight-year battle to defeat the political frame-up of Mark Curtis, a union activist and socialist sentenced in 1988 to 25 years in prison on trumped-up charges of attempted rape and burglary. \$8

FBI on Trial: The Victory in the Socialist Workers Party Suit Against Government Spying

Edited by Margaret Jayko \$20

www.pathfinderpress.com

ons on battle against political repression' s in the US: Washington's Political Police and the American Working Class'



Minnesota Historical Society

U.S. capitalist class in 1930s feared the expanding strength and political consciousness of a section of union movement, led by Teamster-organized truck drivers in Minneapolis, said Mary-Alice Waters. Ten thousand unemployed, above, organized by Teamster union leadership, demonstrate to demand increase in federal benefits, defying police attack in Minneapolis, April 1934.



Militant/Lou Howort

In filing 1973 lawsuit against FBI, Socialist Workers Party "was accusing the government of violating the U.S. Constitution," said Ramón Sánchez-Parodi. Victory in case is "a good lesson of the battle that must be waged to win space and protect yourself against political repression." Inset, FBI document released during court fight. Above, speakers at June 1981 New York rally of 700 to back suit. From left, SWP attorney Margaret Winter; Morton Sobell, co-defendant of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg during witch hunt; literary critic Annette Rubinstein.

Government's expanding 'security state' is hated by workers

The following talk was presented Feb. 13 at the Havana International Book Fair. Copyright © 2016 by Pathfinder Press. Reprinted by permission. Sub-headings are by the Militant.

BY MARY-ALICE WATERS

Thank you, Róger [Calero].
And a special thank-you to compañero [Ramón] Sánchez-Parodi for joining us today to present *50 Years of Covert Operations in the US: Washington's Political Police and the American Working Class*. It is an honor to hear from a comrade with his depth of experience on the front lines of battle against Washington. As we are all aware, it's a battle that has taken on new and even more challenging forms in the last year. The objectives of the imperialist power to the north remain unchanged, while the historical stakes are as great as ever.

Speaking for myself I can say that I have more than once benefited from

Ramón's thoughtful insights into class politics in the US and adjusted my thinking as a result.

Books on US class struggle

Pathfinder Press is presenting three new titles at the Havana book fair this year, each of them about the class struggle in the US.

Later this afternoon, together with compañeros from the World Federation of Trade Unions and the CTC [Cuba's trade union federation], we will be talking about *Política Teamster* [Teamster Politics] by Farrell Dobbs, drawing lessons for today from the most advanced, interconnected battles of the US working class organized and fought during the decade of the Great Depression.

Next Thursday we will be presenting a very special book, *The Cuban Five Talk About Their Lives Within the US Working Class*. The cover — with a painting by Antonio Guerrero — features the words of Ramón Labañino, *It's the poor who face the savagery*

of the US "justice" system.

In this book-length interview, given to Pathfinder last August, the Five Heroes of the Republic of Cuba talk about their experiences during the sixteen years they were part of the seven million working people in the US who are either behind bars or living under some form of police-supervised release such as René [González] faced even after serving every single minute of his fifteen-year prison sentence. Their account is a powerful indictment of the capitalist system and the ways in which it destroys human beings, as Ramón so correctly emphasizes.



50 Years of Covert Operations in the US, the third book in this trilogy, focuses on the class struggle in the US from a different angle. It traces the expansion of Washington's political police starting in the years following the first imperialist World War and the victory of the October 1917 Bolshevik Revolution in Russia, when the rulers targeted the newly formed communist movement as well as the anarcho-syndicalists. The book concentrates, however, on the years between the mid-1930s, when the FBI was created by the Democratic Party administration of President Franklin Roosevelt, and the 1970s, when the "Watergate" crisis exploded, leading to the 1974 resignation of President Richard Nixon.

In the closing years of the 1930s, one of the great concerns of the US capitalist class was the expanding strength and rising political consciousness of a component of the industrial union movement, centered in the upper Midwest, and led by the truck drivers union in Minneapolis, the "Teamsters." The biggest worry for the rulers was the effectiveness with which they were expanding unionization of drivers and warehouse workers throughout an enormous eleven-state region of the country, setting an example and helping other fighting unions.

On that solid foundation of struggles,

they were organizing political opposition within the labor movement to the imperialist war aims of Washington. That's why they were framed and imprisoned, as *50 Years of Covert Operations in the US* explains.

Witch hunt targets labor upsurge

The book describes the rapid growth and consolidation of Washington's "national security" apparatus in the years following the military, political, and economic victory over its capitalist rivals in World War II — both "foes" and "allies" alike.

The postwar anticommunist witch hunt, often referred to as McCarthyism, was not directed first and foremost at artists and writers or communist "spies," although that is a popular misconception in the US and elsewhere, including — we've discovered — here in Cuba. The first objective of the witch hunt was halting and then rolling back the gains of the powerful labor upsurge of the 1930s and integrating the labor bureaucracy more seamlessly into the imperialist state apparatus. In that, the bosses and their government were successful.

50 Years of Covert Operations in the US contains a wealth of information about the US class struggle that we hope will be of interest and of use to readers here in Cuba as elsewhere. Some of the most interesting documentation it presents — especially testimony by ranking US Justice Department officials, as they seek to provide legal cover to government policies that violate rights guaranteed by the US Constitution and its first ten amendments — is the product of a lawsuit brought by the Socialist Workers Party against the US government and its various secret police agencies. These include the FBI, CIA, Military Intelligence, and what today is well known as the National Security Agency.

The SWP suit was filed in 1973 at the height of the Watergate crisis. The scandal exploded when it came to light that the Nixon White House had orches-

Continued on page 8



Militant

President Franklin Roosevelt framed up and imprisoned leaders of Midwest Teamsters union and Socialist Workers Party in early 1940s, aiming to silence vanguard of labor movement, said Ramón Sánchez-Parodi. Above, 18 leaders of Local 544-CIO and SWP march to courthouse in 1943 to begin sentences of up to 16 months for opposing war aims of U.S. imperialism in World War II.

Expanding 'security state'

Continued from page 7

trated wiretapping, burglaries, and other illegal measures against its domestic rivals in capitalist politics.

The roots of the Watergate crisis lay elsewhere, however.

Above all, the conflict revealed the deep divisions — the birth of fear — within the US ruling class in face of two powerful developments. The first was the mass Black proletarian-led movement that had brought down the system of Jim Crow segregation in the US. It was a genuine social revolution. The second was the way the social dynamic of that victory was accelerating in tandem with growing actions in the streets by millions against the US war in Vietnam.

The repercussions even began to disintegrate military discipline within the US armed forces, and fear among the imperialist rulers increased.

At the time, the entire liberal and left bourgeois political spectrum in the US was calling for Nixon's impeachment. The SWP's response was different.

"Instead of that," we said, "let's use the US rulers' crisis to bring into the open their decades of covert operations, to educate the working class and our allies and fight to open political space to fight to defend our class interests. It will be no advance to simply replace one chief executive of the ruling class with another of their choosing."

A victory for the working class

That is the course we followed, winning broad political support in the process. The final rulings by a federal court judge were not handed down until a decade and a half later. The right to a speedy trial is an empty promise in US federal courts, as our Five Heroes can attest!

In the end, however, the judge rejected the arguments put forward by the government attorneys in defense of decades of disruption and spying on the Socialist Workers Party and Young Socialist Alliance. He issued an injunction saying that no document obtained by the government in ways that violate the US Constitution and Bill of Rights can be "used, released, or disclosed" by the FBI or other federal police agencies.

It is a ruling that stands to this day, one that helps keep open political space for working people and their organizations to speak, organize, and act, to fight on our own terrain, not theirs — in the factories, on the picket lines, and in the streets. It helps us all to defend ourselves against curtailment of constitutional rights against government abuse.



That is where I want to end — on the importance of these questions as part of the class struggle in the US today.

The US national security apparatus has undergone a massive expansion over the 15 years since 9/11, facilitated by technological advances embodied in the Internet and spread of what is called "social media." Concerns about this among workers and others is one of the elements driving support for the presidential candidacy of Donald Trump, for many years a Democrat, now running as a Republican (and, yes, marked by "New York values" the entire time, as the Texas-Cuban has taunted him).

Some on the left in the US think Trump speaks for a deeply reactionary, even fascist, development among

sections of the working class. That is a gross misreading. There is no growing ultrarightist, much less fascist, movement in the US today. The direction of motion among capitalist parties and politicians is to the left in bourgeois terms, not to the right. That motion, among other things, has been registered in the bipartisan shift toward opening diplomatic and trade relations with Cuba.

Most people here in Cuba are surprised when we explain that we have no more difficulty selling our press and talking working-class politics with those who attend large Trump election rallies than we do engaging in the same communist propaganda work at Bernie Sanders election events.

The ever-expanding surveillance of and intrusion into every aspect of our lives by Washington's national security apparatus is hated by the working class. As are arbitrary "executive actions" and "regulation." And there's nothing reactionary about that. Smaller government has been a cornerstone of the communist program from 1848 to today.

Reaction to smoldering depression

It is not Trump's crude anti-Mexican, anti-Muslim invective that accounts for his showing in initial primaries. It is his slashing attacks on the hypocrisy, lies, and manipulations of the political "establishment." It is his success in casting himself as an "outsider." Above all, it is his ability to play on the anxiety and fear generated by the smoldering depression conditions US workers have known for almost a decade, and the feeling of helplessness in face of an imperialist world order that is coming apart at an accelerating pace.

It is the heroin epidemic that is devastating working-class families across the



Concerns over "expansion of U.S. national security apparatus since 9/11 is one element driving support for the presidential candidacy of Donald Trump," said Waters. Trump, right, plays on "anxiety and fear generated by smoldering depression conditions facing U.S. workers for almost a decade." Socialist Workers Party members have no more difficulty selling *Militant* and talking working-class politics at Trump rallies than at events for Bernie Sanders, left.



Inset, Militant/Stuart Kiehl

Two powerful developments in U.S. class struggle led to deep divisions in ruling class, Waters said: the mass proletarian-based Black struggle that brought down Jim Crow segregation, and how the gains of that victory were accelerated by millions in streets opposing U.S. war in Vietnam. Above, sanitation workers strike in Memphis, Tennessee, 1968, in closing years of civil rights fight. Right, May 1971 New York demonstration against Vietnam War.



US. It is the deliberately manipulated and camouflaged size of the scourge of unemployment. It is the scandalous lack of medical care and help for young workers who have been torn apart mentally and physically as cannon fodder for Washington's military actions in the Mideast. It is the numbing and terrifying disregard for human life that marks the spreading class conflicts in the Mideast and beyond.

The ancient mandarin curse, "May you live in interesting times," is for revolutionaries, for communists, a tremendous opportunity — and responsibility. And that is what we in the Socialist Workers Party will be oriented to, in the streets, factories, and on picket lines.



Right, Matt A. Johnson

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Step up fight to end barbaric solitary!

Continued from front page

tory to redouble our efforts to win freedom for Oscar López; Leonard Peltier; Mumia Abu-Jamal; Mondo we Langa and Ed Poindexter, known as the Omaha 2; Oregon cattle ranchers Dwight and Steven Hammond; and others thrown behind bars by the U.S. ruling families. Woodfox walked out of prison Feb. 19 unbroken, vowing to step up his efforts “to ending this barbarous use of solitary confinement.” This is a victory for the working class.

Socialist Workers Party candidates across the U.S. will join in stepping up the fight against cop brutality, frame-ups and solitary confinement, to tell the truth about prison conditions and to win solidarity for all our brothers and sisters behind bars.

While Woodfox may have spent more time in solitary confinement than any other prisoner in the U.S., his case is not unique. There are an estimated 80,000 federal and state prisoners in solitary. And this doesn't include those in local jails and immigration prisons.

Oscar López, a fighter for independence for Puerto Rico jailed in the U.S. for more than 34 years, spent his first 12 years in solitary confinement. The Cuban Five, revolutionaries framed up by the U.S. government, were put in isolation their first 17 months in prison. All of the Five — whose “crime” was working to stop violent attacks against the Cuban Revolution — are now back in Cuba.

“The jailers want to destroy you,” said René González, one of the Five. “They want to break

your physical, moral, and mental integrity.” But they couldn't break the Cuban Five, López or Woodfox.

This victory is a boost to the thousands of prisoners in California who through hunger strikes and protests have pushed back the torturous use of solitary confinement there.

The United States has 4.4 percent of the world population but 22 percent of the world's prisoners. There are 2,984 people on death row and the vast majority of those behind bars are from the working class. Some 40 percent are Black.

The Socialist Workers Party candidates encourage everyone we meet to read and use the new Pathfinder book *The Cuban Five Talk About Their Lives Within the US Working Class*. In it they explain what is meant by Ramón Labañino's conclusion, “It's the poor who face the savagery of the US ‘justice’ system.”

Through the course of making their revolution, Cuba's working people dismantled the police, courts and prisons of the U.S.-backed Fulgencio Batista dictatorship. In their place they began to put together a new society, becoming new men and women capable of running their country in their own interests and extending solidarity to workers and farmers worldwide.

As we join Albert Woodfox marching out of prison, we take this victory to step up our efforts to fight against the horrors and abuses of the capitalist “justice” system, and to emulate the example of Cuba's workers and farmers to end the dictatorship of capital right here in the United States.

Cuba says, ‘Return Guantánamo!’

Continued from front page

Everything from the initial arrests, torture and the trampling on the most basic democratic rights of those held at the prison camp — along with the more than century-long violation of Cuban sovereignty — has made Guantánamo a symbol of U.S. imperialist arrogance, brutality and hypocrisy around the world.

The U.S. military has occupied the 28,000 acres of land that surround Guantánamo Bay since 1903. Washington has used the base to intervene in the affairs of Cuba, nearby Haiti and the Caribbean to protect capitalist interests.

Since working people, under the leadership of Fidel Castro and the July 26th Movement, overthrew the U.S.-backed dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista in 1959, the U.S. Treasury has continued to send an annual rent check for \$4,085, which the revolutionary government refuses to cash.

Democratic presidential candidates Hillary Clinton and Bernie Sanders hailed Obama's Feb. 23 statement. Neither said a word about returning Guantánamo to Cuba. Administration officials have repeatedly said they don't intend to do so.

Republican candidate Donald Trump responded

to Obama's Feb. 23 statement by saying he would keep the prison open and “load it up with some bad dudes.” Ted Cruz and Marco Rubio each said shutting it down would lead to returning Guantánamo to Cuba.

“From the beginning the Socialist Workers Party has denounced the torture, beatings and humiliation the prisoners are subjected to in the name of ‘national security,’” Socialist Workers Party presidential candidate Alyson Kennedy said Feb. 23. “The U.S. economic war against Cuba has failed to bring down the socialist revolution. Now the U.S. rulers hope to undermine it through other tactics.

“This is a good time to step up actions in support of the Cuban Revolution and demand the return of Guantánamo Bay to Cuba and the complete end of the U.S. embargo,” Kennedy said.

In an interview with Telesur TV network last November, Cuban government official Vidal explained that “even if at some moment the prison is closed, it would just be a partial solution from Cuba's point of view. The most important thing is to close the entire installation and return this territory that remains occupied to Cuba.”

LETTERS

Thanks for efforts

I would like to express my sincere appreciation to the *Militant* for bringing worldwide news of interest to the working class all over the world as well as revolutionary consciousness to those standing against the imperialist forces of capitalism. I was recently transferred to another institution. Please continue to mail the newspaper to me.

A prisoner
Florida

Cancel my subscription

I cannot believe you would support the armed fascists occupying a federal bird sanctuary in Oregon.

People can protest but when they take up arms and occupy our public land they are fascists and seditionists and deserve no sympathy. They should be in prison.

Also your articles sound straight out of the '50s with expressions like “frame-up.” Please

‘Militant’ Prisoners’ Fund

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Supporting Steelworkers

Thank you for supporting the USW-1196 Steelworkers.

B.C.
Sarver, Pennsylvania

The letters column is an open forum for all viewpoints on subjects of interest to working people. Please keep your letters brief. Where necessary they will be abridged. Please indicate if you prefer that your initials be used rather than your full name.

Capitalist depression

Continued from front page

er — blowing up bubbles like the one in the U.S. housing market, whose collapse helped trigger the 2008 recession.

The Federal Reserve isn't planning to try negative interest rates, Fed chair Janet Yellen told Congress Feb. 11, but she wouldn't rule it out in the future. For seven years the Fed has kept interest rates near zero, until it raised them slightly in December.

Industrial production continues to contract worldwide. In January factory output dropped for the fourth consecutive month in the U.S. and for the sixth month in China. Durable goods production in the U.S. fell 3.5 percent over the past year, the largest drop since 2009. In China exports, upon which the economy is based, declined 11.2 percent over the past year.

“One-Third of Oil Companies Could Go Bankrupt this Year,” headlined a Feb. 16 article in *Fortune* magazine, reporting on prospects facing some 500 oil and natural gas exploration and production companies worldwide. With overproduction and a nearly three-quarters drop in oil prices since mid-2014, oil and mining companies have cut hundreds of thousands of jobs worldwide.

A total of 75,100 layoffs were announced in the U.S. in January, the highest number since January 2009. Layoffs in 2015 rose 41 percent over the previous year.

Daimler, which makes Freightliner trucks, announced Feb. 15 the layoff of 1,200 workers at its North Carolina plants. Procter & Gamble, the world's largest consumer goods maker, announced plans to eliminate 5,700 jobs over the next four years. Walmart, the world's largest retailer, which recently closed 269 stores worldwide, announced its first sales decline in 35 years.

With declining agricultural commodity prices, many U.S. farmers are unable to meet their costs of production. Costs for producing corn are around \$5 a bushel, but the price farmers get on the market is only about \$3.65.

Declining world trade

The economic crisis is also reflected in a growing decline in global trade. Some 690 dry bulk ships that carry iron ore, coal and other bulk commodities are idled worldwide, reported the *Wall Street Journal*, and there's an estimated 30 percent overcapacity of container ships that transport manufactured goods. Shipping giant Maersk has already laid off thousands of workers, with more to come.

Asia-to-Europe trade fell nearly 4 percent last year, according to Container Trades Statistics. The Baltic Dry Index, a global measure of shipping prices for commodities, reached its lowest point in its 31-year history Feb. 10.

As manufacturing production and trade has slowed, the use of protectionist measures has risen with the governments of India, Russia and the U.S. implementing the most. The largest number of trade restrictions imposed over the past seven years have been directed against Beijing — the opposite of what you'd think listening to the hype from politicians ranging from Bernie Sanders to Donald Trump, as well as many trade union officials.

In January the Labor Department reported an unemployment rate of 4.9 percent, but this figure masks the real scope of joblessness. The employment-to-population ratio — the percentage of those over 16 years old who have a job — plummeted from 63 percent in June 2007 to below 59 percent at the end of 2009. It has remained below 60 percent for nearly seven years. In 1999, 84.6 percent of workers aged 25 to 54 were working; today it's down to 81.1 percent.

In Japan, the official unemployment rate is 3.3 percent, but the percentage of the working-age population that is employed is only 57.6 percent, lower than in the U.S. In the countries that make up the European Union, the official unemployment rate is around 9 percent overall, but is much higher in the countries hardest hit by the capitalist crisis, such as Greece and Spain. About half of youth under 25 in Greece don't have a job.