

# THE MILITANT

INSIDE

South Korean auto workers strike four companies

— PAGE 6

A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

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## Janitors fight for contracts

### Los Angeles strike wins wide solidarity

BY MARK FRIEDMAN

LOS ANGELES—Janitors on strike here have won widespread support in the labor movement as they organize mass demonstrations and picket lines in a fight for better wages and working conditions.

The strike by members of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) Local 1877, which began April 3, has grown to include some 8,500 janitors who work downtown and in outlying areas.

With visible and noisy picket lines, confident marches, and mobilizations, the strikers are getting across the message about their fight to reverse a low pay structure and strengthen their union. They have received support unparalleled in years.

Contracts for janitors in other major cities, such as Chicago, Philadelphia, New York, and Portland, Oregon, are also expiring. The strike here is therefore being watched closely by the bosses in those cities.

The size and unity of the strike is in itself a conquest. Some 70 percent of the county's office space, including most of downtown Los Angeles and Century City, is now unionized. In the mid-1980s the city's building maintenance industry fired almost all the unionized workforce of mainly Black workers, who earned \$7.32 an hour, and hired immigrants, many undocumented, at \$3.35 an hour.



Striking janitors and their supporters in Los Angeles. Members of Service Employees International Union have held rallies and marches in their fight for better working conditions, wages, and benefits.

Militant/Carole Lesnick

Through successful battles in the 1990s to organize janitors, who are 98 percent immigrant and 55 percent women, the SEIU grew from 1,500 to 8,500 members. They have fought harassment by the Immigration and Naturalization Service, threats of deportation, and a cop riot against a peaceful march in 1990 at Century City.

Their battle is symbolic of the place immigrant workers through their struggles have earned in the labor movement.

Nonunion janitors typically receive the \$5.75 minimum wage while union workers receive from \$6.80 to \$7.90 an hour. The union is demanding a \$1-an-hour wage increase.

Continued on Page 10

### 5,500 union members rally in New York

BY BRIAN TAYLOR

NEW YORK—Chants of "Thirty-two! BJ!" rang out as thousands of building workers who are members of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) Local 32B-32J and their supporters boisterously marched down wealthy, residential Park Avenue here April 12.

The workers are demanding better working conditions, an end to two-tier wages, a 10 percent pay increase, health-care benefits, and a pension increase.

Their three-year contract expires at 12:01 a.m., April 21. Management has proposed a number of concessions, including greater flexibility to lay off workers and a reduction in starting pay. Many workers said they were prepared to strike if a satisfactory deal is not presented to them by the contract deadline. The union represents 26,000 workers at 2,900 New York City apartment buildings.

Working people came from all five boroughs of New York for the action, which drew some 5,500 people. This was evident from the

spirited response to the borough-by-borough roll call issued from the speakers platform. Mexican ballads, Puerto Rican nationalist tunes, and hip hop drum beats rang through the crowd, giving a certain international flavor to it.

Some SEIU members got a head start, chanting as they exited the subway train and marching as a group to the rally point near Central Park. Several doormen the protesters passed along the way gave thumbs-up signals. Many door attendants are members of Local 32B-32J, which represents building workers from a variety of trades.

"When you first start the job, you wait 30 months to get top salary. That's wrong," said Lawrence Jefferson, a young building

Continued on Page 10

## Sales drive begins picking up steam

BY MAURICE WILLIAMS

The circulation drive is picking up steam. In several areas supporters of the *Militant* and *Perspectiva Mundial* are at or ahead of target by organizing a systematic campaign to sell subscriptions going door-to-door in working-class neighborhoods, participating in political events, setting up tables at college campuses, and talking politics to co-workers on the job.

This past week two supporters of the campaign in Fort Collins sold four subscriptions to the *Militant* and one subscription to *Perspectiva Mundial* at a table set up at Mesa State College in Grand Junction, Colorado.

"We kept our table up for five hours and got to meet a number of students from campus," said Jan Miller. "The team went to the campus the previous evening and approached students from the Cultural Diversity Club about getting a table on campus. They agreed to sponsor it."

"We sold one subscription to a student whose father is a member of the Steelworkers union and is a taconite miner from northern Minnesota. He wants his subscription sent home where he will be this summer, so both he and his father can read the paper."

Miller said they sold another subscription to a student who lives in the town of Paonia,

a coal mining area about 70 miles from the campus. "She wants us to visit her area for more discussion and to bring the *Militant* to coal miners there. She comes from a fam-

Continued on Page 5

### Miners call May 17 rally in Washington

BY JAMES VINCENT

PITTSBURGH—The mine workers union has called a national rally for May 17 to pressure Congress to pass legislation to fund the union's ailing retirees health-care plan.

The United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) rally will take place in Washington, D.C., and begin at 12:00 noon. The legislation, "Coal Accountability and Retired Employee Act for the 21st Century," or CARE 21, was introduced by several congressmen at the end of March.

Without emergency health-care funds,

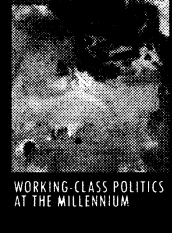
medical care for about 70,000 coal miners will be put in jeopardy. UMWA president, Cecil Roberts, said he "pledges to rally the entire UMWA membership behind CARE 21 and do whatever else is necessary to ensure this important legislation is passed on Capitol Hill." In a press release Roberts said he hopes the rally will "expedite the political process."

The bill calls for transferring \$172 million into the UMWA's Combined Benefit Fund.

The union kicked off the drive in West Virginia April 1 at Teamsters Local 175 headquarters in Kanawha City.

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Cuban doctors confront legacy of apartheid in S. Africa — page 8

# Clinton pushes weapons, funds to Colombia

BY ANDY BUCHANAN

NEWARK, New Jersey—The United States House of Representatives voted last week by 263 to 146 to approve an administration emergency spending bill that would allocate \$1.7 billion in military aid and equipment to Colombia. The Senate, however, has delayed consideration of this bill until later in the year.

Under the banner of the "war on drugs," the Clinton administration has been pushing this plan for several months. Gen. Barry McCaffrey, the director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy, points to the alleged expansion of cocaine cultivation in southern Colombia to justify the moves. Administration sources claim that 90 percent of the cocaine consumed in the United States originates in Colombia.

When it approved the package in early March, the House Appropriations Committee threw in an additional \$500 million on top of the initial request from the White House. The House bill also includes funds for the U.S. forces currently occupying Kosovo, together with an additional \$4 billion added on the spot to cover "additional military spending," including fuel and spare parts.

A big chunk of the "aid" for Colombia's military is slated to purchase 30 sophisticated Blackhawk helicopters, which cost \$12.8 million each, together with 33 retooled Vietnam-era UH-1N Hueys. This equipment is designed to give the Colombian army the air mobility necessary to "push into the coca-growing regions of southern Colombia," according to the *Economist*.

The helicopters will carry troops from three new "anti-narcotics" battalions, which are being trained and financed by the United States. Other funds will help equip special police units. Last year Colombia received the fourth-largest allocation of U.S. military funding after the regimes in Israel, Egypt, and Jordan.

The rough jungle regions of southern Colombia, in the foothills of the Andes mountains, have long been a stronghold of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC). The FARC has waged a 40-year guerrilla insurgency against the Colombian government, fueled by the grinding economic hardship faced by peasants in Colombia, and by the brutal military repression directed against their efforts to organize.

Right-wing paramilitary gangs, with strong ties to the army brass, are responsible for ongoing attacks on peasant farmers.

FARC guerrillas are widely understood to be the real target of the Colombian army's operations. Gen. Fred Woerner, a former commander of U.S. forces in Latin America, commented, "How do you push into an area dominated by these guys [the FARC] without having anything to do with them? Anyone who believes that these counter narcotics battalions will not be involved in counterinsurgency is naive."

Woerner's hesitation about deepening U.S. military involvement in Colombia is reflected by other figures in ruling-class circles. During the House debate, Rep. Gene Taylor, a Mississippi Democrat, moved an amendment that would limit the number of U.S. military personnel deployed in Colombia to 300. New York Democrat Jose Serrano added, "We're getting involved in a civil war for which we're going to pay a price."

For the Clinton administration, however,

the dangers of escalating military involvement in Colombia are weighed against the deepening economic crisis and spiraling political instability that grips the country. General McCaffrey claims that the program will "strengthen democratic government, the rule of law, economic stability and human rights in that beleaguered country."

Hit by falling prices for coal, coffee, gold, and other commodities, the Colombian economy shrank by 3.5 percent last year. Industrial production plunged by 11.2 percent compared to a year ago last January, producing a dramatic rise in unemployment.

Faced with this crisis, Colombia's capitalist rulers have deepened their subordination to the major imperialist countries and their banks and finance houses. In 1997, Colombia's foreign debt rose to \$20.8 billion, or nearly 30 percent of the country's entire gross domestic product. As a condition for receiving a \$2.7 billion loan from the International Monetary Fund, the Colombian government agreed to sell off the

state-owned power industry and other chunks of the national patrimony.

Over the past few months, Colombia's large and well-organized working class has begun to respond to the economic crisis and the government's course by launching a series of nationwide strike actions. These struggles, together with the ongoing insurgency in the countryside, have been met with rising terrorist actions by rightist death squads and the military.

In the situation where neither major social class in Colombian society is able to chart a clear road forward, mounting economic and social crisis is fueling permanent instability, social breakdown, and violence. In an effort to stiffen the backbone of their clients in Colombia's ruling class, the U.S. government is now moving in with its massive military aid package.

Andy Buchanan is a member of the Union of Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Employees in Paterson, New Jersey.

## Protests erupt in Bolivia, shake gov't

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

In response to growing protests by workers, peasants, and students engulfing the South American nation of Bolivia, the government April 8 declared a state of emergency. The Bolivian Workers Confederation then called a general strike for April 12.

The demonstrations began in Cochabamba, the nation's third-largest city, over government plans to raise water rates by as much as 35 percent. Rates now average \$30 a month—10 to 15 percent of the average household income.

The protests rapidly spread to La Paz, San Joaquin, and other regions throughout the country. Peasants set up roadblocks on several national highways in five of the nine provinces, demanding the government not pass a bill currently being debated in Congress that would force them to pay for water they currently obtain for free. University students in the central city of Sucre initiated a hunger strike.

The demonstrators demanded a halt to the \$200 million waterworks investment project by the consortium Aguas del Tunari that would send water prices skyrocketing. The government insists it must guarantee the



Bolivian peasants marched and blocked roads in five of the country's nine provinces

interests of foreign investors. The consortium—led by the London-based International Water Limited (IWL)—is jointly owned by an Italian utility, Edison, and the U.S. company Bechtel Enterprise Holdings.

In response to the protests, IWL announced April 9 that they were canceling the contract.

The government's state of emergency gives Bolivian president Hugo Banzer special powers for the next three months to arrest without a warrant protesting workers, peasants, and students, to establish a curfew, and impose severe restrictions on travel and political activity.

"We find ourselves with a country with access roads to the cities blocked, with food shortages, passengers stranded, and chaos beginning to take hold in other cities," said Information Minister Ronald McLean.

The government's first act was to raid the headquarters of the Bolivian Workers' Cen-

tral Union. Scores of union activists and a leader of a major farmers' organization were rounded up and confined in the remote town of San Joaquin on the border with Brazil. Police seized radio stations to deter independent reporting on these developments.

Military police in riot gear fired tear gas and rubber bullets at thousands of demonstrators in Cochabamba. The body of one activist shot and killed by the police was carried through the streets of this town as protesters hailed him as a martyr.

Thousands of Aymara Indian farmers clashed with soldiers in the Andean towns of Achacachi and Batallas. Two farmers and three soldiers were killed and dozens injured in the confrontations.

Bolivia, a country of 8 million people, is one of the poorest in Latin America. Working people there face rising unemployment and are saddled with a \$4.1 billion debt owed to banks in the imperialist centers.

## THE MILITANT

### Support Puerto Rican independence

On April 19 protesters in Puerto Rico and in several U.S. cities will demand "U.S. Navy out of Vieques." The fight against the effects of Washington's colonial rule is having a big impact on the class struggle in both countries. The Militant covers this struggle in the words of its participants. Don't miss a single issue!



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# Labor federation in Iran demands the right to strike

BY MA'MUD SHIRVANI

The main labor federation in Iran issued a statement April 3 calling for legalization of strikes in the country. This is the first time such a demand is being raised by a mass organization since strikes were effectively banned by the regime that came to power in the wake of the 1979 revolution, which overthrew the pro-imperialist monarchy of the shah of Iran.

Major excerpts from the Central Labor Council of the Islamic Shoras (councils) statement were published in the Tehran daily *Kar va Kargar* (*Labor and Laborer*).

"During more than 20 years of revolution, demands of labor have not received adequate attention," the statement says at the outset, "as if it is forgotten whose able hands were those which helped the revolution triumph, and how [workers] sacrificing material conditions of their lives have marched forward, along with other sections of the society, in all different arenas of war and construction."

"Aren't the oppressed supposed to inherit the Earth?" the statement rhetorically asks. "What kind of rule is this that we give up our lives and property in order to reach the goals of the revolution, but once that victory is attained we are to be forgotten." Until now, the Council statement asserts, "in deference to the welfare of the regime we have not taken any action," but it calls on the workers in the new year "to stand firm against those who have aligned themselves against the toilers, and to prove that...from now on we will take our destiny into our own powerful hands." The Iranian new year, Nowruz, starts March 21, the first day of spring.

The semiofficial Central Labor Council is reflecting the anger that a frontal assault by the ruling class has aroused among the workers. As soon as the elections for Majles [Parliament] were completed in February, the outgoing deputies approved a long dormant antilabor bill disqualifying workers in small workshops of five or less from the benefits of the Labor Law. This law provides some job security, health insurance, retirement benefits, and vacation time.

The new bill is sugarcoated to exempt the existing shops, and to be applied on an experimental basis for six years. Its defenders demagogically claim that it will help solve the country's unemployment problem. But the workers are not buying it and have been organizing protest meetings to demand that it be rescinded.

At a mid-March meeting of workers, Abu Talebi, a labor leader in the oil rich province of Khuzistan, spoke out against the bill. He said the new bill "not only will not solve the unemployment problem, but it will exacerbate it."

Three weeks after the bill was passed

Torkashavand, the executive secretary of the Khaneh Kargar [Worker's House] in the Ray county near Tehran, reported that some workshops have already started laying off workers. He said he knew of print shops and bakeries that were planning to lay off workers in order to get the requirements of the Labor Law off their backs. Workers in the province of Mazandaran by the Caspian Sea in the north held a protest demonstration in the provincial capital.

Daryabegi, the executive secretary of the Khaneh Kargar in Mazandaran, estimated that the new bill will eventually disqualify 70 percent of the workers in the country from receiving benefits of the Labor Law.

In these protest meetings, speakers have reported formation of independent trade unions in oil, steel, electricity and agriculture. Abu Talebi told the audience in Khuzistan that many workers in the province have expressed their readiness to join these independent trade unions. This is a new development.

During the revolution, workers organized shoras, which were independent factory committees taking on revolutionary tasks. After the shah's overthrow, and especially during the Iran-Iraq war of 1980-88 while the working people were fighting at the front to defend the gains of the revolution, pressures from the capitalist regime weakened the shoras, sapped their independence, and prevented the workers from forming trade unions.

Late in February, representatives of the



Workers demonstrate in front of Majlis in Tehran. Iranian rulers' assaults on living standards has provoked protests and more union organizing efforts by working people.

Islamic shoras of Tehran province held a protest demonstration in front of the Majles building in the capital city. They demanded that Majles rescind the antilabor bill it passed earlier. The daily newspaper, *Hamshahri*, estimated the size of the demonstration to be two to three thousand.

Then, on March 8, a more militant demonstration of thousands of workers' representatives from across the country took place in front of the Majles. Kar va Kargar reported that workers of all nationalities, "Kurd, Turk, Baluch and Gilak" protested in unison against the infamous antilabor bill.

Demonstrators "gave an ultimatum to the Majles deputies and governmental authorities that if their demands are not met, the protests will culminate in strikes," the paper reported. Among the slogans raised in the demonstration were, "Labor Law, blood

money of our martyrs!"; "Condemn the new slavery!"; "Majles Nowruz present to us, breads made of bricks"; "Death to the enemies of workers!"; and "May 1: strike, strike!"

Majles deputy Tajaldin from the industrial city Isfahan spoke in the March 8 demonstration and appealed to the government to introduce emergency legislation to rescind the bill. But so far, the government of president Khatemi has stayed silent on this question.

Elias Hazrati, who was elected to the new Majles from Tehran, spoke at the demonstration. Addressing his remarks to the outgoing Majles, he warned, "These are only workers' representatives in this demonstration, but if ranks of workers were to congregate here, all the streets of Tehran would be filled with people."

## Miner beats back attempted frame-up

BY JEFF POWERS

DINOSAUR, Colorado—"It was a big victory for the union," Terry Chase, a grievance committee member of United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) Local 1984, said of the February 3 decision by a jury that found him innocent of charges brought during the Deserado mine strike last spring. Chase has worked at the mine for 15 years.

The local struck Blue Mountain Energy's Deserado mine over health care for retirees and other issues in May and June of last year. Although the miners did not get everything they fought for during the strike, most feel that their local is now stronger because of the fight.

Chase was arrested by sheriff's deputies from Colorado's Rio Blanco county June 12 and charged with reckless driving. "If I was convicted I would have had my license suspended; I could have been put in jail for up

to 10 days," he said.

The incident began when Chase brought a four-wheel-drive vehicle to the picket line that evening and began to drive it down a dirt road on Bureau of Land Management property near the strikers' shack. "I bought it from the company awhile back. Lisa [one of the Deserado miners] and her son, his girl friend, and I went for a ride," Chase said in an interview.

The guards the company hired as strike-breakers took off down the dirt road after Chase, recklessly pursuing him in their own four-wheelers. "I was driving about five miles an hour; you couldn't go any faster if you were driving safely, it was too rough," Chase explained. "A couple of times the guards ran themselves off the road, they were driving so fast."

The sheriff's department was called in and nine deputies showed up. The company

guards accused Chase of driving a stolen vehicle, but they could not find any of Blue Mountain Energy's trucks missing. Eventually the sheriff's deputies came up with the charge of reckless driving.

"They called the District Attorney on the phone at home. By then it was 2:30 a.m. The DA [District Attorney] was the one who told them what to charge me with," Chase said.

As part of Local 1984's settlement, Blue Mountain Energy agreed to drop charges against the five other people who were arrested during the strike, but nothing was done about Chase. "I was on the picket line every day. I think that they had it in for me," Chase said. "The company could have easily seen that my charge was dropped since they arranged to have it done for everybody else."

The UMWA International union provided Chase with an attorney, and Chase decided to request a jury trial. "I was a little worried. The judge is married to one of the engineers who works at the mine," he said.

"Right up to the last minute the DA thought that I would plea bargain. He offered me probation for a year but that was no kind of deal at all. After all, I was not guilty," Chase said.

The first witness called by the district attorney was Wayne Elliot, one of the company's security guards. Elliot bragged that he had been involved in seven more strikebreaking actions since Deserado and that he knew what he was talking about.

Elliot testified that Chase had been traveling at 30 to 40 miles per hour. "If I had been going that fast I would have been 15 to 20 miles away from where I was arrested," Chase said. "The more he spoke, the more he kept changing his story."

"Lisa, her son, and I testified for our side," Chase said. "Our lawyer pointed out that the sheriff's department never went out the next day to check the scene of the crime, that they never followed up on anything."

Several miners from Local 1984 attended the trial to show their support. It took the jury only one hour to come up with a not guilty verdict. At his union meeting the following weekend Chase was warmly received when he reported on his victory. Since the strike, Local 1984 has won all seven arbitration cases it has filed in addition to this court case.

## White House takes next step to set up military command on U.S. soil

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

The Clinton administration is putting in place components of a military command for use inside the United States. Pentagon officials announced March 23 that elite units of the National Guard in 10 states will be receiving "antiterrorism" certification in April, meaning they will be prepared to respond to attacks on communities using "weapons of mass destruction."

The Pentagon organizes its worldwide military operations through several Unified Combat Commands, including ones that cover Europe, the Pacific, the Atlantic, and the Southern Command, which encompasses Central and South America and the Caribbean. Last October, the Pentagon announced that it was changing its command structure to include for the first time the training of military forces for domestic use under a retooled U.S. Joint Forces Command, formerly the U.S. Atlantic Command. It is justified as an "antiterrorism" measure, but its real aim is the struggles of working people in the United States and to utilize military spy and intelligence capacities within the country.

Two years ago the Pentagon initiated this

course with a program entitled Rapid Assessment and Initial Detection, or RAID. In January, after some criticism that the use of the U.S. military for domestic purposes poses a threat to civil liberties, the military brass changed the name of the operation to Weapons of Mass Destruction Civil Support Teams, but its purpose remains the same.

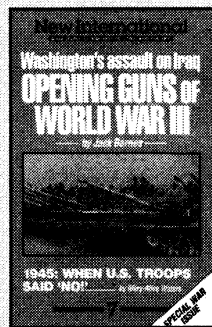
Congress has authorized 17 more National Guard units, which will be operational in the largest population centers, including two teams in California. The Pentagon spent \$60 million last year for units in New York, Colorado, Georgia, Illinois, California, Massachusetts, Missouri, Pennsylvania, Texas and Washington state. The federal government is budgeting \$75 million more for this year.

While stationed in particular states, these units are being organized for deployment throughout the country, U.S. territories, and the colony of Puerto Rico. New York's unit, for example, is assigned to the Air National Guard base near Albany, but can be deployed to New Jersey, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands. The teams will report to state governors unless federalized by presidential order.

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Washington's Assault on Iraq



Jack Barnes

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# YS members reach out to fighters in Ohio

The Young Socialists (YS) is an international organization of young workers, students, and other youth fighting for socialism. For more information about the Young Socialists, call (718) 398-7852, or send an e-mail to: [young\\_socialists@hotmail.com](mailto:young_socialists@hotmail.com)

BY LOU NEWTON  
AND JAY PARADISO

KENT, Ohio—The Young Socialists here have been participating in actions to strengthen the fight of the workers locked out by AK Steel, and other working class battles in the area.

YS member Lou Newton has helped to organize a Young Socialist Club at his high school, Kent Roosevelt High. The YS club is a place where students come to discuss articles in the *Militant* and Pathfinder books, such as *Capitalism's World Disorder*. Discussion often centers around working-class struggles in the region, such as the recent rally of 4,000 to support the locked-out steelworkers in Mansfield, Ohio.

Newton receives a bundle of 10 copies of the *Militant* in the mail every week to sell in the area. Most of them are sold on the Kent State University campus to youth who are interested in linking up with fighting workers and working farmers. Many of the students who read the *Militant* have expressed interest in going to Mansfield to

support the steelworkers. These sales also build the Militant Labor Forums in Cleveland, weekly gatherings where fighters meet to discuss what is happening in the class struggle all over the world.

The Young Socialists here has also been active in visiting bookstores in the area to place Pathfinder titles, so that they will be available to a larger number of workers and youth.

YS members across the Midwest made a special effort to get students, young workers, and others to Mansfield, for the March 25 action in support of United Steelworkers of America Local 169 in its months-long campaign against the lockout by AK Steel. One of the central points in dispute is the forced overtime that the company is demanding of the workforce.

Students from the Oberlin, Ohio, Student Labor Action Coalition joined the rally to show support for the locked-out workers. One student who stopped to look at the Pathfinder book table said that the group had come to link up with workers in struggle in the area. They were among a number of young people who attended the rally in support of and in solidarity with the fight that Local 169 has been waging. They mentioned that they are organizing an upcoming Student Labor Action Coalition Conference to take place on the Oberlin College campus.

Young Socialists sold the *Militant* and

Pathfinder books, and participated in discussions at the literature tables, taking up a wide range of subjects, including the Cuban revolution, Malcolm X, and the rallies of working farmers in Washington, D.C., and steelworkers fighting Titan Tire.

## Youth protest School of Americas

BY KYRA MORRIS

WASHINGTON—Several hundred people gathered in Lafayette Park across from the White House here April 2 to demand the closing of the School of the Americas (SOA), a military training base located at Fort Benning, Georgia.

Participants in the protest were mostly youth and members of religious organizations from many parts of the country. A number of international songs were part of the program, which featured a variety of speakers throughout the day. Opposition toward the School of the Americas and what it represents initiated numerous political discussions, especially among young people.

Manuel, a student from El Salvador, who came from Richmond, Virginia, said the reason why he attended was "to stop the atrocities in Latin America committed by military personnel trained in the SOA. Protests such as this one bring attention to the injustices. They bring people together and give

them power."

An international relations student, Isabel, who came from New York for the event, was just as clear and vigorous in her characterization of the SOA: "Instead of helping the working class, the SOA graduates learn how to oppress and torture people. It is up to the workers and youth to fight against the SOA because its graduates have always and will continue to protect the interests of the elites."

The U.S. Army School of the Americas trains Latin American soldiers in combat, military intelligence, commando operations, counterinsurgency, and anti-narcotics operations. Since its inception in 1946, SOA graduates and their U.S. trainers have been responsible for some of the worst human rights atrocities in Latin America, including the Uraba massacre in Colombia, the El Mozote massacre of 900 civilians in El Salvador and the murder of Archbishop Oscar Romero there, the La Cantuta massacre in Peru, among hundreds of others.

A team of *Militant* supporters sold 11 copies of the paper, two subscriptions, two Young Socialists pamphlets, and about a half dozen books and pamphlets.

There was particular interest in the Pathfinder books and pamphlets featuring writings of Ernesto Che Guevara, the Argentine-born Cuban revolutionary leader who fought for everything the School of the Americas has tried to crush.

# Students in New York City protest cop brutality

BY ELENA TATE

NEW YORK—"They say justified, we say homicide," chanted hundreds of young people as they marched through Manhattan protesting police brutality April 5. The crowd was marking the 41st day since the acquittal of four cops in the killing of Amadou Diallo—one for each bullet fired by the officers Feb. 4, 1999. They also decried the shooting of Patrick Dorismond, Malcolm Ferguson, and other unarmed Black youth killed by the cops over the past year.

Working people and youth have mobilized in their thousands to protest this brutality over recent months. Their chant refers to the justifications that the city administration and police organizations give each time another person is killed by the police.

The march to City Hall was preceded by a rally of about 500 people, mostly high school and college students, at Union Square Park. Many of the high school students there had walked out of their schools in protest and marched to the rally. Signs included, "NYPD: Oldest Gang Around" and "No More Stolen Lives." Many also held placards listing names of people killed by the police.

Jezel Mathews of East Side Community High School marched with a banner students from her school had made during class with the names of many young victims of police brutality. About 25 students came from her school. "This is the first time our school has done something like this," she said.

High school students came from Washington Irving, Bronx Satellite, and Brooklyn Tech. Contingents of students were also visible from Hunter High School, LaGuardia High School, El Puente Academy, Baruch College, Hunter College, and

Columbia University.

A group of about 30 construction workers joined the mostly student rally. Anthony Ramirez, 26, has been a construction worker with Positive Workforce, an organization that aims to get Blacks and Latinos into construction jobs. "People need to get together to fight police brutality," he said. "It felt good to march in 30 strong. This is my first demonstration. I've seen them on television, and I decided I had to come for myself. I never thought it would be this much fun."

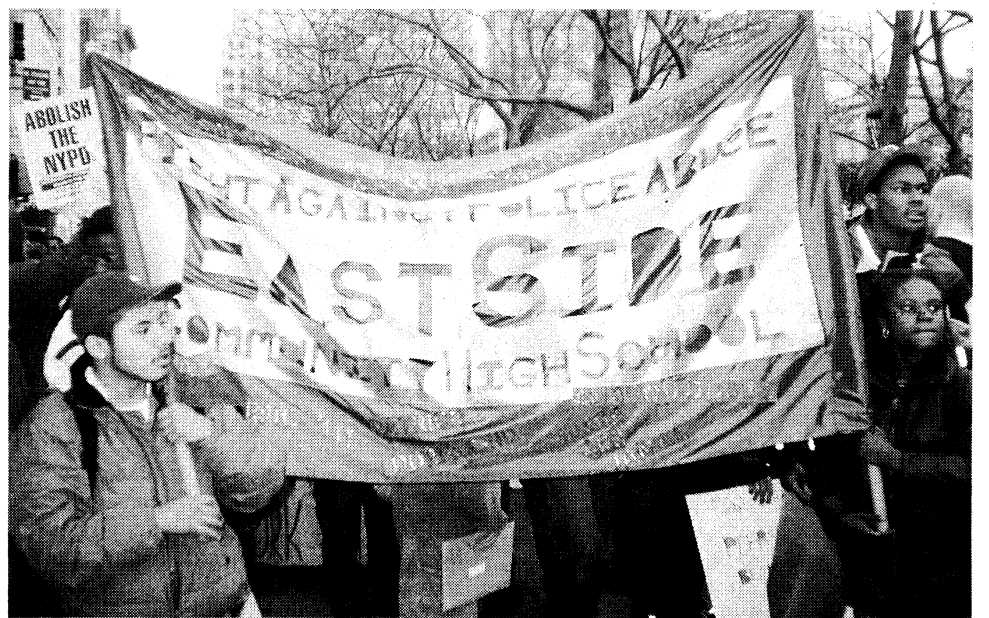
Mike, 20, who preferred that his last name not be used, has been a construction worker for one year. He said that he was protesting the unsealing of Patrick Dorismond's juvenile police record. Dorismond was shot and killed by undercover police officers who tried to buy drugs from him, after he said no.

In the wake of the murder, New York mayor Rudolph Giuliani released Dorismond's sealed juvenile record to the press as part of his smear campaign of this victim of the police. Mike said that it is very important for those records to remain sealed because "they can be used against you by employers throughout your whole life."

Jonah, who came with about 20 other students from Hunter High School, had been a part of a previous rally that he and his classmates had organized. "This is the biggest march I've ever been to. It was great to just be here chanting, Hey hey, Ho ho, Police brutality's got to go!" he said.

The action was organized by a coalition of groups, including People's Justice 2000, Youth Force, and others.

Elena Tate is a member of the YS. Barry Fatland contributed to this article.



Militant/Barry Fatland

Hundreds of high school and college students marched through Manhattan April 5

## YS fund drive reaches halfway point

BY MICHAEL MARTINEZ

MIAMI—Four weeks into the Young Socialists spring fund drive, money has started to come in towards the national goal of \$7,000. Funds are needed to maintain an independent revolutionary youth organization.

Money raised helps YS leaders attend and participate in political events, travel around the country to work with chapters, and maintain a professional national office.

April 22 marks the halfway point of the drive, which ends June 1. Some chapters are off to a good start in raising funds with Detroit leading the way. The YS chapter in Birmingham reports raising more than half of its goal. They plan to use other money they collect to make political T-shirts to sell for future YS campaigns. The YS in Seattle has raised one-third of its goal.

The fund-raising work in Birmingham is an example for all chapters and Young Socialists members on the important task of raising funds for the YS nationally and how this work can help build the organization.

The YS has called for a national week of fund-raising April 16-22 to reach \$3,500 by the halfway mark.

To help organize the drive, regional directors are working with all chapters to adopt goals and bring in the full \$7,000 on time.

Olympia Newton is responsible for the Northeast, Willie Cotton for the West, Jay Paradiso for the Midwest, and Michael

Martinez for the South. Jason Alessio heads up the team as the national fund drive director. Results of the chapters' work should be reported to regional directors so progress can be charted each week.

### Young Socialist Fund Drive March 15-June 1

| City         | Goal         | Raised     | %          |
|--------------|--------------|------------|------------|
| Detroit      | 350          | 144        | 41%        |
| Seattle      | 350          | 120        | 34%        |
| Chicago      | 800          | 205        | 26%        |
| Birmingham   | 450          | 115        | 26%        |
| Twin Cities  | 650          | 115        | 18%        |
| New York     | 1,000        | 5          | 1%         |
| Los Angeles  | 200          |            | 0%         |
| Newark       | 700          |            | 0%         |
| Philadelphia | 500          |            | 0%         |
| Cleveland    | 350          |            | 0%         |
| Fresno       | 200          |            | 0%         |
| Miami        | 400          |            | 0%         |
| Tucson       | 200          |            | 0%         |
| Valdosta     | 200          |            | 0%         |
| Washington   | 200          |            | 0%         |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>7,000</b> | <b>704</b> | <b>10%</b> |

## WASHINGTON'S 50-YEAR DOMESTIC CONTRA OPERATION

LARRY SEIGLE

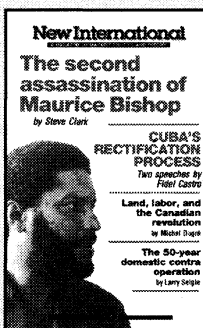
As the U.S. rulers prepared to smash working-class resistance and join the interimperialist slaughter of World War II, the national political police apparatus as it exists today was born. Documents the consequences for the labor, Black, antiwar, and other social movements and how the working-class vanguard has fought over the past fifty years to defend democratic rights against government and employer attacks. In *New International* no. 6. \$15.00

### FBI ON TRIAL

The Victory in the Socialist Workers Party Suit against Government Spying

EDITED BY MARGARET JAYKO

The victory in the case fought from 1973 to 1987 "increases the space for politics, expands the de facto use of the Bill of Rights, increases the confidence of working people that you can be political and hold the deepest convictions against the government and it's your right to do so and act upon them" — from the introduction. \$17.95



Available from bookstores, including those listed on page 12.

PATHFINDER

# 'Militant' sales drive is picking up steam

Continued from front page

ily of coal miners. We also met a professor who wants to place an order for Pathfinder books for classes he is teaching at the campus. He was particularly interested in the book *Che Guevara Talks to Young People*, although he wants to order other titles."

Supporters in every area can emulate this and similar efforts to make this a truly international campaign. In some places where participants in the drive are behind schedule they may want to organize special activities to catch up.

To build on these successes and get more momentum in the drive, the *Militant* is calling a target week for the campaign April 29 through May 7. This will provide an eight-day opportunity for socialist workers, members of the Young Socialists, and other partisans of the international circulation effort to map out plans for organizing extra sales activities and reaching out to broader layers of workers on the job and in other regions. Supporters of the socialist press can build up momentum in the target week to boost the campaign.

All across the United States and other parts of the world actions are popping up, such as the solidarity events demanding that Washington get its Navy out of Vieques, Puerto Rico. The Steelworkers union has organized labor solidarity actions in Iowa and Missouri; janitors are fighting for contracts in many cities; aerospace workers struck the Lockheed Martin plant in Texas; Overnite strikers will soon mark the six-month anniversary of their strike; and there are many others. Workers, youth, and others participating in these actions will welcome the socialist press for its coverage not only of these actions in the United States but similar resistance worldwide.

*Militant* supporter Floyd Fowler in Atlanta said they sent a sales team to Valdosta, Georgia, last weekend where they joined a march and rally for justice for Willy James Williams, who died in police custody more than a year ago.

"Participants in the protest responded to the *Militant's* front-page article on the demonstrations in New York against the latest police killing there, as well as the articles on the labor movement and activities of the Young Socialists," wrote Fowler. "We sold 5 subscriptions, 5 Pathfinder titles, and 18 copies of the paper. One of the new subscribers had already purchased and read several Pathfinder books, and decided that she also needed the *Militant* every week to follow political developments around the world more closely."

BY SHELTON MCCRAINEY

ST. LOUIS—We geared up for the international subscription drive, working as hard as we could to sell subscriptions. We wanted to talk to as many people as possible; students, workers, and go to the coalfields. On Wednesday we had two teams go out, one to Washington University and the other to the Overnite picket line. At Washington University we sold one subscription and

helped build an antiracist march and speakout against the Adams Mark Hotel. This hotel has been sued for racial discrimination.

Thursday we ended up having a good day, but it didn't start out that way. The first place we tried to set up a table we were kicked off by a security guard. So we went to another location where young people shop and eat in University City. At this location we sold two *Militant* subscriptions and two copies of the Marxist magazine *New Internationalist*. On Friday we went to the demonstration against Adams Mark Hotel, which was organized by the Historical Society.

On Saturday, supporters came up from Cape Girardeau to join us. We sent teams to an antiracist speakout at the Adam Mark Hotel and a forum at Webster College about the exploitation by oil companies in Colombia and of the Ogoni people in Nigeria. We sold one *PM* sub at the forum. On Sunday we went back to the Overnite picket line, where we sold one *Militant* subscription to an Overnite striker.

During the first week of the campaign we publicized a *Militant* Labor Forum that featured the struggles of coal miners. Around 18 people attended this forum, including two we had met during the week. One of them was a student who came from Southern Illinois University in Carbondale, Illinois.

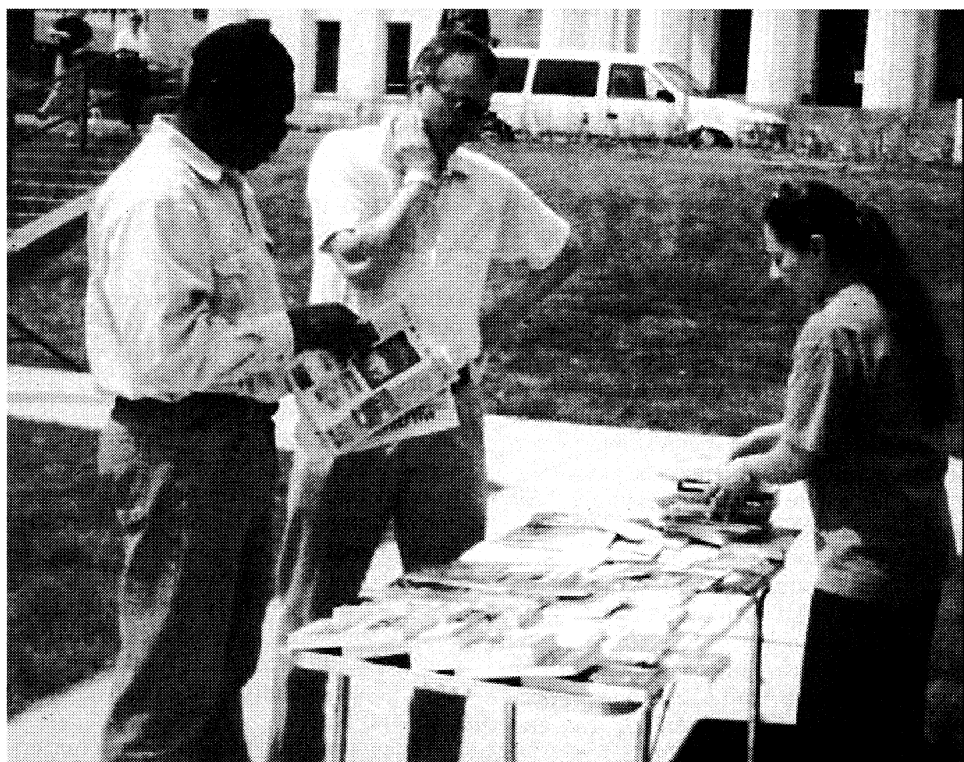
In the first week of the drive we sold 50 copies of the *Militant*, 5 *Militant* subscriptions, 1 *PM* sub, and 2 copies of *New Internationalist*. This week we sold one *Nouvelle Internationale* at a protest organized by Haitian workers in the city. There is a series of anti-police brutality forums we will be attending. We have also sold 13 Pathfinder books during the campaign so far, and met 20 people who we will be following up on.

BY MARIAN RUSSELL

LOUISVILLE, Kentucky—A team of *Militant* supporters from Detroit, Cape Girardeau, St. Louis, and Louisville joined forces here April 7-8. We went to a Contract 2000 rally hosted by IUE Local 761 and attended by some 300 GE union workers from at least nine states (see article page 15). A woman from Erie, Pennsylvania, decided to buy a *Militant* trial subscription.

The team was particularly interested in following up on political developments since the *Militant* reports on cop rallies March 3 and 17 protesting the mayor's firing of Police Chief Eugene Sherrard. Last week the Louisville *Courier-Journal* carried a series, "Use of Force," throwing a spotlight on various aspects of police brutality and racism.

Jesse Jackson was in town on March 30, laying a wreath at the spot where Black youth Desmond Rudolph was shot last year. He also spoke to a "crowd of hundreds" according to the *Courier-Journal*, calling for "reconciliation" and justice. A march has been called for Easter Sunday April 23. Four single issues were sold in the Black community, with one youth particularly drawn



Militant/Shelton McCrainey

Volunteers promoted the *Militant* at speakout against racism in downtown St. Louis

to the *Militant* coverage of the sustained protests in New York City against police killings there.

We also wanted to return to the Tyson chicken plant in nearby Corydon, Indiana, the site of a strike against the chicken processing giant in 1999. We returned to the plant gate to sell twice, and sold three *Militant* singles and a *PM* subscription. One worker, Ivan, who described himself as having scabbed during the strike, complained that workers only got a raise of about 50

cents an hour.

"They took away one of our paid half-hour breaks so that we have to work longer at the end of the day to make up the time," he said. This, however, was instead of taking away both paid breaks as the company had demanded. Annette Murray, who was one of the strikers, had a different view. "We didn't get all that we wanted. For example, we still have to work Saturdays. But I'm ready to go on strike again! Being on strike is the most fun I've ever had."

## Where we stand

|        | Mil | PM | NI |
|--------|-----|----|----|
| Week 7 |     |    |    |
| Week 6 |     |    |    |
| Week 5 |     |    |    |
| Week 4 |     |    |    |
| Week 3 |     |    |    |
| Week 2 |     |    |    |

## Militant/PM Subscription Drive March 25-May 21

| Country               | Militant |      |     | PM   |      |      | NI   |  |
|-----------------------|----------|------|-----|------|------|------|------|--|
|                       | Goal     | Sold | %   | Goal | Sold | Goal | Sold |  |
| Iceland               | 5        | 1    | 20% | 1    |      | 5    | 1    |  |
| Sweden                | 12       | 2    | 17% | 4    |      | 6    | 2    |  |
| <b>United States</b>  |          |      |     |      |      |      |      |  |
| Atlanta               | 30       | 16   | 53% | 10   | 4    | 12   | 1    |  |
| Chippewa Falls        | 15       | 8    | 53% | 10   | 4    | 10   | 1    |  |
| Charlotte             | 10       | 4    | 40% | 3    |      | 5    |      |  |
| St. Louis             | 15       | 6    | 40% | 5    | 1    | 10   | 3    |  |
| Los Angeles           | 60       | 20   | 33% | 30   | 13   | 30   |      |  |
| Cleveland             | 25       | 7    | 28% | 8    |      | 5    |      |  |
| Chicago               | 40       | 11   | 28% | 15   | 2    | 15   | 4    |  |
| Des Moines            | 30       | 8    | 27% | 15   | 5    | 10   | 1    |  |
| Twin Cities           | 35       | 8    | 23% | 8    |      | 10   |      |  |
| Pittsburgh            | 25       | 5    | 20% | 2    |      | 8    |      |  |
| Washington            | 30       | 6    | 20% | 10   | 2    | 11   |      |  |
| Seattle               | 40       | 7    | 18% | 12   |      | 12   |      |  |
| Philadelphia          | 35       | 6    | 17% | 10   | 3    | 15   |      |  |
| Detroit               | 45       | 7    | 16% | 8    | 1    | 15   |      |  |
| Newark                | 65       | 9    | 14% | 25   | 9    | 25   |      |  |
| Birmingham            | 45       | 5    | 11% | 5    |      | 15   |      |  |
| San Francisco         | 50       | 5    | 10% | 20   | 6    | 25   | 3    |  |
| Cape Girardeau        | 12       | 1    | 8%  | 4    |      | 4    |      |  |
| Allentown             | 15       | 1    | 7%  | 2    |      | 5    |      |  |
| Boston                | 35       | 2    | 6%  | 10   |      | 15   |      |  |
| Houston               | 35       | 2    | 6%  | 15   | 1    | 12   |      |  |
| Miami                 | 40       | 2    | 5%  | 15   |      | 20   |      |  |
| New York Garment Dist | 60       | 2    | 3%  | 20   |      | 20   |      |  |
| Brooklyn              | 55       | 1    | 2%  | 10   |      | 25   |      |  |
| Upper Manhattan       | 55       | 1    | 2%  | 20   | 1    | 20   |      |  |
| Fort Collins          | 12       |      | 0%  | 1    |      | 4    |      |  |
| Fresno                | 12       |      | 0%  | 8    |      | 6    |      |  |
| Other                 |          | 2    |     |      |      |      |      |  |
| <b>U.S. total</b>     | 926      | 152  | 16% | 301  | 52   | 364  | 13   |  |
| <b>New Zealand</b>    |          |      |     |      |      |      |      |  |
| Christchurch          | 12       | 2    | 17% | 1    |      | 3    |      |  |
| Auckland              | 20       | 2    | 10% | 1    | 1    | 3    | 1    |  |
| <b>N.Z. total</b>     | 32       | 4    | 13% | 2    | 1    | 6    | 1    |  |
| <b>Australia</b>      | 12       | 1    | 8%  | 1    |      | 5    | 1    |  |
| <b>Canada</b>         |          |      |     |      |      |      |      |  |
| Toronto               | 25       | 3    | 12% | 5    | 3    | 20   | 2    |  |
| Vancouver             | 25       | 2    | 8%  | 5    | 1    | 15   | 1    |  |
| Montreal              | 16       |      | 0%  | 6    | 1    | 15   |      |  |
| <b>Canada total</b>   | 66       | 5    | 8%  | 16   | 5    | 50   | 3    |  |
| <b>France</b>         | 4        |      | 0%  | 4    |      | 20   | 1    |  |
| <b>United Kingdom</b> |          |      |     |      |      |      |      |  |
| London                | 40       |      | 0%  | 8    |      | 20   |      |  |
| Manchester            | 25       |      | 0%  | 2    |      | 2    |      |  |
| <b>UK total</b>       | 65       |      | 0%  | 10   |      | 22   |      |  |
| <b>Int'l totals</b>   | 1122     | 165  | 15% | 339  | 58   | 478  | 22   |  |
| <b>Goal/Should be</b> | 1100     | 275  | 25% | 300  | 75   | 450  | 112  |  |

## Militant/PM Subscription Drive in the Unions

| Country              | Militant |      |     | PM   |      |      | NI   |  |
|----------------------|----------|------|-----|------|------|------|------|--|
|                      | Goal     | Sold | %   | Goal | Sold | Goal | Sold |  |
| <b>United States</b> |          |      |     |      |      |      |      |  |
| UAW                  | 17       | 3    | 18% | 3    |      | 9    |      |  |
| UNITE                | 35       | 1    | 3%  | 25   | 2    | 16   |      |  |
| IAM                  | 45       |      | 0%  | 10   |      | 20   |      |  |
| UFCW                 | 35       |      | 0%  | 20   |      | 15   |      |  |
| USWA                 | 40       |      | 0%  | 3    |      | 16   |      |  |
| UTU                  | 32       |      | 0%  | 3    |      | 10   |      |  |
| <b>U.S. total</b>    | 204      | 4    | 2%  | 64   | 2    | 86   | 0    |  |
| <b>Australia</b>     |          |      |     |      |      |      |      |  |
| MUA                  | 3        |      | 0%  |      |      | 1    |      |  |

IAM—International Association of Machinists; MUA—Maritime Union of Australia; UAW—United Auto Workers; UFCW—United Food and Commercial Workers; UNITE—Union of Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Employees; USWA—United Steelworkers of America; UTU—United Transportation Union

# Auto workers shut down production in south Korea

BY PATRICK O'NEILL

A strike by thousands of auto workers is at the center of a series of labor actions directed at the government and employers in south Korea. Industrial workers and bank employees, along with medical interns, are also stepping up their demands.

The unions are bringing pressure to bear on the governing parties as they prepare for National Assembly elections in mid-April. Police, employers, and the government are threatening legal action against striking workers.

Workers at four carmakers in south Korea went on strike April 6, bringing production by the Daewoo, Hyundai, Kia, and Ssangyong companies to a halt.

The unionists oppose the proposed sale of the Daewoo Motor Co. and the Ssangyong firm. About 5,000 workers from the Korea Metal Workers Federation are expected to join the auto workers in the stoppage.

"We oppose a sell-off to foreigners!" chanted 3,000 workers at the Daewoo plant in Pupyong, west of the capital city of Seoul, at a rally held the previous week. The workers at that plant, which produces half the company's output of cars, had gone on strike a week earlier, on March 31. Unionists say that foreign ownership of the troubled company will lead to mass layoffs. They are calling for its nationalization or sale to a domestic manufacturer.

Ford Motor Co. and General Motors Corp. are considered front-runners among carmakers bidding for Daewoo, which produced more than three-quarters of a million cars in 1999, and holds around \$18 billion in assets and almost \$14 billion in debts. The U.S. auto giants are competing to strengthen their position in Asian markets.

On April 9 Finance Minister Lee Hun-jai and 10 other cabinet ministers threatened the unionists, saying the government would deal strictly with so-called illegal strikes. The next day, on April 10, police chiefs announced that they plan to arrest a list of two dozen strike leaders. The Kia bosses stated they will prosecute some 17 union members for alleged violations of employment rules.

Other capitalists are also organizing for a showdown. The management at the Seoul Metropolitan Subway Corp. said the company would hire replacement workers after the subway drivers called a 48-hour strike starting April 11 to support their demands for a minimum of six days off per month and reduced working hours.

Unionized bank workers called a strike for May 30 to demand an end to restructuring. Railway workers are planning a walk-out for the following day, to call for an end to government plans to privatize rail transport. Around 4,500 resident doctors at 80 hospitals, members of the Korea Intern and Residents Association, began refusing to see patients on April 7.

The Korean Confederation of Trade Unions (KCTU) announced that rallies and

other actions would be organized throughout May, leading to a possible general strike by the end of the month. In wage talks due to begin after April 13, the KTCU is demanding a five-day workweek, the restoration of wages and employment to pre-crisis levels, and a halt to corporate restructuring. Another national union body, the Federation of Korean Trade Unions, has also called for a general strike.

The confidence of workers in south Korea, many of whom have experience in previous labor battles, is being picked up in the context of an economic upturn in this semicolonial country with a relatively large industrial base.

The upturn follows a deep economic crisis that battered many Asian economies beginning in the middle of 1997. The government of President Kim Dae-jung claims that in the year from March 1999 the economy grew by more than 1 million jobs—about



Striking workers protest in south Korea. Thousands of unionists have gone through labor battles gaining confidence to prepare for new struggles against the employers.

40,000 of them in manufacturing, and around 140,000 in construction.

According to the *Korea Herald*, "Labor forces are likely to wage more fierce battles

than in previous years as they are determined to be compensated for wage losses suffered during the past two years of harsh corporate restructuring."

## Seoul, Pyongyang plan for June talks

BY PATRICK O'NEILL

In June, the north Korean capital of Pyongyang will be the site of historic talks between the heads of state of north and south Korea. The agenda for the talks, announced simultaneously in the two countries April 10, will include "economic cooperation, reunification of separated families, and political reconciliation," according to the *New York Times*.

The summit will be the first such meeting since Korea was divided following the 1950-53 war. In that conflict, a massive invasion army, led by Washington and flying the flag of the United Nations, was fought to a stalemate by national liberation forces based in the north. Around 37,000 U.S. troops remain in the south today; Together with the 600,000-strong south Korean army, they carry out annual exercises aimed at the north.

The workers state in north Korea has survived Washington's hostility and a recent deep economic crisis precipitated by a combination of drought and floods. North Korea remains on the U.S. State Department's list of "terrorist nations."

Throughout the peninsula the demand for

reunification of the divided nation enjoys popular backing. Reflecting that fact, the opposition Grand National Party in the south immediately accused President Kim Dae-jung of aiming to change "the circumstances in the ruling party's favor" by "announcing the summit talks just three days before elections" for the National Assembly.

On the same day that the talks were announced, a controversy relating to the historic oppression of the Korean people by imperialism flared up in Japan as well.

The Korean national struggle, which set the scene for the post-World War II developments, was directed first at Tokyo's colonial rule. Japan occupied the country and maintained a brutal domination over its people for 50 years until 1945. Today, Koreans face national discrimination in Japan.

"Atrocious crimes have been committed again and again by *sangokujin* and other foreigners," said Shintaro Ishihara, the governor of Tokyo on April 9 in a speech to soldiers in the Japanese army. "*Sangokujin*," meaning people from third countries, became a term of racist abuse in the post-World War II period, directed at people from the former colonies of Taiwan and Korea. "We

can expect them to riot in the event of a disastrous earthquake," said Ishihara.

The remarks recalled the events of 1923, which began with a devastating earthquake that struck Tokyo and Yokohama and took 100,000 lives. Unfounded reports of riots among Koreans, many of whom had been brought to Japan as indentured labor under Tokyo's colonial regime, sparked off a pogrom in which hundreds were killed.

"These remarks bring the nightmare home to us of the groundless, hostile rumor of the 1923 earthquake by which many innocent comrades were victimized just because they were foreigners," read a statement by the Korean Resident Union in Japan, which represents 600,000 people. Most of the less than one percent of the Japanese population that is classified as non-Japanese is of Korean origin.

Ishihara has staked out other reactionary positions. He uses the derogatory term "Shina" when referring to China, has described the Rape of Nanking, the 1937 massacre in which the Japanese army slaughtered hundreds of thousands of Chinese soldiers and civilians, as a lie, and has called on Tokyo to arm with nuclear weapons.

## Paper workers walk off the job in Finland

BY CARL-ERIK ISACSSON

STOCKHOLM—Paperworkers in Finland, numbering 27,000, walked off the job April 11 in a nationwide strike that shut all the paper mills and related production in 127 companies in Finland.

Such a big walkout in the paper industry has not occurred in Finland since the general strike in 1956. The paper industry is an economically weighty one for the capital-

ists in Finland from which they derive big export revenues and profits. Estimates are that a two-week strike would set back the gross national product by .3 percent.

The paper workers union is demanding a yearly wage increase of 4.6 percent and a yearly reduction of hours by 24. Other demands include no subcontractors, outsourcing, or layoffs during the life of the contract.

The bosses responded that the demands are way above the national norms of 3.1 percent in wage increases for contracts negotiated in the industry in Finland this year.

But last month two contracts were signed with bigger wage increases. The transport workers union won a 3.5 percent yearly increase, with an additional 1.4 percent this October. The chemical and energy workers union signed a contract with wage increases of 4.1 percent. Both were as a result of strike

action by the unions.

A factor in both struggles was solidarity. The dockworkers, who are members of the transport workers union, as well as the Seafarers union, struck in sympathy. Unions in Sweden also pledged to block struck goods.

In this latest strike, the paperworkers union in Sweden has promised to block any work the employers in Finland try to shift to their mills in Sweden. The Finnish Stora Enso, one of the bigger paper companies in the world, has factories at 10 different locations in Sweden, and Metsä-Serla has three.

A big debate over sympathy strikes has opened up in bourgeois politics in Finland, which has spilled over to Sweden, reflecting the nervousness in ruling class circles over the power of the unions when it is used.

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

## 40,000 join warning strikes in eastern Germany

BY CARL-ERIK ISACSSON

STOCKHOLM—The metalworkers union, IG Metall, reports some 40,000 workers participated in warning strikes in eastern Germany to put pressure on the employers for a new contract. They also note that 10 years after German reunification union members in the east still earn 20 percent less—and work longer hours—than metalworkers in the western parts of the country.

IG Metall's chief negotiator for the eastern part of Germany, Hasso Düvel, said that

there can't be a contract in the west until workers in the east get a raise. The union has also officially stated that the contract signed in Nordrhein-Westphalia, with wage increases of 3 percent followed by a 2.1 percent raise the next year, cannot be a model for eastern Germany.

The contract in Nordrhein-Westphalia is held up as a model by employers around Europe. In Sweden, both employers and union officials refer to Europe-wide norms for wage increases.

### for further reading

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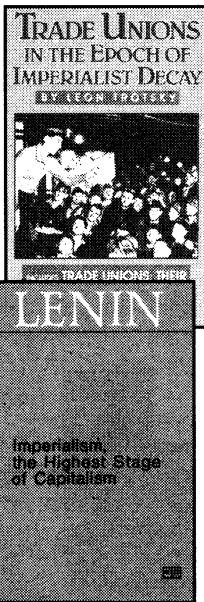
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# Debate on parental rights and 'la migra'

BY PATRICK O'NEILL

In his letter printed on this page *Militant* reader Les Slater calls for the return of Elián González to his father and to Cuba. This is a call the *Militant* wholeheartedly supports. Four and a half months have now passed since the six-year-old child was rescued off the Florida coast—one of three survivors of an attempt to reach the United States on a flimsy boat. Elián's mother was among the 11 who drowned.

As we go to press on April 13, it appears likely that government authorities will hand over Elián from his great-uncle, to whom he was delivered after his rescue, to his father. Crucial issues that have been raised around the case remain for discussion and clarification for working-class fighters. Several are posed in the letter from Slater.

Chief among these is the need for the labor movement to oppose attempts to bolster the powers of the immigration cops.

The U.S. rulers here are continually probing to try to strengthen the judge-jury-and-executioner powers of the immigration authorities. These are moves aimed at undermining the rights, wages, and working conditions of a whole layer of the working class, with consequences for all working people.

Many tens of thousands of workers in this country feel the impact of the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act passed in 1996. The legislation tripled to 15,000 the roll of agents in the Immigration and Naturalization Service, making the INS the largest federal police agency. The annual budget for deportations was boosted to finance an increase in the number of INS detention beds to 17,500. These beds are full. Many people are indefinitely detained while awaiting the outcome of an asylum application.

Under the law, the INS was granted an array of new enforcement tools, including the power to deport people quickly from an airport or some other location upon their arrival. That process, called "expedited removal," denies deportees the right to a lawyer or to any judicial hearing. People who carry allegedly false documents or who seek asylum can be summarily deported. The INS reported last November that 89,000 people—an increase of 16 percent—had been the victims of "expedited removal" in the previous year.

The deportations of working people already living here have also increased. The

1996 legislation expanded the types of crimes that can be used as grounds to deport immigrants, adding offenses such as felony shoplifting. More than 60,000 people were removed under those provisions in the 1999 fiscal year.

The INS lost one challenge to these powers just this month. The federal appeals court covering the nine Western states ruled against the indefinite detention of immigrants from countries with no repatriation agreement with Washington who complete prison sentences. Several hundred people will be affected.

On the other hand, on March 28 the Supreme Court refused to consider a challenge to parts of a welfare law, also passed in 1996, that made legal immigrants ineligible for various kinds of welfare.

## Oppose extra powers for the INS

The unity and strength of the entire working class is at stake in this issue. The bosses use the second-class status of immigrant workers—enforced by the lifted ax of their laws—to press down on all our wages, conditions, and democratic rights. The anti-immigrant policies of the ruling class are aimed at reinforcing this situation, and not at bringing a halt to immigration. In fact in the present capitalist boom the laws are enforced even more arbitrarily as the demand for labor heats up.

These facts are important in considering how working people should react to demands for the INS to step in past the legal appeals process and enforce its ruling, announced in January of this year that Elián should be returned to Cuba. In the context of the rulers' drive to boost INS powers and to weaken the rights to legal appeal, it is dangerous to advocate the "simple administrative return" of the child, to use the words in Slater's letter.

The thrust of President William Clinton's approach on the issue has been to polish up the image of the INS, which is justly hated by many working people.

## The question of parental rights

Parental rights is another issue that is raised in the context of the debate over the custody of Elián that workers need to discuss and to clarify. The dignified conduct of Elián's father, Juan Miguel González, throughout the controversy has undermined the occasional attempt to question his fit-

ness as a father. No one has successfully questioned his ability to speak for this young boy.

Slater makes a one-sided point in his letter about this question, however, when he correctly opposes the "long history...of the ruling class using various agencies...to interfere in the relations within the family, quite often with racist intent."

Such crimes have often marked capitalist rule, and it is important for the labor movement to oppose them. However, class-conscious workers state clearly that parental rights in the abstract should not be held above the rights of children—the most defenseless members of society.

The abuses that children suffer—including violence, sexual assault, and the opposition on the part of some parents to state-provided education or health care—are manifestations of the brutality and lack of solidarity that characterize the capitalist social order. Working people demand that the state intercede on behalf of children in such cases.

The Washington's 'Cold War' against Cuba

These are some of the key questions raised by the struggle over Elián. His fate has become a preoccupation in the media and a cause célèbre among politicians in this country—especially those from the right. To discuss and assess this controversy, it is necessary to step back and place it in the context of Cuba-U.S. relations, and of the deepening fault lines that run through capitalist politics in this country.

The U.S. rulers, head of the mightiest imperialist power on earth, have never forgiven the working people of Cuba for the revolution they began more than 40 years ago. Not only did the workers and peasants overthrow the U.S.-backed Batista dictatorship; they went on to overturn the domination of the foreign and local exploiters in the countryside and the cities. Under revolutionary Marxist leadership, they have extended solidarity to struggles for social justice and independence in other countries.

That is why Washington's "Cold War" against Cuba has not ended. The thrusts of the U.S. rulers against the revolution have included the attempt to overthrow the Cuban government with the Bay of Pigs invasion in 1961. The following year, the government of President John Kennedy threatened Cuba with nuclear weapons and prepared to invade, reversing course only when the Pentagon predicted that 18,000 U.S. soldiers would die in the first 10 days of such an assault. A sweeping set of economic sanctions has been in place since 1960. Measures passed in 1992 and 1996 tightened and extended the embargo. Alongside

## In Cuba, youth discuss struggles in Latin America and Caribbean



Militant/Aris Haras

More than 6,000 delegates from 38 countries throughout the western hemisphere—from Venezuela to Quebec—converged at the April 1-5 Latin American and Caribbean Student Congress in Havana. Many delegates discussed and debated the fights against exploitation and oppression they face. Cuban president Fidel Castro addressed the closing session of the congress. Among other points Castro said—to the hearty cheers of the vast majority of delegates—that capitalism is the cause of the crises facing workers, peasants, and youth under discussion at the conference. Above, participants at closing session held at the Karl Marx Theater in Miramar, Havana.

this, the U.S. rulers have waged an unrelenting propaganda offensive against the Cuban government led by President Fidel Castro, misrepresenting it as a brutal dictatorship.

## Breakup of bipartisan foreign policy

The storm around the Elián case is also a byproduct of the breakup of the bipartisan consensus in U.S. foreign policy that prevailed for most of the last several decades. For that period, however much the representatives of the Republican and Democratic parties might disagree—at least in public—over domestic issues, they united behind the policies of U.S. imperialism abroad. This is less and less true today. In general, coarseness and acrimony increasingly fill relations between and within the major capitalist parties and institutions of government.

These divisions have affected the course of the Elián case. A ruling by the INS that the boy should return to Cuba by January 14 received the backing of U.S. President William Clinton and other top administration officials, and clearly still enjoys the support of a majority in the ruling class.

The ruling immediately came under fire, however, from right-wing politicians who cared little for the opinion polls that indicated a majority wanted to see Elián returned. Sen. Connie Mack, a Republican congressman from Florida, introduced a bill to grant Elián and his family in Cuba permanent residency—a measure cosponsored by the right-wing Republican Jesse Helms and Trent Lott, the Senate majority leader.

Meanwhile, opponents of the revolution filled the newspaper columns and the airwaves with vitriol aimed at Havana. In an editorial entitled "Elián and His Many Uses," the *Washington Post* wrote on March 31, "If Cuba were not ruled by a Communist dictator, the Elián case would be sad, but not difficult. The father could speak freely; if he wanted custody, the boy would be returned.... But Elián's father, Juan Miguel González, lives on an island where people who speak freely go to jail."

The return of Elián to Cuba will not bring this kind of poison to an end. The U.S. rulers will continue to set their sights on Cuba, restrained only by the revolutionary intransigence of the working people of that country, and by the opposition among workers and farmers here and around the world to a bloody military intervention. Defending the Cuban revolution fits into building our own struggles against capitalist injustice. Similarly, to strengthen our organization and increase political clarity among fighters, we need to identify and oppose attempts by the rulers to bolster their powers for use against all working people.

## Opinion of a reader

Dear Editor,

I think the ruling class and the government representatives have been intelligent with respect to their current escalating attacks on the Cuban revolution. I think we have been less so.

They have taken the formal position that it is the father of Elián González who is the only one who has the legal right to speak for him. This is an important position that is truly in the interest of class conscious workers to support. We should not let the fact that it is being set forth by the government cloud this.

There is a long history, which continues to this day, of the ruling class using various agencies of local, state, and federal governments to interfere in the relations within the family, quite often with racist intent. Laws, treaties, and covenants against such practices are hard-won conquests of the working class and its allies. In this case the intent of the use of interference within this Cuban family is political.

There are no particulars in this case that would give cause to find any exception to agreeing with the idea that the government has no right to interfere with this Cuban family. The government's legal claims, likewise, do not find reason for exception.

What the government is doing, in reality, is using the courts to delay this simple administrative return of Elián. While delivering Elián into the captivity of the Cuban National Foundation, they play out their real intents—that is, to flood the stage with vile anti-Cuba revolution propaganda and further provoca-

tions. The government, on the one hand (INS ruling), is saying it has no basis for interfering with this family, but on the other hand is doing just that. We should make a distinction between the different aspects of which side of the mouth the government speaks.

It is not the position of the INS in this case that we should be aiming our fire at. It is the using of this case in the political manner that it is. The government's position that this issue should be decided in the courts is the means by which the kidnapping is extended. We should not be a part of this.

We cannot, however true, just point to any government agency, and say that they are justly hated and therefore any action or position taken by them should be opposed.

We hold no faith in the government upholding any aspect of the codification of gains by the working class and its allies but cannot just oppose, or ignore the government. We are not yet in a position to replace it.

The pressures at this time are enormous. I do not agree with the view expressed by some that we need to "defend the integrity of the INS from the Miami Mafia." But it doesn't mean that we should be obliged to find the exact polar opposite.

We need to know where the class line is, but also be intelligent, honest, and explain the whole complexity of bourgeois reality.

Les Slater  
Brookline, Massachusetts

# Cuban doctors discuss mission in South Africa

## Internationalist volunteers face legacy of apartheid and poor social conditions

BY T.J. FIGUEROA

DENNILTON, South Africa—"Our mission here is not just to help people—it is political. If people like Nelson Mandela and others can come together to build a new South Africa it is going to be an example for the world. In this, Cuba is making a small contribution. We are the representatives of the continuity of Cubans who fought and who are still fighting today," said Antonio Valdez.

Valdez, 37, a physician from Pinar del Rio, is one of 379 Cuban internationalist doctors who are working in South Africa.

"The poorest of the poor want us here," said Antonio Otelito, 34, an orthopedic surgeon, who also worked in Zambia from 1990 to 1992. "We are working in rural areas basically where no one else wants to work."

Otelito and six other Cuban doctors are posted at Philadelphia Hospital in Dennilton, a rural black township in Mpumalanga province. Valdez and René Aguinaga, also a family physician, work about 20 miles further north at Groblersdal Hospital, which was formerly a private facility. In apartheid South Africa, that meant it was for whites.

"Whites felt the hospital had always belonged to them, then after 1994, it became a state hospital and blacks started coming in from the villages," said Aguinaga. At first the whites' hostility was palpable, "but now they're getting used to it because it's time already."

Aguinaga previously worked at Philadelphia Hospital. "Before 1994 all the doctors (three to five) were white South Africans, and they were not touching the patients" in the 500-bed facility. "You should have seen the way they were treating the nurses. When the first Cubans arrived in 1996 the nurses were scared of us. Now it is totally different."

Expressing a common view among the nurses, Mildred Namane said of the Cubans: "They must not go."

Of South Africa's 11 official languages, Zulu, Northern Sotho, and Ndebele are predominant in the area, and the Cubans have picked up quite a bit of vocabulary. "South Africans give us new names," said Otelito. "They call me Thabo."

### Land and nation

Nearly all patients at Philadelphia Hospital are black. Many are farm workers employed on capitalist farms, and still more are unemployed. The state-owned hospital charges the equivalent of about \$2 for admission and treatment, which includes medication. That is a steep fee for many people. Treatment for women who are pregnant and children is free under laws established by the African National Congress government since 1994.

According to nurse Maria Sewela, working people throughout this area successfully fought off attempts by the apartheid state to incorporate them into the KwaNdebele "homeland"—the white regime's euphemism for reservations that millions of blacks were forced to live on and made "citizens" of under racist rule. However, blacks had no citizenship rights, and were prevented by law from farming, selling their labor freely,

or even living in cities.

Conditions in Dennilton are little different from the homelands. The limited work that exists is on farms in the area. As a result, more than a thousand people make the daily commute to jobs in Johannesburg—a trip that takes two to three hours each way. Dozens of buses start leaving at about 3:00 a.m., returning at about 7:00 p.m.

Rural South Africa in particular illustrates the continuing challenges of forging a nation here: there is only a shadow of modern class development and wealthy white farmers still control the great majority of productive land. However, the democratic conquests registered by workers and peasants since the early 1990s have opened up all sorts of possibilities.

"I can see changes even in the last three years," said Otelito. "People here could not talk freely, think or act as human beings," by law under apartheid. "They now have the possibility to express their ideas, to act and to fight."

"It's going to take a long time," said Valdez. "There is no official racism but in practical experience racism is still there. Both blacks and whites need to change, but to change the mentality of people is not something you can do in a year."

### The Cuban mission

The first Cuban doctors began arriving in South Africa at the request of the ANC government in 1996. Initially they were on three-year contracts. Then the South African government asked the Cubans to extend their stay. "We accepted on one condition: that South Africa has to decide if they want us here," said Otelito. Today, the doctors are on one-year renewable contracts.

According to Jaime Davis, who coordinates the work of the Cuban doctors in South Africa at the government-to-government level, there are about 1,200 Cuban doctors working on the African continent, including in Angola, Botswana, Cape Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, Equatorial Guinea, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, Zambia, Zimbabwe, and in the Sahara in areas controlled by the Polisario Front.

Valdez worked in Namibia from 1991 to 1993. He proudly relates the spirit of the internationalists who came to that country, which won its independence after Cuban troops played a decisive role in defeating the apartheid army in 1988 at the battle of Cuito Cuanavale in Angola.

When the first doctors arrived in 1996, the big-business press and opponents of the democratic revolution launched a hue and cry over their presence, not only attacking the Cuban government but also questioning the qualifications of the doctors. They ignored the fact that all the Cubans had to pass a comprehensive test administered by South African medical authorities—in English—before traveling here.

That hostility has subsided, doctors say, as they have demonstrated their work habits and medical ability—and conducted themselves with revolutionary dignity.

Anabel Rodríguez, 31, an anesthesiologist, arrived here two years ago and works



Militant/T.J. Figueroa

**Cuban doctors working in South Africa's Mpumalanga and Free State provinces. Front row, left to right, Antonio Díaz, Antonio Otelito; middle row, Silvio Morales, Iris Clavijo, Anabel Rodríguez, Mario Calzadilla; back row, César Ochoa (partially obscured), Ulises Machado, and René Aguinaga.**

at Boitumelo Hospital in Kroonstad in the Free State province. This is her first time working outside of Cuba, and it has been an eye-opener. "In Cuba there are times we ask why we can't have this or that. Now I see that in Cuba, the government worries over providing everyone the basics. Here, if you don't have money, you have nothing. Winter can kill you if you are poor."

Most of the doctors in her area were Afrikaans speakers; many refused to speak English. "They asked me a lot of bothering questions about Cuba. I said, 'Hey, I'm here and it's the first time I've ever seen TB [tuberculosis] in a kid. I can't have a Mercedes in Cuba but my kids will not get TB.' They didn't ask me any more questions."

The composition of the Cuban brigade, which includes men and women of all skin colors, also comes as a surprise to both black and white South Africans. "We are black, white and yellow—and we are brothers and sisters. They don't understand," said Otelito, how the Cubans work so well together. "They also see that the doctors do not act superior. When we walk through town, people say, 'doctor, how are you? I'm walking because of you.'"

### Impact on health

"Philadelphia Hospital used to be seen as a butchery," said a health official who asked not to be identified. "The view was that if you got in, you weren't going to get out. It's much better since the Cubans came."

"South Africa is a country of two worlds. In the world of whites, hospitals have everything; in the world of blacks, rural hospitals like this one are very different," said Otelito. "We face all the results of apartheid. There are very poor social conditions and there is great ignorance. For instance, there are patients that come for treatment only after spending two to three weeks after they are injured, like with a dislocated shoulder."

TB, respiratory infections, malnutrition, diarrhea and hypertension are among the most common ailments in the area—along with severe trauma and HIV/AIDS. Shortages of medication are chronic, particularly in community clinics.

"We cannot solve the problems of centuries in five to 10 years," said Otelito, but the impact of the Cubans' work is noticeable. "The doctors working in primary health care in community clinics are trying to translate Cuba's family doctor principle here to prevent disease before it strikes. There are improvements in these areas."

A Cuban doctor now serves as the acting medical superintendent of Philadelphia Hospital and the Cubans' working methods have helped to raise the level of discipline.

"We initiated morning meetings of the doctors," said Aguinaga, where the cases of those most seriously hurt or ill admitted during the previous day are discussed. "It used to be a total disaster. Doctors here could come to work whenever they wanted. Patients and nurses were treated improperly."

Otelito added that "every Thursday we have another scientific meeting with a lecture by a specialist."

A question about the level of HIV/AIDS infection elicits a pained expression on the look of each and every Cuban. "It is very high," comes the answer.

Ulises Machado said that where he works, in the Philadelphia pediatric ward, "10 babies a week test positive for HIV/AIDS," and those are only the ones that are tested. "I think AIDS is going to wipe out a generation," says Aguinaga.

"Education is the big thing," said Otelito. "Most people do not know what AIDS means. There is now a big effort on this by the government, but the number of patients is increasing every day."

Aguinaga said, "The conditions in which people live here means that if they contract AIDS they will die." As contributing factors he cited levels of malnutrition, especially in children, and poor hygiene.

### Improving skill levels

Cuban doctors are paid an average of 10,000 rands (about \$1,525) a month by the South African government. This is taxed, and 30 percent of the amount is sent to the Cuban government. Otelito said most doctors take home about 5,000 rands a month, roughly \$760.

"With the money sent from the pay of the doctors in South Africa, last year Cuba bought half of the vaccines it needed for children," Otelito said.

"Our pay here is better than in other countries in Africa," said Valdez. "But I've worked in Namibia and it was not for money. If a little money comes in, okay. We're revolutionary but we're not stupid. We've lost doctors here. How do you pay for that?" Pointing to criticism of the Cubans when they first arrived as being privileged in comparison to the pay they would receive at home, he said "Thousands of Cubans died in Angola. That was right. There is no privilege. We are here already with the blood of our people."

Silvio Morales, 33, is a family physician from Pinar del Rio posted at Philadelphia Hospital. Of the 20 doctors in total at Philadelphia, a minority are South African. The numbers are slowly starting to shift. Under legislation passed by the ANC government, graduating medical students are now required to do one year of "community service," mostly in rural areas.

The Cubans, some of whom have computers and are linked to the Internet, stay abreast of developments, such as the fight to have Elián González returned home. Otelito monitored the response of the imperialist powers to the recent floods that devastated neighboring Mozambique. "All the riches of North America and Europe come at the expense of poor countries," he said. "In Mozambique they talked of help but they are not helping. They can help by eliminating the Third World debt."



Militant/T.J. Figueroa

**Cuban doctor Antonio Otelito and a South African nurse in the orthopedic ward of Philadelphia Hospital in rural township of Dennilton in Mpumalanga province.**

# Putin aims to bolster military, capitalist market 'reforms'

BY MAURICE WILLIAMS

In the weeks leading up to his election as Russian president, Vladimir Putin announced measures to beef up Russia's armed forces and the repressive apparatus of the state. At the same time he repeated pledges of market reforms, saying he wants to "revamp the tax code, encourage foreign investment, and enact a new land code to entrench the right to buy and sell land," according to the *Wall Street Journal*.

Putin's promises of reform reflect the limited success the procapitalist regime of Boris Yeltsin had in dismantling the nationalized property ownership and social relations in Russia in the 1990s.

These conquests of the 1917 revolution still survive and remain barriers to the reinstitution of capitalist exploitation. In particular, the abolition of private property in land carried out by that first, Bolshevik-led government, has erected a formidable obstacle.

"We will focus on guaranteeing the full rights of owners and investors," declared Putin three days before the March 26 presidential election. "The right of ownership must become a priority in Russia.... We will need to make the state strong enough to guarantee implementation of these rights."

Such declarations have won qualified approval from Washington. The imperialists are less enthusiastic, however, about Putin's emphasis on strengthening the country's military. Since he replaced Yeltsin as president, Putin has issued six decrees involving the armed forces, including reestablishing military training in Russian schools and mandatory training for reservists. Putin recently signed orders to call up 20,000 reservists and announced a 50 per-

cent increase in military spending.

Although the Russian president emphasized his commitment to ratification of the Start II nuclear arms reduction treaty, he also stated plans to bolster the country's nuclear arsenal.

"We will preserve and strengthen the Russian nuclear weapons complex," Putin told a meeting at the Chelyabinsk-70 nuclear weapons center near Snezhinsk. During the latest war against Chechnya, the Kremlin broke from its no-first-strike policy involving nuclear weapons and decreed the right of Moscow to use them if "other means of conflict resolution have been exhausted or deemed ineffective."

In a move to consolidate his grip on Russia's armed forces, Putin issued a decree that authorizes the Federal Security Service (FSB), the domestic intelligence agency, to oversee some 200,000 troops under the Interior Ministry and 100,000 border guards. The new measure integrates counterintelligence units throughout the armed forces into the centralized system of the FSB.

The FSB is the successor to the KGB, the Soviet intelligence agency, which included the border force before the breakup of the Soviet Union. Putin, who began his career as a KGB agent and was appointed head of the FSB in 1998, said he plans to bring "into my inner-circle people from law enforcement bodies." This move would include former colleagues from the KGB.

"The FSB is taking on the role of a political police force within the army," remarked Sergei Yushenkov, deputy chief of parliament's security committee and a former army colonel. "It's another sign that since Putin took over, the secret services are



Russian cops guard voting booth in Grozny, Chechnya to enforce participation in presidential elections. Moscow used massive firepower to impose military occupation.

trying to control all structures of power in Russia."

## Putin regime preparing iron fist

The Putin regime is preparing an iron fist to maintain political stability in the event of rising mass protests, upheaval among the military ranks, or another uprising among Russia's oppressed nationalities. Two years ago a national survey of 6,000 people conducted by the Sociology and Parliamentary Institute found that 11 percent of the respondents said they would support an armed uprising against the government. At that time unpaid soldiers had begun shooting at their commanding officers.

Last year the Russian government blamed Chechen rebels for a series of still unexplained apartment bombings that killed nearly 300 people. The Kremlin then waged a fairly successful propaganda campaign to paint the Chechen fighters as "terrorists" and "bandits," as Moscow launched a bloody onslaught to crush the Chechen struggle for independence.

Putin won a degree of popularity in conducting the war, which he exploited to enhance his stature as acting president. "A terrorist or a criminal...can no longer count on finding assistance and shelter in Chechnya," he declared in an open letter to Russian citizens. That letter was published in several newspapers one month before the presidential election.

While Putin avoided a runoff election, winning 53 percent of the vote, his victory was not considered a mandate from the electorate. His closest rival, Communist Party leader Gennadi Zyuganov, won nearly 30 percent of the vote, a far stronger showing than expected. Ultrarightist Vladimir Zhirinovskiy won 3 percent of the ballot.

"The people in power have cheated us a lot and Putin is just continuing in the tradition of Yeltsin," said Stanislov Gribonov, a 47-year-old-coal miner in Shakhty explaining to the *New York Times* why he was voting for Zyuganov. "I haven't really understood this market economy unless it is just a means to degrade the country's resources."

"It was 100 times better under the Communists because we could travel about our country almost for free and we could take our vacations at the sea at any resort," added Valery Klimovich, another miner.

The statements of Gribonov and other miners reflect the views of millions of workers who defend the social conquests of the Russian workers state despite its tattered condition. Their vote for the Communist Party candidate highlights their refusal to accept as normal the unemployment, social insecurity, and dog-eat-dog competition produced and reproduced by the workings of capitalism.

The attempts to reimpose the profit-making system in Russia by the proimperialist regime of Boris Yeltsin had wrought economic turmoil as the country edged towards

Continued on Page 14

## Socialists in Canada prepare for convention

BY MICHEL PRAIRIE

MONTREAL—Socialist workers and youth who are members of the Communist League and Young Socialists in Canada are deepening their participation in the resistance of working people leading into the league's upcoming convention.

Socialists are organizing sales and reporting teams to Western Canada, visiting fighting mine workers in Cape Breton in Nova Scotia, and joining picket lines and talking to municipal workers who went on strike in the Toronto area this past week. The Communist League's Sixth Constitutional Convention will be held in Toronto over the Easter weekend, April 21-23.

At the center of the work of the delegates from Vancouver, Montreal, and Toronto will be proposals on how a small working-class vanguard can organize and deploy its forces more effectively to involve itself in the continuing struggles of workers and farmers across Canada. The effects of the growing crisis of world capitalism is hitting workers, farmers, and oppressed nationalities across the country, and the league aims to recruit a new generation of fighters to the communist movement out of the battles that is engendering.

The delegates will also discuss the communist response to the growing political and social polarization in Canada, including around the unbroken resistance by the Quebecois to their national oppression and the efforts by a wing of the ruling class to build a new, right-wing party, the Canadian Alliance.

One of the main tasks of the convention is to elect a new Central Committee.

A public rally will be held Saturday evening April 22 to report on the convention's decisions. The event will celebrate the building of the communist movement in Canada and the intensified effort to digitize, translate, and distribute Pathfinder books.

The Communist League has launched an effort to increase the number of its supporters working as part of an international project aimed at bringing into a computer

format the 350 titles by Pathfinder. This effort helps to ensure that these invaluable lessons of 150 years of working-class struggle remain accessible to the new generations of fighters coming into politics today and in future class battles.

The Communist League leadership also recently decided to allocate important resources to the editing and translation into French of a series of books by Pathfinder explaining the continuity of the communist movement through the 20th century. These include *The History of American Trotskyism* and *The Struggle for a Proletarian Party* by Socialist Workers Party founder James P. Cannon. Such a step is crucial for building the communist movement in Canada, where 7 million Quebecois and other oppressed nationalities speak French.

On April 13 a *Militant* sales and reporting team composed of socialists from Canada and the United States will leave Vancouver by car and drive for seven days to Toronto.

The team aims to meet and talk to coal miners in the Rocky mountains, *Calgary Herald* strikers in Alberta, farmers fighting for their survival, Native people battling racist cop violence in Saskatchewan, meat packers and other industrial workers, as well as students across the Prairies.

A second team will go to Cape Breton, on the Atlantic Coast, and visit United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) members fighting attempts by the Canadian government to close the last coal mine in the Maritimes. The team will get together with miners met during a previous *Militant* reporting trip and at the recent UMWA convention.

Socialists from Detroit and Toronto will team up to visit strikers on picket lines in the Toronto area, campaign for communism among youth at an April 15 demonstration against the World Trade Organization, and reach out to 20,000 municipal workers who will be attending ratification meetings following the end of their 10-day strike. Several workers have said they consider the proposed agreement a victory and the direct re-

sult of their strike.

The Communist League convention will also be marked by the recent participation of several party and Young Socialists members in the more than 200-member delegation from Canada that attended the April 1-5 Congress of Latin American and Caribbean Students that took place in Havana.

All members of the YS in Canada are invited to attend the convention as observers. Leadership delegations from the Socialist Workers Party in the United States and other communist leagues around the world will also be present.

## Building the Communist Movement Today

Celebrate the worldwide effort to digitize, translate and distribute Pathfinder books

### SPEAKERS

MICHEL PRAIRIE,  
Leader of the Communist League  
and director of its French-language  
publication program  
VUK KCMAR-GRKAVAK  
Young Socialists, Western Canada  
*Militant* reporting and sales team

NATHAN CALDWELL,  
Young Socialists, Cape Breton  
*Militant* reporting and sales team  
CARLOS CORNEJO  
Communist League, participant in  
the 12th Latin American and Caribbean  
Students Congress in Cuba

Others to be announced

Sat., April 22, 7:30 p.m.

### Information

Montreal: (514) 284-5547  
Toronto: (416) 588-8591  
Vancouver: (604) 872-8343

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Suggested contribution: \$5

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Essex Ballroom  
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Downtown  
300 Jarvis street  
(Ten minutes walk from the  
Yonge/College subway station)

# Janitors in Los Angeles win solidarity

Continued from front page

crease for each of the three years of the contract. Last year they won full family health benefits. At current wages, union janitors working all year at full shifts earn under \$16,700, the figure the federal government sets as the poverty level for a family of four. Los Angeles janitors are among the lowest paid in the nation.

The 18 janitorial firms struck by the SEIU, including American Building Management and One-Source, both of which hire tens of thousands of janitors nationwide, tried to avert a strike by offering wage increases for only certain workers in the most highly unionized areas of the city. The offer totaled only half what the union is demanding, and more than 50 percent of the janitors would not receive any increase for the first year.

SEIU leaders described the offer as an at-

tempt to divide the membership. Hector Jimenez told a cheering crowd of 3,000 the day before the strike, "What they don't realize is that we are united, and we will have the last word." Janitor Victoria Marquez, who cleans buildings in Beverly Hills, said, "I have three children. How am I going to give them a decent education on \$6.80 an hour in Beverly Hills?"

## Deepening solidarity

The SEIU has established a \$1 million strike fund to help cover workers' rents and emergency expenses. The L.A. County Federation of Labor began distributing groceries, pledging a bag a week to each striker. The Teamsters union, representing UPS and sanitation workers, told their members to honor the picket lines, thus no deliveries nor trash pick-up. The Building Trades Council announced that they would not cross the

picket lines to do building repair or construction. Operating Engineers Local 501, representing workers who maintain building equipment, followed suit.

"I want them to get better wages so that they can have a better standard of living," said Bixx Richardson, a Mexican immigrant who belongs to Operating Engineers Local 501. "I used to be a janitor and you would not believe the work you have to do and the equipment that you have to operate to do that job. My union supports them all the way because we know what they have to put up with."

A janitor who worked downtown for 25 years said, "You have to stand for something. If you sit at home waiting for someone to do it for you, you will never get anything. We have a lot more support this time than we did before. Then we were trying to get the union in. Now we are fighting to get a contract we can live with. Besides more money, how we are treated is important too. People think that because we are janitors they can look down on us. Well they can't, we have rights too."

Almost daily marches and rallies of up to 3,000 have won deeper public support. On one of the marches through downtown, construction workers stopped work, waved, and raised their fists as the red shirts marched by chanting, "Si, se puede," [Yes, we can!].

A few local politicians have announced their support for the strike. Jesse Jackson marched at the head of one action of 2,000 through downtown. The rally was videotaped and sent to union members in a dozen cities where the SEIU has contracts set to expire. Following the march, union officials organized limited civil disobedience, such as blocking streets and downtown freeway on-off ramps. Some 20 participants were arrested and charged with unlawful assembly.

An all day Pilgrimage for Justice April 7 was the high point of the week. Thousands of strikers converged on Century City. Small groups of other unionists participated, including the teachers union. This year con-

tracts expire for teachers, county workers, and others, totaling 250,000 workers.

Annie Durazo of SEIU Local 250 from Fresno, California, joined the action. She is organizing home-care workers and volunteered to come to Los Angeles for two weeks to help the strike. More than 70,000 home-care workers were organized into the SEIU last year in Los Angeles county. "Workers deserve a better wage, they are getting nothing," she said. "They get no respect or dignity. The same situation faces home-care workers. My obligation was to come and help."

High school students also rallied with the strikers. Eric Rivas from Belmont High said in an interview that the janitors "are fighting for a good cause. My friends' parents are janitors and they need a raise." Rivas has been involved in high school walkouts against Proposition 209, a referendum passed two years ago to end affirmative action programs statewide.

Lively discussions around the city among working people at Boeing, the meatpacking plant Farmer John's, the airport, offices, and in the schools point to the popular support for this strike and identification with immigrant workers. This is also reflected in the pages of *La Opinion*, which ran a headline, "Solidarity with Strikers."

Four food banks have been set up around the county for strikers. Volunteers and strikers prepare 3,000 meals a day, including breakfast, lunch, and dinner. "Here I am working harder than cleaning offices, but for the struggle it doesn't matter," said Estela Cerén at one of the centers.

"They deserve a raise. Everything is going up but our pay. Why are the rich getting richer and when the poor want a raise they don't want to give it to them? I plan on joining the pickets and demonstrations," said Charles Fisher, a ramp worker and member of the Machinists union at Northwest airlines.

Mark Friedman is a member of the International Association of Machinists.

## New York workers rally, demand better contract



Militant/Brian Taylor

Thousands of building workers and their supporters took to the streets April 12 in New York City to demand better wages, working conditions, and health coverage.

Continued from front page

worker at Lefrak City apartments in Queens.

Alberto Valencia, a maintenance worker who recently arrived from Ecuador, said he was at his first U.S. protest. "This action is good. We are all working hard to make a better life for ourselves and our children. The offer the company made is insufficient," he said. "If all the workers unite, from Los Angeles to New York, we will be stronger."

Mike Fuentes, a 21-year-old porter came with several co-workers from Queens because "we have to do this. Otherwise they'll take advantage of us." Fuentes added, "I think we are pretty united. We all got together here today even in the cold. It feels good."

A group of workers who are Black approached this reporter, skeptically asking what newspaper I was reporting for. When I said "the *Militant*," an older worker in the group cracked a grin. "The *Militant*. I know that paper. You all go way back. I remember you from Malcolm's day," he said favorably, referring to Black rights revolutionary leader Malcolm X.

Then another worker from the group, Eddie, who asked that only his first name be used, gave an interview. "If you looked around in the past, you would see that the majority of workers were whites. In recent years," he said, "more minorities have now come into these jobs. Management knows that today the majority of building workers are Black and Hispanic. They try to get more for less. They divide employees and try to create mayhem between us in each building. I am one of those individuals out here just fighting for my rights."

Eddie also made the point that in addition to demanding a decent health-care program, and top pay for all new hires, unionists are fighting for job security.

Anthony Pecorella, a porter at the Dayton Park complex in Far Rockaway, New York, and several of his co-workers also spoke about their fight. "Whatever we have to do we will do," Pecorella said. "We got docked [pay] to come to this demonstration,

but it's got to be everybody together. All the unions have to stick together. If we didn't have the union we'd be making \$5-\$6 an hour."

## City administration recruits scabs

The New York City administration is preparing for a fight. Burns International Security Services is trying to amass a pool of working people in so-called workfare programs "to cover" for SEIU doormen in case of a strike. Burns is offering \$848 a week for 12-hour, seven-day-a-week scab jobs.

The Burns flier was distributed as one of the notices for jobs routinely circulated by the city among welfare recipients on workfare jobs. It stresses that applicants "must be able to handle crowd control, possible aggressive strikers, etc." City officials claim no knowledge of this, with one official stating it is against "our policy to recruit W.E.P. workers to break strikes." But the Burns company said they went through the state to organize recruitment.

Bill Meyerson, a Local 32B-32J spokesman, scorned, "The city should not be involved in recruiting for this kind of activity."

The march ended in a rally with several speakers, including Hector Figuerra, deputy trustee for Local 32B-32J, and SEIU official Michael Fishman, who thanked several unions for coming out to support their fight. These included the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 3, Laborers Local 78, health care workers Local 1199, and others. Cops cordoned off the rally, separating the participants into three segments.

Felix Arias, who started as a building employee in 1958, said, "When I started, the landlord got \$58 a month for rent. Now he makes \$1,000 for that same room. All we're asking for is a comparable wage increase."

Elena Tate, a member of the Young Socialists, and Ruth Robinett, member of the United Transportation Union, contributed to this article.

## Steelworkers plan protests

BY RAY PARSONS

DES MOINES, Iowa—Three labor rallies taking place this month in Des Moines and Kansas City, Missouri, are helping to link struggles of steelworkers, rubber workers, and Teamster union members in the Midwest.

United Steelworkers of America (USWA) Local 13 at GST Steel in Kansas City, Missouri, is hosting a rally April 18 to support their sister local at MEI, in Duluth, Minnesota. There, foundry workers, members of USWA Local 1028, went on strike last August. When the unionists offered to return to work February 28 the company locked them out.

The Kansas City action takes place simultaneously with rallies in Georgetown, South Carolina, and Tempe, Arizona, by unionists working at plants all owned by the same company as MEI.

Some 200 workers at Smurfit-Stone Container in Des Moines, who have been walking the picket lines since December 30, are building an April 22 solidarity rally at union workplaces throughout the region. The strikers, members of Teamsters Local 147, plan to leaflet the Bridgestone/Firestone tire plant across town and speak at upcoming union meetings to win support for their walkout.

The company organized a jobs fair April 11 to recruit scabs. Strikers attended to get out the truth about their fight. Recently, the unionists have made efforts to reach out to Asian and Spanish-speaking workers in the city, looking to draw on the talents of strikers to translate picket signs and leaflets into other languages. Strikers have expressed interest in attending the Kansas City rally.

The following week USWA Local 164 is hosting an event to mark the two-year anniversary of their strike at Titan Tire here. The action on April 29 is attracting solidarity from steelworkers locked out in Mansfield, Ohio, by AK Steel. There, USWA Local 169 held a very successful solidarity rally and march that drew 4,000 unionists and supporters from throughout the region on March 25. USWA workers at Husman in St. Louis are coming by bus to the rally. Titan strikers are discussing how to get the word out about their rally as widely as possible in Des Moines.

These three actions take place as USWA

workers at Bridgestone/Firestone prepare for a possible fight over their contract, which expires April 23. Strike authorization votes in Des Moines and at seven other plants affected by the current negotiations were all 97 percent or higher in favor. Workers at the Des Moines plant are planning to make the trip to Kansas City, and participate in the two rallies to be held here. A plantgate collection for Local 164 is in the works, to help build participation of Bridgestone/Firestone workers in the April 29 rally.

For details on these actions, see the calendar on page 12.

Ray Parsons is a member of USWA Local 310 at Bridgestone/Firestone in Des Moines.

## Machinists strike Lockheed Martin

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

After rejecting the company's latest offer, some 2,500 Machinists went on strike April 10 against Lockheed Martin Aeronautics Co.'s plant in Fort Worth, Texas.

The workers, members of International Association of Machinists (IAM) Local 776, turned down the contract with 56 percent voting no, even though the offer was recommended for approval by union negotiators. Some 85 percent of the workers then voted to go on strike.

Their three-year contract expired April 9. No new talks have been scheduled. Lockheed Martin, the world's largest defense contractor, produces the F-16 fighter aircraft at this plant. The company claims that it will maintain some production with nonunion workers and salaried personnel.

The company's proposal included a 10 percent pay raise over three years and a 25 percent pension benefit increase, but it didn't address the workers' concerns about job security, outsourcing, cost-of-living adjustments, and equal benefits comparable to those won by the IAM workers at Boeing.

The strike is the third in the history of the 59-year-old plant. Previous walkouts took place in 1946 and 1984.

# Kaiser Steelworkers demand benefits

BY CHRIS RAYSON

OLYMPIA, Washington—With chants of "Steelworkers, Steelworkers" and "Do the right thing" booming and reverberating inside the state capitol, 200 steelworkers locked out by Kaiser Aluminum in Washington state rallied here on March 27.

This was the latest in a month of actions members of the United Steelworkers of America (USWA) have taken to demand the state pass legislation extending unemployment benefits to them for an additional 30 weeks. The benefits would be issued if the lockout continued and Kaiser would have to pay the entire cost, more than \$20 million. The steelworkers have been on strike or locked out for 18 months.

The legislation passed the state Senate but the House leadership has refused to allow a vote. The House is evenly split between Republicans and Democrats and the two co-speakers must both agree to bring in a vote. The Republican co-speaker has refused to do so and the Democratic one says it would be "perceived as unfair" to "change the rules." Supporters of the benefits insist there are enough votes to pass it.

Buck McGowan, 53, a USWA road warrior since June 1999 and mobile equipment operator at the Tacoma Kaiser plant near here, told the *Militant*, "I'm here to support steelworkers and show what solidarity is. We're asking for something we deserve. The extra money comes from Kaiser, not from state funds."

A week earlier, 350 steelworkers and their supporters rallied on the capitol steps with broad support from area unions. Steelworkers and their supporters have also organized sit-ins overnight at the state capitol demanding passage of the unemployment benefits.

David Foster, a district director of the USWA in charge of negotiations with Kaiser, told steelworkers at the March 27 rally that "Kaiser is saying 'don't help the USWA because we will bargain a settlement in four to five weeks.' If we were four to five weeks away," Foster added, "why did Kaiser cut

off 300 of our most vulnerable workers from Cobra they are paying themselves?" Cobra is an expensive insurance program used by workers to maintain medical benefits when the employer ceases payments.

A week earlier, Steelworker officials canceled plans for a weekend of protests and demonstrations March 25-27 at Kaiser's aluminum refinery near Tacoma.

The canceled actions had been planned by USWA officials in coalition with several groups that had led the civil disobedience in protectionist protests during the World Trade Organization's (WTO) ministerial meeting in Seattle last December. David Solnit, of the Direct Action Network, said that the Tacoma protests were to help prepare and to practice for protests against upcoming World Bank and International Monetary Fund meetings. According to the March 22 *Seattle Times*, the coalition "intended to use nonviolent tactics learned for WTO."

In this context, there was a likelihood the workers' action would face an unnecessary confrontation with the police that would have resulted in a setback for labor's struggle against Kaiser's lockout.

Sensing an opportunity to possibly victimize the picketing strikers and their supporters, Tacoma, county, and state authorities mobilized a massive show of police force around the Kaiser plant gate and throughout the area that weekend. Even though the actions were called off, Washington State Patrol troopers, Pierce County sheriff's deputies, and King County sheriff's officers joined Tacoma police on behalf of

## Striking housing workers hold rally in Washington state



Militant/Scott Breen

More than 300 people marched through Sunnyside, Washington, to support workers on strike against Valley Manufactured Housing. The April 8 "Solidarity Rally and Barbecue" was called to back the 130 members of WCIW (Western Council of Industrial Workers) Local 2739 who have been on strike since Aug. 25, 1999. Strikers and their families were joined by more than 100 Steelworkers locked-out by Kaiser Aluminum in Spokane, as well as meat packers from IBP and delegations from WCIW locals in Oregon, Idaho, and Washington.

Kaiser. SWAT teams and other police departments were standing by. School officials in Fife, a city just north of Tacoma where the Kaiser plant is located, closed schools March 27, falsely citing concerns for students' safety. That day's *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*

reported police made two arrests during the weekend, when a small number of protesters came to the Steelworker picket lines there.

Chris Rayson is a member of the United Transportation Union.

## Airline mechanics raise safety issues

BY JOHN NAUBERT

SEATTLE—A letter from 64 airline mechanics concerning safety violations by management at the Alaska Airlines maintenance base in Seattle became public knowledge March 16. The letter, addressed to the company's top management, said mechanics were being pressured to cut corners on maintenance work so the company could save money.

Among other things it charged that Robert Falla, one of the maintenance managers, has set a "pattern of behavior" where workers are "pressured, threatened, and intimidated" to put worn parts back on planes. Falla has since been put on paid leave.

This is a particularly sensitive question for Alaska Airlines bosses because of the death of 88 people aboard Alaska Flight 261, which experienced mechanical difficulties and plummeted into the ocean off the California coast.

In a move sure to target union members, the FBI, Department of Justice, and Department of Transportation are involved in a yearlong investigation of the company's maintenance practices at its Oakland, California, facility.

Alaska bosses interviewed the letter signers, which, according to one of the mechanics, was aimed at intimidating the workers. Present at the "interviews" were company lawyers, a representative of the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), a representative from the company's "Quality Assurance" program, and a representative of the Aircraft Mechanics Fraternal Association, which represents mechanics at the airline.

Falla, the maintenance manager, said through his attorney that he has "never knowingly allowed any aircraft to go into service that was not airworthy or failed any safety standard." While not releasing either the letter from mechanics or the contents of their interviews, the company claimed the interviews support Falla's position.

The company's response to the mechanics' letter on safety violations at the airline has not been to try to find out all the facts and correct these abuses. Instead, top management has tried to stop any of the mechanics from speaking out further. The March 29 *Seattle Times* had a front-page article titled, "Workers put heat on airline." The subtitle stated accurately: "Alaska's top executives meet with unions to quell criticism." The article said that two top company officers are "working with union leaders to try to head off further expressions of

a lack of confidence in the company's management."

An Alaska pilot, a member of the Air Line Pilots Association, has proposed a resolution that asks the pilots to "condemn the leadership of maintenance operations" and give their support to the mechanics who sent the letter. Other pilots have called for replacing senior executives and condemning management practices.

After receiving the letter expressing the mechanics' safety concerns, John Kelly, from Alaska's top management, conceded that Alaska is viewed "with a question mark." The company has now created a team of safety auditors and a position of vice president of safety. Some mechanics said that these moves are simply part of more cover-ups.

Safety is also a big discussion at Horizon Airlines, a commuter airline owned by Alaska. John Kelly is known to have cut his teeth at this company where he organized to defeat unionization drives.

On February 11 pilot Richard Stewart refused to fly a Fokker F-28 because of safety concerns. The company assigned another pi-

lot to the aircraft and suspended Stewart. Four days later another pilot grounded the same aircraft in Billings, Montana, because of vibrations. The engine was then replaced. Pilots have documented intermittent vibration problems with this plane 30 or more times since August.

On February 17, Horizon management demoted Stewart from his status as a "check airman," a designation the FAA and airline companies give top pilots.

George Bagley, the CEO of Horizon, maintained that Stewart, a union representative at the company, was under stress from struggling for two years to obtain a contract for the pilots at the company.

FAA spokesman Mitch Barker said regulators were aware of the vibration reports. An FAA inspector flew on the aircraft and reported, "It is not a safety problem. It is an annoyance," adding that despite some pilots' concerns, "we're the agency that oversees safety."

John Naubert is a member of International Association of Machinists Local 1103 in Seattle.

## Nassau County workers forced to take concessions

NEW YORK—Local 830 of the Civil Service Employees Association (CSEA), the largest municipal workers union in Long Island's Nassau County, approved a plan for workers to not be paid for one day out of 11 as part of a bailout scheme for the county.

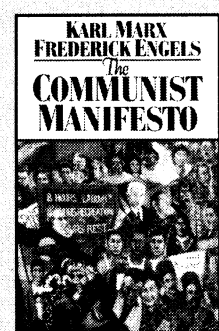
Workers will defer a total of 10 days of pay until they retire or quit, adding \$20 million to the county's coffers. County Executive Thomas Gulotta pushed through the measure as part of a plan to help make up a projected \$200 million shortfall in the county budget this year.

Gulotta threatened the 6,000 union members with layoffs if they did not agree to accept the concession.

Two days before the union vote, county officials backed off a proposal to drastically curtail bus routes after 300 workers, students, and others demonstrated and spoke at a hearing to protest the cuts. The county had planned to reduce its funding for the bus service by \$12.5 million.

"I certainly can't afford to take taxis," said Carol Witkin, a 52-year-old home-care worker who attended the hearing. "They cost more than I make in one hour for just one trip."

### The Communist Manifesto



Karl Marx and Frederick Engels

Founding document of the modern working-class movement, published in 1848. Explains why communism is derived not from preconceived principles but from facts and proletarian movements springing from the actual class struggle. \$3.95

Available from bookstores, including those listed on page 12

## Teamsters on strike in Iowa plan rally

BY RAY PARSONS

DES MOINES, Iowa—Some 200 members of Teamsters Local 147 at Smurfit-Stone Container Corporation here have been waging a strike since the end of December.

The unionists are organizing a solidarity rally for April 22. In a picket line interview strike leader Gary Anderson explained, "What good does it do to just sit here? We're sending out flyers to all union work sites. We want to have all those different unions here, and talk about how to build support."

Wages and health-care benefits are key demands. Anderson reported that 90 percent of the strikers were earning less than \$10 per hour before the walkout. "Jobs here pay \$4 to \$5 less per hour than comparable work at other plants," added another picket.

On March 10 the company presented its final offer to union negotiators. Under this proposal, like the initial one rejected by a vote of 162 to 1, wage increases still fail to cover hikes in health insurance costs the company demands workers must pay. In addition, Smurfit bosses refuse to commit in writing to limits on mandatory overtime. Pension benefits are another issue in the strike. Under the old agreement, workers

with 20 years of service receive only \$275 per month in retirement benefits.

On March 29 the strikers participated in a rally to support Teamsters on strike against Contract Transport Inc. The company hauls mail for the U.S. Postal Service.

The picket line at Smurfit-Stone is a lively place, with cars and trucks honking horns in support of the Teamsters almost constantly. Across the street is a college, the American Institute of Business. Anderson said that some of the students, "who don't have a union background," have harassed Local 147 strikers. Others, such as factory workers from General Electric attending the school for retraining, have come over to ask how they could help. On April 4 the union was scheduled to appear in court over a company-led effort to further restrict picketing at the struck plant.

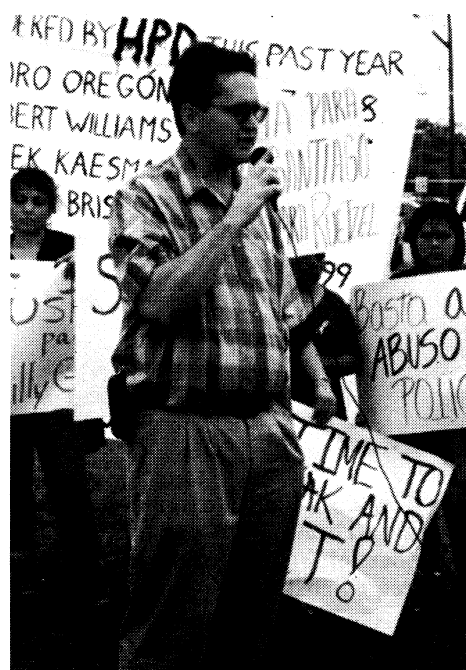
A striker summed up the situation: "The company is not talking because they're afraid what might happen at their other plants if we win."

Ray Parsons is a member of United Steelworkers of America Local 310 in Des Moines.

# Houston socialists petition for place on ballot

BY JACQUIE HENDERSON

HOUSTON—Supporters of the Socialist Workers campaign here have gathered more than 600 signatures to place two working people on the ballot for U.S. Congress. Socialist workers Dean Cook and Dave



Militant/Phil Duzinski  
Dave Ferguson, Socialist Workers candidate for congress in the 18th CD, spoke out at an anti-police brutality action in Houston March 11.

## TEAMSTERS

### Strike support rally Des Moines, Iowa

April 22, 12:00-2:00 p.m.  
Local 147 at Smurfit-Stone Container. Meet at plant, 2300 Bell Avenue, march to Grays Lake Park  
For more information, call Teamsters Local 147 at (515) 262-9711

## Join Steelworkers rallies

### Kansas City, MO

USWA Rally to support Local 1028 in Duluth, Minnesota, locked out at MEI. Sponsored by USWA Local 13, Tue., April 18, 4:00 p.m.  
USWA Local 13, 6801 Winner Road.  
For more information, call 816-231-4023

### Des Moines, Iowa

USWA Local 164 Solidarity Rally April 29, 12 Noon, Iowa State Fairgrounds  
2-year anniversary of strike against Titan Tire.

For more information, call 515-262-4935

### Georgetown, South Carolina

Tue., April 18, 4:00 p.m.  
Sponsored by USWA 7898 at GSI.

## SUPPORT FIGHTING FARMERS

Farmers are planning to "sound off" at field hearings conducted by the U.S. House Committee on Agriculture. Only farmers and ranchers will be permitted to testify.

### Woodland, California

May 1, 8:30 a.m.  
Heidrick Ag History Center.

### Sioux Falls, South Dakota

May 2, 8:30 a.m., Augustana College Humanities Building.

### Boise, Idaho

May 12, 10 a.m., City Council Building, Lesbois Room.

### Peoria, Illinois

May 13, 8:30 a.m., Peoria Civic Center, Exhibit Hall B.

For directions or to listen to the sessions on the Web visit:  
www.agriculture.house.gov

Ferguson are running in Districts 18 and 22 that encompass large working-class and farming areas in and around Houston city limits. Lea Sherman is the party's candidate for U.S. Senate.

Campaign supporters have taken their petitions to shopping centers, libraries, hardware stores, colleges, and factories. Dozens of people stopped by the table to sign up to get a fellow worker on the ballot, to browse through Pathfinder books offered for sale, and to buy copies of the publications that support the campaign—the *Militant* and *Perspectiva Mundial*.

Jason Schroeder, a student at San Jacinto college in Pasadena, signed to get Dean Cook on the ballot because he wants to see "revolutionary ideas raised in the campaign." He bought a copy of the Pathfinder book *Che Guevara Talks to Young People*, and convinced his friend, a high school student, to buy a subscription to the *Militant*. Schroeder also bought a copy of a pamphlet on the Young Socialists. "I want to help

make a revolution here," he explained.

Petitioners report that many people want to stop and talk about what one steelworker described as "these companies' total disregard for workers' lives." He explained that when he saw the news of the latest explosion at Phillips Petroleum in Pasadena March 27, "I knew exactly what had happened. It's just like the pipe mill where I work. These companies have cut back on maintenance to the point where our lives are threatened. They are only interested in their profits."

Many workers signing the petitions explain from their own experiences why they think workers need to organize to defend themselves in trade unions. One young K-Mart employee, signing up on his break, described the efforts of companies like K-Mart and Wal-Mart to keep out unions.

Dean Cook's union experience as one of more than 200 workers locked out by Crown Petroleum for more than four years is one that many workers signing want to discuss.

## MILITANT LABOR FORUMS

### ALABAMA

#### Birmingham

**The Fuel Crisis: Why are Prices Inflated and What Working People Can Do About It.** Speaker: Susan Lamont, Socialist Workers Party, member of United Steelworkers of America Local 2122. Fri., April 21, 7:30 p.m.  
**25th Anniversary of the End of the Vietnam War.** See excerpts from the PBS Film History of the Vietnam War. Fri., April 28, 7:30 p.m. Dinner: 6:30 p.m. Both events at 2232 Magnolia Ave. (Near Five Points South). Tel: (205) 323-3079.

### NEW YORK

#### Brooklyn

**Building an Anti-imperialist Youth Movement.** Speaker: Samantha Kern, member of Young Socialists National Committee, Socialist Workers Party. Sat., April 15, 7:30 p.m. 1068 Fulton St. 3rd Floor. Donation: \$4. Tel: (718) 398-7850.

### PENNSYLVANIA

#### Philadelphia

**What's Behind the High Cost of Fuel and What Can Workers and Farmers Do About it?** Speaker: Connie Allen, Socialist Workers Party, member of Union of Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Employees. Fri., April 28, 7:30 p.m. 711 E. Passyunk Ave. (Two blocks south of South St.). Donation: \$4. Tel: (215) 627-1237.

### Support the struggle to get the U.S. Navy out of Vieques, Puerto Rico

#### National Action

##### • Washington, Wed., April 19

##### • Vieques, April 19, 21 and 22

In front of the White House, 12:00 noon. One-year anniversary of killing of David Sanes in Vieques as a result of a Navy F-18 aircraft dropping a 500-pound bomb.

For more information, contact David Santiago at (202) 223-3915 ext. 308

Solidarity events will also be held in the following areas:

#### New York

April 15, 19

#### Camden, NJ

April 15, 19

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April 14, May 6

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April 18

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Several people have said they not only are familiar with the lockout but know other workers involved.

Two new subscribers this week work in a garment factory with Dave Ferguson, a sewing machine operator. Ferguson was featured in television coverage when he spoke as a candidate at a police brutality protest here last month. More than a dozen co-workers commented on the coverage. One sewing machine operator took petitions home to sign up her neighbors.

The petitioning effort will continue through the first week of May, and the candidates encourage anyone who can to help out in the effort to put the socialist alternative on the ballot.

## DEFEND Immigrant Rights!

### AFL-CIO meetings

In Atlanta April 29, Chicago May 6, and Los Angeles June 10.

### New York

Rally May 6 - Union Square, 1 p.m.  
Sponsor: National Coalition and Amnesty for Undocumented Immigrants.

### Jersey City, New Jersey

Forum for Dignity and Amnesty, Liberty State Park, April 27, 5 p.m.  
Sponsored by Laborers International Union.

## Report Back from Farmers' Trip to Cuba

### Boston

Speaker: Willie Head, Jr., member of Georgia Vegetable Producers Cooperative, Vice-President of Peoples Tribunal of Valdosta, Georgia.

### Thurs., April 20, 7:30 p.m.

Room 121 Academic Building, Roxbury Community College, Tremont St.

Sponsors: July 26 Coalition, Caribbean Focus Program of Roxbury Community College.

For more information, call (781)

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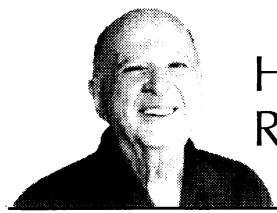
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**Burp**—Despite pledges to cut back on industrial air pollution, Canada's worst offenders are dirtier than ever. However, TransAlta, a



Harry Ring

major utility, has a plan for reducing "greenhouse" gases. Install scrubbers in their plants? Nope. The company owns a 500-year supply of coal, that would be expensive. What then? Beginning in Uganda,

the utility proposes to spray hay and other cattle feed with a product said to reduce bovine belching and flatulence. Which, they advise, will clear the air.

**And whiskers for Mickey?**—The Walt Disney theme parks have ended their 43-year ban on park employees having mustaches. Beards are still verboten, but sideburns are OK, providing they don't go below the ears.

**Some lives cheaper than others**—Denver Mayor Wellington Webb "brokered" a \$400,000 settlement between the city and the family of Ismael Mena. Mena was killed by Denver cops who stormed

into his home in a no-knock raid and had the wrong address. How did the city get off so cheaply? Struggling to support his family and save their farm in Mexico, Mena worked often in Denver without a legal green card.

**Labour gov't program?**—"The rich get richer faster than ever"—Headline in the *Times*. London.

**...meanwhile**—"Britain heads EU [European Union] for child poverty"—Headline, the *Times*, London.

**A warm welcome**—Cape Cod, Mass., now boasts an "affordable" housing complex. Questions appli-

cants must answer include: "If you are a single mother, how often does your significant other stay there?" "Have you ever been in trouble with the police?" "How do you feel about domestic violence?" "Do you own a vacuum cleaner?"

**Name was fitting**—The feds agreed to pay \$508 million to 1,100 qualified women who were systematically excluded from working as broadcasters for Washington's now defunct propaganda machine, the U.S. Information Agency.

**Slicing the baloney**—The Dept. of Agriculture is planning to trim food processing inspections from regular to "random." (Random vis-

its will keep the companies more on their toes, an official opined.) It will also trim 150 inspectors. Meanwhile, there are the ongoing recalls of contaminated food. And some that escape recall. Like, for instance, the 1998 outbreak at a Michigan frankfurter plant that killed 15 people and sickened at least 100 more.

**Thought for the week**—"If I lay them off for a week, I don't have to worry about someone else coming and saying, 'Come work for me.'" —Pierre Sleiman, a sweatshop operator who employs California prisoners to make T-shirts at minimum wage.

## Revolutionary capacities of toilers in Third World

The excerpt below is taken from "So Far from God, So Close to Orange County: The Deflationary Drag of Finance Capital," a talk presented at a regional socialist educational conference held in Los Angeles 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 ultimate showdowns are not over trade primarily, and never have been. Washington emerged from World War I as imperialism's great creditor, more than its great trader initially. Together with British and French finance capital, the U.S. rulers imposed onerous debts—packaged as "reparations"—on

### from the pages of *Capitalism's World Disorder*

their defeated German rivals totaling the equivalent in today's currency of more than \$400 billion, one and a half times Germany's entire national income in 1929.

What's more, Washington demanded that its "allies" pay off their wartime debts as well. London owed the U.S. rulers some \$90 billion in current dollars, about half its national income in 1929, and France owed the equivalent of about two-thirds of its national income. And when some voices in Washington floated the idea of forgiving these "inter-Allied" debts, President Calvin Coolidge spoke for bondholders the world over in snapping: "They hired the money, didn't they?" (In the end, not only Berlin, but London and Paris as well, defaulted on their wartime debts in the early 1930s.)

Today massive Third World debt remains the source both of enormous potential economic breakdowns of the world capitalist monetary system and of imperialist military interventions as well. The pressures that come down on bourgeois governments in the colonial world to devalue their currencies, or to impose sharp austerity measures in order to avoid devaluation, are enormous—wreaking havoc on the living standards of the toilers and broad layers of the middle classes.

Over the past fifteen years, a hammerlock has often been placed on the victims in the name of the International Monetary Fund and its "structural adjustment" programs. That seemingly appeared less crude than overt action by Wall Street backed by the Pentagon. But as we are seeing in Mexico, at some point in the capitalist crisis the niceties were bound to give way. Now it is the U.S. ruling class directly that is dictating the terms. The same Yankee bondholders and bankers who so eagerly thrust the loans on their Mexican "colleagues" to begin with will now demand a program of "frugality" and further inroads for U.S. finance capital into Mexico's national patrimony. And to pay off the new debts, there will be further loans down the line—and the cycle will start all over again. This is the plan, the anticipated pattern.

This is always the pattern. That is why what will "develop" and "emerge" in today's world

are the conditions for new debt balloons and new collapses. This is the outcome of the lawful functioning of parasitic imperialism. This is the result of the rivalry among the ruling families of finance capital to intensify their exploitation of the toilers the world over, increase their market share, collect on their debts, and enhance their profit rates. There is no plot. There is no mystery to it; it is perfectly comprehensible.

#### Struggles engendered by capitalism

What is less comprehensible to the rulers—and more comprehensible to workers—are the struggles these workings of capitalism will engender. What's more, this imperialist reality is also a damned good reason for the toilers to overthrow those who benefit from and defend the capitalist system.

The leadership of the Cuban revolution had absorbed the political implications of this reality in the 1950s. That helped make it possible for them to lead the workers and farmers to power in 1959 and organize the toilers to uproot capitalist property relations over the next two years. In 1962 Cuba's communist leadership, based on their own experiences, reaffirmed this fundamental lesson in a revolutionary manifesto for the Americas known as the Second Declaration of Havana. "Experience shows that in our nations [the national bourgeoisie], even when its interests are in contradiction to those of Yankee imperialism, has been incapable of confronting it," the declaration said, "for the national bourgeoisie is paralyzed by fear of social revolution and frightened by the cry of the exploited masses."<sup>1</sup>

The Second Declaration of Havana is a call by the leadership of the Cuban revolution to toilers throughout the Americas to confront what faces them everywhere. It explains why the only class that can point a way forward is the working class. That is because workers are the only class with no interest in exploitation of any kind—and with no stake in trying to make capitalism work. In fact, when our class gets suckered into trying to help the capitalists make their system work, the bosses always make sure that every step along the way is to their advantage and to our detriment.

So, the exploiters do have a nightmare. The nightmare is what began happening in Chiapas exactly one year ago, when peasants and rural workers said no to the accelerated pace at which they were being driven off the land.

The nightmare is what happened in Argentina, also about one year ago, when workers in the northern province of Santiago del Estero, seemingly out of the blue, rose up and took over government buildings for several days to protest that they had not been paid since the previous August. Smaller explosions then developed elsewhere in that region and in the province of Tucumán over the next month or so.<sup>2</sup> To the Argentine capitalists, these rebellions were completely unexpected. In fact, however, they were the product of the buildup of unbearable conditions over a period of years.

And if that is what the capitalists got a taste of in early 1994, when Argentina,

<sup>1</sup> The *Second Declaration of Havana* (New York: Pathfinder, 1962, 1994). Pathfinder published a new French edition in 1995 as well, entitled *La deuxième déclaration de La Havane*, and a Spanish edition, *La segunda declaración de La Habana*, in 1997.



Workers in Córdoba, Argentina, use fireworks and drums in August 1995 protest. Actions against government and employer attacks occurred in many provinces that year.

Mexico, and Chile were still being heralded as the trinity of the market's miracles in the Americas, then we can wager they are worried even more about what is coming in the months and years ahead.

The Santiago del Estero events reminded Argentina's rulers of an even worse nightmare. That one exploded in 1969 when rising workers struggles, backed by students, culminated in a general strike in the country's second largest city, Rosario, and in a massive working-class uprising in the

big industrial city of Córdoba. The *Cordobazo*, as that explosion came to be known, opened a prerevolutionary situation in the Southern Cone of South America. The capitalist rulers only succeeded in snuffing it out through savage military coups in Bolivia in 1971, Chile in 1973, and Argentina in 1976.

Anybody who was alive and politically aware in those times can never forget what happened, as the working class rose in major cities, not just in one country but in several—especially if you had comrades and knew revolutionists in Argentina and elsewhere in South America. For revolutionary-minded workers, such events confirm what our class is capable of and what we know is coming sooner or later in every country of the world. But for the capitalist rulers throughout Latin America, that memory is a recurring nightmare.

Because equally as lawful and inevitable as the workings of capitalism and its sudden breakdowns is the resistance, mobilization, and organization of its gravediggers produced by that very social system.

## —25 AND 50 YEARS AGO—



April 25, 1975

"The 53,000 people that will be in Kennedy Stadium are going to be dwarfed by the crowd of people outside."

That's how a spokesperson for the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America (ACWA) summed up the massive turnout expected for the April 26 "Rally for Jobs Now," called by the Industrial Union Department of the AFL-CIO. The rally will be held in Washington, D.C., and organizers are readying loudspeakers outside to carry the speeches to the overflow crowd.

The Amalgamated is one of several major industrial unions going all out to bring their East Coast members to the national demonstration.

"We will have at least twenty-five to fifty buses coming from New York," the ACWA spokesperson said. The call for a national jobs protest has been met with such an enthusiastic response, he added, that "I can't really give you an exact figure for all the regions, because there's more every time I check."

"It is particularly necessary for the Amalgamated to have a large turnout," the union officers write. "Our industry has been hit hard. We are currently suffering from an

18.8 percent unemployment rate, and there are no signs that the situation will improve."



April 24, 1950

Students at Penn State College are mobilizing for the defense of Dr. Lee Lorch, who was recently dismissed without explanation from his position as Assistant Professor of Mathematics. Dr. Lorch is a popular instructor, a capable teacher, and a leader on this campus in NAACP work, of which organization he is cochairman.

Last year he was dismissed from CCNY with no explanation, but it is an open secret that both dismissals came because of opposition from high quarters to Dr. Lorch's leadership in the fight against Metropolitan Life Insurance Company's policy of Jim Crow in Stuyvesant Town, New York City.

It had come to light that Lorch has permitted a Negro family to move into his own Stuyvesant Town apartment as guests.

At a time when all traditional civil liberties are fast slipping away, the defense of Lorch is more than resistance to the brutal persecution of the Jim Crow Metropolitan Life Insurance Company.

# Support janitors' fight for justice

Building workers in Los Angeles and New York are engaged in an important fight to strengthen their union, win modest wage increases, and take a stand for the dignity of all working people. Unions in Los Angeles are setting an important example of solidarity with the members of the Service Employees International Union on strike against 18 companies that contract janitorial and other building maintenance work.

Strong backing by the labor movement, students, and organizations of the oppressed can send an unmistakable message to the bosses that they should agree to the workers' just demands.

The fact that these workers, many of them immigrants, have fought their way into the union, built up their organization, and waged a confident and effective strike speaks volumes about the strengthening of the working class in the United States. It also augers well for the potential for the forces starting to come together among proletarians to chart a broad social course for all working people.

The janitors' fight illustrates the problems the employers face, despite the bosses' successes over the past 25 years in pushing back the unions, imposing steep concessions, enforcing a brutal intensification of labor, and seeking, through use of immigrant labor, to divide the working class and create a humbled and docile section of the workforce subject to conditions of second-class citizens.

Instead, what the employers have brought into being is a stronger working class, one with experiences and traditions of struggle from every continent and country around the globe. While indeed facing conditions of super-exploitation, harassment, and deportation by the immigra-

tion police, and racist abuse, immigrant workers have fought back against each, asserted their humanity, and forged union and other organizations to defend their rights.

The struggles in Los Angeles and New York demonstrate the degree to which questions around unions, police brutality, democratic rights and political space, and national oppression are intertwined today. More and more those fighting in one struggle see a common ally with those who step forward in another; fighters welcome each other to their battles against a common enemy. Immigrant workers in the fields, meatpacking plants, garment shops, chicken factories, construction firms, and trucking companies are pushing forward and strengthening the unions.

The building workers' struggle is taking place amidst a rise in class-struggle actions across the country. Steelworkers are building on the success of the 4,000-strong rally to back locked-out union members at AK Steel; a strike by 2,500 Machinists against Lockheed Martin; a rally called by the United Mine Workers to defend health care for miners and their families; speakouts being organized by farmers at upcoming government hearings; and more. These actions are the tip of the iceberg of the thousands of shop floor skirmishes and conflicts inside the plants, mines, and mills every day across the country.

Unionists who have been part of struggles and are looking for more fights, union locals that have come out stronger from recent battles and have experience and numbers, and farmers taking to the streets to defend their land and right to farm, can all weigh in the balance in this new round of strikes and actions, with union power and a growing alliance of workers and farmers.

# Toilers stand up in Latin America

A continuing series of mass protests—from rallies and marches to blockades and strikes—is sweeping across Latin America. The imperialists, first and foremost those in the United States, see the continent as a source of super profits, cheap labor, and inexpensive raw material. In their arrogance they simply push as far as they can to squeeze every possible cent out of the labor of workers and peasants, pillaging their national patrimonies, and leaving human devastation in their wake.

What a "surprise" it is for them to "learn," as U.S. Treasury Secretary Lawrence Summers and officials of the Inter-American Development Bank did in New Orleans recently, that the gap in income and wages and the percentage of the population living in poverty has remained unchanged in two decades. They expressed worries over these facts—not for the human misery caused by capitalist exploitation and imperialist plunder, but exactly because the rising struggles and instability unfolding in the region threaten imperialism.

In Ecuador, Bolivia, Costa Rica, Brazil, and elsewhere, workers and peasants are joining together to prevent themselves from being pushed over the very precipice of existence. Many, as in Ecuador and Bolivia, are seizing government buildings and facing down shows of force by police and military units deployed against them. Social polarization is deepening, giving every government, even ones with

a "popular" mandate, only a temporary existence.

The continental breadth of the actions, their size and militancy, and the fact that this is not the ebbing of a tide of struggle but the coming forward of those waters, should give fighters, unionists, and young people in North America the opposite reaction to that of Summers and his class.

What is stunning is the manifestation of what capitalism and imperialism in Latin American has brought into being: not victims, but tens of millions of workers in the cities, allied with peasants in every country, who have economic and social power greater than their class enemies arrayed against them. They are clearly fighting the same enemy as workers and farmers in North America, and are allies in a common struggle.

It is one reason why the Cuban revolution stands out today as a mortal enemy of imperialism. The fact that a socialist revolution exists in the Caribbean and Latin America shows a different course for those hundred of millions throughout the hemisphere. It is a threat to the U.S. empire and the neocolonial regimes across the continent. It shows that fighting to replace the capitalist government with one of workers and farmers, and charting a road toward the construction of socialism, is not only a good idea, but is something that is both necessary and possible to do.

# More reasons to get the 'Militant'

Each week supporters of the *Militant* and *Perspectiva Mundial* have more reasons and opportunities to make winning new subscribers to the paper an integral part of their involvement in struggles of working people and youth. Reports in this week's issue point out how the subscription drive can be a real aid to the efforts by socialist workers and youth to meet others who are looking to join the resistance, extend solidarity, and build a revolutionary leadership today.

As working people in Asia, Latin America, Europe, Africa, and North America stand up and fight, their struggles reinforce each other. Paper, transportation, and chemical workers in Finland, for example, are saying "No!" to the expectations and pressures from the bosses to moderate wage demands across Europe. Their struggles are sure to give confidence to steelworkers in Germany, auto workers in Britain, and health-care workers in France,

who face layoffs, cutbacks, and concession demands. The show of union solidarity in Finland—extending as well to Sweden—in the latest round of labor struggles is something that the bosses hate to see, and aim to cover up.

Within the major imperialist powers the battles being waged in the semi-colonial countries have a deep impact. The living connections and experiences from workers in the United States to every country and every struggle, to every industry and every region, means that resistance in one part of the world gives an infusion of confidence back into the sinews of the bastion of imperialism.

Making a real international effort over the next six weeks of the drive will mean examples like those reported this week can be multiplied across several continents, strengthening the fighting vanguard of working people, and advancing the construction of communist parties and youth organizations.

# Putin builds up military, backs market 'reforms'

Continued from page 9

ing-class resistance to the moves to sweep away the remaining gains of the October 1917 Bolshevik revolution had exacerbated political instability.

The Yeltsin government sought to implement the austerity program prescribed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), which included measures to eliminate the free child-care centers and health clinics; ending price subsidies of food, rent, and other necessities; and deep cuts in education, pension, health, and other hard-earned entitlements.

Yeltsin was pushed back time after time from any serious attempt to pursue this course. Miners and other workers refused to allow these entitlements and the social relations they represent to be dismantled without waging massive battles to defend them. It is only through those social gains that working people have been able to survive for months and sometimes years without being paid.

The Russian Communist Party led by Zyuganov seeks to tap into workers' resistance to make electoral gains. It is a remnant of the Stalinist murder machine that previously ruled the Soviet Union and shattered in countless shards in the early 1990s.

The disintegration of the bureaucratic layers or caste in Russia included abandoning any pretense to speak for advancing communism. "If you read the Communist [Party] program you won't find a single word about communism there," said Aleksandr Prokhanov, an adviser to Zyuganov. He said the Communist Party head is "becoming a velvet social democrat."

Zyuganov has dropped calls for renationalization and similar platforms from his 1996 presidential campaign. In fact some branches of the Communist Party youth league and one of its main allies in the parliament supported Putin's candidacy.

## Declining living standards

The Russian economy shrank almost every year during the last decade, with output plummeting more than 50 percent during those 10 years. The country's infrastructure continues to decay, including hospitals, schools, roads, and railways. The population has decreased by 6 million people over the last decade. The life expectancy for men has dropped to 58 years.

Millions of workers are not being paid. Putin said last December that total back wages amounted to \$252 million. In the coal industry wage arrears are among the worst in the country. At the same time, tens of thousands of miners have lost their jobs. At the former state coal enterprise Rostovugol, the workforce has declined from 100,000 to 28,000.

In the face of worsening economic conditions, workers throughout the country have waged strikes and other protest actions to demand payment of back wages. Last January some 15,000 teachers in Shelabolikha and Altai demonstrated for wage arrears. In one region east of Shelabolikha teachers organized a two-week sit-in at a government office in December.

Meanwhile, the Kremlin is confronting flare-ups from Chechens fighting the Russian occupation forces, which have destroyed most of the guerrilla bases. Despite Moscow's overwhelming firepower and declarations of victory against Chechen rebel forces, thousands of guerrillas are still fighting in Chechnya. On March 29 Chechen fighters ambushed a convoy of Russian forces, killing 43 soldiers and policemen. The next week Chechens attacked Russian police commandos in Argun.

The Russian government also faces difficulty convincing Russian working-class youth to join its military operations in Chechnya. More than 2,000 soldiers have been killed and 6,000 wounded in the war. "I regret to say that our big industrial centers and regions produce 60 percent of the draft dodgers. These are Moscow, St. Petersburg, and Nizhny Novgorod," said Russian general Vladislav Putilin, chief of the mobilization department of the Russian General Staff. "For the first time in four years, the armed services will experience a shortage of manpower."

## Correction

In the article on Irish farmers in the March 20 issue, Jim Carmichael was wrongly identified as a leader of the Northern Ireland Agricultural Producers Association (NIAPA). He is an employee of the association. The decision to blockade the meat processing plants was made by a number of farmers, not by the NIAPA.

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# GE workers hold first rally in contract fight

BY JOHN SARGE

LOUISVILLE, Kentucky—Hundreds of workers from General Electric (GE) factories across six states rallied here April 8 as part of their fight for a contract with the electronic products giant.

The workers, representing eight unions, gathered in the hall of International Union of Electrical Workers (IUE) Local 761, which represents more than 5,000 workers at the company's sprawling Appliance Park complex here. This was the first rally leading up to the June 25 expiration of the contract between GE and 14 unions that make up the Coordinated Bargaining Committee (CBC).

Workers at the rally explained that key issues in the negotiations are GE's continuing drive to downsize, and the paltry pensions retirees receive. While the bosses earned \$10.7 billion in 1999, making it the first company in history to admit profits exceeding \$10 billion in one year, there is no indication the company will reverse its massive job cuts of the last two decades.

In 1980, 285,000 people worked for the company in the United States. By 1998 that number had been almost halved, to 144,000. In 1982 the CBC represented about 140,000

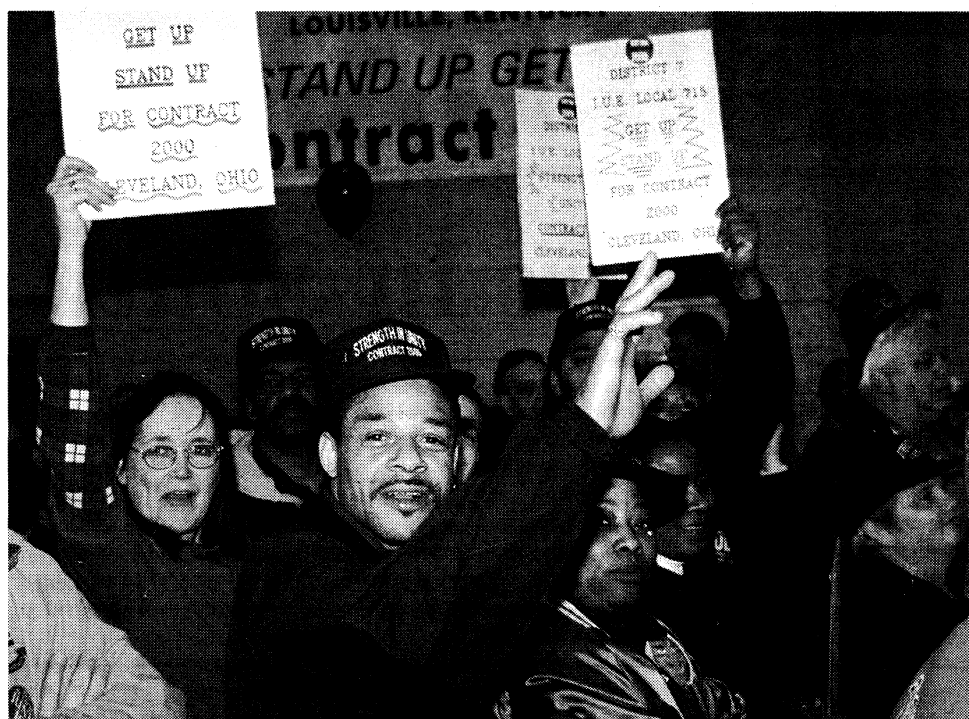
workers, today that number has been slashed to barely 40,000. The Appliance City complex has seen 13,000 union jobs disappear.

While the pension fund produces massive profits for the employers, contributing \$1 billion to the bosses' bottom line last year, workers retire at poverty levels. After working 30 to 40 years, the average pension for a union member is only \$8,400 a year.

Patte Dillen, a member of UE Local 506, which filled two buses for the trip from Erie, Pennsylvania, explained that the demand for early retirement has to be combined with the hiring and training of new workers. "The person with the lowest service in our plant is 10 years," she said. Workers at the Erie complex have seen 6,000 jobs disappear.

Five more rallies are scheduled. The IUE is holding events in Salem, Virginia, April 29, and in Ravenna, Ohio, May 7. International Association of Machinists Local 912 is hosting a rally in Cincinnati May 20 and the UE is organizing a rally in Erie, Pennsylvania, June 3. The CBC is planning a Contract 2000 Rally June 10 in Ft. Wayne, Indiana.

*John Sarge is a member of United Auto Workers Local 900.*



Militant/John Sarge

Electrical workers rally April 8 in Louisville, Kentucky, in fight for a new contract.

## Flight attendants protest firing

BY BILL SCHEER

MINNEAPOLIS—Northwest Airlines flight attendants and their supporters participated in a candlelight picket line March 30

to protest the firing of Diane LaPorte Klingeman.

The action was organized on short notice by co-workers of Klingeman and built primarily by word of mouth.

Klingeman, a Teamsters union member with 22 years at the company, was fired for what a company spokesperson said were "inconsistencies" in her explanation related to calling off sick on New Year's Eve, even though she has a doctors note verifying that she went to the emergency room.

Klingeman had participated in the fight for a contract, including handing out literature and honoring a union request for members to refuse optional, extra-duty flying assignments.

Teamsters Local 2000 represents the Northwest flight attendants and is fighting the firing through arbitration.

"What is the message Northwest is sending us?" said Andrew Collis, a Minneapolis-based flight attendant. "If it can happen to her it can happen to anyone. It is an attack against all of us."

The company filed a lawsuit against Local 2000 claiming it organized a sickout New Year's Eve as part of the effort to get a contract. The union strongly denies it. The suit is pending while negotiations for a new contract continue.

"The company is trying to intimidate us," said another flight attendant. "But it isn't working. We are not afraid, we are angry."

At a brief rally of 40 people before the picket line, flight attendant Shelly Worley announced plans for ongoing actions, including giving out flyers to the travelling public.

She said that the picket line was not organized or sanctioned by the union. Five members of the International Association of Machinists and the Aircraft Mechanics Fraternal Association at Northwest Airlines participated in the protest.

## Massachusetts nurses: 'Patients before profits'

BY SARAH ULLMAN

WORCESTER, Massachusetts—Five hundred nurses on strike for a contract with the Tenet Healthcare Corp. here are waging a fight to defend health care against the cost-cutting drive of the for-profit corporation.

The company bought St. Vincent's Hospital in 1977 and began reducing the nursing staff through attrition and use of non-licensed personnel. The nurses organized into the Massachusetts Nurses Association (MNA) and have been fighting to win their first contract for the past two years.

In the midst of lengthy negotiations, they carried out informational picketing and leafleting to explain to the patients and public that the heart of their dispute is the struggle by nurses to maintain standards of patient care. One of the most popular picket sign

says, "Patients before profits!"

On the morning of March 31, after negotiations broke down and the strike began, Pat Stanton, a surgical intensive care nurse with 27 years, said in an interview, "The only problem is mandatory overtime. We volunteer to work overtime in a crisis, but we can't do it all the time; they need to hire staff."

A delivery room nurse at a prestrike rally the night before, pointed out it is hard to be as sharp on the job as needed toward the end of a second consecutive eight-hour shift, to, for example, resuscitate newborn babies. "We're here for the patients," said one nurse.

The rally packed a nearby American Legion hall with hundreds of nurses and supporters. Some 30 unionists and health-care professionals expressed their solidarity. Among the union representatives were the

Teamsters, the Worcester Building Trades, the United Auto Workers, the carpenters and teachers unions, Steelworkers, the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, firefighters, and the Worcester-Framingham Central Labor Council.

Solidarity statements were also read from the American Nurses Association, with which the striking MNA is affiliated, and the California Nurses Association, where the company is headquartered.

Barry Adams, a nurse who has fought back after being fired for protesting the consequences to patient care of short staffing at another hospital, listed the huge number of tasks nurses do in eight hours and, to heavy applause, said, "We do too much to be forced to turn around and do it all over again!" Public health and other nurses gave support, as did a St. Vincent's technician, whose job is unorganized, and a doctor, who has practised there for 41 years.

Fewer than 10 percent of the 535 nurses in the bargaining unit have crossed the picket lines. The company has brought in strike-breakers hired by the U.S. Nursing Corp. of Denver.

Despite this limited staffing during the strike, hospital management went ahead with plans to move to a new \$215 million facility, transporting the patients on the fourth day of the strike.

*Sarah Ullman is a member of United Transportation Union Local 1473. Andrea Morell and Brock Satter contributed to this article.*

## Workers rally for union recognition

BY EVAN ROBERTS

SYLACAUGA, Alabama—About 100 people participated in a spirited rally here March 25 to support workers fighting for union recognition at a plant owned by the Imerys corporation.

Participants in the rally included workers from several Imerys-owned plants in Georgia and Alabama, where workers are fighting to win or keep union recognition. This included 50 unionists from Drybranch, Georgia, who believe they will face a fight when

their contract expires later this year.

One of the speakers was Fred Higgs, general secretary of the International Federation of Chemical, Energy, Mine and General Workers Unions, an umbrella organization of unions in different countries. Higgs said that Imerys workers in England, France, and other countries supported the struggles in Alabama and Georgia.

*Evan Roberts is a member of United Auto Workers Local 1155.*

## LETTERS

### Honoring Tim Rigby

Tim Rigby, a longtime supporter of the communist movement in the United Kingdom, died suddenly here March 29. He was 45 years old.

Rigby was an enthusiastic participant in the Pathfinder reprint project, convinced that the ideas and lessons contained within the books he was helping to produce are a key contribution to the coming struggles of workers and farmers to overthrow capitalism. He also brought great energy to the task of distributing Pathfinder books and the *Militant*, at work, colleges, picket lines, and through commercial outlets.

Rigby was born in Kenya, where during his early years he witnessed the brutality of colonial rule. Later he followed the massive struggles against it throughout the African continent, which inspired his political development.

Witnessing firsthand the Nicaraguan revolution on a visit there in 1985 was another factor that convinced him of the capacity of work-

ers and peasants, on a mass scale, to struggle to reorganize society, and won him to the communist movement.

Rigby went on to become a founding member of the Communist League in the United Kingdom in 1988. He was a rail worker in Manchester for many years, and participated in strikes and other struggles, introducing many workers to the *Militant* and Pathfinder books along the way.

Rigby's companion, Linzi Rigby, is encouraging those who knew and worked with Tim to donate money to Pathfinder, to ensure the continuation of the production of the books that were so much part of his life.

*Debbie Delange and Anne Howie Manchester, England*

### Boeing strike

The *Militant's* coverage of the SPEEA strike against Boeing was very good. Inside the company and out, people were surprised by the unity and tenacity of the strikers. They beat back a concession con-

tract and strengthened their union and unionism at Boeing.

The company pushed SPEEA members into the actions they took. For the entire previous year and a half life at Boeing was like a death march with thousands getting laid off.

Raises were, in effect, curtailed or very small; openings for promotions were very limited; jobs were doubled up; campaigns to "lean" the work place dominated; Boeing stepped up its "metrics" campaigns to increase measurement of everyone's productivity. This coincided with additional mergers with smaller companies like military contractors Rocketdyne and Hughes.

While this was being carried out by management, more and more scandalous news articles appeared in the papers about defective aircraft.

It appeared people were just going along with Boeing's way without learning anything and without trying to find ways to resist it. It appeared that Boeing had pulled big

layers over to agreeing with its profit-drive plan. It appeared that they had made people into "part owners" by tying their retirement savings plans into the stock market. The SPEEA strike helped bring out what went unsaid and was covered up at Boeing.

SPEEA beat back a steep concession contract. The members strengthened their union by showing through example that solidarity and struggle can bring gains for the majority. It is a good example of what to do and it got a lot of worldwide publicity.

*J.K. Seattle, Washington*

### Dublin and Orange Order

As a supporter of civil liberties for everyone, I am appreciative of the absolute necessity to protest assaults on our inalienable right to express our thoughts and speak our minds.

Be that as it may, one would have thought that people in responsible positions of political authority would appreciate the distinction

between respecting the right of another to free expression and virtual endorsement of the ideas of the person or group in question.

Is there any wonder then that informed people in Ireland and in the Irish diaspora are aghast at the invitation given by the mayor of Dublin, Mary Freehill, to an organization that has so much in common with the American Ku Klux Klan to use the fair streets of Dublin for a march and parade?

That organization is the Orange Order, which claims the Rev. Ian Paisley as one of its more prominent members.

*Barbara Fink Menasha, Wisconsin*

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

**Please keep your letters brief. Where necessary they will be abridged. Please indicate if you prefer that your initials be used rather than your full name.**

## Marchers in South Carolina demand: 'take down the Confederate battle flag'

BY MARY ANN SCHMIDT  
AND LAUREN HART

COLUMBIA, South Carolina—Hundreds of residents swelled the ranks of a march to demand the removal of the Con-

federate battle flag from the dome of the statehouse here April 6.

The march began five days earlier in Charleston, and ended in a rally of nearly 2,000 people on the south steps of the state

capitol. A simultaneous rally by supporters of the Confederate flag drew about 300 people on the north side of the building.

The 120-mile march was called by Charleston mayor Joseph Riley, Jr., and other state politicians under the slogan "Get in step with the people of South Carolina."

The flag has become a central issue of debate since the NAACP began a tourist boycott of the state in January. An overwhelmingly working-class crowd of 50,000 poured into the streets of Columbia on Martin Luther King Day January 17 to press for the flag's removal and demand South Carolina recognize the civil rights movement with a holiday tribute to King.

The battle flag of the slaveocracy was raised by the state government here in 1962 in opposition to the advancing Black civil rights movement, and the legislature has refused to lower it since. Polarization over the flag was clearly seen along the march route. During the next-to-last day of the march, a dozen confederate flag flyers in several pickup trucks and cars repeatedly waited for the march to pass by and then drove past the march to wait again.

"Heritage, not hatred," "Liberal Hypocrites—What about Diversity," read some of their signs. One of the trucks had a bumper sticker backing ultrarightist politician Patrick Buchanan in his effort to be the Reform Party's presidential candidate.

Gail Jones, a manager from a convenience store who is Black, came out to the march on Sunday, and after seeing so many white people there for the cause said, "I had to stay to represent my people. The mayor gave us an opportunity and we have to use it."

She marched the entire 120 miles.

A wide variety of participants with ranging views attended the rally, including some who were part of a protest for the first time. Mary Thompson, a 58-year-old retiree, said, "I heard the march was in a slump so I had to come out." Referring to the civil rights movement, she said, "I had little kids then, now I can march."

Bob Jenkins, an athletics coach for 38 years, said, "I have deep roots in the Southern tradition, my wife's family were plantation owners. This is about being fair to our brothers and sisters. In 1962 they raised the flag to commemorate 100 years of the Civil War, but it went up for other reasons."

Stanard Johnson, a 50-year-old groundskeeper at the state university, said it was his first time doing something like this. He came to make the point that this is a federal issue. "This flag is an extreme version of capitalism. It allowed a few people to gain a foothold and exploit the rest of the state."

Along the walk, some participants described their experiences with racist discrimination and why they feel the flag must come down. Warren, who only gave his first name, a 35-year-old paramedic, commented, "We had a barbecue over the weekend because we're not buying Maurice's BBQ." Outside Maurice's restaurant on the outskirts of Columbia was a very large professional banner supporting Patrick Buchanan for president, and to the side of the restaurant was a homemade sign on cardboard that read, "NAACP Retarded People."

One of four Black paramedics out of 175 in a county near Columbia, he described an incident of racist harassment from people he was sent to help. Warren came to march against the flag "because when I was a little boy it always represented hatred. In 1972 when schools were desegregated I always had to fight the little white boys."

Terry Parker, a 47-year-old member of the Steelworkers union, pointed out he would never have the job he does now without the civil rights movement. "I could've been a janitor," he said, "but not a maintenance mechanic." Like Warren, he pointed out it is still a fight to be treated as an equal.

Benjamin Sellers, a longtime activist for civil rights, said, "The civil rights movement took quite a while to get to South Carolina, but it has finally gotten here." Jackie Brown, a 24-year-old Black woman, said her great-grandfather was lynched under the Confederate battle flag.

The brief program at the capitol featured South Carolina governor James Hodges, who has called for moving the flag from atop the dome to a statue of Confederate general Wade Hampton on the statehouse grounds. The mayors of Charleston and Columbia also addressed the rally. Participants snatched up "Take it down" bumper stickers to wear that day and extra ones for their vehicles.

Many students from the nearby University of South Carolina campus and Benedict College joined in the rally. Some said they decided to go on the spot when they heard about the action, and about the pro-flag rally.

Eric Lee, a 20-year-old student from the University of North Carolina, came with a few other students because of the importance of the issue. "The flag divides, and they need to work together to improve the quality of life for all Carolinians," she said. Several high school students from Charleston said they took a day off to attend. After the "Get in step" rally ended, clumps of young protesters circled the building to confront the Confederate flag-wavers with handmade signs and "Take it down" stickers. Heated debate continued for a couple of hours.

As we go to press, the South Carolina Senate voted to remove the Confederate flag from the Capitol dome and place a smaller version elsewhere on the statehouse grounds. The same day the House passed a bill to enact a Martin Luther King, Jr. holiday there; the only state left that has no day to honor King.

### Michigan protests oppose cop brutality



Militant/Jay Paradiso

One hundred high school and college students, as well as workers, marched against recent police brutality in Kalamazoo, Michigan, April 7th. March organizers said that it was the first ever march against police brutality in Kalamazoo.

## Farmers speak in Florida on Cuba trip

BY MARY ANN SCHMIDT

WILDWOOD, Florida—"Many farmers believe that private land ownership gives you security and stability, but in reality it's a noose around our neck: we live in the constant shadow of foreclosure," Karl Butts explained to a meeting of 30 farmers and rural workers here April 2. "But in Cuba use of the land takes precedence over ownership of the land. And there are no capitalists waiting to gouge you when you buy products you need to farm."

Karl Butts, a small vegetable farmer from Plant City, Florida, and Gladys Williams, a farmer and member of the South Georgia Vegetable Producers Cooperative in Dixie, Georgia, gave a reportback and slide show on their February fact-finding trip to Cuba. This tour, hosted by the National Association of Small Farmers of Cuba (ANAP), also included four other farmers from Georgia and New Jersey.

The meeting was held in Royal, the rural Black community in Wildwood, which is about 40 miles south of Ocala in central Florida. The fund-raising dinner and meeting was organized by Francis Sesler, wife of Clyde Sesler, a watermelon farmer. Sesler had helped to organize a meeting last year for Gary Grant, president of the Black Farmers and Agriculturalists Association, and Augusto Oslen of the Movement of Landless Rural Workers of Brazil. The Royal Community Center where the meeting was held used to be a segregated elementary school until it was desegregated in 1969.

The audience was overwhelmingly Black, with a half dozen or so small farmers in attendance. Many more in the audience used to farm but were driven from the land, in part by the U.S. government's racist policies and discriminatory practices.

A number of these ex-farmers now work in local factories, or as independent truck drivers. Many are part of a class-action civil lawsuit brought by Black farmers against the U.S. government as part of the fight to keep their land.

Nelson Brooks, Jr., used to farm and now works in a nonunion juice-processing plant in Dade City. Before the meeting he said, "When they give you money, they give you just enough to fail. They give you enough to make a down payment on a tractor, but not enough for fuel. Enough to plant, but not enough to harvest. The USDA has organized a systematic theft of Black farmland."

### Backbone of the revolution

Butts and Williams showed 70 slides of their fact-finding tour, which presented an overview of the Cuban revolution of 1959, and showed the different advances and challenges facing Cuban farmers, cooperatives, and urban farms today. "The rule of the rich was replaced with the rule of the urban and rural workers and farmers," Butts said.

The first slides showed the triumph of the revolution and an early photograph of a peasant receiving the title to his land. "Peasants provided a backbone for the revolution. For them it was like a watershed event as material resources were concentrated in the countryside for the first time."

The fight for agrarian reform was linked to the fight against institutional racism from the start. Among the farmers who received title to their land as part of that measure "was a black woman," Williams explained. "They don't view each other as black or white, but just as Cuban. It made me feel good to see so many black people in Cuba sitting behind desks making decisions."

"None of what the Cuban people have accomplished could have occurred without making a socialist revolution," Butts said. "And they couldn't have made a revolution without a strong alliance between city workers and rural toilers."

The question of ownership of the land was addressed during the discussion by Irving Forester, leader of the Orlando Committee to Free the Puerto Rican Political Prisoners. "Never give up your land," he said. "Our land was taken. Our whole nation was taken."

You don't give up your land. You don't get your land from your fathers, you borrow it from your children. And you owe it to them."

To a rousing ovation, he said, "We're right down the road in Orlando, just give us a call if you ever need any help or political solidarity." Forester, along with three other members of the Orlando Committee, brought flyers publicizing a National Day of Solidarity with the people of Vieques on April 19, the one-year anniversary of the killing of David Sanes by a 500-pound bomb dropped by the U.S. Navy in a practice maneuver on the island.

### 'Have to make revolution'

Cozette Sesler, another younger worker, said in the discussion that he agreed with the "need to make a revolution." He asked, "How could it be possible when you have to go through the government and the big corporations? They are not on our side. How do you unite people to make a revolution against them?"

Williams responded, "Well, I don't know exactly how yet, so I'll have to get back to you on that. All I know is we have to do it. How many people were at the affirmative action march in Tallahassee last month? I was there and that was a good example of people uniting to make political progress."

Williams described how the Atlanta Network on Cuba worked together with the Georgia farmers to raise money by having yard sales and other events so that they could get to Cuba. She said they would do that for anyone who wanted to go.

Reportback meetings for the six farmers on the February 2000 farmer-to-farmer trip to Cuba can be organized in other cities by contacting either Cuba Vive at (813) 307-9733, P.O. Box 270928, Tampa FL 33688, or the Atlanta Network on Cuba, 441 Ridgewood Rd NE, Atlanta GA 30307.

Bill Kalman, a member of the United Transportation Union in Miami, contributed to this article.