

THE MILITANT

INSIDE
Socialism, revolution,
and the environment

— PAGE 10

A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

VOL. 62 NO. 3 JANUARY 26, 1998

Protest Washington's threats against Iraq!

Actions are needed now to protest and tell the truth about the latest U.S.-led provocations against Iraq. The moves by the Clinton administration have heightened the threat of a U.S. military assault on the Iraqi

EDITORIAL

people.

The U.S. government and other intruding powers should remove every single one of their "inspectors" and soldiers from Iraq and the entire Middle East. Iraq doesn't belong to them — it belongs to the Iraqis.

Who is Washington — with the blood of Hiroshima and Nagasaki permanently on its hands — to lecture others about weapons of mass destruction? The issue of the "United Nations inspectors" and of biological and chemical warfare is simply a pretext for continuing to pressure the Iraqi government. The real goal of the wealthy U.S. rulers is to weaken and eventually overthrow the

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U.S. government carries out new war provocations

BY ARGIRIS MALAPANIS

Washington engineered a new provocation against Iraq, which it is now using to lay the ground for a military assault. On January 13, the Iraqi government blocked a United Nations "arms inspection" team, dominated by U.S. officials, from snooping into the Iraqi intelligence headquarters in Baghdad.

U.S. secretary of state Madeleine Albright immediately raised the specter of military strikes. "We have a very robust force that is on hand," stated Pentagon spokesman Michael Doubleday, referring to the nearly 30,000 U.S. troops, dozens of navy ships, and hundreds of warplanes in the region.

The Clinton administration pushed for UN Security Council action. The Council approved unanimously a "presidential state-

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Mexico City: 100,000 protest army moves in Chiapas



Reuters/Heriberto Rodríguez

About 100,000 people demonstrated in Mexico City January 12 to protest the December 22 massacre of 45 Indian peasants by pro-government thugs in Chiapas. During the rally, news spread that police had opened fire that day on a protest in the town of Ocosingo, Chiapas, killing Guadalupe Méndez López, and that became the focus of the march. The next day 3,500 people in Ocosingo took part in a militant funeral procession for Méndez, chanting, "Justice, justice!" Over the previous week, peasants in Chiapas rallied in one village after another to try to block the entry of Mexican troops. The banner above in the Mexico City demonstration reads, "No to the war! Silence and passivity mean complicity."

Wall Street demands austerity, buys up wealth of Indonesia

BY MAURICE WILLIAMS

During the second week of January a parade of officials from the Clinton administration and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) marched into Indonesia to squeeze the regime into implementing the IMF's "economic reforms." The imperialist emissaries are pressing Jakarta and other gov-

ernments in the region to open their markets to foreign investors in order to buy up industries and banks on the cheap, deepening imperialist domination of the region. On January 14 President Suharto formally agreed to the IMF's demands.

U.S. deputy treasury secretary Lawrence Summers and State Department official Stanley Roth arrived in Jakarta January 12 and demanded that Indonesian president Suharto reduce fuel subsidies, cancel 15 infrastructure projects, close down 16 insolvent banks, and repeal limits on foreign ownership of property and financial institutions in exchange for the \$43 billion loan arrangement the government made with the IMF last October.

IMF deputy chief Stanley Fischer had already held three hours of negotiations with Indonesian officials the day before, and U.S. secretary of defense William Cohen met with Suharto two days later. Cohen launched a 12-day tour to also visit Thailand, Singapore, China, Japan, and south Korea, to stress Washington's military power in the Pacific.

Adding to the pressure on Jakarta to bow to imperialist dictates, President Suharto received phone calls on January 8 from U.S. president William Clinton, and on January 12 from German chancellor Helmut Kohl, Japan's prime minister Ryutaro Hashimoto, and Australian prime minister John Howard urging Jakarta to impose the IMF austerity package. After the meeting with Suharto,

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Unemployed workers in France occupy gov't buildings

BY NAT LONDON

PARIS — With government ministers openly squabbling among themselves over how to respond to the occupations of dozens of unemployment centers throughout France by workers and youth demanding more jobs and higher unemployment benefits, Socialist Party prime minister Lionel Jospin went on French television January 9 to announce a 1 billion franc (\$165 million) emergency aid package for the unemployed. The next day, at 6:00 a.m., Jospin sent the CRS riot police to evacuate about 20 occupied centers. In at least one city, Arras, the police violently attacked the demonstrators, sending one unemployed worker to the hospital.

Associations of the unemployed called the aid package a "first but insufficient step," and said the protests would continue "in other forms."

Thousands of jobless workers and others marched through Paris January 13 chanting "Unemployment — we're fed up!" The demonstration, estimated at between 5,000 and 10,000 people, was the second within a week. Among the contingents from unions and unemployed organizations was a delegation of African *sans papiers* (undocumented) immigrants who have been fighting for their rights in France, as well as a group of Asian immigrants. Also among the contingents was a group of about 30 cops

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YS leader tours West Coast, builds conference

BY XOCHITL-ITZÁ LEAL

VANCOUVER, British Columbia — "For the next two weeks, Young Socialists in Los Angeles, San Francisco, Seattle, and Vancouver will turn all of their efforts towards building the West Coast Regional Socialist Conference in Seattle January 24 — 25," said Verónica Poses, a member of the Young Socialists National Committee in the United States. As part of this, YS leader Joshua Carroll began a two-week west coast tour here. He is speaking at campuses, house meetings, and forums, urging protests against Washington's latest provocations against Iraq, building the conference, and working to recruit to the Young Socialists.

"In every city, we have the possibility to work with other young people to set up meetings on campuses and other venues to discuss the importance of coming to a conference like this one," Carroll said. "The conference will give an opportunity to vanguard workers and youth to discuss the kind of organizations we need to build in order to overthrow capitalism, and join the fight for socialism. The tour will be a success if in each city we can win a few revolutionary-minded fighters to attend the conference and join the Young Socialists."

The tour began in Vancouver on January

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FROM PATHFINDER

Opening Guns of World War III WASHINGTON'S ASSAULT ON IRAQ

by Jack Barnes

The U.S. government's murderous assault on Iraq heralded increasingly sharp conflicts among imperialist powers, the rise of rightist and fascist forces, growing instability of international capitalism, and more wars. In *New International* no. 7. \$12.00. Also available in French, Spanish, and Swedish.

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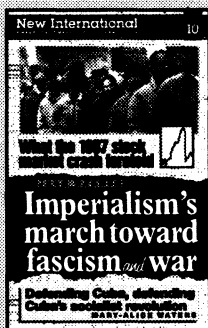
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Peasants block Mexican troops

Indigenous women and youth in Morelia, Mexico, locked arms and blocked a heavily armed unit of 170 Mexican government troops from entering their town January 9. For the fourth time this year, soldiers gave up and pulled back. The Mexican government has pressed its troops to patrol that region in the state of Chiapas ever since the December 22 massacre of 45 indigenous peasants by supporters of Mexico's ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI). Some 40,000 soldiers are in Chiapas.

Haitians may still be deported

U.S. courts are continuing nearly 4,000 deportation hearings against Haitian immigrants, despite a December 23 presidential order granting some 20,000 Haitians a one-year exemption from deportation under draconian new immigration laws. Haitian refugees and supporters called for immediately dropping the proceedings, which result in deportation roughly 85 percent of the time. Thousands of people demonstrated in Miami and Washington, D.C., in October, pressing the White House to grant the exemption. Haitians were not included in earlier legislation that exempted many Nicaraguan, Guatemalan, and Salvadoran immigrants from deportation. Honduran immigrants are now demanding this provision be extended to them.

Executions restored in Bahamas

The Bahamian government — in the name of fighting crime — will reinstate the death penalty in mid-January for people convicted of murder. Four inmates have already been sentenced to death this year. The governments of Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago are also moving to legalize executions.

Canadian gov't issues 'insulting' apology to Native peoples

On January 7 the Canadian government expressed "regret" to 1.3 million Native residents for 150 years of racist "assistance programs" and residential schools, but some indigenous leaders say the hollow apology is too little, too late. As part of its so-called amends, Ottawa promised to establish some social and economic development plans,

which include a \$245 million "healing fund" for Natives who were removed from their homes and forced into schools where they were forbidden to speak their own languages and practice their beliefs. These reparations fell far short of the demands put forward by indigenous activists. Native peoples face the highest unemployment and infant mortality rates in Canada.

The Canadian government also claimed it wanted to reverse its characterization of Louis Riel, who led a Métis rebellion against Canadian colonialists and was hanged for treason in 1885. But Ottawa did not revoke the treason charge. The government also left the status of the Métis people — those of mixed Native and European ancestry — unresolved, preventing them from making land claims and filing for some support programs. While leaders of the Assembly of First Nations and some other Native groups hailed the declaration as a victory, others disagreed. Marilyn Buffalo, president of the Native Women's Association of Canada, said, "The federal government is insulting aboriginal people with this response."

German cops can 'bug' homes

Helmut Kohl's ruling coalition government in Germany and the opposition Social Democrats reached an agreement January 7 to alter the German constitution by granting cops the authority to electronically peep into private homes to investigate "serious crimes" for the first time since the Nazi regime. In 1995 Kohl's former justice minister resigned over the proposed measure.

The agreement gives Kohl the two-thirds majority needed to amend the constitution, and the law is expected to pass January 16. The cops are to get permission from a judge before bugging a house, and conversations with doctors, tax advisors, and journalists must be reviewed by a court before being allowed as evidence. Herman Lutz, chairman of the so-called police union, complained that the law isn't strong enough because of these limits and because priests, defense attorneys, and some government officials will be excluded from bugging.



Some 1,000 indigenous peasants protested January 11 in Altamirano against the Mexican army patrols in Chiapas. "We don't want any soldiers near our houses," said one woman.

Demonstration demands release of Basque independence fighters

Tens of thousands of people came into the streets of Bilbao December 27 to demand that the Spanish government release 23 leaders of Herri Batasuna (Popular Unity), the Basque pro-independence political party. They have been sentenced to seven years in jail, charged with collaborating with the ETA (Basque Homeland and Freedom), an armed Basque liberation organization. Several Herri Batasuna supporters addressed the demonstration. The Basque leaders' so-called collaborative crime consisted of attempting to show an election campaign video on television that included the ETA's proposal for a process leading to self-determination for the Basque people, an oppressed nation in northern Spain and southern France.

Workers to Hong Kong gov't: 'you killed chickens, you pay us'

On January 4 about 700 poultry workers demonstrated in downtown Hong Kong with signs that read, "No chickens, No Income" and "Give Us Back Our Jobs." The Tung Chee-hwa government, following growing hysteria around a flu that scientists say is probably linked to chickens, organized a slaughter of 1.3 million birds. As of the beginning of the year, 13 people were known to have the flu called A H5N1. The massive destruction of the chickens has left hundreds of poultry workers and truckers jobless. Small vendors have also suffered a big blow. The Hong Kong government promised to reimburse farmers for their chickens and can-

cel vendors' rent on the public markets for three months.

Apartheid ex-ruler faces trial

P.W. Botha, a former apartheid president in South Africa, faces criminal charges for refusing to answer a summons to testify before the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The commission was designed to expose the atrocities carried out under the apartheid regime. Botha, who headed the government for more than a decade, denied any knowledge of or consent for the assassinations, torture, and bombings carried out by racist government security forces against South African freedom fighters. He ignored several subpoenas to come before the commission last year and instead submitted a 1,700-page denial of any direct involvement. Archbishop Desmond Tutu, commission chairman, filed the charges. Botha could be fined or get two years behind bars for ignoring the subpoena. Meanwhile, the state is considering halting its funding of Botha's attorney fees — which so far total more than \$100,000 — for refusal to appear before the commission.

Death penalty record in Texas

A record-breaking 37 inmates were executed in the state of Texas in 1997. No state has put so many people to death in a year since 1930. Across the United States, 74 people behind bars were executed last year — the most in more than four decades. Seventeen of the 38 states where the death penalty is legal used it in 1997.

— BRIAN TAYLOR

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The Militant

Vol. 62/No. 3
Closing news date: January 15, 1998

Editor: NAOMI CRAINE
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Published weekly except for one week in December and biweekly from mid-June to mid-August by the Militant (ISSN 0026-3885), 410 West St., New York, NY 10014. Telephone: (212) 243-6392; Fax (212) 924-6040.

The Militant can be reached via CompuServe at: 73311.2720 or via Peacenet at: themilitant. Internet: 73311.2720@compuserve.com or: themilitant@igc.apc.org

The Militant can be accessed on the internet at: gopher://gopher.igc.apc.org/11/pubs/militant. Correspondence concerning subscriptions or changes of address should be addressed to The Militant Business Office, 410 West St., New York, NY 10014.

Periodicals postage paid at New York, NY, and at additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to the Militant, 410 West St., New York, NY 10014.

Subscriptions: United States: for one-year subscription send \$45 to above address. Latin America, Caribbean: for one-year sub-

scription send \$65, drawn on a U.S. bank, to above address. By first-class (airmail), send \$80. Asia: send \$80 drawn on a U.S. bank to 410 West St., New York, NY 10014.

Canada: Send Canadian \$75 for one-year subscription to Militant, 4581 St. Denis, Montreal, Quebec H2J 2L4.

Britain, Ireland: £36 for one year by check or international money order made out to Militant Distribution, 47 The Cut, London, SE1 8LL, England. Continental Europe, Africa, Middle East: £40 for one year by check or international money order made out to Militant Distribution at above address. France: Send FF300 for one-year subscription to Militant, MBE 201, 208, rue de la Convention, 75015 Paris; chèque postale: 40 134 34 U. Belgium: BF 1,900 for one year on account no. 000-1543112-36 of 1Mei Fonds/Fonds du 1 mai, 2140 Antwerp. Iceland: Send 5,400 Icelandic kronur for one-year subscription to Militant, P.O. Box 233, 121 Reykjavik. Sweden, Finland, Norway, Denmark: 500 Swedish kronor for one year. Pay to Militant Swedish giro no. 451-32-09-9. New Zealand: Send New Zealand \$75 to P.O. Box 3025, Auckland, New Zealand. Australia: Send Australian \$75 to P.O. Box K879, Haymarket, NSW 1240, Australia. Pacific Islands: Send New Zealand \$75 to P.O. Box 3025, Auckland, New Zealand.

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Wall St. demands austerity in Indonesia

Continued from front page

U.S. deputy treasury secretary Summers remarked, "It is clear that President Suharto recognizes the need to take the strong steps of the kind under discussion with the IMF to create confidence."

Imperialist officials gave a "thumbs down" to Jakarta's "wildly unrealistic" 1997-1998 budget and its failure to push through sufficient austerity measures. The budget assumptions were based on the country's currency trading at 4,000 rupiah to the U.S. dollar, instead of its current exchange rate of some 8,000 rupiah to the dollar. Foreign investors are unwilling to accept the government's plan to pay interest for some \$52 billion in loans based on 4,000 rupiah to the U.S. dollar, even though the budget projects a 57 percent increase in loan payments.

The rupiah has fallen 72 percent from its value one year ago, since a wave of currency devaluations that began last July and spread throughout southeast Asia. The lower value of the rupiah makes it impossible for most Indonesian companies to repay massive loans from U.S., Japanese, and European banks.

Indonesia's total foreign debt is estimated at \$133 billion, with many companies and banks failing to make payments. This includes the state-owned airline, Garuda, which missed two payments on aircraft loans in December totaling \$8 million. The escalating debt burden had sparked rumors that the government would declare a moratorium on debt repayments.

Meanwhile, this nation of 200 million people has been hit by the worst drought in 50 years and famine conditions are spreading across eastern provinces. Unemployment is expected to rise by 50 percent, to at least 6.5 million workers.

Jakarta's budget included an increase in the country's petroleum subsidy, which reflects its nervousness over impending political and social instability. More than 60 percent of the rural population relies on kerosene for heat and light.

In a signal of the potential of Indonesian toilers to resist, 16,000 aerospace workers in Bandung went on strike last October and held mass rallies protesting threatened layoffs.

"The government's primary concern is not the unhappiness of IMF emissaries but the possibility of social unrest," declared the editors of the *Wall Street Journal* January 9. "President Suharto may now believe that his only course is to increase spending on things like food and fuel subsidies to ... placate the masses who might be tempted to take to the streets."

A news article in the same big-business daily said that unnamed "analysts don't begrudge Indonesia for prioritizing social and humanitarian concerns, but they criticize the government for doing so without implementing structural economic reforms" — that is the IMF conditions.

A layer of the U.S. capitalist rulers, however, have begun a clamor for Suharto's resignation. "[Suharto] seems more of an impediment to reform," declared the *New York Times* January 11.

Others within Indonesia's ruling circles are openly calling for his ouster, including a section of the military. "It seems the only solution now is for the president to step down," said an unnamed senior armed forces officer. Suharto came to power in 1965 following a coup and bloody repression in which more than 500,000 workers were massacred.

Imperialists push to buy companies

As part of the IMF "reforms" imperialist bankers are demanding Indonesian enterprises pay their debts or sell assets. With their prices denominated in devalued currencies, many companies in Asia have become cheap in dollar terms. "We're looking at opportunities the likes of which we have never seen before in any Asian country," remarked Patrick Alexander, fund manager at Peregrine, the day before that Hong Kong investment bank collapsed.

In December U.S. senator Robert Torricelli declared that south Korea "is about to see a fire sale of some of its major assets."

Nutricia International, the Dutch food group, is bidding for Indonesia's largest baby food company.

The Korean Press Agency reported that General Motors (GM) is negotiating to purchase a stake in Daewoo Motors Co. "These currencies now are at incredibly low lev-

els," said John Smith, chairman of GM, pointing to advantages for bosses looking to cut costs. "If there's an opportunity that presents itself because of the favorable cost position that some of these countries and companies might be in, we may be more than willing to take a look at it," he added.

The Ford Motor Co., GM, and two German enterprises, Robert Bosch and Sachs A.G. are reportedly interested in buying Mando Machinery, south Korea's largest manufacturer of auto parts.

Meanwhile, Indonesia's cheapened currency provoked the collapse of Hong Kong's Peregrine Investments Holdings Ltd., which went belly up January 12. Peregrine was the largest investment bank in Asia outside Japan and its collapse has resonated throughout the business world, including the United States.

Last summer Peregrine lent \$260 million in U.S. dollars, a third of its capital, to Steady Safe, a taxicab company in Indonesia. When the value of the rupiah plummeted, Steady Safe was unable to repay the loan and Peregrine's stock plunged to about three cents per share.

Peregrine finally went under after it failed to clinch a deal with an investor to replenish the company's capital. The Zurich Group of Switzerland backed out of a deal to put up \$200 million for a 24 percent stake in the company when one of Peregrine's main bank creditors, First Chicago, declined to put \$25 million into the investment bank. Last June Peregrine reported handsome profits for the first six months of \$82.5 mil-

New U.S. provocations against Iraq

Continued from front page

ment," a step short of a full resolution, January 14, deploring the barring of the UN inspectors and demanding unconditional access to all sites. The statement, however, did not threaten the use of force, which the governments of France, China, and Russia, three of the five permanent members of the Security Council, have opposed.

Baghdad blocked one of the groups of inspectors after accusing the team's head, Scott Ritter, of being a spy and protesting the presence of too many U.S. and British officers on the team — 14 out of the 16 in the group barred January 13. Washington and London are the two powers that have persistently pushed for military action to overthrow Iraqi president Saddam Hussein and replace him with a regime subservient to U.S. imperialism. Doing so would result in greater U.S. government control of oil reserves in the Middle East that would give the U.S. rulers an even greater economic and strategic advantage vis-à-vis their capitalist rivals such as Tokyo.

U.S. officials immediately denied that Ritter is a spy. The January 14 *Washington Post*, however, reported that Ritter was an "intelligence officer" with several commendations on his record while a captain in the Marine Corps, where he served for seven years. Ritter was assigned at the headquarters of the U.S. Central Command in the Arab-Persian Gulf during the U.S.-led slaughter against the Iraqi people in 1991. Since leaving the Marines later that year, Ritter has been part of the UN weapons inspection operation in Iraq, which the U.S. government has used to justify maintaining a draconian embargo on the country for more than seven years.

The sanctions have had a devastating impact on the Iraqi people. A United Nations Children's Fund report issued last November stated that as a result of lack of food and medicines due to the UN embargo, 32 percent of Iraqi children under five, some 960,000, are chronically malnourished — a 72 percent rise since 1991. In rural areas only 50 percent of people have access to water, and only 34 percent have sanitation. Since the sanctions were imposed, infant mortality has increased sixfold.

Under the terms of the cease-fire Baghdad was forced to sign at the end of the Arab-Persian Gulf War, the lifting of the embargo is conditional on certification by the inspection teams that the Iraqi government no longer possesses "weapons of mass destruction." As part of these teams, Ritter has been personally responsible for orchestrating previous provocations.

Leading up to the latest flare-up, U.S. officials had floated allegations that the Iraqi



Students demonstrate outside the Finance Ministry in Jakarta January 13 against austerity measures demanded by the IMF that are expected to leave millions jobless.

lion on revenues of \$19.6 billion.

Peregrine's bankruptcy signals a deepening financial crisis in Hong Kong that could lead to ending its currency peg to the U.S. dollar. With the value of some Asian currencies dropping by 70 percent, business

analysts assert that the Hong Kong dollar is vastly overvalued. "The fall of the peg could lead to a banking and property collapse in Hong Kong," said Ma Guonon, head of economic research at Salomon Smith and Barney.

government used prisoners as guinea pigs to test biological agents, which Baghdad denied. "That is one of the lies being used as a pretext for intruding," said Iraqi deputy prime minister Tariq Aziz. Ritter's aborted intrusion into Baghdad's intelligence headquarters, which Aziz said was a flagrant violation of Iraqi sovereignty, was planned under the guise of uncovering evidence of weapons testing on inmates.

In October and November the Clinton administration orchestrated a similar string of provocations with its inspectors, leading Baghdad to expel the U.S. officers. Washington then amassed a giant armada in the region and unleashed a propaganda campaign to justify devastating carpet bombing of Iraq. As the *New York Times* stated in November, "The White House decided to prepare the country for war." The media hoopla included the performance of U.S. defense secretary William Cohen waving a five-pound bag of sugar in front of television cameras and declaring that if the sugar were anthrax it would kill half the population of Washington, D.C. The U.S. government is accusing Baghdad of illegally manufacturing biological and chemical weapons.

The December 1 *Newsweek* magazine featured an article by liberal politician George Stephanopoulos titled "Why we should kill Saddam." The former senior advisor to U.S. president William Clinton wrote, "The gulf-war coalition is teetering and we have not eliminated Saddam's capacity to inflict mass destruction. That's why killing him may be the more sensible — and moral — course over the long run."

Stephanopoulos was referring to the setback the Clinton administration suffered by mid-November, when some of Washington's imperialist allies, with Paris leading the pack, refused to support military strikes, along with the governments of Russia and China. The White House was forced to accept a diplomatic solution brokered by Paris and Moscow.

Ever since, the Clinton administration, weakened by its faltering war drive, has been on the prodd for the next time a pretext could be mustered for renewed war preparations. "The crisis may have disappeared in your minds," White House press secretary told reporters January 13. "It has not changed one whit since October."

According to the Pentagon, there are currently 28,800 U.S. troops in the region. Among them are the crew of 2 aircraft carrier groups — 14 ships — sailing in the Gulf as well as another 7 warships. These include 4 guided missile frigates, 4 cruisers, and 4 destroyers capable of launching cruise missiles deep into Iraq. About 375 U.S. warplanes are in the region, including in Tur-

key. Additional aircraft can be moved in the area within 48 hours.

Since the setback the Clinton administration suffered in November over Iraq, rightists in the United States have assumed more of the leadership of the capitalist war preparations. In a November 19 column, ultrarightist politician Patrick Buchanan said the failure of Washington's allies to support the Clinton administration's military plans against Iraq meant that "multilateralism has been discredited: a new era of American unilateralism is upon us."

In a January 14 column, Buchanan further proposed that Washington take steps to thaw relations with Iran, taking advantage of overtures by new Iranian president Mohammed Khatami. The Iranian government has had adversarial relations with Baghdad since the latter launched a U.S.-backed war against Iran soon after the overthrow of the shah — Washington's favored client regime in that region — through a massive popular upsurge in 1979. "Since the Arab and Western nations we protect are cutting their own deals with Baghdad and Tehran, perhaps it is time we gave up a costly imperial policy," Buchanan said, "and began looking out for America first."

Similar views on U.S. relations with Iran are pushed by an array of capitalist politicians and pundits. "Saddam may not be afraid of America anymore. But he's afraid of Teheran," wrote columnist Thomas Friedman in the January 6 *New York Times*. "If Washington isn't going to play military hardball with Saddam, it should at least play diplomatic hardball. It's time for President Clinton to stop exchanging pleasantries with the moderate new Iranian President... and open a real dialogue."

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Proposal to ban bilingual education sparks debate, protests in California

BY JIM ALTENBERG

OAKLAND, California — State election officials have placed an initiative on the June 1998 ballot to ban the use of bilingual education programs in California's schools. The "English as a Required Language of Instruction" proposition would dismantle bilingual programs now offered in Spanish, Chinese, or any other language. Students who do not speak English fluently would be given a one-year "sheltered English immersion" class, after which they would be enrolled in the regular academic program at their own age or grade level. All other instruction could only take place in English.

This attack on bilingual education has sparked debate and some protests.

The measure's sponsors are Silicon Valley millionaire Ron Unz and Gloria Marta Tuchman, former board member of U.S. English. This chauvinist outfit campaigns for "English-Only" laws aimed at forbidding the use of languages other than English in schools, courts, voting booths, public services, and workplaces. It has endorsed the Unz measure.

Unz and his supporters claim that bilingual programs fail to teach children English. Parents "wanted their children to learn English, not Spanish, and the record of children in English as a second language in California is dismal," Unz told 350 people at a debate on bilingual education at the University of California at Berkeley last October. "Children in some of those classes speak only Spanish." He claims that there is widespread opposition to bilingual education among Latino parents. Unz's public statements and propaganda feature Latino parents and students who charge that bilingual education denied them the ability to learn English.

The real failures of many bilingual programs have enabled Unz to get a hearing among some Chicanos and Spanish-speakers. Unz appeals to parents' genuine fears that their children are not getting an adequate education to win support for his campaign against bilingual education.

Under current law, parents can choose to send their children to bilingual classes or to classes taught only in English. The Unz measure would end this choice, and force those who want bilingual programs to go through complex and difficult procedures to win a waiver of the anti-bilingual law.

There are currently some 1.38 million school children in California deemed to be

of limited English proficiency. Of these, a little over 30 percent are currently enrolled in bilingual education. Availability of these programs varies greatly across the state. For example, Fresno, a large city with a huge immigrant and Spanish speaking population, has 25,566 students who don't speak En-

would not include the regular academic work these students had been doing in their bilingual classes. The classes would not group students by age or grade level. They could include students ranging from 6 to 14 years old in the same classroom, based on a teacher or school official's assessment that

and '70s took up the fight for bilingual education as a central demand. High school students held huge protests in Los Angeles, Denver, and other cities in the southwest. Raising the banner of "Education, not Contempt," and "Education, not Eradication," they called for instruction in Spanish as well as English and for the use of course material relevant to their own culture.

In colleges and high schools, students fought to establish Black, Chicano, Native American, and Asian studies programs as well as affirmative action to open up admissions to the universities. The demand for bilingual/bicultural education was part of a nationalist movement for self-determination by Chicanos and for Chicano control of the institutions and communities where they lived. This fight dealt serious blows to the entire racist setup that condemned Chicanos to the worst living conditions, the poorest schools and public services, and the lowest paying jobs.

In the wake of these struggles, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in the 1974 *Lau v. Nichols* case that failure to provide bilingual programs to students who did not speak English was a denial of their right to an equal education.

The Unz initiative comes in the context of attacks on other advances in the fight for equal educational opportunities won through the struggles of the 1960s and '70s, including busing for desegregation of the schools, and the actual right to free, public, and secular education. Under the banner of "school choice," opponents of public education are demanding the power to use school funds for private and religious schools. In Denver, for example, substandard and unequal education offered in the Denver Public Schools has led some Black and Latino parents to join a class action lawsuit against the school district demanding that a voucher system be set up to allow public funding of private schools.

In Napa, California, a fierce debate has opened up around a proposal to turn three schools over to the Edison Project, a company that runs schools as profit-making business operations. Some 25 schools across the United States are already in the hands of this company, which claims fantastic successes in students' educational achievement.

The attack on bilingual education is also part of broader moves by the rulers against the rights of immigrants and the oppressed. In 1994 California's Proposition 187 was adopted. This law curtailed the right of immigrants to receive public services including health care and education. Federal "welfare reform" and recent immigration laws have extended the reach of Prop. 187's provisions, targeting immigrants for loss of benefits and deportation. More than half of the 22 states that have some sort of law making English the "official" language passed them in the last decade. Only the law in Arizona has been declared unconstitutional.

Jim Altenberg is a member of the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers union.



Chicano students march in California April 17, 1997, to defend Chicano studies and affirmative action. Attack on bilingual education is part of broader assault on immigrant rights.

glish fluently, as defined by the state department of education. Only 6 percent are enrolled in bilingual programs. There are no bilingual programs in the Bay Area city of Alameda, although residents there speak many different languages. In San Francisco, 43 percent of the students with limited English attend bilingual classes. In Oakland that rate is 27 percent, and in Los Angeles it is 34 percent — about 100,000 youth. State funds for bilingual education account for only 0.4 percent of the \$27 billion education budget.

Law would ban non-English instruction

Unz's scheme, which he had hoped to get on the ballot under the title "English for the Children," would immediately force these students into a one-year cram course in English, which could not be repeated and

they are at the same level in their ability to speak English. Students who speak different first languages would attend the same class. The Unz measure would require teachers to speak in English at all times. Teachers, school officials, and other employees could be held legally liable and sued for teaching in another language.

Public forums and meetings to oppose the Unz initiative have begun to take place. The 350 participants at the UC Berkeley debate included many Latino students who supported bilingual education. Two hundred people attended a protest meeting in San Jose in December, and a forum in Oakland drew around 60. The Atzlan Bookstore in Modesto also hosted two meetings. Participants included supporters of Chicano and Latino community organizations such as the Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund, the National Latina Health Organization, and the Labor Council for Latin American Advancement, as well as teachers in bilingual programs, students, and trade unionists.

Bilingual classes were won in struggle

In California the first laws requiring bilingual education were won in 1974 by parents of Chinese-speaking students in San Francisco, as Chicano, Chinese, and Puerto Rican parents and youth across the country fought for equal education.

The Chicano movement of the late 1960s

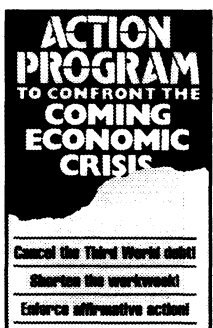
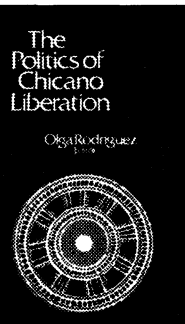
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Pittsburgh cops face trial for third time for killing Black man

BY EDWIN FRUIT

PITTSBURGH — Two suburban cops will stand trial for a third time in the death of Jonny Gammage, Jr., a 31-year-old Black man who was killed following a traffic stop in October 1995. Two previous prosecutions of Milton Mulholland and Michael Albert ended in mistrials in October 1996 and December 1997.

A third cop, John Vojtas, was acquitted in November 1996 by an all-white jury selected from Lackawanna County, far away from Pittsburgh. Two other cops involved in Gammage's death were never charged.

Last month's mistrial resulted from the fact that while 11 white jurors voted to acquit Mulholland and Albert, the one Black juror refused to budge from his vote for a conviction. Patrick J. Thomassey, one of Mulholland's attorneys, said that in the upcoming trial, "I would be reluctant to put an

African American on the jury because that is the reality of this case."

At a news conference January 8, Pittsburgh NAACP president Tim Stevens reacted to Thomassey, saying, "It's a racist statement." He said "it's an insult" to suggest that a Black juror was incapable of making a decision based on the evidence.

Representatives of the United Concerned Christians at Work and the Campus Coalition for Peace and Justice, which have been organizing protests demanding justice in the Gammage case, also spoke at the news conference. These groups are building a march and rally on January 17 to demand the prosecution of all five cops and to commemorate Martin Luther King Day.

Edwin Fruit is a member of International Association of Machinists Local Lodge 1976.

SELL THE BOOKS WORKERS OF THE WORLD NEED

Join the campaign to sell Pathfinder books and pamphlets

Pathfinder sales visits to bookstores in Canada pay off

BY KATY LEROUGETEL

TORONTO — The Pathfinder Press Distribution center set up in Toronto this past August is looking forward to increasing sales in the coming year. Housed in the same building as the Pathfinder Bookstore, it is run by volunteers who pick, pack and invoice orders for Pathfinder titles from bookstores and schools across Canada.

"Students at a university in British Columbia have been reading Pathfinder's *An Introduction to Marxist Economic Theory* by Ernest Mandel, which was ordered as a course adoption title in the fall," said John Steele, business manager. "And the Marxist classic *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific* by Frederick Engels, published by Pathfinder as an inexpensive pamphlet, is being used in a course at another campus."

Top sellers since the opening of the center have been Pathfinder's recent titles *Pombo: A Man of Che's 'guerrilla'* and *At the Side of Che Guevara: Interviews with Harry Villegas (Pombo)*. Cuban Brig. Gen. Harry Villegas fought with Ernesto Che Guevara in the Cuban revolutionary war and later, under the *nom de guerre* Pombo, joined Guevara in internationalist missions in the Congo and Bolivia.

Following a close second in popularity were Pathfinder's new French-language publications, *Le Visage changeant de la politique aux Etats-Unis* (The Changing Face of U.S. Politics), of which 42 have been sold since October 31st, and *La lutte pour un parti prolétarien* (The Struggle for a Proletarian Party) by James Cannon in the same format as the English-language Education

for Socialists series, 8 1/2" by 11" booklets. Thirty have been sold since late September.

Volunteer sales representatives visited bookstores in Saskatoon and Toronto in the late summer and early fall without receiving any orders at the time. Months later, these stores did send in modest book orders to the distribution center.

"A Halifax bookstore phoned about Leon Trotsky's *The Balkan Wars (1912-13)*, and we will be phoning the buyer back with the information they need as well as to point out a few other relevant titles we carry. This is the kind of follow-up work we want to increase," Steele said.

"A new superstore in Toronto features a mural-sized photograph of jazz musician John Coltrane. We'll be making sure that they see (Frank Kofsky's) *John Coltrane and the Jazz Revolution of the 1960s*," he added.

New staff writers join socialist press

BY NAOMICRAINE

This week the *Militant* welcomes Joshua Carroll as a new staff writer. Carroll, 25, is a former airport worker and a leader of the Young Socialists.

Over the last two years Carroll has written for the *Militant* on actions in defense of the Cuban revolution, the work of the YS, and other topics. He moved from Washington, D.C., to Chicago four months ago to take on more national responsibilities in the YS leadership. He will contribute to the paper from Chicago, helping to edit the col-

December Sales of Pathfinder Books to Non Pathfinder Outlets						
DECEMBER						
CITY	GOALS	SOLD	%	NOV	OCT	SEP
UNITED STATES						
DES MOINES	35	574	1640%	163	0	0
ATLANTA	32	204	638%	239	59	29
BOSTON	50	231	462%	9	54	414
PHILADELPHIA	49	158	322%	39	0	0
SAN FRANCISCO	74	195	264%	256	25	25
NEW YORK	190	354	186%	7	59	160
LOS ANGELES	95	148	156%	61	190	288
NEWARK	133	156	117%	1	0	2
CHICAGO	60	69	115%	76	2	129
WASHINGTON, D.C.	42	48	114%	124	12	13
BIRMINGHAM	50	40	80%	5	1	0
PITTSBURGH	49	24	49%		0	16
CLEVELAND	40	18	45%	134	0	146
MIAMI	42	17	40%	108	3	69
SEATTLE	60	21	35%	5	36	9
TWIN CITIES	67	23	34%	16	22	121
HOUSTON	32	8	25%	1	9	59
DETROIT	60	0	0%	28	0	50
U.S. TOTAL	1160	2288	197%	1272	472	1530
CANADA						
VANCOUVER	35	25	71%	16	10	
TORONTO	60	13	22%	24	0	
MONTREAL	41	7	17%	3	12	
CANADA TOTAL	136	45	33%	43	22	

umn "Young Socialists Around the World," among other assignments. Carroll is currently on a West Coast YS speaking tour, building the regional socialist conference that will take place in Seattle January 24-25 (see article and ad on page 7).

At the same time, Francisco Picado has joined the staff of the *Militant's* Spanish-language sister publication, *Perspectiva Mundial*. Picado, 36, who also served on the *Perspectiva Mundial* editorial staff from 1986 to '89, has written for the socialist press on a wide range of issues over the years.

Most recently he has covered political developments in Nicaragua, Washington's attacks on north Korea, and actions in defense of immigrant rights.

In 1993 Picado took part in a reporting team to Cuba for the *Militant* and *Perspectiva Mundial*. At the time, he was living in Miami, where he was a member of the Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union (now the Union of Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Employees), and wrote about political developments there. For the last couple of years, he has worked in the printshop that produces Pathfinder books.

Meeting celebrates the life of Frank Kofsky

BY ASKAITOURÉ

BENICIA, California — More than 50 friends, collaborators, and colleagues of Frank Kofsky met here January 11 to celebrate his life.

Kofsky, a professor of history of California State University at Sacramento, author, and frequent lecturer on jazz, was 62 years old when he died November 19. He was the author, among other works, of *Black Nationalism and the Revolution in Music*, its revised edition *John Coltrane and the Jazz Revolution of the 1960s*, and the forthcoming new book *Black Music, White Business: Illuminating the History and Political Economy of Jazz* — all published by Pathfinder Press.

Messages from friends and colleagues around the country, read by his wife, Bonnie Kofsky, and others characterized Kofsky as "a man of passion," someone who "loved a good argument," and one who "vigorously defended his views." Several, including colleague Joe Morrow, noted the fight that Kofsky — an outspoken partisan of the movements against the Vietnam War and for Black rights — had to wage to keep his teaching post.

A number of the messages noted, as one put it, that Kofsky had a "quality that allowed him to take seriously the views of those with whom he disagreed and propose they continue the discussion." A former student told of a series of lectures Kofsky gave

on the Vietnam War, which were attended by several veterans, some of whom still defended the U.S. role in that war. "The discussions were quite heated," she recalled, "but Frank always left them with a sense that while he disagreed with their views, he respected them."

Glen Spearman, a jazz musician and instructor at Mills College in Oakland who was a longtime friend of Kofsky's, commented that "Frank knew jazz. He respected and knew the hard way jazz artists have to go in the United States."

Spearman said he first read *Black Nationalism and the Revolution in Music* in 1970, and uses it to this day in his classes. He thanked Pathfinder for keeping the book in print, and said he looked forward to reading the new edition.

Michael Baumann, representing Pathfinder, presented Bonnie Kofsky with a copy, just off the press, of *John Coltrane and the Jazz Revolution of the 1960s*.

He explained that "Pathfinder is proud to have been associated with Frank Kofsky and his pioneering work in the history and political economy of jazz for nearly three decades."

In 1969, Baumann said, when Kofsky first came to Pathfinder, "he had a manuscript no other publisher would touch with a 10-foot pole. It was a book that rejected the work of virtually every one else then writing on jazz, a book that explained the deeply interconnected relationship between jazz as a music form and the social history of the Black nationality in the United States — above all its intransigent fight against racial discrimination."

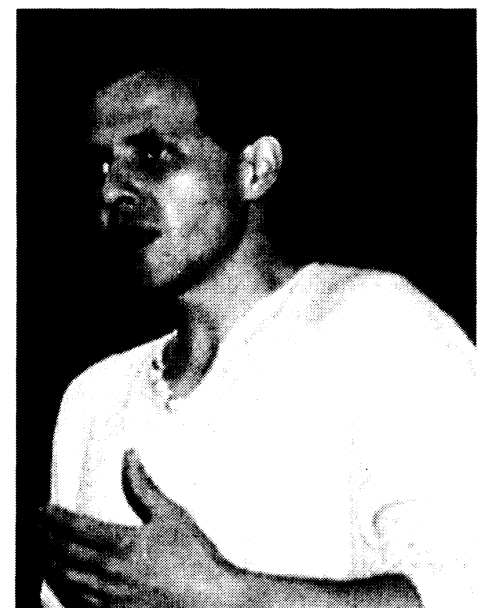
"Pathfinder publishes just those kind books," he said, "books that tell our own true history as working people."

Music was provided by a combo made up of Spearman on saxophone, pianist Matthew Goodheart, and drummer Donal Robinson.



Militant/Scott Breen

Joshua Carroll



Militant/Dave Wulp

Francisco Picado

Just off the press from Pathfinder



By Frank Kofsky

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Ice storm hits workers hardest in Quebec

BY ANNETTE KOURI

MONTREAL — The near-total collapse of Quebec's electrical system has affected over 3 million people in the province. Although power has been reestablished in most of the Montreal area, more than 600,000 people remain without heat and lights, and have no clear idea of when they will get them. Overnight temperatures have dropped to minus 14 degrees Celsius.

The crisis was provoked by torrents of freezing rain that started January 6. Almost immediately, power failures began on the south shore of the Saint Lawrence River. As the week proceeded working people watched as trees and power lines accumulated up to eight inches of ice.

The great majority of Quebec power lines — strung on wooden poles or huge aluminum pylons — collapsed and snapped, hit by trees or branches that fell from the weight of the ice. The only sections along the heavily populated southern part of the Saint Lawrence Valley that weren't touched by power black-outs were areas wealthy neighborhood such as Westmount, where the power lines are buried underground. Hydro-Quebec says that burying more of the power lines would be much too expensive.

Class lines determined how the crisis affected people. Quebec premier Lucien Bouchard declared that he was forced to find a hotel room because he had no power. But all hotel rooms in Montreal were quickly booked solid by those that could afford this option. Thousands of working people were forced to go to hastily established shelters, many of which are seriously overcrowded and lack essential services, including generators for electrical power. Appeals for help from these centers took on added urgency when Hydro-Quebec announced that power for over 600,000 people

would not be reestablished for up to two weeks, or perhaps longer.

Several people in these shelters described their experiences to the *Militant*. Chantal Arcand, who is staying at converted facilities in the Montreal downtown Convention Center, said, "My 14-year-old son has only eaten a banana and a bagel since yesterday. My baby has had no milk in two days. In the meantime, the IGA will throw away meat and milk. Mayor Bourque came. He said that they would help us to have enough food, enough milk. He gave CAN\$35."

Canadian prime minister Jean Chretien and Premier Bouchard were forced to delay their participation in a trade mission to Mexico. Throughout the week they continued to give repeated assurances, but Bouchard finally acknowledged the crisis situation in the shelters January 11. His response was to appeal to those in the region who have power to open their doors to those who don't. He also promised a paltry Can\$70 per week in assistance to those who must leave their homes.

The government's main action has been to send in the Army, ostensibly to pick up broken tree branches and help people without power. Several thousand soldiers came immediately, with the goal of eventually sending in up to 8,000 troops into Quebec and thousands more into adjoining regions.

Favorable publicity is welcomed by the Canadian military — still smarting from the disclosure of the torture and abuses carried out by Canadian troops during a "peacekeeping" operation in Somalia in the early 1990s.

Police have been given special powers that allows them to force people to leave their homes. They can also restrict people's movements, forbidding access to certain areas and demanding to see identification.

Phillip Yankey, a sailor who came to the



Near the Canadian border residents in Watertown, New York, inspect damage left by the ice storm that also hit Canada's eastern provinces.

Convention Center shelter because his family had gone 24 hours with no electricity and his children were getting cold, said, "A police officer came to tell us to boil the water before drinking it, but where do I boil it?"

Michel Roy had been at the Plateau Mont-Royal Center since his apartment building burned down January 6. "There were no fire extinguishers in sight, there are no emergency lights, and the batteries were dead in the fire alarm. It's pure and simple negligence."

There have been at least five deaths from carbon monoxide poisoning, as well as several from fires and hypothermia.

Hospitals are stretched to the breaking point. Already seriously understaffed and under equipped from previous budget cuts by the Quebec government, the hospitals

now face an increased patient load from bone fractures, hypothermia, and basic needs for shelter and food.

The impact on working farmers is not clear, as information is slowly reported. The emphasis, particularly in the countryside, has been on basic survival. But media reports said 3 million liters (more than 790,000 gallons) of milk had to be thrown away as a result of the storm and power outage. In addition, the decimation of maple forests and orchards will have a devastating impact. It took a week before compensation for the farmers was even discussed, and as of January 13 nothing concrete has been proposed.

Parts of south-eastern Ontario, the north-eastern United States, and the Maritime Provinces were also hit by freezing rain and subsequent power cuts. Ontario-Hydro called for volunteers among its workforce in the Toronto area to go to northern Ontario. One of the workers asked why they were not asked to also help in Quebec, and volunteered to go if the call included the entire area that was in crisis. But the help was kept in an Ontario framework.

Throughout the crisis many factories in the larger Montreal region have had electricity. At the factory where this reporter works, one worker suggested that the factory should shut down. He noted that many workers lacked power and had kids to take care of, as well as the fact that it was getting more and more dangerous to get to and from work. His boss answered, "There's no way production will be shut down."

At Samuel and Sons in Laval the union insisted that "floating" paid time off could be used by those workers needing the time.

Joe Young contributed to this article. Annette Kouri and Joe Young are members of the United Steelworkers of America in Montreal.

Boston rail workers push back firing

BY TED LEONARD

BOSTON — "The Board has determined that the discipline imposed is excessive and directs that Claimant be reinstated to service with full seniority rights." So reads the January 8 Public Law Board finding in the case of *United Transportation Union (UTU) v. the National Railroad Passenger Corporation (Amtrak)*, which orders Amtrak to rehire Andrea Morell.

This finding pushes back an attack on workers' rights that has stirred up controversy, discussion, and solidarity among workers at the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) commuter rail service, which is run by Amtrak.

Morell, an assistant conductor and longtime member of the Socialist Workers Party, was the last of four UTU members to be reinstated. The four were taken out of service after one crew failed to detain a wheelchair-bound passenger last June 30. Two members were restored to work in July. Edward Fanion, the conductor of the train, and Morell, who worked the car the passenger was left in, were accused of "gross negligence" by Amtrak and fired July 31.

MBTA commuter rail workers — members of the UTU and the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers (BLE) — were outraged by the company's draconian and unprecedented discipline for an act that any one of them could have committed.

In the past year, this type of incident had occurred at least four times. Amtrak work rules counterpose maintaining train schedules to the safe entraining and detraining of disabled passengers. One result is that they are often put in empty cars. When this leads to a crew leaving a passenger on a train past his or her destination, the company blames the crews involved. Disabled passengers have sued Amtrak for this in the past.

Amtrak has been on a drive to reduce the size of train crews and increase the amount of work for each worker, while demanding workers provide on-time performance.

A petition signed by more than 85 UTU and BLE members called on top union officials to fight the firing of Fanion and Morell. "The undersigned members are extremely upset and angry over Amtrak's recent handling of discipline cases in work zone CS-1. Two members were dismissed for an infraction, that in previous cases had been settled with minor suspensions. If this had

happened years ago, the railroad would have had a problem finding crews at rush hour. The company has no respect for its work force. As a result morale is at an all time low. Something must be done and it must be done NOW." Amtrak workers also collected more than \$2,000 to help out their fired co-workers. Amtrak rescinded its decision to dismiss Fanion and reinstated him after a 60-day suspension.

The company refused to reinstate Morell during the course of its original investigation and two levels of appeal. The UTU took Morell's case to a Public Law Board, a form of review set up by federal rail labor law. The Board held a hearing in Amtrak's Philadelphia offices January 6.

An MBTA engineer, a conductor from Amtrak's Boston passenger service, and a

Conrail conductor accompanied Morell to Philadelphia. The group had letters of support from nine other co-workers, which Morell presented to the board when she made her statement.

Two days later, the Public Law Board ordered that Morell be put back to work.

Commenting on the victory, Morell said, "This episode shows two things above all: Amtrak misestimated the united resistance to this attempt to weaken the union. They were forced to pull back. And, secondly, the company will scapegoat rail workers for unsafe traveling conditions they are responsible for. Rail workers must take the lead in championing passenger safety."

Ted Leonard is a member of the United Transportation Union at Conrail.

Meatpackers in Canada fight lockout

BY SUSAN BERMAN

STONEY CREEK, Ontario — The picket trailer of United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) Local 617-P is standing room only. Some workers are warming up; others are signing in after returning from grocery store leafletting to encourage people to boycott Maple Leaf Foods products.

On October 4 Maple Leaf Foods owner Michael McCain locked out the 280 workers here. UFCW members at the North Battleford, Saskatchewan, plant were also locked out, and workers at the Edmonton, Alberta, and Burlington, Ontario, plants are on strike. The Canadian food giant McCain is driving to radically restructure the pork industry to be more competitive — attempting to slash wages and benefits, increase line speed, and change work rules.

Laurin and Simone Thivierge, a brother and sister who work at the plant and serve on the boycott committee, talked to *Militant* correspondents. "We had 80 percent benefits coverage and now they want to cut that to 50 percent," Simone explained. Laurin added that in the proposed contract, "if you miss one day's work you lose one day seniority. So if you're off on maternity or paternity leave, you'd lose six months."

The majority of the workforce, about 60 percent, is women. Like the other Maple Leaf plants, the workforce is multinational.

This pork processing plant is mainly supplied by the struck plant in Burlington. Some of the strikers from Burlington and Stoney Creek have picketed each others' plants. They also have a joint Boycott Committee.

Of the four plants, the Stoney Creek facility has the second lowest wages. Starting rate is Can\$10.15 (Can\$1 = US\$0.70) an hour. Because of the low wages, many workers rely on overtime to earn a living wage. "We live on overtime, but they want to abolish the workweek," explained Laurin. "What they put in the contract is 40 hours a week [not stipulating a Monday – Friday workweek]. So if it just says 40 hours a week some people can be working Sunday to Thursday and others can work Tuesday to Saturday. None would get overtime pay for the weekend."

Amadeu Vieira has worked at the plant for 6 years and was one of the workers who fought to organize the union here. Vieira said, "He offered us a three-year contract with a 35-cent wage increase the first year and 30 cents the second and third."

He is one of three workers fired by the company for strike-related activity. "They're accusing us of mischief. But they got nowhere to stand," said Vieira, whose brother is one of the others fired by Maple Leaf.

The company has been getting help from the cops and the courts. Among other at-

tacks against unionists, an injunction posted at the gate limits picketing to 15 people. The day before *Militant* reporters visited the picket line, three workers were hit by a pick-up truck driven by security guards escorting another vehicle out of the plant. "It's funny how the people who hit the pickets aren't being charged," Vieira noted.

The locked-out workers have been getting a lot of support from other working people, especially from teachers and auto workers. Simone Thivierge said they get a pretty good response from shoppers when they do their daily leaflet distributions at grocery stores. "We're also going door-to-door distributing flyers and we're hoping by next week to start telephoning."

In a related development, meatpackers at Toronto's Quality Meats have just signed a one-year extension of their contract. At an early-morning plant-gate distribution of the *Militant*, workers stopped to talk and get information on the Maple Leaf strike. Several workers explained the company wanted a short contract extension to see if Maple Leaf succeeds in pushing back the meatpackers, so it could try to do the same.

Solidarity messages and contributions to the locked-out Maple Leaf workers can be sent to: UFCW Local 617-P, 1129 Main St. E., Hamilton, Ontario, L8M 1P2. For more information call: (905) 545-8354.

YS tour condemns threats against Iraq and builds socialist conference in Seattle

Continued from front page

12 with a house meeting at the home of a member of the YS. On the following day, Carroll spoke at Langara College in the afternoon, and at the Pathfinder bookstore in the evening. He also visited an aerospace plant organized by the International Association of Machinists.

Carroll will travel to Los Angeles January 14, to Seattle on the 18th, and to San Francisco on the 20th. His schedule in each of these cities is still in formation. Below is a report on his first stop of the tour.

BY JOSHUA CARROLL

VANCOUVER, British Columbia — We were able to set up a number of small meetings here in Vancouver to build the Seattle Socialist Educational Conference. The first was a house meeting at the home of a member of the Young Socialists January 13 that five young people attended. We began the meeting discussing the U.S. rulers' current war preparations against Iraq, and the importance for working people to oppose it. People agreed that William Clinton and the U.S. capitalist class were looking for an opening to launch another military attack against Iraq in hopes of accomplishing what they could not in their 1991 war: establishing a regime subservient to their interests in Iraq.

We also talked about the recent nationalist campaign by the trade union bureaucracy

in Canada against the Asian Pacific Economic Cooperation forum (APEC). In this campaign, liberal politicians and the trade union officialdom seek to draw working people into seeing themselves as having some "Canadian interest" in common with the Canadian capitalist class. We discussed the reactionary nature of the campaign to "free Tibet" and the fact that it is propaganda aimed against the historic conquests of the Chinese revolution. One participant pointed to the similarities between the call to "free Tibet," and the recent release by Disney of *Anastasia* — a movie that glorifies the reactionary historic role of the Romanov monarchy which the Russian workers and peasants toppled in February 1917.

Through the discussion, a high school stu-

dent at Burnaby Central, Ian Roxborough-Smith, said that he would like to attend the conference in Seattle.

The following afternoon, I went to Avcorp, an aerospace plant organized by the International Association of Machinists. I met with several workers there including Billy Rhude, 26, who explained that he supported the right of the Quebecois to independence from Canada.

He related this fight to both the struggle by Irish republicans and the struggle by Scottish independence fighters against British rule. Rhude was also interested in talking about why socialists and other fight-minded people are so attracted to the Cuban revolution.

That evening, the Young Socialists orga-

nized an open house at the Pathfinder Bookstore. I spoke mostly about the U.S. rulers' war preparations against Iraq. After the meeting, Lenin Fernández, a 26-year-old immigrant worker who wants to attend the conference in Seattle, explained to me that he thinks imperialism is weaker today than ever before.

Fernández said, "Imperialism lost in Vietnam; it lost in Cuba; and it lost in Nicaragua. It's not as strong as it was before." I told him that I agreed, and that's why we need to work today to build the kind of revolutionary movement that can lead the fight to take power.

Xochitl-Itzá Leal is a member of the Young Socialists in Vancouver.

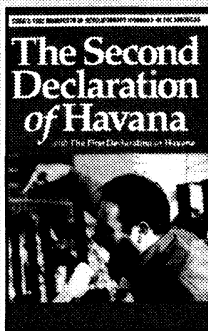
Environment

Continued from Page 10

ing those against abuses of the environment, from the framework I've outlined and in organizing a party of the advanced detachments of the working class — today.

The *Militant's* description of the hysteria of some middle-class defenders of the environment seems accurate to me. If you don't have either the understanding or the confidence that there is a social force — that is the working class — that can and will put us in a position where we can deal with problems such as global warming (whether or not you think it has begun yet), destruction of the ozone layer, and feeding a growing world population, there is a tendency to get desperate and frantically flail around for alternatives. One variant of this is to respond to socialists by exclaiming, "How can you be talking about socialist revolution when the whole world may be destroyed. We've got to save the world first, then we can talk about socialism!" But, of course, all their frenzy leads them to supporting some strain or another of capitalist politics, which can only perpetuate the system that is responsible for the social evils of today's world.

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West Coast Regional Socialist Conference January 24-25 Seattle

Main Presentations

The Siren Call of Economic Nationalism and Washington's March toward Fascism and War

JACK BARNES, National Secretary of the Socialist Workers Party

- ▶ Asia and beyond: the looming crisis in Europe
- ▶ Iraq and beyond: the weakening of the Clinton administration and the shortening war fuse
- ▶ The seduction of the entire North American left by the new leadership of the AFL-CIO
- ▶ Liberal reformers and petty bourgeois radicals walk workers and youth toward Patrick Buchanan's fascist trap
- ▶ Oliver North joins outcry against horror of sweatshops abroad
- ▶ Poor Little Tibet: Today's Poor Little Finland
- ▶ Seattle, Boeing: the central political test of workers' space in the war industries

100 Years of Struggle against Yankee Imperialism: The Weight of the Cuban Revolution in a World of Growing Capitalist Disorder

MARY-ALICE WATERS, Editor of 'New International' magazine

- ▶ The special period, rectification, and the homecoming of Che Guevara's Reinforcement Brigade
- ▶ From Brazil to Japan: Washington's drive to buy up the world
- ▶ The scope of the spreading economic crisis in Latin America and the tasks of revolutionary fighters
- ▶ The pope's visit and its effect on the course of the Cuban revolution
- ▶ The leadership transition to new generations of Cuban communists
- ▶ The combat example set by the Cuban people and their Revolutionary Armed Forces

Schedule

Saturday, January 24

- 9 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. Registration
- 11:00 a.m. Meeting of socialist workers in the United Transportation Union (UTU)
- 12 noon Reception
- 1:00 p.m. Opening presentations and discussion

9:00 P.M. Sendoff for international team to Havana Book Fair and Young Socialists delegation to Cairo meeting to discuss 1997 World Festival of Youth and Students in Havana and next steps for international youth movement.

Social to follow.

Sunday, January 25

- 8:45 a.m.-11:00 a.m. Classes
- 11:15 a.m.-1:30 p.m. Classes
- 2:15-5:45 p.m. Discussion (continued) and Summary of Conference
- 7:00 p.m.-9:30 p.m. Meeting of socialist workers in UTU (to be continued Monday, January 26)

Classes

Who will change the world?
The battle of Birmingham and the fight to end racist segregation

Stephen Bloodworth and Derek Bracey

Iraq and the working-class campaign against imperialist war

Joel Britton and Naomi Craine

From the defeat of Radical Reconstruction to the Spanish-American War: the rise of U.S. imperialism and the struggle against it

Andrea Morell and Ted Leonard

Working farmers in the whirlwind of capitalist crisis: From Mad Cow Disease to Round-Up Ready Beans — The scourge of nationalism and the fight for a worker-farmer alliance

Doug Jenness

The fight for Quebec independence: On the front lines of the struggle against Canadian imperialism

Michel Prairie and Jason Phelps

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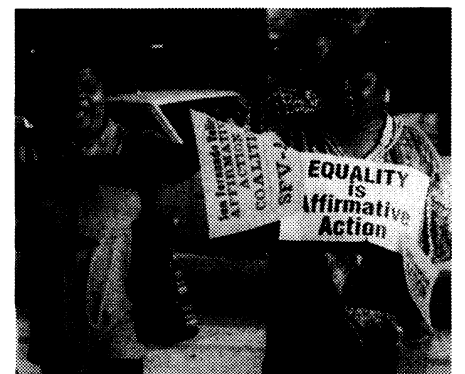
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Selling the *Militant* at Boeing plant gate in Seattle, Dec. 5, 1997



Rally in California in defense of affirmative action, Sept. 19, 1995

VENUE:

Edmond Meany Hotel

4507 Brooklyn Ave. NE
(corner of 45th St. and Brooklyn)

HOSTS:

Young Socialists National Committee,
Los Angeles, San Francisco and
Seattle branches
of the Socialist Workers Party

Unemployed in France occupy gov't buildings

Continued from front page
belonging to a police "union."

The same day about 6,000 workers protested in Marseilles, and smaller actions were held across the country. Unemployed organizations and trade unions are now building for a national day of demonstrations for January 20.

The protesters have been demanding a 3,000 franc (\$500) Christmas bonus for the unemployed, a general increase of 1,500 francs (\$250) a month in minimum social benefits, a guaranteed annual income equal to the minimum wage, and an entire restructuring of the unemployment system. The government has refused to discuss a general increase in minimum social benefits.

The protests have been organized by three national unemployed associations — AC!, APEIS, and MNCP — and the CGT Committee for the Defense of the Unemployed. The CGT is a major union confederation that has ties to the Communist Party (CP). The two social democratic union confederations, the CFDT and FO, have opposed the actions.

The occupations quickly led to open divisions in the government, which came to power in May headed by the Socialist Party. It includes the Communist Party, Greens, and several smaller formations. The Greens and the CP generally support the protests. The Labor and Employment minister, Martine Aubry of the Socialist Party, condemned them as "illegal actions."

Alain Bocquet, president of the French CP group in the National Assembly, called the January 10 police intervention a "serious human and political error." Dominique Voynet, Minister of the Environment and leader of the Greens, supported Jospin's decision to call in the CRS riot cops. She had previously supported the occupations.

The fascist press has virulently denounced the actions at unemployment offices. The *National Hebdo*, a weekly that supports the National Front, a fascist party led by Jean-Marie Le Pen, called the protests a "political maneuver launched by the Communist Party in order to put pressure on the government and — above all — take over the popular electorate attracted to the National Front." The threat to "public order" that the occupations represented should not be allowed "to go too far," the fascist paper warned. At the same time, National Front leaders are demagogically expressing sympathy for the unemployed, blaming immigrants and "15 years of socialism" for the high jobless rate.

"French, immigrants, young and old — everyone in the Marseilles occupation was really together in a fantastic spirit of solidarity," said Eric Ducoing, a young leader of one of the unemployed groups. He talked to *Militant* correspondents in the Paris office of AC! (Act together against unemployment!), an association that campaigns for the rights of unemployed.

Unemployment remains high in France. The official level is 12.4 percent, which represents 3.1 million workers. Hundreds of thousands — particularly youth — have been out of work for a long time and have used up their unemployment compensation.

"Unemployment benefits were scaled back starting in 1993 when a new system was instituted," Ducoing said. "Benefits are now reduced by 17 percent after four months and are reduced another 17 percent after six months. When unemployment benefits reach a fixed minimal level, the unemployed worker is eligible for other social benefits instead of regular unemployment. Only 43 percent of registered unemployed are receiving regular benefits today. The rest are on various forms of welfare — if they are lucky."

A recent poll showed that 48.8 percent of the unemployed do not have the necessary medical care because of the low rate of unemployment benefits. The various welfare funds have now also come under attack. On July 2, 1997, the UNEDIC — a joint union and employer committee that manages the unemployment insurance funds — reduced access to one of the principle benefits, called the Allocation Solidarité (Solidarity Fund). This cut eligibility to those who had worked a minimum of four months in the last 18. This effectively cut off the last resources for tens of thousands of young people. The measure, approved by the bosses and by the CFDT and FO unions

but opposed by the CGT, went into effect October 1.

These cutbacks came into direct conflict with actions organized by unemployed workers in Marseilles who were demanding a renewal of the Christmas bonus they had won in previous years. In December 1995, in the midst of the railroad workers strikes that paralyzed the country, 15,000 unemployed workers demonstrated in Marseille and won a 1,400 franc (\$233) Christmas bonus for 18,373 unemployed.



Protesters in Bourse, France, dampen cops January 13.

The next year, a similar bonus was won for 60,000 unemployed workers. However, when the protests began in 1997, workers were told that the cutbacks in the Solidarity Fund made a Christmas bonus impossible.

Outraged, jobless workers started to occupy unemployment offices throughout the Marseilles area on December 11. Soon eight out of 13 offices in the area were occupied and the occupations began to take place in other cities. As soon as the CRS could evacuate one center, others were occupied in other cities. In some cases, local town halls were occupied, as well as various other government offices and, in one case, a bank.

As the protests spread they centered on raising regular benefits for all the unemployed — not just through a special Christ-

mas bonus. "We are also for reducing the work week in order to create jobs and reduce unemployment," Ducoing told the *Militant*.

Laurent Raiola did not spend Christmas as usual this year. On December 27 he demonstrated in Paris with 300 supporters of the unemployed associations. "We took over the Social Action Center, a government office, before the CRS could block the entrance," he said. With 25 others, Raiola was still barricaded inside a week later. The CRS had surrounded the center and the only means the demonstrators had to communicate with the outside world was by telephone or posting handwritten messages in the windows. Like three or four other demonstrators, Raiola has a job, but the others were all unemployed and ranged in age from 20 – 60 years old. "We only agreed to voluntarily leave the center when the Paris Prefecture agreed to give 1,800 francs (\$300) to a list of unemployed workers in the greatest financial difficulty," he added.

Opponents initially tried to ridicule the protests as the political mobilization of a tiny minority. But there was widespread support by workers and youth for the occupations. One national poll showed 63 percent supporting the actions.

This comes at a time when tensions are growing around the government's plans to present a draft law to reduce the work week to 35 hours. Attacks on the government's plan by right-wing French president Jacques Chirac have become a daily phenomenon. On January 13 five employers organizations issued a joint statement urging the government to drop its draft law.

Claude Bleton contributed in the preparation of this article.

CORRECTION

Last week's *Militant* carried an inaccurate headline on the article about the Goodrich tire strike in Indiana. The headline should have read, "Tire strikers return to work at Goodrich."

MILITANT LABOR FORUMS

MASSACHUSETTS

Boston

The Truth About Tibet: Imperialism and the Chinese Revolution. Fri. Jan. 23, 7:30 p.m. 780 Tremont St. Donation: \$4. Tel: (617) 247-6772.

MICHIGAN

Detroit

Defend Abortion Rights! Panel discussion. Fri.

Jan. 23, 7:00 p.m. 7414 Woodward (one blk north of Grand). Donation: \$4. Tel: (313) 875-0100.

AUSTRALIA

Sydney

Jabiluka: The Struggle of the Mirrar People Against the Jabiluka Uranium Mine. Film, discussion, and report on campaign by Justin White from the Wilderness Society. Fri., Jan. 23, 7 p.m.

66 Albion St., Surry Hills. Donation: \$4. Tel: 9281-3297.

NEW ZEALAND

Christchurch

1951 — Key Union Battle. Featuring video *Shattered Dreams*, a film of the 1951 waterfront lockout. 199 High Street. Fri., Jan. 23, 7 p.m. Donation: \$3. Tel: (3) 365-6055

— CALENDAR —

COLORADO

Denver

Protest U.S. Travel Ban of Cuba. Sat., Jan. 24. Rally 2:00 – 2:30 p.m. between Denver Art Museum and Denver Public Library, 100 West 14th Ave. **March:** 2:30 – 3:30 p.m. Public Library, past the State Capitol, down 16th St. Mall, North on South, past the Federal Bldg., and on to the Mercury Cafe. **Political discussions:** 3:30 – 4:00 p.m. Mercury Cafe. **Cuba Dance:** 4:00 – 6:30 p.m. (2nd floor, Mercury Cafe). Cover: \$4. For more information, contact *Coloradans for Cuba*, 1200 Madison, P.O. Box 516, Denver, CO 80206. Tel: (303) 333-7936.

GEORGIA

Atlanta

The Economic Recovery of Cuba in the Face of the Helms-Burton Law. Speaker: Félix Wilson, deputy chief of the Cuban Interests Section. Fri., Jan. 23, 7:30 p.m. North Decatur Presbyterian Church (at Scott Blvd. and North Decatur Rd.) Sponsored by the Atlanta Network on Cuba. For more information, call: (404) 377-4980.

MASSACHUSETTS

Boston

Class: Lessons of the Fight for Abortion Rights and for the Equal Rights Amendment. Sat., Jan. 24, 4 p.m. 780 Tremont St. Tel: (617) 247-6772.

WASHINGTON

Seattle

Defend Free Speech and Workers Rights. Protest meeting to restore Socialist Workers Campaign Exemption. Speakers: Representative of ACLU, Washington; Doug Jenness, Socialist Workers National Campaign Director; Dale Bartley, International Association of Machinists Local 2202; Jason Welling, Shorecrest Students for Democracy, sponsored by Seattle Committee to Defend Free Speech. Sat., Jan. 31, 7p.m. For more information, call: (206) 346-0379.

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A riddle — Visa International reports a record 13.4 million personal bankruptcies last year, a 20 percent jump over '95. An apparently puzzled news report said the



Harry Ring

trend continues "despite an increasingly prosperous population."

Another riddle — "Nationally, 86 percent of the cities surveyed recently by the U.S. Conference of

Mayors reported an increased demand for emergency food assistance ... And 38 percent of those seeking food aid are employed." — News item.

Black vs. orange — After heated public debate, the Riverside, California, school board voted to name its new school after Martin Luther King Jr. Opponents had argued that the name would hinder graduates of the school from being admitted to colleges, which might think it's a "Black school."

Many prefaced their remarks with kind words for Dr. King. A number argued for a name reflecting the area's citrus heritage. (On a rare unsmoggy day, you can see

where the orange groves used to be.)

Neat — Claudia Gómez, one of those arguing to name the new Riverside school after King, began by assuring, "Don't get me wrong. I like oranges."

Science and capitalism — Back at mid-century, Quaker Oats decided to match advertising claims of rival Cream of Wheat. In collaboration with prestigious MIT, radioactive cereal was fed to 100 boys — many falsely classified as retarded — at the Fernald school in Massachusetts.

It was part of an experiment to prove that oat nutrients spread throughout the body. Quaker has

now agreed to pay \$1.85 million to settle a damage suit.

Boom and bust — A federal panel anticipates a 50 percent increase in air travel by 2006 and warns, "A system straining at the seams of capacity is one that is also straining to be safe.... Sheer growth is going to result in more accidents." The panel recommended airport improvements and semi-privatization of air control operations.

Quotas? Nah, just numbers — The Internal Revenue Service did a self-audit, which confirmed that tax collectors are "improperly" seizing people's homes and other property.

The auditors said the collectors persistently confuse "statistical benchmarks" with quotas. They said the amount of revenue raised is not an official part of job evaluations, but, informally, managers do talk about it often.

Theft for art's sake — The exhibit of priceless art works of antiquity at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts drew angry protest from the countries of origin of the works. Among museum visitors there was a variety of opinions.

Asserted one knuckle-head: "I think it's sad they were not able to protect their own culture. We certainly wouldn't want them destroyed in a revolution."

Civil war opened new era for U.S. class struggle

Over the next several weeks, this column will feature a series of excerpts that explain the conditions that gave rise to U.S. imperialism and the struggle against it. We begin here with the second American revolution — the Civil War of 1861-65 — which destroyed the system of chattel slavery in the southern United States. Other columns will take up the period of Radical Reconstruction and struggle for land by Black former slaves; the bloody counterrevolution that halted this process; the Cuban wars for independence; and the Spanish-American war of 1898. We encourage our readers to send in any suggestions for this series.

Karl Marx and Frederick Engels wrote

BOOK OF THE WEEK

extensively on the Civil War, and their co-thinkers in the United States fought with the Union Army against the slavocracy. Below are major excerpts of two letters by Karl Marx. The first is addressed to Abraham Lincoln, president of the United States, just after his reelection in 1864. The second letter was written in 1865 following Lincoln's assassination and is addressed to President Andrew Johnson. It was sent on behalf of the Central Council of the International Workingmen's Association. The letters appear in the collection *Marx and Engels on the United States*, published by Progress Publishers and distributed by Pathfinder.

BY KARL MARX

To Abraham Lincoln, president of the United States of America

Sir, — We congratulate the American people upon your re-election by a large majority. If resistance to the Slave Power was the reserved watchword of your first election, the triumphant war-cry of your reelection is Death to Slavery.

From the commencement of the Titanic American strife the working men of Europe

felt instinctively that the star-spangled banner carried the destiny of their class. The contest for the territories which opened the dire epopee, was it not to decide whether the virgin soil of immense tracts should be wedded to the labour of the emigrant or prostituted by the tramp of the slave-driver?

When an oligarchy of 300,000 slaveholders dared to inscribe for the first time in the annals of the world "slavery" on the banner of Armed Revolt, when on the very spots where hardly a century ago the idea of one great Democratic Republic had first sprung up, whence the first Declaration of the Rights of Man¹ was issued, and the first impulse given to the European revolution of the eighteenth century; when on those very spots counter-revolution, with systematic thoroughness, gloried in rescinding "the ideas entertained at the time of the formation of the old constitution", and maintained "slavery to be a beneficent institution", indeed, the only solution of the great problem of "the relation of capital to labour", and cynically proclaimed property in man "the corner-stone of the new edifice", — then the working classes of Europe understood at once, even before the fanatic partisanship of the upper classes for the Confederate gentry had given its dismal warning, that the slaveholders' rebellion was to sound the tocsin for a general holy crusade of property against labour, and that for the men of labour, with their hopes for the future, even their past conquests were at stake in that tremendous conflict on the other side of the Atlantic. Everywhere they bore therefore patiently the hardships imposed upon them by the cotton crisis,² opposed enthusiastically the pro-slavery intervention — importunities of their betters — and, from most parts of Europe, contributed their quota of blood to the good cause.

While the working men, the true political powers of the North, allowed slavery to defile their own republic, while before the Negro, mastered and sold without his concurrence, they boasted it the highest prerogative of the white-skinned labourer to sell himself and choose his own master, they were unable to attain the true freedom of labour, or to support their European brethren in their struggle for emancipation; but this barrier to progress has been swept off by the red sea of civil war.

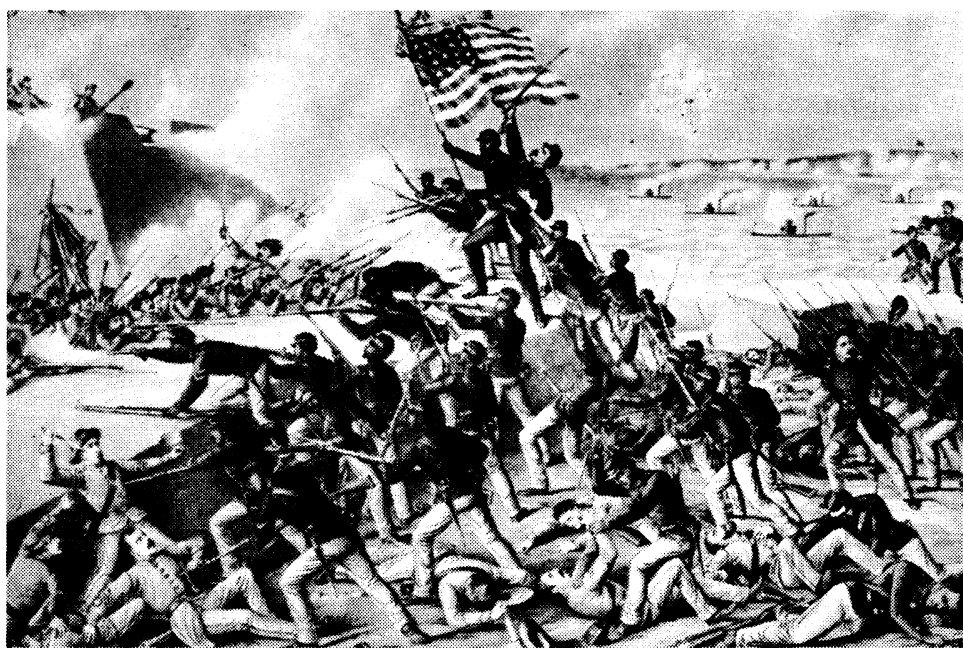
The working men of Europe feel sure that, as the American War of Independence initiated a new era of ascendancy for the middle class, so the American Anti-Slavery War will do for the working classes. They consider it an earnest of the epoch to come that it fell to the lot of Abraham Lincoln, the single-minded son of the working class, to lead his country through the matchless struggle for the rescue of an enchained race and the reconstruction of a social world.

To Andrew Johnson, President of the United States

¹ The reference is to the Declaration of Independence.

² The cotton crisis was caused by the stoppage of cotton deliveries from America due to the blockade of the Southern slave states by the Federal fleet. Most of the European cotton industry was paralyzed, and this worsened the condition of the workers.

³ The phrase is from a speech in defense of slavery by Alexander Stephens, a Confederate leader, on March 19, 1861.



54th Colored Regiment charges Fort Wagner, South Carolina in Civil War, July 18, 1863. Marx and Engels actively promoted the fight to defeat the slavocracy, which would remove the major obstacle to development of the U.S. working-class movement.

Sir, The demon of the "peculiar institution",³ for the supremacy of which the South rose in arms, would not allow his worshippers to honourably succumb in the open field. What he had begun in treason, he must needs end in infamy....

Yours, Sir, has become the task to uproot by the law what has been felled by the sword, to preside over the arduous work of politi-

cal reconstruction and social regeneration. A profound sense of your great mission will save you from any compromise with stem duties. You will never forget that, to initiate the new era of the emancipation of labour, the American people devolved the responsibilities of leadership upon two men of labour — the one Abraham Lincoln, the other Andrew Johnson.

— 25 AND 50 YEARS AGO —

25 CENTS THE MILITANT A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF THE WORKING PEOPLE

January 26, 1973

DETROIT—The polarization here between the Black community and the police department grows wider as each day passes. Tensions have reached such heights that one conservative TV commentator was recently compelled to say, "Detroit police had better reconcile their differences with the Black community rapidly or be faced with another '67." He was referring to the ghetto uprising that rocked this city in the summer of 1967.

The current situation stems from a pre-dawn shoot-out Dec. 4 between four white STRESS police officers and three Blacks. STRESS (Stop the Robberies—Enjoy Safe Streets) is a group of plainclothes cops who have been involved in 16 known deaths—15 of whom were Blacks — since the group's inception one year ago. When the smoke cleared, the four STRESS officers were wounded and the three Blacks, identified as Mark Bethune, 22, Hayward Brown, 18, and John Boyd, 23, had escaped. On Dec. 27, Bethune, Brown, and Boyd were allegedly involved in the killing of one STRESS officer and the wounding of another. They are now the object of what has been characterized as "the most intensive manhunt in this city's recent history."

The Detroit Common Council, in an attempt to quell the growing antipolice sentiment in the Black community, held a public hearing Jan. 11. The hearing had to be moved to a larger auditorium because of an overflow crowd of 2,000 Blacks. The crowd was visibly angry. Relatives and friends of

the suspects and others told of midnight raids on their homes, unexplained searches, physical abuse, and harassment. Police Commissioner Nichols attempted to read a statement defending the action of his officers but was repeatedly interrupted with boos and shouts of "Lies! Lies!" He finally left the meeting without completing his statement.

THE MILITANT PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF THE WORKING PEOPLE NEW YORK, N.Y. FIVE (5) CENTS

January 26, 1948

Prodded by hunger, the German working class is returning to the arena of struggle. Dispatches from Germany report that 90,000 workers in Cologne have tied up the city in a general strike. 100,000 workers in Nuremberg are scheduled to walk off their jobs.

These strikes come on the heels of walk-outs which occurred in various industrial centers of the Ruhr last week involving at least 150,000 workers in basic industries. The workers returned to their jobs with the clear warning that they would resume the strike unless drastic measures were taken to improve the food situation.

British and American military occupation forces who rule the area are responsible for a policy of starving the people in their zones. It is now openly admitted that the promise of the Anglo-American bizonal authorities to maintain the daily diet at 1650 calories has never been kept. During the last weeks the daily diet has dropped to the famine level of 1100 calories daily, and little hope is held out that it will rise to even 1400 calories in the next months.

for further reading

Marx and Engels on the United States

Karl Marx and Frederick Engels

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Marx and Engels on the United States

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Protest threats against Iraq

Continued from front page

Iraqi government and replace it with a regime that will meekly do the bidding of Wall Street.

The U.S. government, however, faces some problems with its imperialist rivals and other states represented in the UN Security Council. While obtaining a Security Council statement that condemned the government of President Saddam Hussein, Washington faces conflicts of interests with Paris, as well as with Moscow, in trying to get official UN cover to unleash a direct military attack on Iraq.

In November, the Clinton administration carried out similar provocations against Iraq and moved to the brink of a large-scale military assault. But the U.S.-led "coalition" quickly unraveled and that intervention plan failed. The immediate threat of military action receded. This was due not to gains won in struggle by working people, but to conflicts between the imperialists themselves. So the interimperialist tensions have grown and the war fuse continues to burn.

In fact, the relative political weakness of the Clinton administration makes it more dangerous, not less. It is more likely to lurch into a military adventure. Meanwhile, those who advocate unilateral U.S. military action from a posi-

tion of strength — the clearest voice being ultrarightist politician Patrick Buchanan — have been boosted.

The war threats against Iraq are simply an extension of the U.S. employers' war against working people at home, from the attacks on bilingual education to bosses' attempts to fire militant workers.

The drive to war is caused not by bad individuals in office, but by the need of the U.S. billionaire rulers — the "Sixty Families" — to salvage their increasingly volatile world order. That capitalist order is in trouble, as seen today in the Asian financial catastrophe and, above all, the looming crisis in Europe.

What our class needs to do is organize protests that get out the truth about the U.S.-led war moves. Daily, systematic political work is needed inside factories and mills, at plant gates, in Black and other working-class neighborhoods, to get into the hands of fellow workers the *Militant* and books that explain Washington's march toward fascism and war. This is the only way to find, get to know, and fight together with other worker-militants and youth who are attracted to the perspective of building a working-class party capable of leading millions toward a revolutionary struggle to disarm the war-makers by taking state power.

Defend bilingual education

Working people have a big stake in beating back a reactionary campaign to eliminate bilingual education in the California public schools. The ballot measure demagogically advertised as the "English for the Children" initiative would make bilingual programs illegal and force students now studying in Spanish, Chinese, Vietnamese, or other languages into classes taught only in English.

The issue has nothing to do with good or bad teaching methods. The attack on bilingual education is part of the capitalist rulers' attempts to curtail the rights of immigrant workers and oppressed nationalities while chipping away at social entitlements, driving down wages and working conditions, and pushing back the democratic rights of working people as a whole. Their "welfare reform" schemes, police brutality, and widespread Immigration and Naturalization Service raids and deportations are aimed at deepening the divisions within the working class and forcing its most vulnerable sections to share a major burden of the devastating capitalist economic crisis. This is how the rulers seek to weaken working-class solidarity and resistance to their austerity measures.

Bilingual education was won through massive struggles by Chicanos, Chinese, and Puerto Ricans in the 1960s and '70s. It coincided with the battles of farm workers to unionize California's fields. It was one front in the battle for equal education that included the fight for affirmative action and busing for desegregation of schools, open admission to public colleges, and Black, Chicano, Asian, and

Native American studies programs.

The Chicano youth who walked out of high schools for bilingual education demanded and won respect for themselves and their culture. They challenged the racist setup that condemned them to the poorest schools, the worst jobs, and the prison cells throughout the country.

The "English for the Children" sponsors want to roll back the clock to the days when Mexican and Chicano students were forbidden from speaking Spanish at school, and when the quality of education available to them was among the worst.

These rightist politicians are political servants for the wealthy class, who seek to exploit the real concerns among millions of working people over the inadequacy of education offered in the public schools, including many of the existing bilingual programs. They are in the vanguard of advancing the rulers' campaign to scapegoat immigrants and oppressed nationalities for social problems, while promoting U.S. national chauvinism, to convince working people to view themselves as "Americans."

Working people should reject this reactionary propaganda, which lays the ground for deeper assaults and imperialist war moves. By fighting to defend and extend the right to bilingual education, the labor movement can strike a blow on the side of those hit hardest by the capitalist system and advance the struggle for a society where the resources are used for all of humanity instead of the profit hunger of the wealthy minority in power.

Ice storm disaster is not natural

While the ice storm that hit Quebec and parts of Ontario, the Maritimes, and the northeastern United States had natural causes, its disastrous impact on working people is a result of the profit-driven workings of capitalism. In the cities, it is disproportionately working people who are forced into inadequate emergency shelters, without the money to leave town or rent a hotel room. The run-down housing in many working-class neighborhoods is more susceptible to fire and other accidents as residents try to resolve the lack of heat and light. Many working farmers have been hard hit by the destruction of animals, machinery, and the fruit and maple trees they make their livelihood from and lack the resources needed to recover.

The federal government has seized the occasion to deploy 12,000 Canadian troops — about 8,000 of them in Quebec — using the pretext that they are necessary to help with repairs and cleanup, while thousands of volunteering working people have been turned down and left unorganized by the authorities. Now the troops have been given police powers. Little else has been done to mobilize resources in the rest of Canada to help Quebec which has been by far the hardest hit. This contrasts with the millions that were spent to bring tens of thousands to Montreal for a rally against Quebec sovereignty just before the referendum on that question in October 1995.

Federal officials have used the deployment of troops to try to improve the image of the Canadian army, which suffered a major blow when it was involved in the murder of several Somalis in 1993. They are preparing for the day when they will once again be used against the Quebecois fighting for independence, as they were in 1970.

Using the pretext of preventing looting and making sure that people don't freeze to death, police patrols have been stepped up and the police have been given special powers to remove people from their homes by force and to control access to certain areas.

Working people have been at the forefront of responding to the crisis, from the efforts to repair the badly damaged electrical system, to clean up and staffing the hospitals. The labor movement needs to take the lead in calling for a massive Canada-wide effort to help those hit by the crisis. They should campaign for full compensation for all those who have suffered losses. This needs to include full payment of lost wages to workers and complete reimbursement to working farmers for losses in livestock, crops, machinery, and other inputs.

The unions need to call for a massive and immediate program of public works to repair the electrical system and other damage caused by the ice storm. Workers should be hired at union-scale wages to carry out the installation of electrical lines underground, which is much safer than the present system. The army should go back to the barracks. All attempts to increase the repressive powers of the police should be opposed.

In Cuba — where working people hold state power — when a hurricane or any other natural disaster strikes, the whole population is immediately mobilized by the revolutionary government to save human lives and limit the impact. This points to the need for working people in Canada and elsewhere to fight to replace the capitalist regimes with workers and farmers governments that act to defend human needs, not profits.

Socialism and the environment

BY DOUG JENNESS

In their letters to the editor published in this issue, Gerald Field and Gary Cohen criticize the *Militant* for allegedly not taking the struggle against environmental destruction, including global warming, seriously enough and for appearing to counterpose socialist revolution to the fight against despoliation of the environment. They also object to an editorial in the December 29 issue stating that the apocalyptic approach of some middle-class environmental activists verges on "hysteria."

Their comments offer an opportunity to step back and assess the stakes of the revolutionary workers movement in the fight against environmental ruin. To do this we need to answer two questions: who is responsible for

DISCUSSION WITH OUR READERS

destroying the environment and how can this curse be stopped?

We are the only animal species that is dependent on toolmaking for survival, and from our very origins the procurement of food and shelter has led to altering nature. The rise of industrial capitalism dramatically accelerated this process. As the young revolutionists, Karl Marx and Frederick Engels wrote in *The Communist Manifesto* in 1848, "The bourgeoisie, during its rule of scarce one hundred years, has created more massive and more colossal productive forces than have all preceding generations together." This not only brought many benefits to humanity but unleashed a myriad of hazards to our health and safety and the well-being of the environment. Modern capitalist society, Marx and Engels wrote, "has conjured up such gigantic means of production and exchange," that it "is like the sorcerer who is no longer able to control the powers of the nether world whom he has called up by his spells." This apt description rings even truer in today's world of nuclear energy, widespread use of fossil fuels, application of chemicals to farmlands, genetic engineering, and the possible threat of global warming and holes in the ozone layer.

Industrial workers and working farmers, the producing classes in our society, are right at the center of where nature is altered through mining and logging, manufacturing and processing, and cultivation and breeding of plants and animals. Consequently, we are at the center of where contaminants and pollutants are produced and where necessary resources like soil and water are squandered. We face both the hazards of the production process on the job and those of the wastes in our communities. From this vantage point working people increasingly are recognizing the stakes we have in the fight to protect our safety and environment.

Even though it's our labor that is altering nature we are not to blame. The mines, mills, factories, storage depots, and transportation lines are not in our hands. Control over what is produced and how it's produced and transported is not in our hands. In large measure this is also true for working farmers, who are told by banks and manufacturing monopolies what, when, and where to plant and what seeds and chemicals to use or else face foreclosure.

Marx appropriately stated in *Capital*, "Capitalist production ... only develops ... by simultaneously undermining the original sources of all wealth — the soil and the worker." The capitalists are driven by the very nature of their private property system to try to squeeze as much profits out of working people as possible. This includes cutting corners on safety and resisting and cheating on emission standards.

Many working people know that when we have fought collectively and asserted united strength against the employers we have been able to win some protection. Fights over safety and health have been a central aspect of union struggles in mining and other industries.

As the international crisis of capitalism worsens, working people are going to be increasingly ravaged by war, unemployment, inflation, police brutalization, cuts in social services, and an escalation of on-the-job hazards and environmental blight. In response we will fight to organize to protect ourselves from being physically, socially, and morally destroyed as a class. But if these struggles don't help prepare us and point us toward overturning capitalist rule and replacing it with *our* government, one of working people, we will never be able to rid the world of the horrors of capitalism. Through a workers and farmers government we will be able to abolish capitalist ownership of industry and replace it with state ownership and a planned economy. This won't be sufficient to end environmental destruction, as we have seen with the devastating environmental destruction in Russia, Eastern Europe, and China. To accomplish this, working people must also be in full command of economic planning. Through this activity they will deepen their social understanding and collective action, advancing toward communist society.

If Cohen and Field agree with this we have no argument. But I detect in their comments a tendency to underestimate the importance of preparing today for the class explosions that will bring tens of millions into action. This preparation includes participating in all struggles, includ-

Continued on Page 7

2,400 paper workers press strike in Canada

BY PAUL KENT

VANCOUVER, British Columbia — Some 2,400 pulp and paper workers at three different mills are into their seventh month of a strike, with no end in sight. Two-thirds of the strikers are members of the Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union (CEP), while the others belong to the Pulp, Paper and Woodworkers of Canada (PPWC).

Their employer, Fletcher Challenge Canada (FCC), is demanding mill-wide "flexibility" on job classification and contracting out, 365-day continuous production, and a six-year contract. It claims the union has already conceded these demands to pulp and paper mills in eastern Canada.

On January 5 the New Democratic Party provincial government appointed arbitrator Vince Ready as a one-man commission of inquiry into the conflict. As mediator, Ready is assigned to make public his nonbinding recommendations for a settlement to both parties. Ready's appointment comes following a meeting between NDP premier Glen Clark, union officials, and FCC president Doug Whitehead.

Clark called the prospects for a settlement "very debatable." The main issue that has kept the picket lines up since July 14 is the company's drive for "full flexibility, meaning the workers agreeing to do any maintenance work assigned by the company, regardless of traditional trade jurisdictions. The provincial premier, who has not ruled out the possibility of imposing a settlement, complained that the issue "has become a kind of philosophical one ... a holy grail."

The union members at FCC see full flexibility as a life and death issue, however, that will affect job security and safety.

Other workers are following the strike at Fletcher Challenge, the longest in the history of the pulp and paper industry in British Columbia. The 12,000 members of the pulp and paper unions in the province are each contributing \$50 per week to provide the strikers with \$400 per week strike pay so they can stay out for as long as it takes to push back this assault.

One of the workers contributing \$50 per week to the strike is Dana Tillstone, a member of PPWC Local 6. He works as a shift engineer at Macmillan Bathurst in the Vancouver area. Commenting on the importance of pushing back the bosses' demand for full flexibility for himself and others, he told the *Militant* that pulp mills contain "ma-

chinery that has no respect for humans. It can kill you quick."

"Lack of competitiveness is the single biggest negative issue facing the industry in BC and labor costs are one of the most significant factors impacting on competitiveness," asserts Mike MacCallum of Price Waterhouse, a consulting firm commissioned by FCC to study the flexible work practices at mills in eastern Canada.

MacCallum claims that 1996 labor costs at coastal mills in British Columbia were Can\$150 per ton — the highest in the world — compared to Can\$113 per ton in the BC interior, Can\$105 in eastern Canada, Can\$87 in the western United States, and Can\$68 in Scandinavia (Can\$1= US\$0.70). He concludes, "The industry in BC cannot sustain labor costs that are higher than competitors in other regions. Return on capital employed is well below what investors can reasonably expect."

Phil Davies, editor of PPWC Local 2 newsletter, questioned the accuracy of these figures. "During negotiations we were given several.... charts and detailed cost break downs. We were told that this was very confidential stuff, so please do not share it with the public. I guess FCC didn't share it with Price Waterhouse either. The cost of labor per tonne at FCC's Crofton mill? [Can]\$95 per tonne of pulp produced and only \$92 per tonne of paper produced."

Fletcher Challenge says 140 jobs will be shed in the three mills as a result of implementing total flexibility. But workers on the picket line at the Crofton mill told *Militant* reporters December 27 that at least 200 jobs would be eliminated at their mill alone.

Several strikers at a October 29 march and rally in Vancouver, which coincided with FCC's annual shareholder meeting here, de-



Militant/Xochitl Leal

Pulp and paper workers on the picket lines at Fletcher Challenge, Crofton, Vancouver Island, Dec. 27, 1997.

scribed the implications the "full flexibility" policy would have on health and safety inside the mill. "Full flexibility means they can get a millwright changing a fuse in a 600 volt starter — presently only done by an electrician. This could eventually lead to someone getting electrocuted," remarked Rick McConnell, who works as an operator at the Crofton mill. "In fact I work in the section of the mill where two supervisors were killed last week while inspecting a de-aerator tank that removes oxygen from the water used in the mill's boilers."

Jim Lee, a millwright at Crofton, also felt strongly about the dangers to health and

safety posed by the company's demand. "Flexibility wound up killing two supervisors in a steam plant last week," he said, referring to the same incident.

Support for the strikers has come from as far as New Zealand. Pulp and paper workers from the Manufacturing and Construction Workers Union there sent a Can\$5,000 contribution to the strikers last month. They toured the picket lines and spoke to meetings of both the PPWC and CEP last fall. A number of pickets this reporter spoke to underlined the importance of this support from unions in New Zealand, where Fletcher Challenge is based.

Longshoremen walk off job in Boston

BY JOHN HARDING

BOSTON — Longshoremen walked off the job here November 14 in a three-day strike in response to an attempt by the Massachusetts Port Authority (Massport) to deny workers pay for waiting time after being called in for a job unloading a ship. The action closed the container port in Boston's Moran Terminal and forced the ship to steam back to New York to unload cargo.

The 250 members of the International

Longshoremen's Association Local 1066 are seeking a new contract with Massport. The company is trying to force another round of concessions on the union to meet shippers' demands to consolidate port operations for container shipping at one port and open up a new automobile terminal at the Moran Terminal.

Bruce Fenimore, president of Columbia Coastal, which is one of the main companies shipping containers out of the port, told

the *Boston Globe* that "if the consolidation doesn't take place, my company will have to leave." A senior official of Mediterranean Shipping Lines threatened to ship containers by train from New York, bypassing the Boston port, if the union doesn't come to heel.

Massport spokesman Jeremy Crockford stepped up the public pressure on the union by adding that the "Shipping lines are complaining. They say we're costing too much."

— LETTERS —

Global warming I

I appreciated the articles exposing the hypocrisy of the various bourgeois governments regarding the Kyoto treaty. However, I believe the editorial "Stop Pollution? Via Revolution" is flawed (*Militant*, December 29, 1997).

The editorial decries the "petty-bourgeois panic and hysteria" about the destruction of the planet by pollution. It also downplays the significance of scientific evidence pointing to the dangers of global warming for future generations. Stephen Jay Gould spoke to the first issue in the prologue to *Bully for Brontosaurus: Reflections in Natural History*. We are powerless to harm the planet, he opines, because "[n]othing within our power can come close to catastrophes that the earth has often passed through and beyond." However, "we can surely eliminate our fragile selves." Among other dangers he cites global warming "because it will flood our cities and alter our agricultural patterns to the severe detriment of millions."

One does not have to succumb to panic and hysteria to recognize the dangers of global warming as demonstrated by numerous scientific studies which point to at least a strong possibility (in my opinion, probability) of devastating consequences for a large portion of future generations. If one were to wait for absolute, unambiguous proof for this phenomenon, it would be too late to avoid much of the damage.

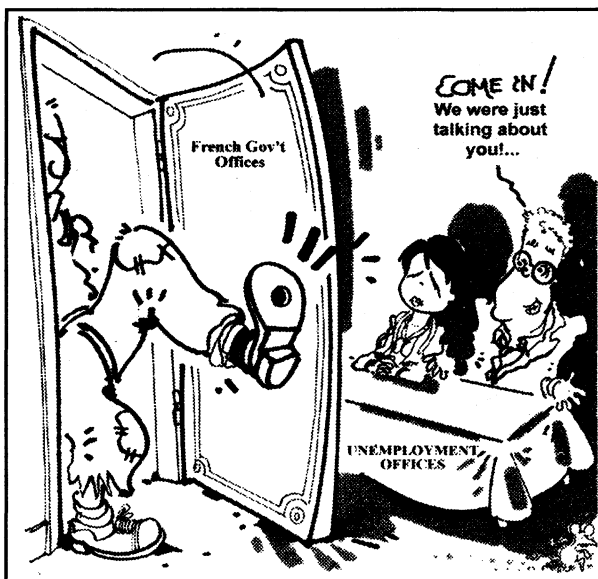
Having illusions about the desire

or capacity of bourgeois governments to stop polluting and rectify the damage done is a dead end, as the editorial points out. But we do not have to wait for the revolution to fight capitalism's wreaking of havoc to our environment. Workers, farmers, youth, and anyone concerned for the future of humanity should join the fight against toxic waste, destruction of our forests, nuclear power and its waste, industrial emissions causing global warming and destruction of the ozone layer. And most importantly, communist workers should join those in struggle because only they can bring a class analysis and a real understanding of the etiology of the destruction of the natural environment to the struggle. That understanding, that capitalism is the driving force behind the accelerating destruction, will lead the best fighters to the conclusion that power must be removed from the hands of the capitalist class by working people, and that a revolutionary party is necessary to accomplish that task.

Gary Cohen
Arlington, Massachusetts

Global warming II

The December 29 *Militant* con-



tains an article on the Kyoto treaty by Argiris Malapanis, as well as an editorial on the same subject, that I think contain some important errors. Before describing these, let me state that I am in agreement with the assessment of the Kyoto conference as being characterized mainly by jockeying of rival imperialist powers for their own advantage, and certainly not by any concern for the environment.

What, then, are the problems I see with the *Militant's* coverage? They are 1) the skepticism about global warming (and the severity of the world's environmental problems as a whole) is handled inappropriately, and betrays a lack of background on the scientific issues and on how scientists draw conclusions, and 2)

the editorial does not point a way forward politically, arguing from what I think is a sectarian and ultraleft standpoint that the only thing anyone can or should do about environmental problems is to join a revolutionary party.

Global warming is only one way in which capitalism is devastating the environment. There are numerous others, and the evidence is quite strong (and less ambiguous) that, for example, that natural ecosystems are being destroyed, species driven to extinction, and agroecosystems are facing severe problems. I am not stating that the "destruction of the planet is imminent through pollution," (as the editorial and article both claim that many environmentalists do) and am not aware of anyone who has made such an argument. I think it's a description of reality, not "petty bourgeois hysteria."

Is the treaty a farce? Yes. It is largely a device to win support to "our" imperialists in their contests with other imperialists. Most, if not all, of the environmental groups (who are about as reformist as one can get) have fallen for this device. Does that mean that working people don't have a stake in fighting against capitalism's environmental destruction? Absolutely not.

And that's why the editorial's tone and conclusion are, I think, wrong. It doesn't describe a program that could be implemented by a workers' and farmers' government, or demands around which union members can fight the destruction wrought by their employers. Instead it argues that the only really useful thing one can do is to join a revolutionary party — but it appears to be a revolutionary party that has nothing to say, really, about these environmental issues, because its program isn't stated.

There is no doubt about it: environmental problems are going to be with us as long as we have capitalism. In fact, I'd argue that such problems as global warming are actually powerful arguments for planned economies. But that doesn't mean that we have nothing to say in the meantime — any more than we'd say that exploitation of workers or oppression of women can only be eliminated by revolution. That's true, but it's not a sufficient basis for getting people to fight back, or to think about the problem from the viewpoint of class politics. Those should be our goals.

Gerald Field
San Diego, California

The letters column is an open forum for all viewpoints on subjects of general interest to our readers. 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.

Sinn Fein presses for a free, united Ireland as multiparty talks proceed

BY PETE CLIFFORD

LONDON — London and Dublin outlined their joint proposals for the future of Northern Ireland to the multiparty talks taking place in Belfast on January 12. All of the parties participating in the talks agreed to consider the proposals, although Sinn Fein, which is leading the resistance to London's rule over Northern Ireland, made clear its objective is to end British domination. London says its goal is to secure an agreement by May.

The proposals have three elements: an elected Assembly for Northern Ireland, an all-Ireland body to promote cooperation between Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic, and a "Council of the British Isles." The task of the latter would be to review the relationship between Ireland and Britain. There is no agreement, however, on the connection between these different bodies, nor on what their powers would be.

Sinn Fein representative Mitchell McLaughlin emphasized that a Council of the British Isles that usurped the power of an all-Ireland body would be "totally unacceptable." Sinn Fein also opposes the establishment of a Northern Ireland Assembly with governmental powers inside the United Kingdom — it is fighting for a united and independent Ireland.

On the other hand, David Trimble, leader of the Ulster Unionist Party (UUP), focused on welcoming the proposal for an Assembly in Northern Ireland, claiming this signaled the six counties would stay within the United Kingdom. Trimble's party ruled Northern Ireland on behalf of London from 1921 until 1972, when the British government established direct rule after sending in tens of thousands of troops. The UUP draws support from Protestants whose caste-like privileges lead them to look to London. Trimble has still not met face-to-face with Sinn Fein leaders in the talks.

The day before the talks, Terry Enwright, a relative of Sinn Fein president Gerry Adams, was killed by gunmen from the pro-British Loyalist Volunteer Force (LVF). Ostensibly, this act was in response to the killing inside Long Kesh prison of William Wright, leader of the LVF, by the Irish National Liberation Army. Enwright was the third Catholic to be killed by the LVF in the last two weeks. The LVF under Wright's direction was believed to be responsible for six deaths in the last year. This latest act was clearly designed to provoke a reaction by Irish nationalists to undermine the talks. As he entered the talks, Adams said, "Those who refuse to talk cannot escape responsibility for these killings."

These latest developments came after a trumpeted visit by Northern Ireland secretary Marjorie Mowlam — London's direct ruler over the six counties — to Long Kesh prison in Belfast. Mowlam met with both loyalist and republican prisoners' represen-



Sinn Fein leaders Gerry Adams, left, and Martin McGuinness at multiparty talks.

tatives January 9. Mowlam was widely depicted as a courageous woman trying to talk peace to the warring tribes. Her visits, however, were aimed at ensuring support from the loyalist paramilitaries for London's course to try to maintain the "union" of Britain and Northern Ireland through the talks.

She spent most time talking with representatives of the Ulster Defence Association (UDA) and Ulster Freedom Fighters (UFF). These pro-British outfits, referred to as death squads by nationalists, have been relied on for decades to augment London's political rule. They had urged representatives of their party, the Ulster Democratic Party, to withdraw from the multiparty talks. UDP spokesperson Gary McMichael explained that they wanted London to take a "more pro-Unionist, pro-British stance." UUP leader Trimble, who met the UDA/UFF prisoners before Mowlam, focused their complaints on Dublin's decision to release nine Republican prisoners before Christmas. Trimble called for all releases to be subject to agreement within the talks. In other words, he demanded the right to veto them.

The UDA/UFF affirmed their backing for participation in the talks after Mowlam's

visit, having been assured their points about prisoner releases would be put on the table. The *London Observer* also revealed that London's proposals to the talks were discussed with the loyalist prisoners when Trimble saw them, prior to details being given to other parties at the negotiating table.

In the days before Mowlam's prison visit, Dublin also reacted to this pressure from London. Longtime republican leader Brendan McFarlane was arrested in the Irish Republic and charged with involvement in a 1983 kidnapping. McFarlane was a central leader of the Irish republican prisoners during the 1981 hunger strikes, when 10 prisoners died demanding political prisoner status and to be treated with dignity. McFarlane had only just been released from Long Kesh. Sinn Fein leader Pat Doherty said McFarlane was being "scapegoated" to appease the unionists.

Widespread press reports in the last weeks linked the UDA to the killing of a Catholic man, Seamus Dillon, in late December. While the pub shooting was carried out in the name of the LVF, the UDA is widely known to have assisted, the January 9 *Guardian* reported.

Mowlam's prison visit was preceded by journalists being able to photograph and interview representatives of the loyalist and republican prisoners inside Long Kesh. The press has made a big deal of the supposedly lax conditions at the prison. The *London Times* noted prisoners are able to decorate their rooms and corridors, but these are gains won as a product of the 1981 republican hunger strikes. It explained that republican prisoners "favour silhouettes of Che Guevara and posters of Palestinians, women's rights, and the Irish language." In contrast it reports, "The loyalist wings are more dramatic with murals of raging gunmen." A picture with the article showed one of these with a death mask. Sam McGrory, the UFF representative who met with Mowlam, posed in front of a mural declaring, "Better to die on your feet than live on your knees in an Irish republic." McGrory had "White Power" tattooed on his arm.

Commenting on these developments, an editorial in *An Phoblacht*, the paper which supports Sinn Fein, remarked that "the ball [is] firmly in the British court. Mowlam and Blair have a choice. They can back unionist and loyalist demands for no change — in other words, follow the fine British tradition of playing the Orange [Unionist] Card. Or they can push forward a process which will bring real change. They do not really have much of a choice."

Meanwhile, support is building up for a demonstration in Derry, Northern Ireland, now fixed for February 1, calling for a new, independent, and public inquiry into Bloody Sunday. That was the day in 1972 when British soldiers shot dead 14 civil rights protesters, in an attempt to break the resistance to British rule. (A previous issue of the *Militant* incorrectly reported that this action would take place January 30.)

A demonstration is also set for London on January 24. In response to press speculation that the British government may issue an apology for the massacre, march spokesperson Enda Finlay responded, "The truth must be told, the same methods of brute force are still used today. An apology is not enough. For there to be no more Bloody Sundays, Britain must go."

Students and steelworkers protest as joblessness hits new high in Germany

BY CARL-ERIK ISACSSON

STOCKHOLM — Some 4.5 million workers were registered as unemployed in Germany in December 1997, a new post-war record. The total number of jobless was up 200,000 from a month earlier. As an average during 1997, unemployment also reached a record height of 4.4 million, or 11.4 percent. Chancellor Helmut Kohl, who had promised to cut unemployment in half by the year 2000, admitted, "As it looks now it will not be possible."

Despite an increase in exports from western Germany during the present upturn in the business cycle, the jobless rate there climbed slowly. In the eastern part of the country the growth in unemployment was much faster. In the West, 3 million people were registered as unemployed in December, 123,000 more than in November 1997 and 103,000 more than in December 1996. In the East, nearly 1.5 million people were registered unemployed in December — up 77,000 from a month before and an increase of 270,000 over December 1996. The population of western Germany is 65 million, compared to 15.5 million in the East. Overall unemployment stood at 11.8 percent in December 1997 as compared with 10.8 in December 1996. In the East, however, 19.4 percent were registered as unemployed.

These unemployment levels add to tension already simmering over the government's austerity moves and attempts by the bosses to limit workers' wages, particularly in eastern Germany.

Since late October, hundreds of thousands of students across the country have been involved in protests ranging from student strikes to demonstrations involving tens of thousands in Berlin, Düsseldorf, and Bonn alone. Students are protesting the deteriorating conditions of education in Germany and the imposition of tuition fees, after decades of free university education.

Steelworkers in eastern Germany voted in late December to call a strike that was to begin January 12, with nearly 78 percent in favor. Steelworkers there now number 8,000, far fewer than before reunification of Germany in 1990. At the heart of the dispute is the employers' attempt to scrap agreements that were put in place after the reunification to incrementally bring wages and other working conditions in the East up to parity with those in the West.

These agreements were reaffirmed in 1993, after the bosses tried to renege on the pledges and were met with a strike by metalworkers in both the East and West.

On January 8 of this year, the IG Metall steelworkers union reached an agreement

with the employers that will give the workers a 2.6 percent wage increase for January 1998 — March 1999. Workers will also get \$180 as a lump sum raise for October — December 1997.

According to the German daily *Die Welt*, this will bring workers up to 80–83 percent of the wage level in the West. The paper quotes the head of the steel bosses association, Josef Fidelis Senn, as saying, "We are not satisfied. We have only accepted the agreement under the threat of a strike that would have threatened the existence of this industry." *Die Welt* reports that the wage offer in the agreement is 0.3 percent lower than the pact in place in the West, and in an editorial the paper expresses hope that the agreement could be a step toward breaking the links between wages of workers in both parts of the country. Hasso Düvel, the IG Metall union chairman for Berlin, Brandenburg, and Saxonia stated that this link has not changed. The 8,000 steelworkers are to vote on the agreement on January 12 and 13. It can be approved by a vote of just 25 percent of the workforce.

Public workers are also entering negotiations with wage demands above 4 percent.

Carl-Erik Isacsson is a member of the metalworkers union in Södertälje, Sweden.

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