

THE MILITANT

INSIDE

U.S. farmers in Cuba

— PAGE 8

A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

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Defend affirmative action!

Working people around the world should salute the workers, students, and others throughout Florida who have mounted one of the most sustained and widespread struggles to defend affirmative action in years.

Buses heading to Tallahassee March 7 are sponsored by the AFL-CIO, local unions, schools, and churches for what promises to be a massive rally to defend this social gain. Like strikes and struggles for dignity on the job, actions against police brutality, and those standing up to anti-immigrant attacks, the protests in Florida over the past weeks are part of working people taking the moral

EDITORIAL

high ground against the effects of the employer and government offensive.

Statements in defense of affirmative action by those who have turned out for meetings around the state have helped answer the ideological rationalizations for attacking this gain by the Democratic and Republican party politicians. Workers and students have presented facts and convincing testimony as to why, given persistent and endemic discrimination in the United States,

Continued on Page 14

Thousands protest as Diallo's killers go free

BY ELENA TATE

NEW YORK—Taking the moral high ground and making a disciplined and determined stand against police brutality, thousands marched here in successive protests against the freeing of cops who killed Amadou Diallo.

The day after the verdict, 3,000 people marched in Manhattan. One thousand gathered across from the United Nations the following day. At a third march to City Hall, hundreds held up their wallets and chanted, "Don't shoot! It's only a wallet!" and "NYPD: Guilty!" In their scripted testimony, the four cops who shot the West African immigrant claimed they thought Diallo was reaching for a gun when in fact he was just taking his wallet out of his pocket as the cops approached him.

The big-business media raised the prospect of violent street actions after the acquittals, helping to justify placement of many cops on the streets and around the demonstrations. Disappointing them with dignified and political demonstrations, the protesters let the city government know just how the cops are seen by working people in this city.

The march through midtown Manhattan was organized by the coalition Justice 2000. The march grew significantly along the route and responded to police attempts to



Protesters in New York City February 27. "Volpe's in jail! Why aren't they?" refers to Justin Volpe, a cop jailed for torture of Abner Louima.

block its progress. Many motorists stopped as the demonstrators went by and honked in support. Some drivers held their wallets out car windows.

A nurse at Columbia Presbyterian Hospital decided to join the protest. "There should be a march every day until justice is served," she said, adding she had taken part in the many actions to demand justice for Abner Louima, a Haitian immigrant worker who was tortured by the police two-and-a-half years ago.

Justin Volpe, one of the cops who brutalized Louima, plead guilty at the opening of the trial when it was clear there was damning evidence against him. He was convicted and sentenced to jail time last year. Three other cops are currently on trial.

Judy Cesaire, who saw the march go by

Continued on Page 12

Farmers build March 21 action in D.C.

BY JOE SWANSON

SALT LAKE CITY, Utah--Working farmers and ranchers from 25 states met here to discuss how to respond to the deepening crisis in the countryside and to build the March 21 Rally for Rural America in Washington, D.C.

The convention of the National Farmers Union (NFU) held here February 25-28 drew 500 people. The NFU is organized through state chapters, the vast majority being from the Midwest, Southwest, and far West. The 140 delegates discussed, debated, and adopted a policy platform.

Others attending as observers are mem-

bers of NFU, including family members, representatives of grain and livestock associations, youth from the NFU Youth Advisory Council and the Utah Future Farmers of America, and several rank-and-file trade union members. Representatives from the embassies of Austria, France, Germany, Ja-

pan, Sweden, and the United Kingdom attended all or part of the convention.

"The Spirit of Rural America," was the main banner and theme of the convention. Building for the March events was a feature of the meeting. A number of NFU state

Continued on Page 9

Miners strike in Alabama over closures

BY JACOB FOX

BIRMINGHAM, Alabama — Coal miners staged a one-day wildcat strike against the Shoal Creek mine, located about 40 miles west of here. The next day the company responded by shutting down the mine, placing it "on idle status indefinitely."

The February 23 action by United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) members was in response to the firing of a union member at the underground coal mine owned by Drummond Co.

Union officials said anger had been building among miners against Drummond Co. for some time.

It is not clear whether Drummond intends to reopen the mine soon. Some miners think the closing is only a threat by the company in order to retaliate against the strike and scare union members into giving up con-

Continued on Page 2

Reportback from Havana Book Fair Building the Communist Movement

Celebrate the publication of the Spanish translation of Capitalism's World Disorder: Working-Class Politics at the Millennium, Che Guevara Talks to Young People and Making History: Interviews with Four Generals of Cuba's Revolutionary Armed Forces

These new Pathfinder titles — plus some 350 others — were on sale at the Havana International Book Fair in Cuba February 9-15. A *Militant* reporting team covered the book fair, and volunteers from six countries staffed a Pathfinder booth.

Come to a celebration of these books which are essential in responding to the new rise of resistance by workers and farmers today. Join efforts by revolutionary workers, young socialists, and their supporters to take the next essential steps in building the communist movement.

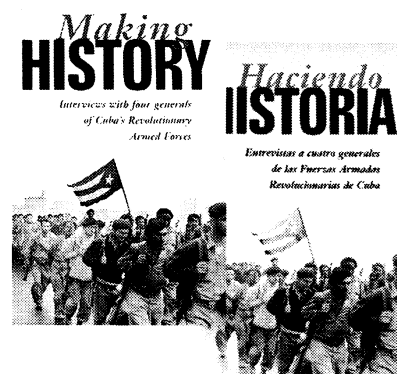
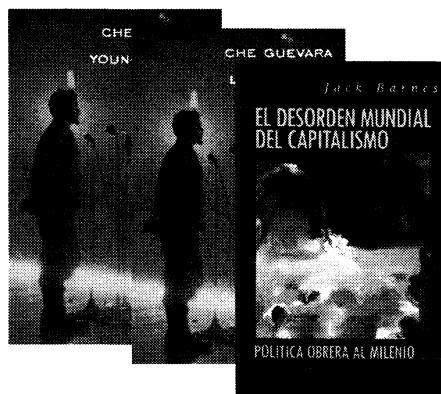
SPEAKERS

Mary-Alice Waters, President of Pathfinder Press and Editor of *Che Guevara Talks to Young People* and *Making History*

Samantha Kern, Organizer, National Executive Committee of the Young Socialists

Others to be announced

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PROGRAM AND RECEPTION AT BOTH EVENTS: \$10 DONATION

Hunger worsens for U.S. working class

BY HILDA CUZCO

Despite the "booming economy" and the lowest unemployment rate in 30 years, the problem of hunger has grown worse over the last five years for working people in the United States.

A report issued by Bread for the World says that 31 million people live in a family that can't afford the food they need. The country's emergency providers of food all report increased requests, 40 percent of which are from working families. Accord-

ing to the report, the welfare cuts spearheaded by the Clinton administration in 1996 have considerably contributed to the rise of hunger levels.

Bragging that his "welfare reform" law "ended welfare as we know it," Clinton often points to how many fewer recipients of food stamps there are now. Subject to eligibility criteria, many welfare recipients now employed under "welfare to work" programs have lost benefits of food stamps, health care, and child subsidies.

At a minimum wage of \$5.15 per hour, which has not increased since 1997, many cannot afford to buy enough food to stay healthy. Minimum wage workers with an income of \$10,712 per year fall \$348 below the poverty line for a family of two. The number of recipients of food stamps has dropped by 10 million since 1994. In 1998, the number of full-time year-round workers with incomes below the poverty level increased by nearly 500,000.

Food stamps are often the only way low-paid workers can afford adequate food for their families. Each month 17 million people in the United States use this program, receiving an average of \$71 per family. The "welfare reform" law also restricted access to food stamps by "legal" immigrants—those who arrived in the United States before 1996. According to the Government Accounting Office, the number of children receiving food stamps has dropped by 1.3 million or 10 percent, driving up the number living in extreme poverty by 426,000 from 1996 to 1997. The government defines extreme poverty as a family of three with income of less than \$123 a week. In all, participation in food benefits has dropped from 1994 by one-third or 9 million people. Users of this program include 44.6 percent who are white, 34.3 percent African-American, 16.6 Hispanic, and 4.5 other groups.

The loss of food benefits has prompted more people to seek out food pantries, soup kitchens, and shelters that some private and church charities sponsor. For example, in

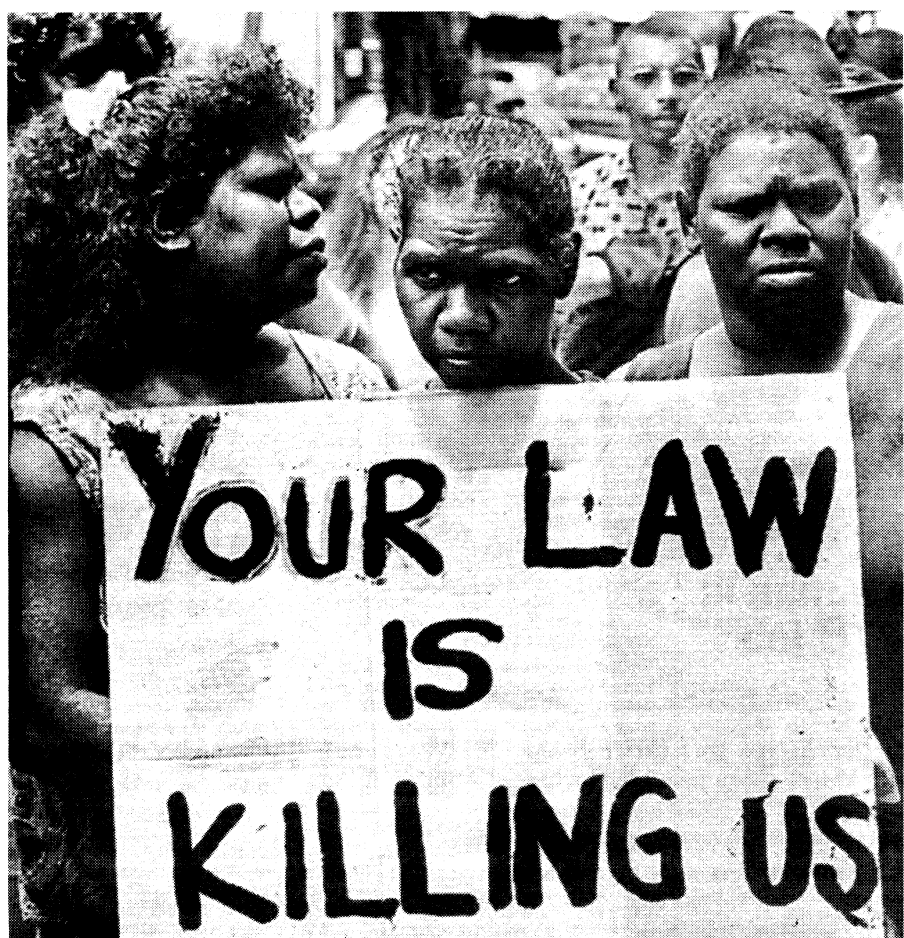
New York the 600 pantries in 1992 have risen to 1,100 today. In Arizona, the number of recipients of a statewide food network grew by 50 percent while those getting food stamp benefits declined by 50 percent.

Effects on African-Americans

African-Americans have also been hit with a general decline in their well being despite the economic upturn. According to a survey conducted by the University of Michigan, and reported in the *New Pittsburgh Courier*, the net worth of the median Black household decreased to \$7,000, a decline of 17 percent from 1994 to 1999. During the same five-year period, the net worth of the median U.S. household rose 9 percent to \$59,500. The decline followed a 10-year period where Black household net worth more than doubled. The study cites big gains in wealth by the richest 3 percent of African-Americans.

Meanwhile, the number of women in prison has also increased dramatically, rising since 1980 at nearly double the rate for males. From 12,300 Black women and those from other oppressed nationalities behind bars in state and federal prisons in 1980, the figure grew to 82,800 by 1997. The government's "war on drugs" is the main reason that more women are being incarcerated. Two-thirds of the women serving time have children under 18 years old. In New York, 91 percent of women incarcerated on charges for drug offenses are Black and Latino.

Protest condemns sentencing laws in Australia



Some 300 people protested at the magistrates court in Darwin, Australia, February 11 after a 15-year-old Aborigine hung himself in a Darwin detention center. He had been jailed for minor theft and property offenses under the Northern Territory's mandatory sentencing law. Aborigines have called for abolishing these laws, which have been used mainly to lock up young Blacks.

THE MILITANT

Build March 21 farmers' rally

More farmers are taking actions to defend their right to farm, for better prices, and to stop foreclosures. Workers can back these demands by joining their fellow producers and forge an alliance of workers and small farmers. The 'Militant' welcomes this perspective and reports their resistance. Don't miss a single issue!



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Miners protest closure

Continued from front page

cessions. Others think Drummond may close the mine permanently.

Hundreds of miners were already on lay-off from Shoal Creek before the strike. All other Drummond mines in Alabama have been closed in the last few years. Drummond's Cedrum facility, a surface mine located north of Jasper, Alabama, shut down last year, throwing 165 miners out of work. There are now only six UMWA-organized coal mines in the Alabama coalfields.

In a number of cases, coal mines have opened in virtually the same area where former Drummond mines once operated, except they are now run as nonunion operations. Wages, safety, and working conditions are considerably worse in nonunion mines in Alabama than when they were under UMWA contract.

It is not uncommon for hourly wages in these mines to be set at less than \$10 per hour. Some nonunion mines offer health benefits, but the premiums are usually sky-high. Others offer no medical coverage at all.

In this context, coal mines that traditionally have been nonunion are also slashing wages and benefits. The Taft Coal Co., for example, closed two surface mines south of Jasper about two years ago, and soon after opened a third in the vicinity. Miners who drove front-end loaders and rock trucks, jobs at the heart of surface mining operations, were told they could get jobs at the new

mine, but their wages would be slashed from \$18 to \$10.50 an hour.

Layoffs are widespread in the coalfields as the price of coal dropped in recent months. Coal production in Alabama fell to 21 million tons in 1999 from 24 million in 1998.

Many Alabama mines, including the struck Shoal Creek mine, provide much of their coal under contract to Alabama Power. But in recent years the power company has begun purchasing a substantial amount of coal from the western states at much reduced prices. Drummond Co. is also supplying Alabama Power with 3.5 million tons of coal a year from one of its mines in Colombia, South America.

Failure to notify of layoffs

In late January, the United Mine Workers sued Drummond Co. in federal court here for failing to give required notices before a large layoff in November. Under federal law, the company is supposed to give 60 days notice before they lay off more than 33 percent of its work force.

Drummond at first said it would lay off 280 workers, which would have required the 60-day notification. The company's reply to the union lawsuit claimed they actually laid off only 215 miners, less than the one-third threshold. The UMWA is seeking 60 days back pay for the laid-off miners and fines of \$500 per day until Drummond furnishes the proper notification.

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U.S gov't drags feet in black lung project

Coal miners still ravaged by disease, see little progress in MSHA programs

BY JAMES VINCENT

PITTSBURGH, Pennsylvania—Participation in the federal X-ray program to determine the extent of black lung among coal miners is off to a slow start.

The *Charleston Daily Mail* reports that, according to U.S. Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) officials, "less than 40 percent of the first 10,000 miners eligible for free chest X rays have taken the agency up on the offer." Another MSHA official reported that only 25 percent of eligible miners have taken the X rays.

In Kentucky the figures are even lower. MSHA officials said that just 10 percent are participating in the program. The reason for the low turnout in the government program is not hard to find. At a recent government hearing in Frankfurt, Kentucky, coal miners testified that they are not "volunteering to be tested because they don't trust MSHA and fear retaliation by their companies," according to a report in the *Louisville Courier-Reporter*.

Kentucky is the third-largest producer of coal in the United States, behind Wyoming and West Virginia respectively, but has more than 500 underground mines, the largest of any state. Only 4 percent of these mines are union. Nonunion miners who voice complaints about dust conditions are often "fired and blackballed, which make it almost impossible to get another job in a nearby mine."

Black lung, or coal workers' pneumoconiosis, is caused by breathing coal dust. The United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) estimates that 1,500 miners die every year from the disease. About 5,000 miners and widows submit claims for black



For more than three decades coal miners and their supporters have held protests like the one above to demand medical care and compensation for black lung disease. Today 1,500 miners die a year, with no serious assistance from coal bosses or the government.

lung benefits every year, according to government figures.

In recent years, the workers compensation laws that cover black lung benefits have been drastically cut in the coal fields. In response, miners have turned to the federal government for help. But according to a government report in the past 10 years only 4 percent of those who applied received benefits on the first try.

Only 1 percent of Kentucky miners got

black lung compensation in 1997. Taking appeals into account, the number rises to 7.5 percent. In 1997, 418 miners won benefits out of 6,791 filed claims. The appeals process can take years, sometimes up to 20 years.

The grim reality is that scores of miners die every year while their appeals are pending.

'Miners don't trust the program'

"Why don't they participate? They don't

Rally opposes cuts in workers' benefits

BY MARIAN RUSSELL
AND JOHN SARGE

FRANKFORT, Kentucky—Workers from across the state converged on the capitol steps here February 23 to protest recent cuts in workers compensation benefits by the state of Kentucky. Entitled "Labor Rally 2000: Fighting for Working Families," the rally was organized by the state AFL-CIO.

The rally was called to protest cuts in workers compensation, demand collective bargaining rights for public employees, and to introduce new officers of the Kentucky State AFL-CIO. The state AFL-CIO was charged last year with embezzlement of hundreds of thousands of dollars. Top officers were removed by the national labor federation.

Some 1,500 workers, many involved in struggles in the state, turned out looking for solidarity.

George Cammon, a crane operator with 27 years at NSA/Aluminum, came with 80 other members of the United Steelworkers of America (USWA) from Hawesville, carrying signs saying, "USWA Local 9423 fighting against Unfair Labor Practices."

Workers from NSA went on strike 20 months ago after winning a union election, but not their first contract. When they made an agreement to go back, the company locked them out. So far the company has brought back 100 workers, but 300 are still out.

Poultry workers

Mindy Catron and Janet Butler are young women who had worked only 10 months at Cagle-Keystone, a poultry processor employing 1,000 workers in Albany when they were fired from their jobs along with 46 other workers for trying to organize a union. Dozens of Cagle workers were very visible in their bright orange T-shirts, as they sold buttons and passed out flyers explaining

their fight against the company's more than 200 violations of labor law.

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 16.6 of every 100 poultry workers suffered a work-related illness or injury in 1997—more than twice the rate of all private industry.

Only two of Kentucky's five chicken plants are unionized. A fatal accident at one of the nonunionized plants owned by Tyson in the western part of the state at Robards occurred in 1999. One worker tumbled over a retaining wall into a pit of poultry entrails and other parts. A second man was lowered into the pit to try to rescue him.

Both workers were overcome by methane gas that gathers in the pit, where rotting chickens and poultry by-products are stored before being shipped to plants that make pet food. Neither man was wearing breathing gear.

Construction workers, Teamsters, members of the garment and textile workers union, and of the United Food and Commercial Workers union (UFCW) attended the rally. About 45 of the UFCW workers were from Carhartt sewing plants and a warehouse in the western part of the state. Most said they came because of the cuts in workers compensation.

Workers compensation is a safety net for injured workers who incur occupational-related injuries or illness. While administered by the state, employers pay the premiums. Benefits include payments for medical expenses, lost income, and job training. In exchange, employees surrender almost all rights to sue employers for damages arising from workplace injuries.

Only 2 percent get compensation

Led by Gov. Paul Patton, cuts in workers compensation and black lung benefits were enacted in 1996. This has resulted in only 2 percent, or 19 of 806, of applicants qualifying for black lung benefits since the law was changed. In 1994-95 nearly 80 percent of applicants received benefits.

The new law gives a few doctors enormous influence over disability decisions. Even most miners with X-ray evidence of the disease are not being qualified for benefits because of the law's more restrictive standards for black lung cases.

Although employers have benefited from Kentucky's new law, workers are dying. The state estimates that the cost of workers compensation insurance decreased for all employers by at least \$136 million—18 per-

cent—during 1997. And the number of claims for occupational disease and retraining benefits, which include black lung cases, declined 57 percent.

Falsification of dust samples in coal mines has resulted in hundreds of miners dying of black lung disease and countless others living with disabling lung damage.

Nevertheless, Governor Patton spoke from the platform at the February 20 rally. State AFL-CIO president Bill Londrigan introduced him as an "ally of labor." The introduction went on, "Unfortunately we had a falling out with him over workers compensation, but are working closely with him in this legislative session to reverse that." Patton said he intended to fix the law so that "workers are fairly compensated, but the benefits are not abused."

Many workers were angered by Patton's participation in the rally. Helen Epling, a bakery worker, said, "Patton was one of the biggest nonunion mine operators in Pike County. That's how he made his fortune. My father is about to die of black lung disease, and he hasn't gotten a dime." The *Louisville Courier-Journal* reported that the United Mine Workers union did not have organized participation because Patton was part of the lead contingent in the short march that preceded the rally.

Anti-China tirade

Mike Leonard, a United Food and Commercial Workers official attempted to take the focus off the state and federal governments, as well as the employers, when he launched a tirade against China and Wal-Mart during his remarks. He also demanded that recently proposed "domestic content" legislation be passed, stipulating state purchases would first be made from Kentucky companies, then U.S. companies, and if that wasn't possible, companies from other countries that "respected labor standards."

A newsletter entitled "Task Force America," which was passed out by about a half dozen participants, including a few wearing UFCW jackets, took this theme to its logical, America-first, and anti-worker conclusion.

The flyer was devoted to attacking Wal-Mart for its business ties to China. Printed in red, white, and blue, it was splashed with American flags with the main headline: "Wal-Mart In Bed With Red Dictators."

John Sarge is a member of the United Auto Workers in Wayne, Michigan.

trust the system," said Butch Odom, a UMWA official from Madisonville, Kentucky. "They don't trust MSHA. They don't trust the operators, and they don't trust the sampling program. They don't trust the X ray program."

MSHA announced that it was taking over dust sampling in underground mines beginning October 1999. Part of this was launching a program to track black lung through the free X-ray program. Up until that time, the dust sampling was the responsibility of the coal bosses.

However, in the aftermath of extensive reports from the *Courier-Reporter* in 1998, which documented dust sampling fraud and cheating by coal companies, MSHA was forced to take over dust sampling.

But for coal miners this change is hardly reassuring because for decades MSHA, the federal agency responsible for protecting miners, ignored overwhelming evidence of cheating. MSHA officials claim that their main concern was preventing accidents, even though they had evidence that black lung was killing more miners than accidents.

Throughout the coalfields miners have begun to speak out. They are asking: After Congress passed the federal Coal Mine Health and Safety Act to prevent the disease 30 years ago, why is black lung still the number-one killer of coal miners? Even the *Charleston Gazette*, hardly a champion of coal miners, editorialized recently that, "black lung is a national disgrace" and "should have been wiped out long ago." The reason it didn't is because "the federal government and the coal industry never took coal dust monitoring seriously."

In response to rising complaints from coal miners, the government began a review of black lung regulations in 1997, which included public hearings. In October of last year, the U.S. Labor Department issued new proposed regulations. The UMWA is pushing to strengthen these regulations. Last month the union launched a lawsuit to force MSHA to implement a government-run dust sampling program in underground mines across the United States.

Weighing in on the other side, the National Mining Association (NMA), the insurance industry, the American Bar Association, and the U.S. Small Business Administration are working overtime to ensure that black lung laws remain as weak as possible. Their main concern is the impact stronger laws would have on their "profitability," as one NMA report put it.

All of this is leading to sharper conflicts. The fight for strong black lung laws to prevent the disease and provide just compensation is at the heart of the growing resistance to the coal bosses today.

Silo collapse kills 2 miners in Illinois

BY JACK WARD

ST. LOUIS—A large section of a 165-foot coal storage silo collapsed during demolition work at a closed mine, killing Kevin Auchter, 22, of Glen Arm, Maryland, and Scott McGee, 29, of New Athens, Illinois, February 24.

The silo collapsed at the Monterey Mine in Albers, Illinois, trapping the workers beneath it, said Tom Heuer, assistant chief of the Clin-Clair Fire District in Albers.

"It was a failure, a structural failure," Heuer said. "A large section of the wall of the silo broke free and suddenly fell outward, broke in half and pancaked down."

The two were drilling holes at the base of the silo to insert sticks of dynamite for demolition when the wall buckled. They worked for demolition and excavating companies contracted by the mine.

The coal mine, owned by Exxon Coal and Mineral Corp., was closed in the fall of 1996. The demolition work was part of the effort to close the mine and reclaim the site, about 30 miles southeast of here. Federal and state mine safety inspectors are investigating why the wall gave way.

COAL MINERS ON STRIKE

Articles on the 111-day 1977-78 strike, the 1981 strike and contract rejection vote, the United Mine Workers of America and the fight against nuclear power, the fight for health benefits and compensation to black lung victims, and more. \$5.00

Available from bookstores, including those listed on page 12.

YS members reach out to fighters in the South

BY ROSA GREENE

BIRMINGHAM, Alabama—In recent months the Young Socialists in Birmingham has met many young fighters through political work. This is due to the increasing collaboration with the local Socialist Workers Party branch and joint regional work with the SWP and YS in Atlanta, Georgia.

In early January the Young Socialists participated on a team with other communists that went to the coalfields in Alabama to meet and talk politics with coal miners. This opened the door for meeting students at the University of Alabama in Tuscaloosa. At the university we met youth interested in learn-

ing more about socialism, and helping to organize speaking engagements for farmers from the United States who recently went to Cuba to find out more about what the workers and farmers there have accomplished since the triumph of the Cuban revolution in 1959.

On February 2 at the campus the YS held a class on the pamphlet *Socialism and Man in Cuba*, which is a letter by Ernesto Che Guevara and a speech by Fidel Castro, two central leaders of the Cuban revolution. Six students from the university and one high school student from Birmingham attended the class. The class included discussion on

why the word "vanguard" is used in the pamphlet, what the term "new man" means, and what socialism is.

On February 5 a Militant Labor Forum was held at the Raddison Hotel titled, "Land and Justice: Black Farmers Speak Out."

The Young Socialists also held a raffle to finance the YS national pamphlet, which will be published in the spring. Prizes included a picture of Pedro Albizu Campos, a leader of the Puerto Rican independence struggle in the 1930s; a YS mug; a BFAA T-shirt; and more. YS members raised \$175.

A few days later students held a continuation of the class on *Socialism and Man in Cuba* at the University of Alabama. Three students from the university and two high school students from Birmingham attended the class. When the phrase "dictatorship of the proletariat" was mentioned, one participant asked wouldn't that create oppression all over again. In every class society, one class exercises its rule over the other. The dictatorship of the proletariat, some participants explained, means that the working class takes power.

When asked about the class, high school senior Elizabeth Darnell said that it was good to be able to discuss the pamphlet and that everyone was able to participate in it. The next class will be on *The Communist Manifesto*.

On the weekend of February 12-13, a joint team of the Birmingham-Atlanta YS and SWP went down to Valdosta, Georgia, to meet with YS member David and to visit A&M University in Tallahassee, Florida, where there have been explosive pro-affirmative action protests. The team set up a literature table in front of a cafeteria near the dorms. A&M students there bought a copy of the book *By Any Means Necessary* by Malcolm X, as well as a couple of copies of the *Militant*.

The next morning team members had a political discussion on building a speaking engagement at their campus Valdosta State for the farmers when they return from Cuba.

The Birmingham and Atlanta YS have also recruited new members to the Young Socialists. Atlanta now has two members and Birmingham is now a chapter of three.

Rosa Greene is a garment worker; Ricardo Zuniga, a textile worker, contributed to this article.

Los Angeles YS defends students' right to discuss 'sensitive topics'

BY GEORGE CHABRILO

LOS ANGELES—Last week news from the usually peaceful suburban city of Orange, in Orange County, hit the national media and provoked a heated debate.

The center of the controversy is El Modena High School where a group of students has organized a Gay-Straight Alliance club on the campus. Using the excuse that it is inappropriate for students to lead discussions on "sensitive topics" such as sex and sexuality—things which are supposedly reserved for the sex education class only—the Orange Unified School District school board decided to ban the club from meeting on the school grounds.

Students responded by filing a lawsuit against the district based on the Equal Access Act of 1984, enacted to prevent schools that accept federal funds from picking and choosing among extracurricular clubs based on what might be discussed at meetings. A judge has now ordered the school board to allow the club to meet until the case is heard in the courtroom.

The Orange Unified School District school board, in a desperate attempt to stop the meetings, took a step further by threatening to ban all 38 noncurricular clubs. The school board has spent nearly \$50,000 so far on its legal defense.

In the meantime, suddenly put under the spotlight, gay students and their supporters—more than 50 students signed the petition for the club—are facing harassment on a daily basis. Insults, threats, and even physical violence has become something that these students must cope with.

Anthony Colin, who organized the group at El Modena High School, says that he was inspired to form the club by the death of Matthew Shepard, a 21-year-old freshman from the University of Wyoming who was murdered because of his homosexuality.

Colin and other leaders of the El Modena group said they hoped to raise public consciousness and promote tolerance by providing forums for discussion on issues related to sexual orientation and homophobia.

Fifteen-year-old Colin described the aims and activities initially planned by the club in an interview in the *L.A. Youth* newspaper: "I would like to see teachers go through anti-homophobia classes, where they will learn to deal with situations put in front of them every day. We would go on field trips to the Tolerance Museum for example. Stuff like that."

The Los Angeles Young Socialists recognizes this incident as an attack on the basic democratic rights of all students. This battle is another piece in the series of attacks on the rights of the workers and the youth today. The ruling class increasingly attempts to make scapegoats out of immigrants, oppressed nationalities, homosexuals, women, and youth for the crisis of capitalism. What ultrarightist politician Patrick Buchanan described as the "cultural war" is in full effect and youth are one of its main targets.

One cannot view this recent event separately from California's Proposition 21, which would lower the age limit at which young people can be "tried as adults" and executed, or Proposition 22, which would outlaw gay marriages by not recognizing marriages that take place in other states where it might be legal. Several demonstrations to protest these two propositions, which will appear on the March 7 primary ballot here, will take place over the next two weeks.

The Los Angeles YS plans to participate in these protests, to focus on a campaign against these two propositions, and to support the El Modena Gay-Straight Alliance in its fight to exist. The YS is calling on high school students in this area to protest the ban on student clubs in Orange County.

If you are interested in joining us in these protests, contact the Young Socialists at 2546 West Pico Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90006. (213) 380-9460.

Locked-out Steelworkers march in Alabama



Militant/Clay Dennison

More than 400 Steelworkers and supporters participated in a February 22 candlelight march and prayer vigil at the Scottsboro Aluminum plant gate in Alabama. The company broke off negotiations when the old contract expired last October, locked the workers out, and has been attempting to run the plant with scabs since then. None of the 420 union members have crossed the picket line. The Steelworkers are demanding a limit to forced overtime, decent health insurance for future retirees, and respect and fairness in the workplace.

Canadian gov't threatens Cuban diplomat

BY MICHEL PRAIRIE

MONTREAL—The Canadian government is considering "diplomatic action against Cuba" following the refusal of Cuban diplomat José Imperatori to leave Canada, officials here announced February 29.

U.S. officials accused Imperatori, a vice-consul at the Cuban Interests Section in Washington, D.C., of spying and expelled him from the United States to Canada February 26. Earlier that day, Imperatori resigned from his post, giving up his diplomatic immunity, and demanded to be tried in U.S. courts in order to contest the accusations against him.

Canadian foreign minister Lloyd

Axworthy asserted that his government had simply accepted to "facilitate" Imperatori's return to Cuba through Canada. The Cuban diplomat was flown to Montreal aboard an FBI plane.

Officials in Ottawa refused him a 30-day visa requested by Cuba, granting him only a 48-hour transit visa and insisting he leave Canada on a February 28 flight to Havana. At press time, he remains in the Cuban embassy in Ottawa, continuing a hunger strike he began in Washington.

"I will remain on a hunger strike," he wrote in a letter to his wife in Cuba, "as long as I do not get a satisfactory answer to my problem, which is also a slander against

Cuban diplomacy."

Since last year, the Canadian government has adopted a more openly hostile stance toward Cuba, straining diplomatic relations, to try to pressure the revolutionary government into making concessions to imperialist dictates. The previous week, Washington arrested Mariano Faget, an official of the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) in Miami, and charged him with espionage on behalf of the Cuban government. U.S. officials alleged that Faget had passed secret information to Cuban-American businessman Pedro Font. They then demanded Imperatori leave the United States, claiming he was associated with the alleged spying activities.

The Cuban daily *Granma* published a statement in its February 22 issue reviewing the facts in detail and refuting the charges that Cuban officials had done anything improper. Imperatori, it explained, had met with Faget, who is Cuban-American, on routine business. Cuban diplomatic personnel regularly meet with Cuban-Americans, businessmen and others.

The head of the Cuban Interests Section, Fernando Remírez, stated at a news conference on February 26, the day Imperatori resigned from his post, that the arrest of Faget and expulsion order against Imperatori had the effect of undermining the effort to seek the return of the boy Elián González to Cuba and his family there. The arrest of the INS official on spying charges came just days before a scheduled federal court hearing on the child's case.

U.S. State Department spokesman James Rubin declared that it was "highly unusual" for Cuba to refuse to remove its diplomat voluntarily after being ordered by Washington to leave. He stated, however, that Imperatori, who has demanded to appear before a U.S. court to refute the charges against him, may be asked to return to testify in the trial against Faget.

Meanwhile, more than 150,000 people marched down Havana's seafont February 22 in a spirited protest against the U.S. spying charges and to demand the return of the Cuban boy.

Imperialist troops police Mitrovica

BY PATRICK O'NEILL

Tensions and conflict among the imperialist powers occupying Kosova are focused today on the city of Mitrovica, in the north of the province, which was partitioned by the imperialist forces. Clashes between residents of the divided city, and between the residents and troops of various countries, have occurred almost daily.

In response, Washington is calling for the "KFOR" military occupation, led by the U.S.-dominated NATO military alliance, to be boosted. Heavily armed troops are stepping up their policing of this industrial city, located in a mining region.

"We don't have enough troops," said Gen. Wesley Clark, the senior commander of the NATO military alliance on February 23. More than 2,000 soldiers from the armed forces of a number of countries, including the major imperialist powers of Germany, Italy, the United Kingdom, and the United States, have been moved to the city.

Clark, who is from the U.S. military, called for 1,800 additional troops and complained that "nations have turned down command requests."

The troops are increasingly taking on policing duties, including the enforcement of a 6:00 p.m. to 6:00 a.m. curfew. Two thousand police have also arrived. In interviews,

several cops expressed their aggressive attitude. A policeman from Northern Ireland said, "If we had enough police we'd certainly go for a more proactive policy, clamping down on arms and violence." "Sure we can bash heads all day. But then don't ask us to walk a beat and have people's trust," said a cop from Canada.

The U.S. forces have constructed observation towers and set up checkpoints and listening posts along the border between Kosova and the rest of Serbia. U.S. tanks now overlook Dobrosin, a village just to the east of Kosova whose residents are majority Albanian.

"Is Mitrovica the preparation for a partition of the province?" wrote Misha Glenny in the February 23 issue of the *Wall Street Journal* in an opinion piece that spelled out the options facing the imperialists. "Is the West considering exchanging the large Albanian population in Serbia proper for the Serbs of Kosovo?" Reflecting distaste for the area and the working people who populate it, Glenny described Mitrovica as a "malignant tumor fed by Slobodan Milosevic's mischief-making."

The Yugoslav president survived last year's NATO offensive, and his removal remains an express target of Washington's policy.

Diallo protesters buy socialist literature

BY PATRICK O'NEILL

In New York and New Jersey, supporters of the campaign to sell and place *Capitalism's World Disorder: Working-Class Politics at the Millennium* joined in the protests condemning the not guilty verdict in the trial of the four cops who killed Amadou Diallo. "We sold four copies of the book over the weekend of February 26 and 27, along with \$120 worth of other Pathfinder literature and 30-plus copies of the *Militant*," reports Mike Galati.

Seven months ago socialists launched a campaign to promote this new title among the increasing numbers who are looking for ways to resist the brutality and injustice of the capitalist system—both by selling it to individuals, and by placing it on the shelves of libraries and shops.

"The protests against the exoneration of Diallo's murderers attracted large numbers of workers and youth. Many were interested in discussing broad political questions," explained Galati.

"One young cab driver from Iran bought a copy of *Capitalism's World Disorder* and agreed that capitalism is sinking deeper into crisis around the world. He decided he needed the book as a way of learning about the growing resistance to this crisis.

At the protests the socialist campaigners handed out many copies of a flier advertising a meeting on March 5 in New York entitled "Reportback from Havana Book Fair/Building the Communist Movement." A week later socialist workers in San Francisco are organizing a similar meeting.

The speakers on March 5 will include Pathfinder Press president Mary-Alice Waters and others who attended the book fair.

They will celebrate the new books by Pathfinder available at this major political and publishing event: the Spanish-language translation of *Capitalism's World Disorder* and *Che Guevara Talks to Young People* and *Making History: Interviews with Four Generals of Cuba's Revolutionary Armed Forces*, both in English and Spanish.

Among the themes of the meeting will be the place, alongside these titles, of books that record the work of communists to build a communist vanguard based in the working class and its unions. *The Changing Face of U.S. Politics: Working-Class Politics and the Trade Unions*, by Jack Barnes, in particular forms a companion to *Capitalism's World Disorder*. In this book Barnes addresses the political changes that brought the industrial working class to the center of world politics in the 1970s and '80s, as the long postwar capitalist boom ran out of steam. He discusses the radical shifts communists made to respond to those developments to build proletarian parties rooted in industry, and the main defense organizations of the working class, the trade unions.

Socialists across North America are organizing to go back to those who have bought *Capitalism's World Disorder* over the past year and introduce them to *The Changing Face of U.S. Politics*. They will also be organizing educational discussions on the latter title. Both books will be part of the impressive range of Pathfinder books that supporters of the *Militant* and *Perspectiva Mundial* will use as they prepare for an eight-week campaign to sell introductory subscriptions to these socialist periodicals. Initial plans call for the drive to begin on March 21 in conjunction with the



Militant/Linda Joyce

Workers discuss political and union fights and the *Militant* newspaper at the Martin Luther King Day parade in Atlanta on January 17. The *Militant* is marked by accurate reporting of struggles and clear political stance on questions confronting labor.

Rally for Rural America in Washington, D.C. *Militant* supporters and distributors are encouraged to begin discussing plans for the drive. More coverage of the effort will appear in coming issues of the paper.

Workers, farmers, and youth involved in struggle today appreciate the *Militant*, its accurate reporting of their struggles, and its clear political stance on questions confront-

ing the labor movement. Scott Breen in Seattle reported—after participating alongside technical workers at Boeing and steelworkers locked out by Kaiser Aluminum in a march and rally—that workers in the "upbeat" event responded well to the *Militant*. "We sold 51 copies to the 2,000 participants," he reported—a response that augurs well for the upcoming circulation drive.

Socialists in California oppose Propositions 21 & 22

BY JIM ALTENBERG

SAN FRANCISCO—The Socialist Workers campaign in California is calling on working people, farmers, fighting youth, and other defenders of democratic rights to vote against two reactionary measures on the March 7 ballot here.

One is California Proposition 22, known as the "Limits of Marriage," or Knight initiative, named for its sponsor, state senator William Knight. Proposition 22 bans same-sex marriage in the state, despite the fact that it is already illegal in most states. It also seeks to deny recognition of such marriages from other states.

The other is the Youth Crime Initiative, Proposition 21. It is a sweeping package of measures attacking the democratic rights of working people, youth in particular. It goes after such hard-won rights as keeping the names of minors charged by the police out of the public record and news media.

Omari Musa, a railroad worker and socialist candidate for city council in Oakland, has used his campaign to explain the issues involved, pointing out the need for the labor movement to counter these attacks, and encourage people to vote against the two initiatives on election day.

"What right has the government to tell you who you can and cannot marry?" said Musa at a recent campaign meeting. "The state must stay out of our bedrooms and private lives! One of the gains of the civil rights movement in the 1950s and '60s," Musa pointed out, "is that laws barring Blacks and whites from marrying were finally removed from the books."

"Proposition 22," Musa said, "is part of a broader campaign, described by ultra-rightist presidential candidate Patrick Buchanan as a culture war that plays on middle class fears and insecurities about their prospects under capitalism."

"It promotes resentment, and attempts to pin the blame for today's conditions on the oppressed, on Blacks, women, gays, and on the working class," he said. "It attacks the democratic and civil rights conquered in the past decades, as well as those who fight to extend them."

The socialist candidate also pointed out that even now workers who are not legally married, gay as well as straight, have been fighting for benefits equal to married

couples. This has become a big question at United Airlines, one of the Bay Area's largest employers. Workers at the company are pressing the bosses to comply with a San Francisco law requiring those doing business with the city to provide domestic partnership benefits, including company-paid health care and pension plans.

Seen as a threat to the family

Backers of the discriminatory legislation portray themselves as defenders of the family. They are making a concerted bid for support among Latinos, for example, by running ads in Spanish throughout the state depicting a large Latino family celebrating a 50th wedding anniversary.

The hierarchies of both the Catholic and Mormon churches have weighed in on behalf of the measure, as has the right-wing Focus on the Family organization. It is also supported by all of the Republican presidential candidates running in the March 7 California primary election.

"Ending discrimination against gays undercuts the oppression of women and the role of the family as a basic institution in capitalist society," Musa said. "The wealthy rulers push more and more of what should be a social responsibility—schooling, health care, child rearing, and putting a roof over our heads and food on the table—onto the basic family unit."

"We must fight against this," the socialist candidate said, "in its own right and because it helps justify cuts in social programs, food stamps, welfare, Medicare, Medicaid, and Social Security."

Proposition 22 comes as political polarization on issues around ending discrimination against gays deepens. In addition to student protests at El Modena High School in Orange County, 100 people recently picketed a central California newspaper after its owners announced that they would not run any articles depicting gays or abortion in a favorable light.

"Under the pretext of combating 'gangs' and 'youth violence,'" Musa said, "the wealthy families who own the factories, banks, urban buildings, and vast tracts of agricultural land in California are proposing to greatly extend the power of their police forces to frame and imprison workers and young people." This, simply put, is what

Proposition 21, the so-called Youth Crime Initiative is all about. Backers of the measure aim to use repressive laws along with strengthened police and military forces to curb social struggles and protests that working people will increasingly wage as living conditions deteriorate.

Young people across the state have held rallies, school walkouts, and protests against Proposition 21 in the days leading up to the March 7 vote.

The socialist candidate told the *Militant* that for many years, capitalist politicians and the big business news media have sought to whip up hysteria around the dangers of "unsafe streets" and "gang violence." They have promoted a lie about what crime is, and that the insecurities of life under capitalism can be blamed on "criminals," and "gangs."

Repressive measures

This has been the basis to carry out repressive measures and hire more cops, beef up sentencing laws, enforce harsher and longer prison sentences, as well as increasingly authoritarian practices such as youth curfews, identification cards, and laws against "urban blight," such as now stand on the books in Oakland.

Musa noted that protecting the names of minors arrested by the police was rapidly eroding, pointing to the recent murder conviction of a 14-year-old boy in Michigan whose name was splashed across newspapers and television around the country.

Over the past few decades, juvenile police records have been more or less sealed, and were unavailable for inspection once the individual turned 18.

This has provided some protection for young people against these records being used as a club over them for years by employers and cops. Proposition 21 would end this practice. Probation for youth convicted of felonies would be eliminated. Misdemeanors such as painting graffiti would now become felonies.

The measure would also subject youth as young as 14 to "adult" courts and prisons at the discretion of a prosecutor. Currently any decision to try a minor as an adult must be made by a judge.

"These attacks on young people constitute punishment for the crime of being young and poor," said Musa. Moreover, "the

normal operation of capitalism, which fosters and reproduces racism and national oppression every day, ensures that Black and Latino youth will be hit hardest by measures such as those contained in Proposition 21."

The initiative would give police the power to keep lists of, follow, and wiretap those they decide are "gang members." The law would extend the use of harsh mandatory life sentences and the death penalty. Those convicted of "gang-related" activities would be required to register with local police when they get out of prison, in effect continuing their sentence.

What constitutes 'crime'

The capitalist rulers' pervasive "anti-crime" campaigns aim to cover up the fundamental truth about life under capitalism, Musa explained.

Their power over society means that the capitalist class, and their political servants, make the laws that protect their interests, and they determine what constitutes crime or illegal activity.

They deem individual or collective acts of rebellion, directed against their property, as criminal. "Wasn't the murder by four plainclothes cops of Amadou Diallo, a Black, immigrant worker in New York City, a crime? Wasn't the attack by 600 cops on South Carolina longshore workers picketing to defend their union at the port a crime?" Musa asked.

Moreover, the capitalists themselves "use every method, including torture, massacres, and nuclear war to preserve a social system which makes them rich, while subordinating human solidarity to a dog-eat-dog war of all against all," Musa said. "Workers, farmers, and youth will forge bonds of solidarity, respect, and cooperation in struggle against the capitalists and the devastation their system imposes upon us."

"My campaign urges everyone to vote against Proposition 21," Musa said. "But the vote on March 7 will not be the end. The young people across California marching against Prop. 21 are already showing that the police and government officials will not simply be able to implement this law without a fight."

Jim Altenberg is a member of the United Transportation Union.

Grave site exposes brutality of slavery in early New York

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

NEW YORK—For the past six years a team of researchers led by biological anthropologist Michael Blakey of Howard University has been examining the bones of more than 400 African slaves buried a few blocks from city hall here. They plan to release a series of reports on their findings this year.

The controversy surrounding this story exposes some important facts about how various forms of labor, including bonded labor, built New York into the city it was to become.

The accidental unearthing of bones and skeletal remains of slaves from Africa, who worked under brutal conditions on the island of Manhattan in the 1700s, sheds new light on the scope to which slavery was an integral part of the history of this city, and not just a "peculiar institution" in the South.

The story coming to light from a scientific examination of these bones provides an important glimpse of a previously untold story that reveals the absolute brutality, racism, and inhumanity of capitalism from its very earliest days.

"That the graves existed at all surprised New Yorkers who grew up believing that theirs was a 'free' state where there had never been slavery," wrote Brent Staples in a January 9 *New York Times* opinion column. He points to the findings to be revealed by the Blakey team that will "show that colonial New York was just as dependent on slavery as many Southern cities, and in some cases even more so."

Commenting on his research, which documents the extent of slavery in the North, Blakey points out, "These facts have been hidden by selective education that created a mythology of America."

In 1991 workers digging a foundation for a 34-story federal office building in downtown Manhattan came across a number of unmarked grave sites, some as deep as 28 feet beneath street level. The General Services Administration (GSA), after reviewing the New York archives, announced that the site was listed as a "Negros Burying Ground." When it became clear to city authorities that there were hundreds of skeletal remains there—threatening expensive delays to their \$500 million construction project—the GSA brought in a larger force of workers and organized them to rapidly excavate all of the remains.

An outcry by various individuals and organizations in the Black community put a stop to this. This burial ground, which had apparently been used for more than a century, covered five acres of land—bordered by Broadway, Elk, Duane, and Reade

Streets. It turned out to be the largest and earliest African burial site in the nation, containing remains of 10,000–20,000 people by the time it was closed in 1794.

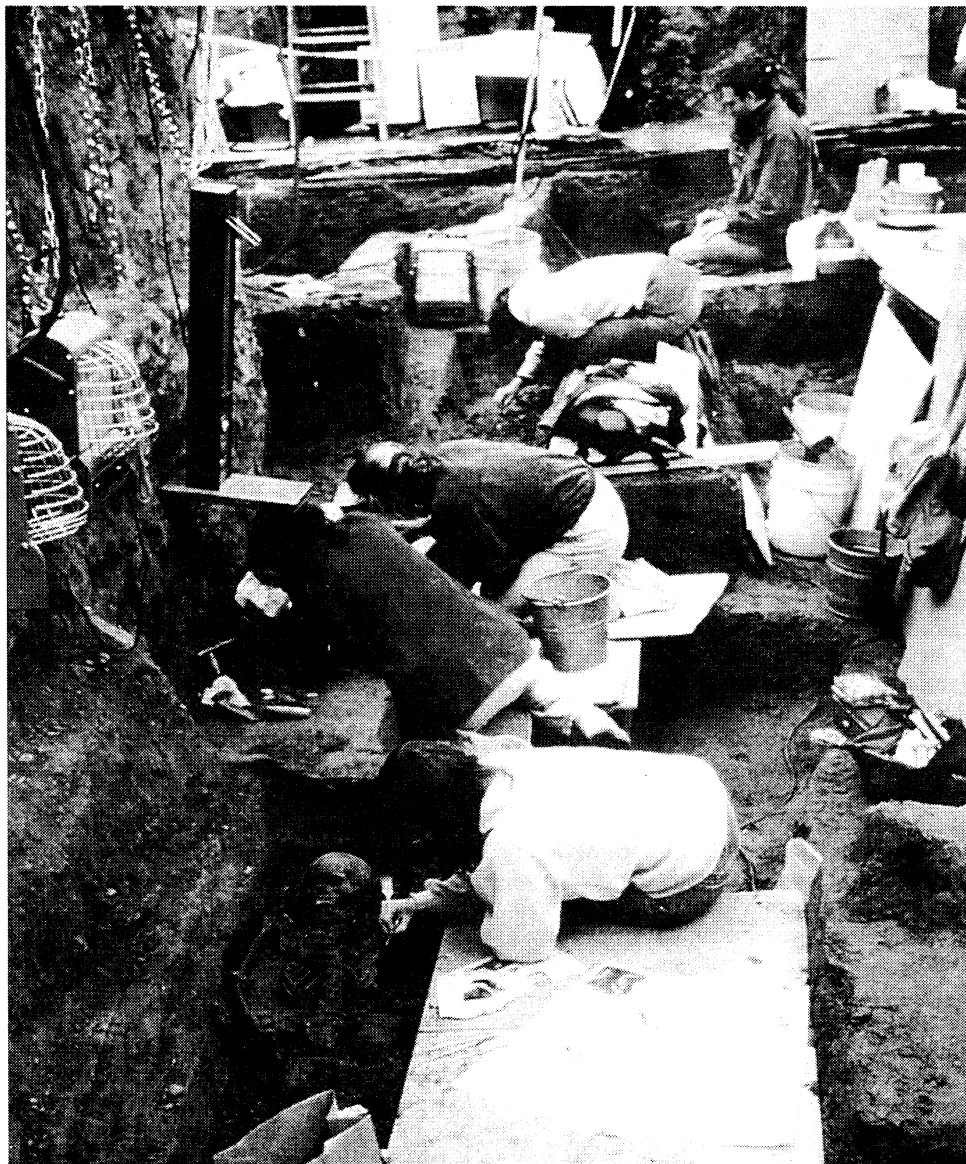
A total of 427 sets of human remains were moved to Lehman College in the Bronx, where a city-appointed Metropolitan Forensic Anthropology Team, which is usually called in for criminal investigations, took charge of the study. Blakey and others protested this move to conduct what amounted to a coroner's examination rather than an historical and archeological study. In 1992, Blakey succeeded in winning approval from the GSA to turn these bones over to the African Burial Ground Project, which he would direct. This study, which involves both physical examinations and DNA studies, began in mid-1994. "The GSA persistently and inexplicably has thrown stumbling blocks in our way," said Blakey.

'Not a genteel state of affairs'

"We need to tell our own story and tell it right, not just for our ancestors, but for their living descendants," he stated. "It's clear that slavery in New York was hard both physically and psychologically," and not as some have argued a "genteel and benign" state of affairs.

These African slaves were literally worked to death carrying out such tasks as constructing the streets of the city, clearing land, loading and emptying ships, and even building the Trinity Church. Slaves erected the wall from which Wall Street takes its name, as protection from military attacks on the former Dutch colony.

The study shows that the highest mortality rate was among those 15 to 20 years old. Many of these individuals died of unrelenting hard labor. Strains on the muscle and ligaments were so extreme that arm, leg, and shoulder muscle attachments were ripped away from the skeletons—taking chunks of bone with them. Circular fractures at the base of the skull were the result of heavy loads carried on the head or shoulders. In some cases, the injuries were fatal, as the spine was pushed all the way up into the cranial cavity. About 40 percent of the 427



U.S. General Services Administration

Protests forced government to allow African Burial Ground Project to excavate site slated for federal building in New York City. African slaves built the streets of the city and the Trinity Church, cleared land, and loaded and emptied ships. Slaves also erected the wall from which Wall Street takes its name.

skeletons found belonged to preadolescent children, many of whom died of malnutrition, and suffered from rickets, scurvy, anemia, or related diseases.

"These people were obviously working at the very margins of human endurance and capacity, especially undernourished children," states Blakey. "Women who gave birth in these conditions knew that they were bringing their children into hell."

Among the findings of the study is the lack of fertility among many women slaves. Women as well as men were forced to do "arduous physical labor," commented Blakey, and when they were worn out they were just replaced with other slaves.

The Dutch colonial masters recruited set-

tlers with advertisements that promised to provide them with slaves who "would accomplish more work for their masters, at less expense than [white] farm servants."

According to Blakey, about 6 million people came from the old world to the Americas from 1492 to 1776. Only 1 million of those people were European. The rest were mainly African. By about 1660, the population of New York (then a Dutch colony called New Amsterdam) was 40 percent African, about half of whom died by age 12. Thirty or 40 percent of those died in infancy. The first African slaves were brought to America in 1626, two years after the Dutch settled New Amsterdam. Slavery was outlawed in New York in 1827.

Residents oppose racist, anti-immigrant rally

BY LAUREN HART

SILER CITY, North Carolina—"They lost the hoods, but it's still up under there," said Sabrina Sweet, as she watched the racist, anti-immigrant rally assemble in this town.

Sweet and her friend Felicia Miller, both of whom are Black, had driven up from Fayetteville to observe the February 19 rally, which featured former Ku Klux Klan leader David Duke.

Some 60 people, all of them white, took part in the rally on the town hall steps, holding signs such as, "Pollution of our population is stupid," "La Raza go home. This is our land," and "No Spanish spoken here." A couple wore jackets patterned after the Confederate flag.

Siler City, like many other towns in this region, has seen substantial immigration in the last 10 years. Today, close to 40 percent of the 6,000 residents are Latino. Many of the immigrants work in the two large poultry plants and various textile mills located here.

The police and a number of organizations opposed to the racist rally had urged Latino residents and others not to hold a counterprotest, but to stay inside during the rally. Nevertheless, nearly 200 people gathered in the blocked-off street and on the sidewalk opposite town hall.

Some of those in this crowd applauded the speakers, but the large majority were opposed to the anti-immigrant action. A few brought signs reflecting this view, including a group of students from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. A number of students from the Siler City high school, both Black and white, said they came to oppose the rally. Individuals came from throughout the region.

Duke, who now heads an organization called the National Organization for European American Rights, gave a 50-minute

speech that scapegoated immigrants, Blacks, and Jews for social and economic problems, often in very crude terms. "To get a few chickens plucked is it worth losing your national heritage?" he said.

Other speakers were Will Williams of the National Alliance in Raleigh and Sam van Rensburg, a white South African who left following the fall of apartheid rule there. The final speaker was a supporter of ultrarightist presidential candidate Patrick Buchanan, who urged participants to sign petitions to put Buchanan on the state ballot as the Reform Party candidate.

A few observers who had been sympathetic to the anti-immigrant demagoguery of the rally organizers were taken aback by the blatantly racist platform. Johnny Bengé, a hydraulics worker who is white, said he was "disappointed. This is different than what it was supposed to be—it's the KKK under disguise."

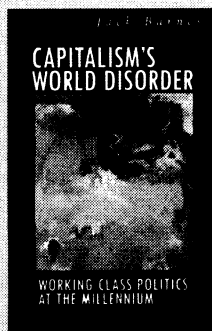
Most had no illusions about what to expect. Barry Green, who is Black, brought his teenage son from Durham. "I went to one of these in Tallahassee when I was in college in the '60s and it had a deep effect on me," he said.

Although there was no organized protest, a few people in the crowd shouted out against the speakers. Among them was Michael Siler, a young Black worker who builds trailer homes. Siler, who grew up in this town, said many of his coworkers are Mexican. "You have to stand up for yourself against this racist abuse," he said.

Jesus Perez, a Mexican worker who drove 20 miles from Liberty, was one of the few Latinos present. "I want to show them I'm not scared," said Perez.

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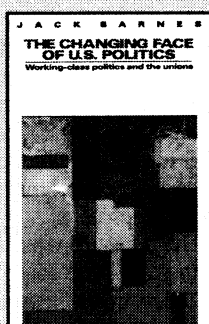
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Washington-Beijing conflict intensifies

BY MAURICE WILLIAMS

Relations between Washington and Beijing sharpened this past week over the questions of unification of China with Taiwan and the planned U.S. antimissile defense. In response to discussions about Taiwan's independence among candidates in the upcoming elections there, the Chinese government issued a stern warning that it will use force to unify the country if negotiations with Taiwan do not progress.

After stunning the Clinton administration, Yu Shuning of the Chinese Embassy in Washington said they wanted "to let the international community, including the United States government, know China's principled issue on Taiwan." China's policy, he said, remained "peaceful unification with one country, two systems," adding the document will help Washington "better understand the settlement of the issue."

With the victory of the Chinese revolution in 1949, the defeated Kuomintang, or Nationalist Party, fled to the island of Taiwan. Backed by the United States they for years posed as the government of China, but in 1972 Washington normalized relations with Beijing and agreed that "all Chinese on either side of the Taiwan Strait maintain there is but one China and that Taiwan is part of China."

Two important pieces of legislation are now before Congress: the Taiwan Security Enhancement Act and another granting China permanent normal trade relations and entry into the World Trade Organization. The first is opposed by the Clinton administration, the second was introduced by the U.S. president. This is another arena of division and factional fighting among sections of the U.S. ruling class, played out in conflicts in the various branches of government.

But the direction of Washington is clear to the Chinese: further arming of Taiwan and steps to put in place an antimissile system that would give the United States a nuclear first-strike capacity without fear of retaliation from China. The shield would involve deploying a scheme of land-, sea-, and air-based equipment in Japan and south Korea designed to locate and destroy missiles fired from China and north Korea.

The Pentagon, for example, is considering providing Taiwan with four advanced Arleigh Burke-class guided missile destroyers equipped with Aegis air defense radars that are part of the proposed antimissile system. U.S. Rear Adm. Eric McVadon, retired, said that China has made clear that providing the warships to Taiwan would be "the straw that breaks the camel's back. They have said they will react harshly if we do it."

Opponents of China's entry into the World Trade Organization have seized on these developments to whittle down support for Clinton's proposal in Congress, raising concerns at the White House that the measure may fail.

Building antimissile system

How quickly, and with what methods, an antimissile system should be put in place is being debated in U.S. ruling circles. The goal of the system is to intercept long-range missiles fired at the continental United States, thus putting nuclear blackmail back into Washington's hands. This will strengthen its military encirclement of the Chinese workers state especially, as the U.S. rulers prepare for the day when they will attempt to use force to overturn noncapitalist social relations there, in Russia, and elsewhere in Eastern Europe.

On January 18 the second of three scheduled tests failed when an "interceptor missile" fired from the Marshall Islands missed its target. The first test last October was initially touted as a success, although questions were later raised about the results. The failure of the second test provoked calls by a layer of the big business class to not put an unrealistic deadline on deciding whether or not to move forward with development.

U.S. president William Clinton has set a June deadline for making a decision on the system after the third and final test, which is scheduled for May.

"Test Missile is Rushed, Pentagon Official Says," was the headline in a February 15 article in the *New York Times*. According to the article, the Pentagon's director of operational testing and evaluation, Philip Coyle, stated the government agency was under unnecessary pressure to meet an "artificial" summer deadline for making a decision on whether to set up the missile sys-

tem.

But Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Henry Shelton said he was "comfortable with the June deadline." Last year the U.S. Defense Department had also launched tests for destroying medium-range missiles using warheads from the Army's Theater High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) program and new Patriot Pac-3 "interceptor" missiles. Washington is preparing deployment of the THAAD missile system at U.S. military installations around the world.

Debate on missile treaty

Last year U.S. defense secretary William Cohen announced that the White House would spend several billion dollars for the national antiballistic missile system. Such a system would violate the Antiballistic Missile Treaty (ABM), signed in 1972 with the Soviet Union. The treaty presumed neither state would launch nuclear-armed missiles against the other if it lacked the means to block retaliation.

"This may be one of the most serious decisions a president of the United States may make in modern times, and if the technology isn't there to look at all of the options, then we have to defer the decision," declared Sen. Charles Hagel, a supporter of the missile system.

The editors of the *New York Times*, nervous that the move would mean dumping the ABM Treaty too soon before an "effective" and "dependable" missile system is in place, advised Clinton to "resist any impulse" to rush through approving the missile system for narrow political considerations of the legacy of his presidency or to boost Democratic election prospects next fall. The *Times* chided Clinton's hastiness as a "political tactic" to enhance Vice-President Albert Gore's campaign for the presidency.



Taiwan missile ships carry out patrol. Washington is considering providing Taiwan with warships and antimissile system to strengthen military encirclement of China.

The *Wall Street Journal* called for immediately scrapping the ABM Treaty altogether, while echoing similar sentiments against a "political maneuver" in the presidential campaign.

Currently the U.S. government is seeking to gain Moscow's acquiescence to the missile system and to allow the amending of the ABM treaty. At a February 18 meeting in Washington, several White House officials met with Sergei Ivanov, Russian head of national security, for six hours to press their demands. Ivanov maintained the Kremlin's stance against the U.S. missile system stating, "If we are talking about slightly modifying the ABM treaty at the same time as deploying national defense, these two things simply can't exist together."



Meanwhile, Washington's plans for setting up a missile system in Japan hit a snag recently when Tokyo asked in January to cut its financial commitments to underwrite U.S. military bases there. Last year the Japanese government forked over \$2.5 billion to the United States for its military forces in Japan, which include 45,000 military personnel. Pentagon officials say with the closure of U.S. bases in the Philippines, the bases in Japan are essential for its security concerns in Asia. According to the *New York Times*, Tokyo states that with continued recession there, its "military support payments are a heavy burden."

Both governments had agreed to conduct research on deploying the missile system, estimated at \$521 million in the initial phase.

Truckers demand lower fuel prices

Continued from Page 16

I can hardly pay for the fuel." The trucker said their desperate economic situation, and being paid by the mile, makes the job unsafe due to the long hours they put in each week.

The NTA was formed several weeks ago out of the kitchen of Heather Whyte, the wife of a trucker. Since then, thousands of truckers have rallied to its call for action. The Canadian Auto Workers union donated \$10,000 to help it get organized. In Ontario, independent truckers who haul auto parts for GM, Ford, and Chrysler are required to pay dues to the CAW, although they do not work under union contracts.

Truck stops become organizing centers

Across Ontario truck stops have become organizing centers at which each day truckers gather to plan their next moves. An NTA phone line explains where meetings are taking place.

At the Fifth Wheel truck stop in Bowmanville, east of Oshawa, one young trucker explained that when he got back to Nova Scotia he intended to park his rig if the protest was still going on. "I've been driving my own rig for five years," he said. "I've got two years more payments to make. But the way things are going I might not make it. I'm just paying for fuel." He explained that he was on a two-day layover waiting for a load, but couldn't afford to drive his rig to visit relatives in the area and has a hard time paying for meals once his cooler runs out.

Fuel prices have almost doubled over the past year and have risen as much as 30 percent in the last eight weeks. In 1999 the average trucker paid \$36,000 for fuel. This year it will be \$48,100, reducing pretax income from \$31,500 to \$19,400 for an hourly rate of about \$13 per hour or less.

An NTA poster in the truck stop restaurant points out that haulage rates, which are about a dollar a mile, have not changed in 20 years. Yet the price of a new class 8 truck tractor has risen \$40,000 since 1993. "This country runs on the wheels of its trucks," is the slogan at the bottom of the poster.

At the same truck stop, trucker Janice Williams from Las Vegas, who has been driving for 12 years, said that she thought that "things are bad in the States but they're worse here. I support what they're doing. If we all went on vacation north and south of

the border for a week we'd get what we need," she said. "The stores would be empty in three days."

The realization of their key role in the economy is a constant theme in the discussions among trucker drivers. "Between 80 and 90 percent of this country's productivity travels by truck and we will bring the entire economy to a halt to get what we want," said Oshawa trucker and NTA organizer Paul Bourgeois to a mass rally at the beginning of the protest.

Capitalist politicians stonewall truckers

The NTA and other truckers are demanding government action to lower taxes on fuel, reduce fuel prices, and raise haulage rates per mile in the trucking industry. The NTA also demands a base salary for truckers, a retroactive lump sum payment by customers to help cover drivers' losses, and a fuel surcharge tied to the retail cost of fuel. So far, capitalist politicians have turned a deaf ear to their demands while condemning their militant tactics.

In Newfoundland, Finance Minister Lloyd Matthews says he will not reduce taxes on diesel fuel. In Ontario, Premier

Michael Harris said he had no time for truckers who break the law to protest fuel prices. "I don't think that improves their cause. I don't think lawbreaking is ever an option," he complained.

In Ottawa, Prime Minister Jean Chretien said truckers should pass rising expenses on to others. "We live in a market economy. These prices have increased around the globe. When you have added costs you transfer it to the people you are working for," he said. The editors of the *Globe and Mail* backed up Chretien, lecturing the truckers that "the government should not be in the business of regulating prices. That is the job of the marketplace."

What really worries Canada's capitalist rulers was expressed by Christian LeMire, president of the Purchasing Management Association of Canada. "These people [truckers] have a lot of power," he said. "If one day they block everything, we would be in deep trouble."

John Steele is a member of United Food and Commercial Workers Local 175. Nathan Ceccin and Rosemary Ray also contributed to this article.

S. African parliament passes anti-discrimination bill

BY T. J. FIGUEROA

PRETORIA, South Africa—The South African parliament, in which the African National Congress holds a decisive majority, passed the Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination bill January 26.

The bill, mandated by the post-apartheid constitution as a complement to the bill of rights, bans discrimination on the basis of race, gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status, ethnic or social origin, color, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, language, and birth. Under the legislation, "equality courts" will be formed to hear charges of discrimination.

Only the Democratic Party, African Christian Democratic Party, and Afrikaner Eenhedsbeweging voted against the bill.

South African president Thabo Mbeki of the African National Congress announced

in his February 4 state of the nation speech that he had signed the bill into law. "The government will act to ensure the observance of these laws as part of our common national offensive against all forms of inequality and discrimination," he said.

Mbeki emphasized in his speech that racism is far from dead in South Africa. To make the point, he quoted from an E-mail sent by an Illovo Sugar Company engineer to his colleagues. The engineer's diatribe said his goal was to "summarize what the kaffirs have done to stuff up this country since they came into power." The term "kaffir" is a racist epithet. The E-mail concluded: "All I am saying is that AIDS isn't working fast enough."

Members of the Food and Allied Workers Union obtained the E-mail and launched protests at the sugar plant. The engineer was subsequently fired.

U.S. farmers speak in Cuba of struggle to defend land

The following article appeared in the February 19 Spanish-language Internet edition of the Cuban newspaper *Granma Internacional*. It reports on a February 15 press conference by six farmers from the United States who conducted a fact-finding trip to Cuba February 12-19. The National Association of Small Farmers (ANAP) hosted the visit, which the Atlanta Network on Cuba helped organize.

The article is headlined, "Now I understand very well the difference between an embargo and a blockade." The subheading reads: "States Eddie Slaughter, vice president of U.S. Black Farmers and Agriculturalists Association [BFAA], in Havana. Discriminatory policies of U.S. Department of Agriculture dispossesses not only blacks but women of their farms." Translation and subheadings are by the *Militant*.

BY RAISA PAGES

Gladys Williams is besieged by poverty in the United States: as a black woman without full-time work, she has been able to survive with the help of her family and the community in Georgia where she lives with her two children and grandchildren.

Her story is not unique, as shown by the story of Anna Marie Codario, who is white and has become a "squatter" on the farm handed down through three generations of her family. It was expropriated by the government of her country, which claimed that

"as a woman I didn't have the capacity, nor was I competent to run it."

Hundreds of women in that country face a similar plight. Anna Marie and Gladys explained that some 50 landless women farmers in the United States decided to publicize their demands, but have been ignored by the media.

Perhaps this was why these women expressed with emotion their gratitude for the welcome they have received in Cuba as they saw the 30 reporters attending the press conference held at the headquarters of the National Association of Small Farmers, the organization that invited a delegation from the Atlanta Network on Cuba and a group of black Georgia farmers to visit the island.

"We had to come to Cuba to demand our rights, to find more forces and solidarity in a country where things are so different from what we are told over there," Anna Marie declared.

When a journalist asked Gladys whether she would consider handing over her grandchildren to people who are wealthy, her reply picked up on the questioner's intention.

"It seems that when someone becomes rich they lose the ability to love. Elián must return [to Cuba], because even though they offer him many material things, he will never have the love he will receive here among his father and family."

More than 16 million acres confiscated

But what was most amazing wasn't what



Militant/Ron Poulsen

U.S. farmers at press conference in Havana speak of crisis facing small producers. From left to right: Lee Dobbins, Karl Butts, and Willie Head.

these two U.S. farmers described, but what Eddie Slaughter, BFAA vice president, explained. Descendants of the black soldiers who took part in the civil war against slavery have had their land taken from them—land won through courage and hard work by their forbears during that historic stage in the development of the nation, which eventually became the greatest power on Earth.

Since 1920, more than 16 million acres belonging to black farmers have been confiscated through the U.S. government's discriminatory policy, Slaughter stated.

He explained that another million acres could be added to this amount of confiscated land. In a legal process that began in 1981,

the farmers went before the federal courts, after the U.S. Department of Agriculture ignored their demands for years.

Under pressure, that department acknowledged the racial discrimination that had caused the land loss, but proposed an out-of-court settlement. In March 1999, the U.S. Department of Agriculture agreed to pay \$2.5 million in compensation to the farmers whose land had been taken. "But we haven't received a penny," Slaughter said, explaining that the amount does not even compensate for all the social harm and economic losses suffered over that period.

In 1910 there were around one million black farmers in the United States, he said. Today there are only 16,000.

Disinformation is the greatest enemy

Karl Butts, a white vegetable farmer in Tampa, Florida, faces high taxes and high prices for the inputs needed for his crops, together with low prices for his produce as a result of cutthroat competition by the big transnational companies.

When people from his community heard he was traveling to Cuba, they feared for his safety. "The ignorance there about the reality of this island is such that I was advised to watch out because there were supposedly nuclear missiles everywhere and a lot of repression," he commented with irony, contrasting the very different atmosphere that has surrounded the farmers' five-day exchange with Cuban peasants and farm workers.

"I have discovered a big difference between the way small farmers are treated here and in the United States. Here they received the title to the land, and there they took it away from me because I am black," remarked Georgia farmer Lee Dobbins.

"There is no justice in the United States for blacks and poor people. We will take our case to the United Nations. Our aim here is to find people who will support us, because we suffer the same effects that are inflicted on Cuba by the [U.S.] blockade. We suffer as black people, and we are blockaded in our own country," Slaughter said.

Small-scale farming in the United States survives through high-interest loans obtained on the financial markets to enable us to buy what we need to farm, explained Willie Head. Production costs increase every year, he added.

"Here in Cuba farmers not only receive low-interest financial assistance, but are guaranteed the sale of their crops before they plant, and they are protected by bank insurance against natural disasters," he said.

"Farmers from Georgia and Alabama have tried to export rice to Cuba and other countries, but have been unable to because of the discriminatory policies of the U.S. Department of Agriculture," said Slaughter.

"On our return, we will hold meetings to report the truth about Cuba and its experiences in carrying out the land reform, the cooperative movement, the aid to small farmers, and urban farming.

"Truth, crushed to the earth, will rise again," said the vice president of BFAA, who said he now sees that the Yankee government imposes not an embargo, but a blockade against Cuba. "Now I understand the difference very well."

'Visit Cuba and see for yourselves,' say librarians responding to U.S. lies

BY JONATHAN SILBERMAN

HAVANA, Cuba—"Protest erupts at Cuban Book Fair." That was the title of a press release posted on the Internet by the Friends of Cuban Libraries on the eve of the recent Havana International Book Fair.

The release cited an open letter to foreign publishers titled, "Book Fair or Carnival of Persecution," which called on foreign publishers to protest the "scandalous repression of Cuba's independent librarians...the only librarians in the world who are being subjected to systematic persecution."

The release also cited as a "cause of dismay...the fact that [the book fair] was being held in Havana's La Cabaña fortress, notorious as the former site of a harsh prison where the Castro administration carried out hundreds of executions." Among the signatories of the open letter were, according to the release, Cuban writers Guillermo Cabrera Infante, Herberto Padilla, and

Carlos Franqui, who took part in the revolutionary movement against the Batista dictatorship in the 1950s but later turned against the revolution and now live outside the country. Another signatory is Jorge Castañeda, a Mexican writer who recently published a hostile biography of Argentine-Cuban leader Ernesto Che Guevara.

In fact no protests by foreign publishers were made at the book fair where publishers from 31 countries participated. The book fair was a major event in Cuba, reflecting the decades-long promotion of books by the revolution. It was attended by 130,000 workers, professionals, and young people. An entrance ticket to the book fair cost just two Cuban pesos and a special coach shuttle was laid on to provide easy access; thousands of books were sold to fair-goers at very accessible prices in national currency. In addition to displays of books, the fair also hosted a number of cultural presentations

and book launchings.

A few days after the fair closed, the *Militant* arranged to talk to some of Cuba's leading librarians about the organization calling itself the Friends of Cuban Libraries.

"The so-called independent librarians movement in Cuba is not independent; they're not librarians, nor is it a movement," Eliades Acosta Matos, director of the José Martí National Library, told the *Militant*. "I invite people to visit Cuba and see for themselves, to go into the streets, and speak with the people."

Also present at the interview, held at the Rubén Martínez Villena Havana Provincial Library, were Cila Delia Pentón Pérez, director of the Havana Provincial Library; Sara Moreno Rodríguez, Havana provincial president of the Cuban Library Association (ASCUBI); and Ofelia Santiel Orozco, ASCUBI's Havana provincial vice-president.

"We were delighted to hold this meeting both because we are keen to publicize the truth about the 'independent libraries' and because of our past relations with Pathfinder," explained Cila Pentón Pérez. "We have been receiving donations of Pathfinder books for many years."

"I was able to visit the Pathfinder stand on the first day of the book fair," added Eliades Acosta. "Pathfinder publishes important books of excellent quality and I was very impressed with the wonderful mural," he added referring to a poster of the six-story Pathfinder Mural in New York.

A political project funded from abroad

"It would be more accurate to describe these 'independent' libraries as 'virtual libraries,'" Acosta said. "They really exist only on the Internet. The people associated are not librarians; nor do they have a cultural project. They have a political project. And they receive funding from abroad to mount their political challenge. They say that they receive books from UNESCO but that is simply a lie."

Two of the main foreign financial sources are Freedom House and the Center for a Free

Continued on Page 14



Militant/Jonathan Silberman

"We are keen to publicize the truth about the 'independent libraries,'" said Cila Delia Pentón Pérez, director of the Havana Provincial Library, at far left. Other Cuban library officials at meeting with *Militant* reporters included, from right to left, Sara Moreno Rodríguez, Ofelia Santiel Orozco, and Eliades Acosta Matos.

Farmers rally at USDA, demand action

BY MARY MARTIN

WASHINGTON, D.C.—Eighty family farmers turned out here to appeal the terms of a federal court settlement of a class action lawsuit charging the U.S. government with widespread discrimination in its dealings with farmers.

Afterwards they demanded and got an emergency meeting with U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) official Rosalind Gray, director of the Office of Civil Rights.

Organized by the Black Farmers and Agriculturalists Association (BFAA), the February 28 protest was one in a series of actions by farmers defending their land and fighting the racist practices admitted to by the federal government.

The farmers hold USDA director Dan Glickman, Gray, and other officials responsible for continuing discrimination and the fact that many farmers have yet to see any benefits from the April 1999 federal consent decree. In settling the suit the government promised farmers debt relief and compensation. Instead, the farmers say they are facing continued discrimination, recrimination, foreclosures, and ruin at the hands of the USDA and their local officials.

Mae Savant, a hay farmer from Hope Mills, North Carolina, said she and her husband received notice they had been approved for a \$50,000 settlement but not for the debt relief, which is crucial to them keep-



Farmers at February 28 action in Washington, D.C. Top, farmers meet after hearing at Rayburn building. Above, farmers emerge from courthouse.

ing their farm.

In addition, she has been notified that their income tax return will be applied to unspecified existing farm debts. She is concerned that she may never see the check for \$50,000, and that it will be applied to debts

for farm loans instead.

After the meeting at the USDA, Griffin Todd, a farmer from Zebulon, North Carolina, said, "The good old boys are still at work. There is no justice for Black farmers. But we will get justice!"

Dairy farmers demand price controls

BY TOM MAILER

HARRISBURG, Pennsylvania—Dairy farmers from Maryland and Pennsylvania, including seven Amish farmers, held a press conference here to demand action by the U.S. government to prevent the economic ruin of family-operated dairies.

Faced with processors paying less than \$10 per hundredweight for their milk, and with production cost at close to \$20, working dairy farmers and their supporters are putting forward proposals to gain some say in the pricing system and win support from consumers.

The meeting was called by the Pennsylvania Association for Sustainable Agriculture and the Maryland Sierra Club. Chris Bedford of the national Sierra Club's Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations Organizing Committee warned that one-half of Pennsylvania's dairy farms are on the verge of failure and could go under this year.

"Food production is being industrialized with greater use of genetically modified organisms, increasing use of antibiotics and other chemicals, and factory techniques. The family farmer is being turned into a factory worker, a wage worker on the land," he said. "The concentration of waste from these factory farms also threatens our water quality."

Three of the 15 dairy farmers present also spoke. George Donnon, a 32-year-old dairy farmer from Rising Sun, Maryland, explained that the major corporations control milk pricing through the Chicago Mercantile Exchange and daily futures trading. Donnon advocated labeling products "with their country of origin so people can decide for themselves" what to buy.

Pointing to a sheet of paper in his hand, he added that farmers "need Congress to put into action 'Option USA,' because if we keep going the way we are now, thousands of farmers will be forced off the land. Then it will be corporate farms milking the government for tax dollars."

The "Option USA" plan envisions a 36-member committee composed of one dairy farmer, consumer, and processing company representative from each of the current 12 milk marketing areas in the United States. This committee would set minimum milk prices each quarter based on production, consumption, exports, imports, and cost of production.

Additionally, a graduated premium would be paid that favors smaller producers over large ones. Another provision would require that the established minimum price be paid to the producer for all milk marketed in the U.S., even if it is imported.

Ken Marshall, who runs a dairy farm with 75 milk cows and 250 acres for feed crops,

summed up the situation many farmers are facing. "My family has had this farm for five generations, since 1840. But now all that work and sweat to build it up is slipping through my fingers like sand. But we're not asking for handouts. Just the right to make

a living without being forced off the land. Now we all have to begin getting active ourselves, because no else will do it for us."

The next action is set to coincide with hearings in Harrisburg of the Pennsylvania Milk Marketing Board on March 2.

NFU meeting discusses national rally in D.C.

Continued from front page

chapters are organizing buses that will leave for the nation's capital March 18 and pick up people along the way in rural towns and large cities. On March 20 a town hall meeting in Washington on the rural crisis is planned as well.

Mark Uckert, of Clear Lake, South Dakota, said some 30 high school and college students, most from family farms and rural towns, are among those on the half dozen buses from that state.

It was clear from the meeting that NFU members have been actively building the protest among people living in rural areas. Endorsers of the action include the AFL-CIO, American Agriculture Movement, Federation of Southern Cooperatives, National Family Farm Coalition, National Farmers Organization, a number of grain and livestock associations, and church and religious groups. Jodi Niehoff, national coordinator for the rally, said that as of the convention about 1,500 people have signed up for the march and she expects double that number to attend.

USDA proposes welfare for farmers

Working farmers at the convention made clear the depth of the crisis they face and the need for action now. Some were handing out a copy of a recent Omaha *World-Herald* article that pointed to a proposal quietly floated by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The report suggests putting farm families on welfare, a sharp departure from financial assistance to farmers based on a farm's production or planting history.

The January issue of *Wallaces Farmer* reports that less than 4 percent of farms sell more than half of all farm products. About 73 percent of U.S. farms have sales of less than \$50,000, with these farmers keeping on the average about 20 cents of each dollar they take in. Their average income is less than \$10,000 a year.

"I work driving a truck about eight months a year from 4:30 in the morning until I get home around 7:30 at night. My wife works as a school teacher full time," said Gary Gragekson, a sugar beet farmer from Badger, Minnesota. "That is the only way I can keep farming my 700 acres," he said.

Del Styren from Brady, Montana, said

that in his region rural towns of 2,000–5,000 people are hurting because social services are being cut. Some towns have lost their only hospital or have had to cut back on staffing because of a decline in the tax base of the county.

The only reason towns like Emporia, Kansas, which has a population of 25,000, is not hurting more, said Gary Watts, a grain and hog farmer near Emporia, is because of packinghouse giant IBP. "The company needs a hospital to take care of all those injured meat-packers they haul out of the plant each week," he said. "The businesses that are doing the best in Emporia are welding and farm machine repair shops. The ones doing the worst are new farm equipment dealers. Very few farmers are buying anything new."

Railroads put squeeze on

Styren is also on the board of a local grain cooperative. "Besides low grain prices, we also have to deal with the Burlington Northern Railroad," Styren said. "Over the years

Gary Grant, president of BFAA, told the USDA officials, "All we want to do is to work our land. Meanwhile your local agents have called us [racist epithets], have crumpled up and thrown our loan applications in the trash.... We say, stop it now! Stop playing games."

Wayne Alexander, a specialty grass and tree farmer from Texas, is facing imminent foreclosure on his farm despite a consent decree provision that is supposed to suspend foreclosure proceedings while the farmer's claim is being processed. He told the officials that "under this agreement we will have the demise of a great number of farmers."

According to a lead attorney in the class-action lawsuit, some 40 percent of the plaintiffs have been denied compensation in the federal settlement. Stephon Bowens, director of the Land Loss Prevention Project, said the average debt relief received by those who are receiving settlements is \$17,500.

The appeal hearing on contested provisions of the consent decree was held before a panel of federal judges convened by Judge Paul Friedman. One of the two original attorneys for the class action suit, Alexander Pires, sat alongside the government attorneys and chimed in on their arguments against any change or challenge to the consent decree's wording and execution.

Melvin Bishop, president of Georgia BFAA, said, "The way it goes in court still won't solve the problem of what the USDA is doing to farmers. We need the secretary of agriculture to make sure justice is being done with this decree."

At a farmers' strategy session after the hearing, Eddie Slaughter, vice-president of Georgia BFAA, urged the farmers to "reach out to others in the same or similar circumstances." He read out loud the flyer for the "Rally for Rural America" on March 21 sponsored by the National Farmers Union.

a lot of railroad spur lines have been pulled up. We have had to truck our grain five to six times farther to an elevator to get rail service. The railroad is in the process of extending that distance up to 100 miles, about double what it is now," he said. "It is one of the reasons we have had to merge some rural cooperatives. The BN is trying to force us to build new facilities. They want to go from 52-unit car trains to 104-unit cars," said Styren.

Farmers at the convention were enthused that organized labor had endorsed the March 21 action. For more information on the events, contact the NFU in your state or call the national coordinator for the Rally for Rural America at (202) 314-3103, or write to 400 N. Capitol Street NW #790, Washington D.C., 20001. On the Internet go to www.rallyforruralamerica.org. Leaflets, news releases, and other material to build the march are available.

Joe Swanson is a member of United Auto Workers Local 1672 in Des Moines, Iowa

1,000 protest crisis in Minnesota

BY DOUG JENNESS

ST. PAUL, Minnesota—At a militant and spirited rally here farmers from across the state rallied at the Capitol March 1. Some 1,000 farmers and their supporters turned out for the action, called by the Minnesota Catholic Conference and the Minnesota Council of Churches.

The protest assembled at St. Paul Cathedral and marched to the Capitol. The action was built in conjunction with a national demonstration planned for March 21 in Washington, D.C. A large banner reading, "Agri-culture, not agri-business," hung in the capitol rotunda during the rally.

So far four buses from Minnesota are filled up to bring farmers and their supporters to the Rally for Rural America. Organizers at the Minnesota Farmers Union (MFU) office expect that at least five buses will roll out of here on March 18.

Dozens of farmers are also flying to Washington for the action or taking locally organized vans. The action has been en-

dorsed by the Minnesota AFL-CIO and discussion about it is taking place in some union locals, including the International Association of Machinists and the United Steelworkers of America. A day of other activity by the farmers, such as lobbying, is planned March 20.

Dave Frederickson, state president of the MFU, has been actively drumming up support for the March 21 action across the state. During the week of February 7–11, he addressed eight organizing meetings. The largest, in Granite Falls, drew some 50 farmers.

At a meeting in Mankato nearly 40 farmers peppered him with questions about the demands for the action and raised the problems they are most concerned with.

Basement-level prices farmers are getting for their corn, soy beans, hogs, and milk is generating a great deal of anger. Most are trying to grapple with proposals that could give them a price high enough that they can meet their costs of production and have enough for their families to live on too.

Hospital strike defends health care in France

BY NAT LONDON
AND CLAUDE BLETON

PARIS—In a movement that has been growing since early November, thousands of hospital workers went on strike and took to the streets of Paris and other French cities on February 10.

The majority of the demonstrators were young women, including nurses, nurses' aides, and student nurses. "*Tous ensemble, tous ensemble*" (All together, all together), the slogan of the 1995 railroad workers' strikes, is the chant most often heard on the demonstrations. "Inside—too much work! Outside—unemployment! Hire the unemployed! Hire the unemployed!" is also popular.

With a growing number of local hospitals on strike, the movement now organizes mass national demonstrations every Thursday. On January 28, a one-day national strike brought more than 10,000 hospital workers onto the streets of Paris, while tens of thousands more demonstrated elsewhere in the country.

For the first time in France, such a movement unites all layers of hospital workers, from nurses' aides and maintenance personnel, to doctors and even directors of clinics in France's large state-run hospital system.

The strike is coordinated by an "inter-syndical," a committee bringing together all the unions present in the hospitals. But the driving force of the strike has been the mass-based general assemblies open to all hospital workers that take place at least once a week in each hospital, where the basic decisions on strike activity are made.

The hospital workers are fighting to defend the "Sécurité sociale," France's public health-care system popularly known as the "Sécu." They are demanding an end to budget restrictions and the closing of local hospitals and clinics. They call for massive hiring of new hospital workers.

"We are not here for ourselves but for the sick," said 24-year-old nurse Sevrine Cartigny during a demonstration in Paris December 21. "We want to work in good conditions and above all we want the hospitals to hire new workers."

Florence Radigue is a member of the Confederation of Labor (CGT) at the Salpêtrière Hospital that, with 5,000 workers, is Europe's largest. "In general, about 500 workers from Salpêtrière go to the central Paris-wide demonstrations," she said. "On January 28, the day of the national strike, we were 800. Many more were obliged to work during the demonstration."

Hundreds of Salpêtrière strikers were in the middle of their February 11 general assembly meeting when it was discovered that the police had entered the hospital.

The strikers forced the hospital's director to come to the assembly, where he explained that he had not called for the police and agreed to ask them to leave. The strikers then decided to lock all the hospital entrances except one. They marched through the hospital grounds, and then blocked the main avenue in front of the hospital until the police forced them to move onto the sidewalk.

The protest movement started in November following the closing of the emergency ward in the Rothschild Hospital in Paris.

Emergency patients were shunted off to the nearby St. Antoine Hospital. With patients in hospital beds lined up in the halls waiting for hours to see a doctor, workers in the emergency ward called for a demonstration and strike that rapidly spread to other hospitals experiencing the same conditions. The strikers maintain urgent medical care, but force the postponement of routine medical procedures.

The closing of hospital wards is a result of draconian budget restrictions adopted by the government of Socialist Party premier Lionel Jospin, called the "Plural Left." In March 1999 the budget provisions for the Social Security system planned to reduce expenditures by 62 billion francs over a five-year period. This includes a 30 billion franc reduction in spending by public hospitals.

Jospin has not attempted the same frontal assault on the social wage as did earlier governments, but has instead launched an indirect attack of ever tightening budget restrictions while preserving the "principle" of guaranteed medical care.

In fact, a new law extending medical care to the indigent, including homeless persons who were not previously covered, has just been adopted.

The current wave of strikes and demonstrations indicates that workers' resistance continues and is beginning to cause problems for the "left" government. In a warning letter to the government, French Communist Party general secretary Robert Hue wrote, "All means should be mobilized to get us out of a dead end that is dangerous for the credibility of the Plural Left," which



Militant/Nat London

Some 10,000 hospital workers demonstrated in Paris, January 28, in defense of the health care system. They were joined by tens of thousands more in other cities throughout France. The government has been enacting significant budget cuts.

the CP is a part of.

But the only measure he was able to come up with was for the government "to take an emergency initiative to organize a roundtable discussion bringing together hospital workers, unions, the health ministry, and the hospital management" to see if they could agree on a compromise.

He did not propose allocating additional funds, hiring the large number of new workers the hospitals need, or stopping the closures of hospitals and clinics. The gap between the aspirations of widening layers of workers on the one hand and the concrete actions of the governing "left" coalition is slowly widening.

Conflict arises over new head of IMF

BY CARL-ERIK ISACSSON

Tension and disagreement has been simmering among the major imperialist powers in Europe and the United States over the appointment of the next head of the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

Headquartered in Washington, the IMF has a staff of some 3,000. It holds \$90 billion in outstanding loans to almost 90 countries and plays an important role in defending imperialist property holdings and investments, especially in the Third World. In particular, the IMF promotes the prerogatives of U.S. capital.

The formal decision as to who the managing director of the fund should be has been left to the European imperialist powers. Michel Camdessus, a Frenchman, has retired after 13 years in the post. American Stanley Fischer, who has run the day-to-day operations for years, is acting director.

The main candidate put forward is Caio Koch-Weser, a longtime World Bank official who is currently the state secretary in the German finance ministry. After a long silence greeted his nomination by the German government, the European Union gave a lukewarm endorsement to his appointment. The French government, for example, issued a statement saying it would not block Koch-Weser for the seat.

[As we go to press, U.S. president William Clinton rejected Koch-Weser for the

post, leading the *Financial Times* to observe that "it is barely conceivable that a candidate could win over the opposition of its (the IMF's) largest shareholder." Fisher, and Eisuke Sakakibara of Japan, are the two other nominees now on the table.]

The *Financial Times* of London said in an editorial it would be a mistake to appoint Koch-Weser. "The key task for the new managing director," the big business newspaper said, "is to take the IMF in precisely the opposite direction.... It needs a new leader who can refocus its role on macroeconomic surveillance and managing financial crises."

This is the same position put forward by U.S. treasury secretary Lawrence Summers, who outlined a major shift in December. He proposed the IMF stop long-term loans and only focus on short-term lending to countries facing currency crises or other financial emergencies.

The proposals by Washington to alter the IMF's role reflects the growing disorder of capitalism, in which IMF demands for austerity in countries such as Indonesia and south Korea have deepened economic turmoil and led to increased resistance by workers and peasants there. It also reflects the inability of IMF loan practices to make any headway in overturning the workers states in Russia and throughout eastern Europe.

Concerns over Koch-Weser's candidacy have also been expressed by some South American countries, according to the *Financial Times*. Among the alternatives who have been mentioned are Fischer and Jacob Frenkel, former chairman of the Israeli central bank.

German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder has argued that his country should take a role in world affairs which better reflects its economic weight. The truth of the matter, though, is that banks in Germany hold more than 40 percent of the outstanding loans to Russia, a much bigger proportion as compared to banks in other imperialist countries. German banks are also a main creditor in the third world, especially in Asia. What is at stake for German imperialism is that if Washington's proposed policy shift for the IMF is put into effect, German banks will have a harder time getting payments from their debtors in these countries.

For example, on February 12, the London Club of international commercial creditors reached an agreement with Russia to write off about one-third of its \$32 billion private sector debt left over from the Soviet Union. This spurred hope in Moscow that the Paris Club of official creditors will also write off a large proportion of its \$42 bil-

lion debt to foreign governments. The German government holds about half of the Soviet sovereign debt and has strongly opposed a big write off within the Paris Club, arguing that Russia is a naturally rich country that is unwilling rather than unable, to service its obligations.

Another example of the seriousness of the inter-imperialist rivalry over the future role of the IMF is that Paris, although it sees the Berlin-Paris axis as the core of the EU, is floating the idea of an informal poll of IMF members to test the support for Koch-Weser.

Revelations indicating the Ukraine misled the IMF on how it used its foreign currency reserves in 1997-98 was seized on by U.S. Congressman Jim Saxton, vice-chairman of the joint economic committee, to press for the changes advocated by Washington. Saxton said the evidence shows "the IMF's traditional 'hear no evil, see no evil' approach continues to raise questions about the IMF's stewardship of taxpayers' money."

The *New York Times* noted that the Clinton administration does not regard Koch-Weser as having "the right résumé to carry out such changes." Given the tentative green light in Europe, the United States, it says, "will have to choose between accepting Mr. Koch-Weser or using its standing at the IMF to oppose him, perhaps in alliance with some developing countries. Washington would have to weigh the importance of finding what it considers an ideal candidate for the post against the cost of straining relations with European allies."

Carl-Erik Isacsson is a member of the Metalworkers Union in Södertälje, Sweden.

Ford to lay off 1,500 workers in the UK

The Ford Motor company announced February 18 that it would begin a massive production cutback in Europe by laying off 1,500 of the 8,100 workers at its plant in

Dagenham, England. Ford's European chairperson, Nick Scheele, said the company has 25 percent overcapacity on the continent.

Even after the cutbacks the firm would be overproducing 200,000 units a year, he said. Ford's profits in Europe fell from \$193 million in 1998 to \$28 million in 1999. The company lost \$55 million in the fourth quarter of last year. The profitability of the plants in the United Kingdom has suffered as the British pound has strengthened against the euro, the currency used for cross-border transactions in Europe.

Exports from the United Kingdom have become more expensive for buyers on the continent, as the euro has declined by 15 percent over the past year. Officials of the Transport and General Workers' Union, which organizes the plant, said they oppose cuts of more than 1,000 jobs. "We are not prepared to be treated unfairly or disproportionately with other workers across Europe," said union negotiator Tony Woodley.

GENESIS OF CAPITAL

BY: KARL MARX

The starting point of capitalism, of the development that created both the wage-laborer and the capitalist, was the "servitude of the laborer," Marx writes. This series of events, in which the peasants were driven from the land and deprived of the tools of production "is written in the annals of mankind in letters of blood and fire." . \$3.00

Poultry workers sue Tyson Foods

Some 4,500 people have added their names to a lawsuit, initially filed by 159 current and former employees, against Tyson Foods, Inc. The company is the world's largest chicken and poultry producer.

Now the Department of Labor has stepped in, saying it will conduct a nationwide audit of the company's practices, according to a February 15 Reuters news wire report.

The audit will review pay practices covering processing plant workers and catching crews. The workers' lawsuit contends the bosses failed to pay them for all hours worked and did not pay them enough for overtime. The Labor Department's investigation is to cover 51 plants.

Report from Tehran on elections to Majles

BY SADEQ HEKMAT

TEHRAN, Iran—More than 30 million people in Iran went to the polls February 18 and elected a Majles (Parliament) that in its majority favors more democratic rights.

Across the country 80 percent of those eligible to vote participated in the elections for the 290-member Majles, the sixth since the 1979 revolution. Over all, 221 delegates were elected. The remaining seats will be filled in run-off elections in April. The 3 million people who voted in Tehran elected 30 delegates allotted to the capital city, all in the first round.

The current Majles in its majority is composed of deputies who are part of what is commonly called the "right faction" in the government. This conservative faction has been instrumental in banning opposition newspapers, jailing its political opponents within the regime, and promoting legislation reinforcing limitations on democratic rights. Prior to the elections, the Majles voted to raise the voting age requirement from 15 to 16 years. This was generally viewed in the country as a factional move to prevent 15-year-olds, amounting to a million and half young people, from voting for opposition candidates.

But the mass outpouring of the population—especially youth and women, with people waiting in long lines to vote—more than made up for this loss. Among the overwhelmingly youthful campaigners for the candidates, women stood out distributing campaign literature in the schools and streets. By law they had only a week to campaign, and they made the most of it.

Protest against conservative faction

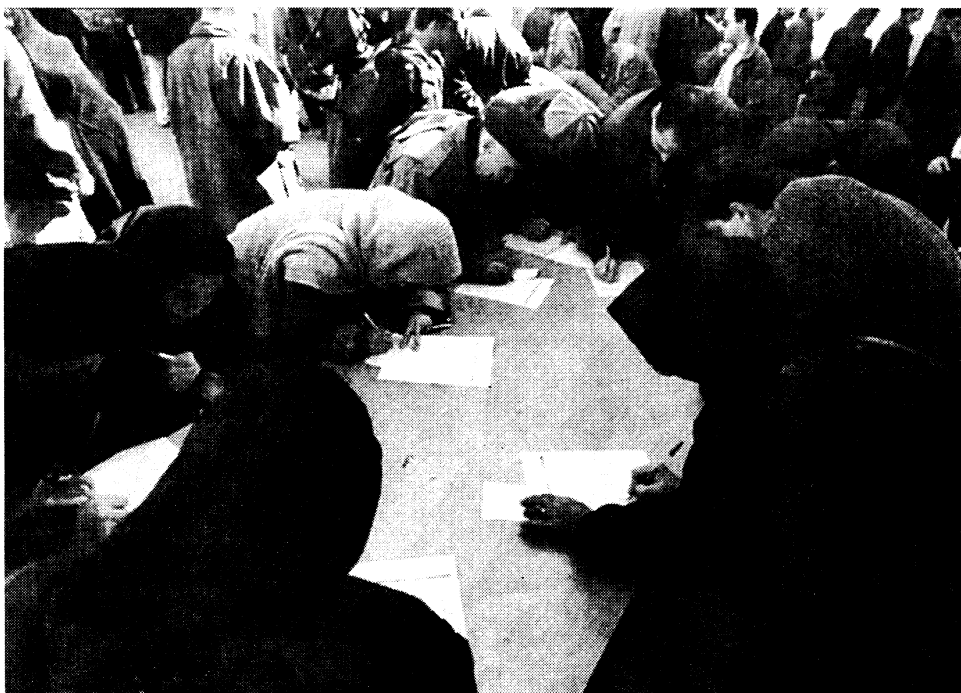
A major element in the elections was a massive protest vote cast against the conservative faction. The highest number of votes in Tehran, 1.8 million, went to Mohammadreza Khatami, a younger brother of President Mohammad Khatami who until recently had been relatively unknown. President Khatami was elected as president three years ago in a landslide victory against a favored leader of the conservative faction, Ayatollah Nateq Nouri, the speaker of the house in the current Majles.

Many people view the conservatives as putting road blocks in the way of Khatami's progressive direction. The vote for his brother is viewed as a proxy vote in support of him. Votes for some of the other candidates had a similar character.

The next three candidates who received the highest votes were Jamileh Kadivar, Alireza Nouri, and Hadi Khamenei who were also relatively unknown. Their high votes caught everybody by surprise. Jamileh Kadivar's brother, Mohsen Kadivar, is a well known Islamic cleric. He was imprisoned for what is generally thought to have been expressing dissenting views. Alireza Nouri is the brother of Abdollah Nouri, an Islamic cleric and former editor of the Tehran daily *Khordad*.

He previously held high-ranking positions in the government. Abdollah Nouri was accused of blasphemy. He was given a five-year jail term last November and his paper banned after a highly publicized trial broadcast on national radio and TV where he defended his ideas.

The fourth highest vote went to Hadi Khamenei, an Islamic cleric and a brother of the Islamic head of state, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. Because of his views favoring tolerance and political openness, he was attacked last year by zealots and beaten up.



In Tehran, part of massive turnout of Iranians who cast their ballots February 18.

The vote for him reflected an aspect of solidarity and abhorrence of thuggery in politics.

Of the 30 candidates in Tehran, only one nominated by the conservative faction was elected. Former president Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, while not associated with the conservative faction, nevertheless almost lost the election, one of the reasons being that he was nominated by the conservatives. To everyone's surprise he ended up having the lowest number of votes among the 30 elected candidates, barely scraping by.

The degree of shake-up can be seen by the fact that 230 out of 290 deputies in the current Majles will not be sitting in the new one. Mohammad Reza Bahonar, a leader of the conservative faction in the current Majles, told reporters, "The results are not as we thought in Tehran."

The political opposition to conservatives coalesced around what has come to be known as the 2nd of Khordad movement. This is a broad liberal bourgeois movement that looks to President Khatami to one degree or another for leadership. Central themes of Khatami's campaign include expansion of political liberties, special attention to the needs of the youth, and privatization of major industries.

A leaflet put out by Jebheye Mosharekat (Participatory Front), which is viewed as Khatami's party, calls for legislation to guarantee security of capital and private ownership. Along these lines, last week's papers here carried in their headlines the news that a private bank was opened here for the first time since the revolution.

Dismantling 'parallel institutions'

The dismantling of the so called "parallel institutions" was also a central demand of 2nd of Khordad, as well as most of the independent candidates.

These institutions came out of the 1979 revolution when the old state structures cracked under the revolutionary assault of the masses. For example, there are two military structures: the pro-imperialist army built by the shah of Iran, which shattered during the revolution; and a new army built outside of and coexisting with the defeated imperial army.

Other parallel institutions include two ministries of agriculture. One ministry is inherited from the old regime, the other arose with the awakening of the peasants during the revolution. They were joined by thousands of youth from cities who went to the villages and worked with the peasants to raise productivity on the land and to introduce literacy and education. All attempts in the last 20 years to dismantle "parallel institutions" and unify their functions has proved to be futile.

This was an election marked by the candidacy of all the bourgeois currents of Iran, including probazaar (mercantile) wing of Ayatollah Nateq Nouri, who was the speaker of the fifth Majles; Ayatollah Akbar Hashemi; Rafsanjani's Kargozaran (Functionalists) Party; and President Khatami's Mosharekat Front.

Many of the prominent spokesmen of these parties, with the ex-

ception of the conservatives, were ruled off the ballot by the Council of Guardians, an elected body of mainly high-ranking Islamic clerics who have the final say on many matters of state. The Council of Guardians has pretty much carried out policies of the conservative faction.

The 2nd of Khordad movement is not politically homogeneous. For example, Mojahedin Enghelabe Eslami is known to be for more government control over the economy, while Khatami's faction favors more privatization. In fact, the Tehran daily *Keyhan*, which is more inclined toward the conservatives, has been running numerous articles on a possible split in this front.

What people enjoy the most is to be able to express opinions without fearing victimization ...

Mojahedine Enghelabe Eslami has been putting out statements warning of a potential coup being organized against the reform movement.

Khaneh Kargar also fielded candidates. This organization has been in existence for two decades and is closely connected with the newly formed reformist Islamic Labor party.

Its national secretary, Abolghsem Sarhaddi Zadeh, was reelected to the sixth Majles from Tehran. He was endorsed by almost all 2nd of Khordad formations, with the notable exception of Rafsanjani's Kargozaran party. On the other hand, Soheila Jelodarzadeh, who was elected as a "Workers' candidate" to the fifth Islamic parliament, used her platform to support Mr. Rafsanjani's candidacy.

The Workers' House had their own slate, topped by the name of Hashemi Rafsanjani and Hasan Rohani, vice-chair of the current Majles who is associated with the conservative wing. Soheila Jelodarzadeh was quoted by the Tehran daily *Karo Kargar* (Labor and Laborer) in January saying, "The workers community has special gratitude towards Hashemi Rafsanjani because we received his support when he was the president." Jelodarzadeh was speaking for the Islamic Labor party. In the same article she said, "We can not reach economical stability unless the capital receives its fair share."

A large number of independent candidates ran in the elections. They included quite a few army officers, civil servants, and faculty members of educational institutions. It appears some 50 independent candidates were elected, creating a mild dispute among the contending factions who seek to claim some of the "independents" as their own.

It is evident that Khatami's Mosharekat party has recruited a large number of youth during this election. One student who this correspondent spoke with said that he had walked for hours in the Tehran streets two days before election day, and had seen hundreds of youth passing out electoral leaflets, which he said were mostly in support of Khatami's reform movement.

Another current that actively participated in the election was the main student organization, Daftar Tahkim Vahdat (DTV—Center to Strengthen Unity). They worked as

part of the 2nd of Khordad movement and the Khaneh Kargar. In support of the reform movement, DTV put out a leaflet with a headline, "The dawn is near." This student group takes its continuity from the students who took over the U.S. embassy in 1979 to protest Washington's moves to interfere in Iran's internal affairs and to reinstall the deposed shah to the throne.

The U.S. government did exactly that in 1953 through a military coup organized from the U.S. embassy in Tehran by the CIA. Many of those students fought as volunteers in the 1980–88 Iran-Iraq war to repel a pro-imperialist-backed attack by Iraq's capitalist government against Iran's revolution. This group also led protest actions after thugs and police attacked a student dormitory at the University of Tehran last spring. Since then, most other student groups have evaporated, but DTV is widening its influence among students.

Downplaying religious themes

An eye-catching feature of this election was the downplaying of religious themes in election literature and the widespread use of nationalistic slogans. Most leaflets had the Iranian flag painted on them. Big banners of Jebhe Mosharekat were put on the streets with a headline saying, "Iran, for all Iranians."

Most army officers running as candidates called for the restoration of "law and order." Reza Zarrin Ghaba, an active army pilot, called for "freedom in thought, logic in talk, and law in the field of action." A retired army officer, Mohsen Zainali, who was running as an independent candidate, put out an electoral statement that was widely distributed in the demonstration held on the anniversary of the 1979 revolution. His statement was about how to solve the widespread unemployment in Iran. His solution: "Throw out all Foreign Workers!"

Many people in the demonstration dismissed this right-wing statement with laughter. But it reflects the fact that Iran like any other capitalist country under the present world crisis is not immune to developing right-wing currents.

Most people are very happy about the election results. What they enjoy the most is that they have found a way to express their opinions without fearing victimization. They cast a protest vote without any worries about becoming known and identified as some one opposing the ruling view. The joy of voting and getting results permeates the air for now.

'The lesser evil'

According to official reports, about 10 million eligible voters did not participate in the elections. No report has been put out about the composition of the nonvoters. Two workers told this correspondent that they would not vote because those who win will not represent their interests. They were not very far off if we consider what was just voted upon in the current Majles.

According to a report in *Keyhan*, a new law exempts workshops that employ less than five people from abiding by the Labor Law for the next six years. This law provides some job security and other benefits. Not all young people were enthused with the candidates either. On the eve of elections two students who are supporters of Daftar Tahkime Vahdat said they will vote for reform candidates only because "they are a lesser evil."

Unemployment is officially at 20 percent, but it is much higher for the 70 percent of the population who are under 30. The rate of inflation is 20.4 percent over the last 10 months. Under these conditions, eyes are now on Khatami and the coming Majles to deliver on rising expectations.

The imperialists have assessed the outcome of the elections as a step by the Iranian masses away from the revolution and towards U.S. imperialism. This is a very big lie. Because for the Iranian masses the U.S. government is remembered as the architect of the 1953 military coup that resulted in 25 years of tyranny, exploitation, and plunder; a tyranny that broke every independent pen and jailed every independent voice.

This memory is still too fresh to be conned with such illusions. The U.S. Congress still votes to allocate funds to destabilize Iran. Mass participation in these elections, registering their will, was in itself an anti-imperialist action of people resolved to fight for their sovereignty.

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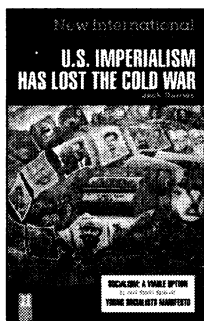
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N.Y. actions condemn freeing of killer cops

Continued from front page

as she was working and caught up with it after her shift, said, "I am upset at the verdict. Anyone else would be convicted. This is sending a message to the cops that they can do it again."

Hans Arrieta, 22, who works as a meat-packer and had also been at a gathering on Wheeler Avenue in The Bronx the night before, said at the march, "The police cannot change. The political system is designed to oppress the working classes, especially Latinos and Blacks. Clearly, racism exists in this country, and it starts with the government which makes the laws. It is good that we are out protesting today to say we are not going to take it anymore. We can have many demonstrations, but if we don't organize, nothing will happen. We need leaders and political formations."

The four white cops—Kenneth Boss, Sean Carroll, Edward McMellon, and Richard Murphy—were charged with second-degree murder for killing the unarmed immigrant worker in a hail of 41 bullets. The jury also considered lesser charges. The officers, however, were acquitted of all charges February 25.

The officers were indicted after months of sustained protests in New York, which drew thousands of working people. Before the trial opened, however, it was moved out of The Bronx, to Albany, after an appeals court ruled in favor of the cops' claim that finding an "impartial" New York City jury was impossible.

Kadiatou Diallo, the mother of Amadou, participated in many of the rallies following her son's killing. On the "Today" show after the verdict was announced she said, "The judge said to the jury they should put themselves in the shoes of the police officers. But Amadou did not come alive during the trial. No one talked about him, really."

The judge instructed jurors several times that if they concluded that the officers "reasonably believed" Diallo was armed, they

must acquit. Juror Helen Harder told the Associated Press that the law had made the jury's decision "very clear. Not happy, but clear."

During the trial, Dr. Joseph Cohen testified that three of the 19 bullets that hit Diallo proved that the officers continued their barrage when he was already down or on his way down. One bullet, he said, entered through the bottom of his shoe and traveled upwards. The officers testified that Diallo had assumed a "combat stance" and had forced them to shoot in self-defense.

After the "not guilty" verdict was handed down, about 300 people gathered in an impromptu rally on Wheeler Avenue where Diallo lived and was gunned down. It was a mixed crowd, mostly Black and Latino, with many from the neighborhood and some coming over from Brooklyn, Manhattan, and New Jersey.

There were also lines of riot police who blocked off the road. Many people chanted, "We want to march!" and some held handmade signs which read "Justice for Diallo." Some later marched to the 43rd Precinct, the base of the Street Crimes Unit to which the cops who killed Diallo belong.

'He wasn't a criminal'

Jamal Hazlewood, 14, a high school student who lives on Diallo's street, stressed that this was not a "bad neighborhood," as the cops, the defense, and the media had painted it during the trial. "Everyone knows each other here. I knew Amadou. We played



Militant/Hilda Cuzco
Protest against Diallo verdict across from UN building on February 27. Participants raise wallets in mockery of cops' story. Placard reads: "Immigrant — don't shoot."

basketball together, he was always sitting on his front stoop. He wasn't suspicious. He wasn't a criminal."

Hazlewood said that protesting the verdict was important "because it shows people all over the world what we think about it, and because it is the only thing we can do to stop it."

The February 27 action in front of the United Nations was organized by Alfred Sharpton, a prominent member of the Democratic Party and the National Action Network. It featured Kadiatou and Saikou Diallo, the parents of the slain man, many politicians and lawyers, and an active member of the New York Police Department.

Among those participating in the UN protest were two students from Hunter High School in Manhattan. They said that they're planning to organize a walkout at their

school to protest the verdict.

"You don't shoot someone 41 times and say it's a mistake," said Celeste Rosa. "It's not a mistake. No way in the world you can say 41 shots is OK."

Mayor backs cops

New York mayor Rudolph Giuliani held a press conference where he defended the actions of the police department and said the case "fits well within the perimeters of a fair trial."

At graduation ceremonies for 1,224 new cops, Giuliani called them "civil rights workers," who "have to make more important decisions in a split second without any advice."

"When you are in an ambiguous but difficult circumstance," the mayor advised those who will carry semiautomatic pistols and walk the streets, "and when others are pointing the finger of blame on you, I give you the benefit of doubt."

Hillary Rodham Clinton, who has announced her Democratic party campaign for U.S. Senate in New York, spoke at City College about the case. She has repeatedly apologized for referring to the killing as a murder, and stated that what is needed is more "minority" recruitment to the New York Police Department.

She also stressed the need for more "understanding" of the police by the community and the need to "reach across the lines of mistrust and division."

Elena Tate is a student at Hunter College and a member of the Young Socialists. Bobbi Negrón, a student at Rutgers University and a member of the Young Socialists, and Glova Scott, a member of the Union of Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Employees Local 23-25, contributed to this article.

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MILITANT LABOR FORUMS

ALABAMA

Birmingham

Defend Affirmative Action! Reportback from Tallahassee. Speaker: Ardy Blandford, Socialist Workers Party, and member of United Auto Workers Local 1155. Fri., March 10, 7:30 p.m. Dinner 6:30 p.m. Both events to be held at 2232 Magnolia Ave. Donation: \$4. Tel: (205) 323-3079.

GEORGIA

Atlanta

Eyewitness Report from Tallahassee March for Affirmative Action. Fri., March 10, 7:30 p.m. 230 Auburn Ave. Donation: \$4. For information, call (404) 577-7976.

ILLINOIS

Chicago

Washington vs. the Chinese Revolution. What is Behind Conflicts over Taiwan and Chinese Entry into the WTO? Speaker: Harvey McArthur, Socialist Workers Party and member of United Food and Commercial Workers. Fri., March 10, 7:00 p.m. 1223 N. Milwaukee Ave., Donation: \$4. Tel: (773) 342-1780.

CALENDAR

FLORIDA

Tallahassee

Mass Demonstration In Support of Affirmative Action. Tues., March 7, 11:00 a.m. Assemble at the Capitol. Bus transportation available through Elite Bus Tours. Call (305) 757-9700 for reservations. Airline transportation, group rates available through Great Adventure Travel (305) 858-4347.

OHIO

Mansfield

Join Locked-Out UAW Local 169 Members at a Noon Rally. Sat., March 25. Town Square. For more information, call Local 169, (419) 522-9375.

WASHINGTON, D.C.

Rally for Rural America. Mon., March 20, town hall meeting on the rural crisis, 2:00-5:00 p.m. Tues., March 21, rally at U.S. Capitol, 12:00 noon. Sponsored by the National Farmers Union. For more information: 202-314-3103.

TEXAS

Houston

Fighting Racist Oppression in the United States. Speaker: Tom Leonard, Socialist Workers Party. Fri., March 10, 7:30 p.m. 6969 Gulf Freeway #380. Donation: \$4. Tel: (713) 847-0704.

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???—Cadet Mfg. is recalling some 2 million in-wall electrical heaters that tend to overheat and catch fire. The company says it's aware that about 300 have sparked, smoked or caught fire. The feds as-



Harry Ring

sert the heaters have caused three deaths and two serious injuries. Turn one in and Cadet will offer you a new one at a reduced price

The enforcers—"OXNARD, CA—A metal recycler is leaking a lethal chemical into valuable coastal wildlife habitat, and has released radioactive substances that may have reached a storm drain that empties into the Pacific. Citing sloppy housekeeping, state water quality officials...said they issued a notice to Halaco Engineering Inc.... The enforcement action [?] is just the latest in a series of complaints against the recycler."—*Los Angeles Times*.

'91? I just died—A Utah legislator introduced a bill to scotch the idea of requiring folks needing emergency health care to call their insurance company before dialing 911.

Digging their own graves?—In the *Communist Manifesto*, Marx and Engels explain that the nature of capitalist production leads the capitalists to create and expand the industrial working class which will serve as the grave diggers of capitalism. A recent medical check of Fortune 500 execs and like fat cats, found 70 percent weren't active enough and 40 percent are obese.

Read it and shiver—Continuing water and air pollution and the persistent massive use of pesticides are taking an increased toll, especially on the children of poor city dwellers and farm workers, reports a special California commission. The children's cancer rate is 10 per-

cent higher than it was 20 years ago. The report says women in Los Angeles and San Francisco have among the highest breast cancer rate in the world.

No senior rates?—The Alabama legislature is debating a "Pay to Stay" bill that would charge people \$41 to \$45 a day for time behind bars. The tab for locked-up children, however, would be a piddling \$30 to \$40 a day.

In lieu of a raise?—"Professional Secretaries Week" (Opens April 23) has been redubbed "Administrative Professionals Week."

Chortle of the week—Responding to the report of continu-

ing economic surge, Bank of America honcho Michael Levy chuckled, "This is the best of all worlds."

Thought for the week—According to the World Economic Forum, 4.8 billion of the world's 6 billion poor people live in "developing" countries. Of these, 3 billion try to survive on less than \$2 a day. Two billion have never made a phone call.

You can really help—The clippings you send will much improve the quality of this column. Send to Pathfinder Bookstore, 2546 W. Pico Blvd., Los Angeles, CA. 90006. Fax: 213-380-1268.

New opportunities for building proletarian party

The excerpt below is taken from "So far from God, so close to Orange County," a report given at a regional socialist educational conference held in Los Angeles, California, over the 1994-95 New Year's weekend. The entire talk appears in the pages of *Capitalism's World Disorder: Working-Class Politics at the Millennium*, copyright © 1999 Pathfinder Press, reprinted by permission. Subheadings are by the *Militant*.

BY JACK BARNES

The important thing is that without taking on the working class and our organizations in gigantic battles that we will have the opportunity to win, the exploiters can-

from the pages of *Capitalism's World Disorder*

not use their enormous military might to unleash a third imperialist world slaughter. Don't fall for the rulers' bluff. Long before such a war becomes possible, the capitalists must cow the workers and defeat us in struggle.

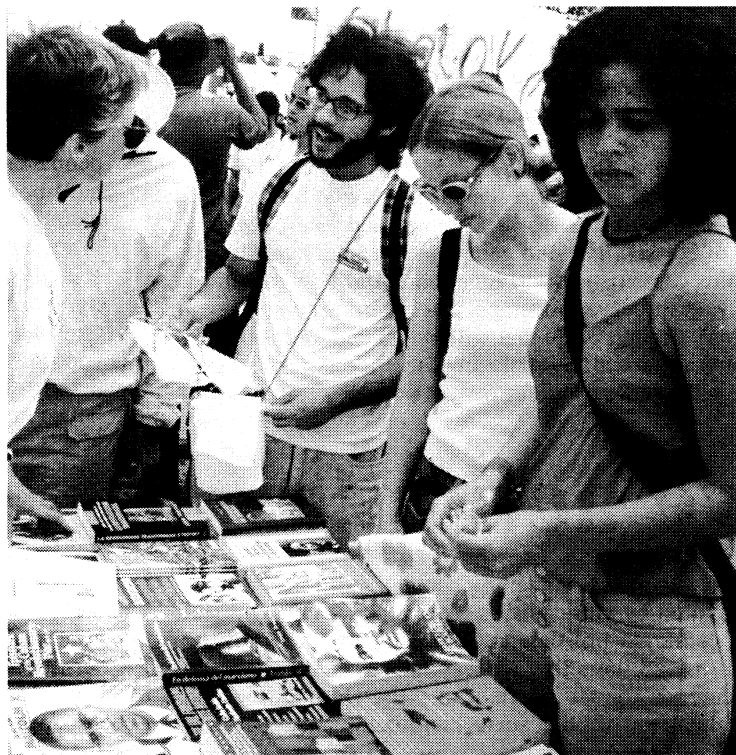
They will ultimately finance and support growing rightist and fascist movements, because the capitalists cannot defeat the working class using "normal" methods. There will be massive street battles between fascist legions and the forces mobilized by the class-struggle-minded labor movement.

That is the nightmare for the world's capitalist classes and their temporary political spokespersons—the Clintons, the Gingriches, the Majors, the Blairs, the Zedillos. In their big majority, they do not want to confront those class battles, because they are far from confident they can win. They try to put off the confrontations and finesse them. They buy off this or that middle-class layer in order to weaken our class organizations and try to con us into accepting more and more sacrifices for the good of the "nation."

But a point is always reached where working people can be conned no longer and struggles begin to mount. And with revolutionary leadership, forged and tested in coming struggles, the international working class has the numbers, the social power, the culture, the values, and the program to defeat the reactionary forces loosed by finance capital. We can organize victorious revolutions and open the construction of socialism on a world scale.

That is what we are preparing for. That is what is so important about political weapons such as the new issue of *New Internationalist* that we are celebrating here. That is why it is so important to get this magazine — along with the *Militant*, the Spanish-language *Perspectiva Mundial*, and our entire arsenal of revolutionary books and pamphlets published and distributed by Pathfinder — into the hands of workers and young people who are fighters and aspire to be revolutionists.

The right wing in this country puts a lot of time and money into TV talk shows and radio call-in programs. The Rush Limbaughs, and others far to the right of him, mix suggestive coarseness and cynicism with saccharine sentimentality. The



Militant/Rolland Girard

Selling Pathfinder literature at protest in San Juan, Puerto Rico.

radical right trades in demagoguery. They seek to tap fears and anxieties. They try to whip you up emotionally. They treat sex as a commodity and gender as a joke. They debase and corrupt politics, life, and civil discourse — as do their counterparts in the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Japan, Russia, and all over the world.

But the one thing they do not do is urge those to whom they are appealing to read books — to really read books. They want you to scapegoat two or three layers in society — immigrants, welfare mothers, labor unions, the "femi-nazis," whatever — and blame them for all the problems created by capitalism. The last thing the rightist demagogues ever want you to do is to read and work at understanding sober, scientific explanations of the capitalist system. They do not want you to learn from history and draw the political lessons. The radical right will never call on anybody to read more — because they have no respect for those whom they seek to mobilize as a mass social base. They have no confidence in the worth of human beings, no sense of social solidarity.

Disgruntled middle-class layers, enraged bourgeois youth, thin strata of demoralized workers — these social layers are radicalized by mounting fear, envy, and resentments. They respond to prejudice and demagoguery. Their growing radicalization is reinforced and focused by the rhetoric of a Patrick Buchanan, telling them how much they are being mucked over by the degenerate elites, the illegal aliens, the un-Americans. That is why no fascist movement is ever going to have a serious education program. They never have; they never will.

Reading—the most powerful weapon

The opposite is true of the revolutionary workers movement. What the working class needs is not demagoguery, not scapegoats, not crank theories, even if spun by Ph.D.s from Harvard or Yale. As workers, farmers, and youth organize to resist the assaults and probes by the capitalists, we need in the process to develop a clearer understanding of the entire world picture. We are confident that those who work at studying the past experiences of our class and who take the time

and effort to think about and discuss what we are facing today will come to communist conclusions.

We know that only by fighting and by reading can the working class prepare itself to do what it must to ensure the future of humanity.

We know that reading, discussing, and coming to understand the truth is the road to more effective working-class action and organization. It is working people's most powerful weapon in charting a revolutionary course that can take on the imperialist war makers and win.

These are the communist conclusions that best fit the facts of how history has actually unfolded in this century. And these communist conclusions are thus the best guide to action for vanguard workers and revolutionary-minded youth.

There is no way for any individual or group of individuals to arrive at these lessons from their involvement in any one struggle in their factory, city, or country — or even from a number of such struggles. Nobody can come to these conclusions just from good trade union work, for example.

—25 AND 50 YEARS AGO—



March 14, 1975

PASADENA, Calif., March 1—Outrage is growing in the Black community here over the cops' latest racist offensive, known as "Operation BAD" (Burglary Abatement Detail). More than 240 Blacks were stopped by the Pasadena police in the first four days of the new campaign.

"Operation BAD" consists of intensified patrolling of the predominantly Black and Chicano Northwest Pasadena community, with cops arbitrarily stopping and photographing residents for permanent police files.

Field interrogation cards are filled out and, along with the photographs, become permanent police records, whether or not the person was doing anything illegal.

The racist procedure in Pasadena has been met with community protests, and the local American Civil Liberties Union is seeking an immediate restraining order against the racist dragnet.

According to the cops, "Operation BAD" quadruples the number of police in the Black community. This means that almost half of all on-duty cops in Pasadena at any given time will be in Northwest Pasadena.

This campaign follows closely on the heels of "Operation Sweep," aimed supposedly at picking up truants, but in reality directed against all young people in Pasadena.



March 13, 1950

The militant soft coal miners once more have proved there is no substitute for fighting mass action to win gains for labor. By reliance on their own organized strength against the combined powers of the strike-breaking government and the coal operators, the miners have won one of American labor's greatest victories.

Their triumph is two-fold. They smashed through the wage-freeze "pattern" which Truman attempted to impose on the basis of the formula cooked up by this steel "fact-finding" board last September and which was accepted by Philip Murray and Walter Reuther for the CIO steel and auto workers. And they dealt a damaging blow to the Taft-Hartley Act with their bold and successful defiance of Truman's injunction.

The miners' example may well inspire a new upsurge in the class struggle, after the almost steady succession of retreats led by the top union leaders since passage of the Taft-Hartley Law in June 1947. It will undoubtedly hearten the Chrysler strikers and spur the General Motors workers to a more aggressive fight for their new demands. The miners have shown the kind of methods that will win and the kind of demands that can be won.

What Diallo trial outcome shows

The acquittal of the four New York cops who killed Amadou Diallo in a hail of bullets has sparked deep and widespread outrage. Many working people sense that the trial's outcome signals open season by the cops against members of our class, especially those who are Black and other oppressed nationalities. The police killing of Malcolm Ferguson, a 23-year-old Black man, just days after the verdict, reinforced that conviction. The news prompted an immediate protest by 200 people in the Bronx neighborhood who shouted, "Murderers! Murderers!" at the wall of riot cops who proceeded to seal off the area.

How could Diallo's killers get off scot-free, many are asking. The representatives of the wealthy ruling families worked overtime to ensure an acquittal. They moved the trial to Albany and out of New York City, where repeated protests against police murders have heightened the awareness of millions about the brutal nature of the cops. The prosecution colluded with the defense lawyers in the selection of a jury that excluded a number of Blacks and others who are more prone to have some experience with police violence.

The judge, Joseph Teresi, gave the jury a four-hour lecture, repeating six times the ways they could legally justify acquitting the killers. And the prosecutors, whose normal job is to relentlessly prosecute and frame up working people, did not pursue a vigorous case against the cops and did not challenge the defense on a number of points.

Democratic and Republican politicians alike lauded the trial as a supposed example of fairness. Liberals such as Hillary Rodham Clinton dismissed the gunning down of Diallo as a "tragedy"—not an injustice—and insisted there should be concern for the risks taken by the police. That is the classic justification used by cops to justify their murders.

The Diallo trial verdict is not an example of how the U.S. judicial system does *not* work. This is how the capitalist "justice" system works. As the judge explained, existing laws and police regulations make it legal for the cops to act as on-the-spot executioners in cases such as this—including when their victims are unarmed, standing in their own apartment building, like Amadou Diallo.

The laws are such because the entire system of cops, courts, and prisons is designed to keep working people in check, while protecting the rule and property of the rich handful. All the various proposals by liberal politicians to reform the police—better training, more cops with black skin, cops who "understand the community"—accept this framework and aim to reinforce the cops. The big-business media and politicians seek to convince the middle class and working people to accept police brutalization as a price for reducing "crime."

After taking some hits over the past few months, the billionaire families and their servants in government are pushing back, as the Diallo trial shows.

Four cops got off the hook. But workers and youth in New York through their response—from street protests to countless individual expressions of outrage—are taking the high ground and making the rulers pay a political price.

The *Militant* joins with those who continue to mobilize to demand that the cops who killed Amadou Diallo be jailed. We also urge our readers to study two books especially—*Capitalism's World Disorder* and *The Changing Face of U.S. Politics*—to gain a deeper understanding of how this capitalist system functions. And how to build a mass working-class movement that can bring about a revolutionary change—one that will put an end to this brutality once and for all by replacing the billionaires' government with workers and farmers in power.

Defend affirmative action!

Continued from front page

affirmative action should be extended rather than eliminated.

Affirmative action is a key question for the working class. It is not only about correcting past wrongs, but aimed at building unity among working people. It is a social conquest that was won as a result of the massive civil rights battles in the 1950s and '60s.

Discrimination is a weapon used by the capitalist bosses to maintain divisions among workers and tear apart class solidarity in order to deepen the exploitation of the working class as a whole. Life for workers under capitalism is not worth much, as evidenced by the recent cuts in Kentucky for workers compensation and black lung benefits.

A look at any socioeconomic indicator gives irrefutable proof that capitalism continues to perpetuate discrimination based on race, sex, language, and citizenship and the dog-eat-dog competition for jobs. This is shown by figures on rising hunger among workers cited elsewhere in this issue; facts on the sharp decline in the net worth of the median Black household; and growing numbers of Blacks, Latinos, and women thrown behind prison bars.

The battle for affirmative action in employment, education, and housing—and the fight for busing to achieve school desegregation—puts working people in a better position to push back the capitalist rulers' attempts to weaken the unions, roll back social conquests, and pit one against another in a desperate scramble for survival.

These advances enable all workers to better see the political economy of discrimination and how the bosses profit from divisions that drag down the real wages and job conditions of the working class as a whole. Discrimination and its ideological justifications sap the ability to unify and fight back. That's why blaming immigrants

for low wages and worsening social conditions, such as is promoted by ultrarightists like Patrick Buchanan and other capitalist politicians, is poison for the working class. Instead, targeting the capitalist system, the state that defends the ruling rich, and the Democratic and Republican parties that serve them is the only road forward.

The response of working people in Florida has opened the door to involving unions there in this fight. This is a welcome advance. It helps show the class interests of each contending side. This stands as an example of how the basic defense organizations of the working class—the labor unions—can be brought to bear on broader social questions facing humanity.

Taking this example more widely into the labor movement can help win more rank-and-file workers and unions to join in defending affirmative action, including quotas in hiring, education, and housing. Unions must wage a broad struggle to counter growing wage inequality and fight to raise the minimum wage to a living income.

The battle for affirmative action unfolding in Florida points to the initial germination of a proletarian movement in the United States. Actions such as those in Florida help draw in more farmers, students, and workers to see themselves as actors and the subjects of history, not helpless victims of a cruel system. They also help show that despite their dictates and pretense of unquestioned power, the ruling rich and their state and federal governments are weaker and more fragile than they would like working people to believe.

Stop attacks on affirmative action!

Restore full affirmative action programs in employment, education, and housing where they have been rolled back!

Raise the minimum wage!

New York cops kill again

BY GREG McCARTAN

New York City cops killed Malcolm Ferguson with one shot to the head at close range March 1 a few blocks from where Amadou Diallo was gunned down last year. Four plainclothes cops approached a group of people in an apartment hallway, police say, then "pursued" Ferguson after he "bolted" upstairs. The cop's gun was stained with blood, "indicating close proximity when the firearm was discharged," said the cops afterwards. Policeman Luis Rivera refused to give a statement following his killing of Ferguson.

The police department immediately played up Ferguson's record of prior arrests on drug charges and claimed he was carrying heroin at the time. Ferguson, a 23-year-old Black man, was arrested the previous Friday at a protest of the acquittals of the four cops who killed Amadou Diallo and charged with resisting arrest.

"It's not even a week since Amadou, and you're back here shooting us again!" yelled one of 200 protesters who gathered as news of the latest cop killing spread through the neighborhood.

In a related development, prosecutors revealed evidence

against two cops who brutalized Cheræ Williams. Last September Williams called the cops because she was being beaten by her boyfriend. When the cops arrived and refused to respond to her complaint, Williams testified, she asked for their badge numbers. She said they then grabbed her, handcuffed her, and took her to a deserted area where they beat her so severely her jaw had to be wired. Williams had to call her own ambulance.

In Los Angeles police released a report admitting a pattern of police brutality, frame-ups, and corruption. Earlier revelations led the United States attorney, FBI, and state attorney general to open a criminal investigation into the department. The big-business media openly says that hundreds of people have been wrongly imprisoned because of police misconduct and expect the city to pay out \$200 million or more in lawsuit settlements.

The *New York Times* reported that the "unusual joint action appeared to reflect both plummeting public confidence in the police and growing, and increasingly open, political feuding between the police department and the district attorney's office over the pace of the investigation."

'Visit Cuba and see for yourselves,' librarians say in response to U.S. lies

Continued from Page 8

Cuba, both of which receive U.S. government money for their activity against the Cuban revolution. Track II of the Cuba Democracy Act enacted by the U.S. government in 1992 (sometimes known as the Torricelli Law) provides for US government support to non-governmental organizations in Cuba, including "dissidents" and "independent librarians."

Acosta cited Cuban president Fidel Castro speaking at the 1998 Havana Book Fair. "Fidel said there are no banned books, only those we don't have the money to buy. Fidel was right. The biggest problem we have is lack of resources. With such scarcity, hard choices have to be made as to which books to buy. Similar choices are made in every country. We don't buy racist, xenophobic, anti-Semitic literature although important books such as Hitler's *Mein Kampf* are held in the national library."

Acosta said the Cuban librarians are delighted to receive donations of books from abroad and cited a donation of 800 books made following the book fair by the Spanish government. "There is no policy to exclude literature by people opposed to the Cuban revolution: for example, we have books by Octavio Paz and Carlos Fuentes; and we maintain [former Cuban dictator] Fulgencio Batista's library, which is part of our national patrimony. But the scarcity is real and the so-called independent librarians try to take advantage of the lack of dictionaries and encyclopedias especially. They call themselves the 'Abraham Lincoln library' or the 'Frank Pais library.' Some young people go to check them out. But when they arrive at the house or store, they find 5 or 10 titles, mainly children's books and lightweight magazines with articles on topics such as on the heroic life of Richard Nixon. We've gone ourselves and we invite others to do likewise."

Taking culture to most remote areas

Nor are the "independent librarians" subject to repression, Acosta said. "We answer them with words. If they contravene Cuban law, if they commit a crime, that's another question: for example, if their financial accounts are not open to audit. But our basic position is to fight our enemies with ideas not with the police." Acosta contrasted the activity of the "independent librarians" to the efforts made throughout the revolution to take books and culture to the most remote areas of the island. "They don't go into the streets let alone into the mountains."

"In the Sierra Maestra, every small village has a library," said Sara Moreno. "The same is true for almost every sugar production center. On March 15-16 there will be a convention to establish libraries in the remaining centers that don't have them. We organize libraries in hospitals, in ships, wherever."

"In Havana" Moreno continued, "in addition to the main libraries, there is a minilibrary system: books from one of the main libraries—there are 25 in the city—will be made available to, for example, a local child-care center for two to three months; then the books will be renewed. In Boyeros, one of the outlying Havana districts, local people decided to establish a library in a new building even though there's still a housing shortage. In the Community of Cotorro, a mobile library has been organized, with associated cultural events, poetry readings, etc. Such things have been going on for years."

Acosta paid tribute to the international efforts to tell the truth about the so-called independent libraries and cited the Cuban Library Support Group (CLSG) established last July in the United Kingdom by London librarian John Pateman. The CLSG seeks to win support for Cuban libraries, opposes the economic embargo against Cuba, and collaborates with individuals and organizations in an effort to win the International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA) to take a similar stance. The committee on Freedom of Information and Expression of the IFLA recently issued a report calling on the Cuban government to allow freedom of expression and to stop intimidating the independent libraries.

In the United States, the Progressive Librarians Guild and the Social Responsibilities Round Table of the American Library Association have expressed support for the Cuban Library Support Group campaign.

The CLSG has acknowledged the importance of Pathfinder's Books for Cuba fund and has invited Pathfinder to give an eyewitness reportback from the book fair.

Jonathan Silberman is a member of the Transport and General Workers Union in London and was a volunteer in the Pathfinder stand at the Havana International Book Fair.

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NWA seizes flight attendants' computers

BY MARK FRIEDMAN

LOS ANGELES—The February decision by a federal judge allowing the seizure of the contents of flight attendants' computers at Northwest Airlines has been met with opposition from airline workers.

With the judge's ruling in hand, computer forensic experts hired by Northwest seized the home computer of rank-and-file flight

attendants who operate a web site and electronic bulletin boards. They also copied the hard drives, including personal E-mail messages, from the computers of 21 individuals and of Teamsters Local 2000 which represents Northwest's 11,000 flight attendants.

The airline sued the union and individual flight attendants in January, after canceling 300 flights on New Year's Day due to low

bookings. The bosses alleged the union violated Federal law by organizing a sick-out. U.S. District Judge Donovan Frank in St. Paul agreed and issued a temporary restraining order prohibiting Teamsters Local 2000, its leaders, and specific flight attendants from encouraging or participating in "sick-outs" or other alleged illegal job actions.

The judge also gave Northwest the right to seek evidence to prove its claim, including searching through the E-mails of 43 individuals. The company targeted flight attendants Kevin Griffin and Ted Reeve who operate web sites and electronic bulletin boards that have been critical of both the company and the union's contract proposals.

On February 6, Northwest Airlines and Teamsters officials reached an agreement that suspended legal action against the union and halted the discovering proceedings against 19 union officials. The temporary settlement did not apply to Griffin and Reeve, who were not invited to the settlement talks but later won a release from the temporary restraining order.

"Many of us would have gone to jail rather than agree to the release of information from our own computers. And now there is a threat over our heads to force us

to accept the next contract," said a flight attendant in Los Angeles. Debbie, from Minneapolis, said she had spoken with a "lot of other flight attendants and we are not intimidated."

As other unionists at Northwest learned of the company's tactics, many have shown support for the Teamsters. The flight attendants' web site is filled with messages supporting Griffin and Reeve. One entitled, "Any plans for channeling public support?" comments that the public support for the flight attendants is a "huge asset" and "the public has a right to join in our fight since NWA has crossed the line into the rights of all Americans."

At the company's maintenance base in Atlanta, mechanics and cleaners are wearing buttons that say, "We Support NWA Flight Attendants," put out by the Airline Mechanics Fraternal Association. In Los Angeles, IAM Local 2785 passed a motion to send a letter to NWA bosses "denouncing their lawsuit against the Teamsters and vigorously opposing the seizure of computer hard drives as a violation of free speech and constitutional rights."

Mark Friedman is a member of the International Association of Machinists and works at Northwest Airlines.

Overnite strikers rally in Pennsylvania



Some 80 striking Teamsters and supporters marched and rallied February 18 outside the Overnite facility in Bensalem, Pennsylvania. Pickets chanted, "What do we want? Contract! Who are we? Teamsters!" More than a dozen cars full of cops and sheriffs arrived to enforce a court injunction requiring strikers to maintain a 30-foot distance from the plant. Strikers plan to step up ambulatory picketing and ask other AFL-CIO unions to join this effort.

Steelworkers march against Bayer Corp.'s plant closing

BY HARVEY MCARTHUR

ELKHART, Indiana—Some 400 Steelworkers and supporters marched here January 29 to protest plans by the Bayer Corporation to close their Consumer Care Division and lay off up to 550 workers. The workers are members of USWA Local 12273 and produce Alka-Seltzer and several vitamin products.

"I'm going to keep fighting until the last light is turned out," union member Dale Nye told a rally at the end of the march. The local is planning a protest at Bayer's U.S. corporate headquarters in Pittsburgh some time this summer.

Bayer executives announced late last year that the Elkhart facility would be phased out by the end of 2003 and the production shifted to plants in Pennsylvania, Germany, and Mexico. One new Bayer plant was built in Mexico in the early 1990s in anticipation of expanded sales. When the Mexican currency, the peso, collapsed in 1994 however, Bayer sales there dropped by 30 percent.

The latest plan to cut jobs comes after the USWA had made extensive concessions to the bosses' profit demands over the past decade, including wage cuts and job combinations. Employment at the sprawling Bayer complex in Elkhart has fallen from 3,000 to 2,000 today.

Trudy Manderfeld, Local 12273 president, reported on her recent trip to Bayer headquarters in Leverkusen, Germany. She said corporate officials would not meet with her, but she got a better response from officials of the German workers unions at Bayer who sent a solidarity message to the rally protesting the plans to close the Elkhart facility.

"Don't fall into the trap of being played off against each other," the message said. "Why would German workers want U.S. workers laid off? Something is wrong in the system." The German union appeal was especially noteworthy since unemployment there and in Mexico is much higher at this time than in the United States.

Bayer's plans pose a challenge to working people in different countries of how to unite in a genuine fight against devastating unemployment as the bosses continue lay-offs to boost profits. USWA officials, however, organized the January 29 protest along lines that promoted an America-first chauvinist appeal. "Keep Speedy in the U.S.A." was the main theme of the many placards printed for the march and rally. Other placards read, "No go Mexico."

USWA District 7 assistant director Jim Robinson blamed "unfettered world trade" for causing "good paying jobs to go overseas." He praised the recent WTO protests in Seattle, where USWA of other top union officials pressed the U.S. government to implement protectionist policies that benefit particular groups of U.S. capitalists.

Some workers in the march did point out other facts about the challenge they faced. The production and distribution operations the bosses have already shifted from Elkhart have gone to other U.S. facilities—most of them lower paid and nonunion.

Harvey McArthur is a member of United Food and Commercial Workers Local 100A in Chicago.

Teachers demand job security

BY FLOYD FOWLER

ATLANTA—More than 600 teachers, school staff, and their supporters from across Georgia rallied at the state capitol here February 19. The action opposed a package of measures moving through the legislature that includes ending tenure for all new teachers hired after July of this year.

Tenure makes it harder for teachers to be fired and allows those facing dismissal to appeal. The spirited rally was organized by the Georgia Association of Educators (GAE), the local affiliate of the National Education Association, a national teachers' union. The state house of representatives has already passed Gov. Roy Barnes's "education reform" bill, which is endorsed by the Professional Association of Georgia Educators (PAGE), leaders of the state Parent Teacher Association, business organizations, and associations representing the state's school superintendents and school boards.

"PAGE was originally set up by school administrators as an 'alternative' to the union formed when separate white and Black teacher organizations merged in the early 1970s," said Brian Westlake, a GAE member. "But a lot of their members support our fight for tenure."

Many at the rally held printed signs such as, "Pass a Better Bill," or "Governor speaks with forked tongue." Jim Cox, a librarian at West Elementary here, said he joined the protest "for future teachers who will care for the children. This is about more than one rally. It's about the future of our children."

A group from Walker county explained that the governor's bill would mean large numbers of them will be laid off with no guarantee that trained teachers would be found to replace them.

Maureen Dinnen, president of the Florida Teaching Professionals, the NEA affiliate in Florida, spoke at the rally alongside local union leaders. She said afterwards that when Florida governor John Ellis Bush "tried to end affirmative action, he only consulted with a few Black business people. When this governor created this education bill, he didn't ask teachers what they thought. I see similarities in these two fights." Dinnen said that the Florida Teaching Professionals has chartered buses to bring teachers to the March 7 rally for affirmative action in Tallahassee.

The Georgia state senate is slated to begin debate on the governor's bill this week.

Floyd Fowler is a member of the United Steelworkers of America.

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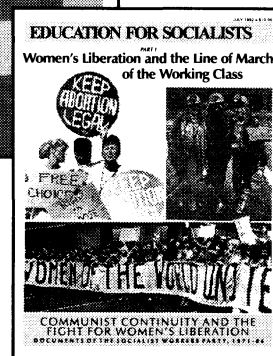
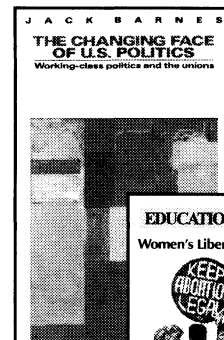
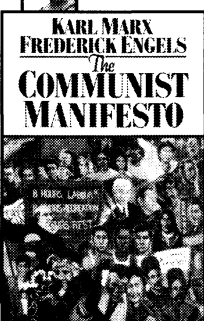
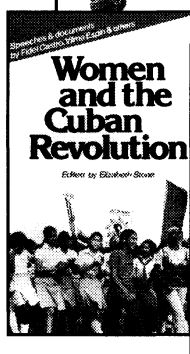
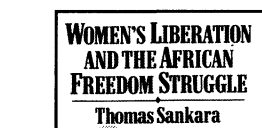
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Rally backs strike for contract at Boeing

BY SCOTT BREEN

SEATTLE—More than 2,000 Boeing engineers and technical workers marched to Boeing's corporate headquarters here February 23. They were joined by 150 steelworkers and a top official of the Machinists union spoke at the rally.

Chanting, "One Day Longer!" and "What do we want? Contract," demonstrators waved picket signs as they marched from the parking lot of the International Association of Machinists (IAM) to Boeing's executive offices. Demands of the action were: "Fair contract for SPEEA," and "Solidarity with locked-out Kaiser Steelworkers."

Some 18,000 engineers, computer programmers, researchers, and other technical workers struck Boeing February 9 after rejecting the company's two contract offers. The main issues behind the strike are inadequate salary raises, cuts in company-provided benefits, and anger at how Boeing is treating this section of the work force. They are represented by the Society of Professional Engineering Employees in Aerospace (SPEEA), which joined the AFL-CIO last fall.

More than 3,000 workers at Kaiser Aluminum have been locked-out of their jobs in Spokane and Tacoma, Washington; Gramercy, Louisiana; and Newark, Ohio, for more than a year now. Their union, the United Steelworkers of America (USWA), has been organizing a public campaign urging Boeing to stop buying aluminum from Kaiser, which has been running its aluminum refineries and mills with replacement workers.

Sam Thomas, who worked at Kaiser's Gramercy plant, marched alongside striking SPEEA members. "It's a great turn out," he said. "We're 100 percent behind SPEEA. We're fighting corporate greed, too, and we'll win."

Staying power of strike

"To see blue and white collar workers together has got to bother management," added Buck McGowan, a steelworker at Kaiser's plant in Spokane. Joe, an engineer on Boeing's F-22 fighter plane program, thought the march was "awesome. I've waited 21 years for this kind of unity!" he said.

The march and rally are the most recent signs of the staying power of the strike, which has surprised Boeing's management. Despite predictions that the strike would quickly fizzle, SPEEA's picket lines remain solid throughout the Boeing factory system up and down the Puget Sound of Washington state, more than two weeks after they walked out.

Most of those marching echoed the determination of Trent Mathias, who has worked at Boeing for three years as a technical worker. "I'll stay out however long it takes," he explained. Some carried signs that read: "Hey, Harry! We're still here!" One sign read, "Phil and Harry: Don't be a Frank Lorenzo! Remember what happened to him?"

These signs refer to Harold Stonecipher, president and chief operating officer, and



Strike by engineers and technicians has severely hurt Boeing's delivery of airplanes. Steelworkers locked out by Kaiser Aluminum joined February 23 rally, pictured above.

Philip Condit, chairman and CEO. Frank Lorenzo was the head of Eastern Airlines, which went under after IAM members stopped his union-busting drive in a 22-month strike in 1989-91. Steelworkers from Kaiser plants spoke at the rally, as did several local politicians and union officials, who pledged their support. Strikers especially appreciated Bill Johnson, president of IAM District 751, who spoke out in solidarity with their strike for the first time since the walkout began. IAM District 751 organizes more than 30,000 production workers at Boeing.

Several SPEEA officials also spoke, in-

cluding its executive director Charles Bofferding. He said SPEEA and the company planned meetings the next day with a federal mediator, in hopes of getting a decent contract offer. Bofferding expressed optimism that the union would secure a new contract. "This strike is not about beating Boeing," he said. "It's about saving Boeing."

Strikers received their last paycheck a week earlier, and their company medical coverage ends March 1. They have no strike fund, but began a Striker Relief Fund at the start of the strike, which has raised \$118,000 in two weeks to help defray expenses of those most in need.

Strikers remain upbeat, and the march and rally were a strong expression of their unity and seriousness. "Boeing is just being mean," stated Betty, a 55-year-old striking programmer from Boeing's Kent factory. "But," she continued, "they'll come around, or they won't get us back." She said she was on strike "for a decent contract, not to save Boeing."

Impact on Boeing

The strike is having an economic impact on the company. Since almost all of the engineers who must certify Boeing's jets as safe and air worthy are on strike, the Federal Aviation Authority's (FAA) personnel must now sign off on each plane. This is leading to substantial delays in the delivery and final sale of airplanes to customers.

In addition, assembly of the planes has begun to back up and bottlenecks are developing because Boeing is unable to quickly resolve mistakes and make changes in the manufacturing process that require engineering approval.

Despite the bosses claims that there are no safety problems, strikers are raising this issue. SPEEA, for example, sent a delegation of striking engineers to Washington, D.C., to talk with the FAA, the Department of Transportation, and other federal bodies about their concerns. Boeing is especially sensitive to this issue now, in light of the recent tragic crash of Alaska Air MD-80 off California and a recent exposé around the 737 rudder problems.

The MD-80 crash on January 31 resulted in the death of all 88 people aboard. The subsequent investigation discovered mechanical problems with the tail's horizontal stabilizer and jackscrew that tilts the stabilizer up and down. Boeing inherited the MD-80 when it merged with McDonnell-Douglas, the original manufacturer.

Charges of cover up

The February 19 *Seattle Times* carried a front page article alleging that for years Boeing's management covered up design and mechanical problems with the 737's rudder control system. Recently acquired documents show that Boeing waited until after two 737's—a United Air flight near Colorado Springs in 1992 and a USAirways jet near Pittsburgh—crashed killing all aboard, to acknowledge the problem. The National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) has ruled that the Colorado crash was caused by the rudder jam created by a defective control system. The article is based on documents released after a lawsuit against Boeing and its rudder-parts supplier, Parker Hannifin Corporation, by the families of two of those killed in the 1994 US Airways crash. The suit was settled out of court for \$25.5 million.

The article also alleges that the FAA, after being made aware of the problem, agreed to keep the information secret at Boeing's request, for "proprietary reasons." Boeing denies that it did anything wrong and said it did all it was required by federal safety regulations.

The day this damning article came out, Jason, a technical researcher who was walking the picket line at Boeing's Frederickson factory, remarked, "We talk about airplane safety all day. We want to build the best product possible." Reports of Boeing cover-ups, he said, mean "our efforts are sabotaged." He said concern for airplane safety is "probably the best reason to win our strike," against Boeing.

After three fruitless days of discussions with a federal mediator, talks between Boeing and SPEEA broke down February 26. "The company's latest offer was a step backward," stated Charles Bofferding. Boeing's latest offer includes a medical benefits provision little changed from the one rejected by 98 percent of the union's members.

Scott Breen is a member of the International Association of Machinists who works at Boeing.

Canada truckers continue to protest and organize

BY JOHN STEELE

TORONTO—Thousands of independent truckers who own their own rigs are continuing to strike and protest over high fuel prices and low haulage rates. This has led to a partial victory in Quebec.

The actions are occurring throughout Ontario, Newfoundland, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and elsewhere in eastern Canada. In Ontario, a new organization, the National Truckers Association (NTA), formed several weeks ago, is attracting thousands of members and has become the organizing center of the Ontario wing of the movement, which exploded onto the highways in the last week of February. An estimated 4,000 of the 20,000 truckers in Ontario are refusing to work.

In Newfoundland, scores of gas stations ran out of fuel, dairies stopped receiving

milk, and mail delivery became irregular.

In Quebec, the protests have ended for the moment following an agreement in principle between the Confederation of National Trade Unions (CSN), which represents 1,000 Montreal area independent truckers, and 10 employers to increase wages by 15 percent to cover the higher fuel costs.

In Ontario, truckers belonging to the newly formed NTA organized protests at General Motors and Ford plants, and at oil refineries and storage depots. Blasting their air horns they convoyed around the plants tying up traffic. Other truckers continued their protests tying up traffic on the highways in the greater Toronto area.

"We're desperate," trucker Slawomir Bledowski said at the entrance to the Shell and Esso storage depot in north Toronto. He and a dozen other truckers had parked their

rigs at the entrance preventing the Shell drivers from leaving the yard for intervals of half an hour. At the same time other truckers drove their rigs up and down the street slowing traffic. Many drivers in cars honked in solidarity. Some rolled down their windows yelling out "making them come down!" referring to the exorbitant gas prices they are being forced to pay.

Signs in the windows and on the sides of the truck tractors said: "On strike," and "I won't work for free." Another read: "Who will support me when I'm older and can't drive. Why won't the media support us?"

"About 95 percent of the Shell drivers understand us," said Bledowski. "They know we are fighting for them too. The bank owns my truck which I bought two years ago," he said. "I lose every time I take it on the road."

Continued on Page 7