Striking janitors win wide solidarity in Los Angeles

Chicago city workers settle, suburban union walks out

BY MARK FRIEDMAN

LOS ANGELES—Entering the third week of their strike, the 8,500 building workers fighting for a contract with 18 companies remain strong and confident.

Their militancy has changed politics here, from television news to workplace discussions. The workers are members of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) Local 1877.

The strike here has expanded with picket lines now set up in Long Beach, San Fernando Valley, Ventura, El Segundo, Pasadena, and Santa Monica.

Reports from around the county brought more than 1,000 strikers to downtown Pershing Square for a candlelight vigil on the evening of April 12. Building strikers and janitor for 10 years, told the crowd, "The small raise we are asking for may not seem like a lot, but for all of our families, it will make a big difference in our lives."

A rally and march April 13 of 700 strikers and their supporters at the Los Angeles International Airport (LAX) followed a walkout by SEIU members working there.

LAX has been the site of an effort by the union, unsuccessful to date, to organize Argenbright’s 800 contract workers who handle bags, staff’s-ray screening machines, and push wheelchairs for the major airlines at all the terminals.

Infringement negotiations between the SEIU and representatives of the 18 struck cleaning contractors in the city have yielded

Continued on Page 2

Stepped-up pace needed in subscription campaign

BY MAURICE WILLIAMS

"I appreciate your reporting of events that ‘big business’ papers won’t report in order to keep the masses unenlightened," wrote Ray Delarwelle, a locked-out steelworker at AK Steel in Mansfield, Ohio. Delarwelle recently renewed his subscription to the Militant for one year. Many other unionists engaged in labor battles and farmers fighting to defend their land also appreciate reading and needing the news and analysis provided in the Militant, Perspectives Mundial, and the Marxist magazine New International.

Now is the best time to step up the pace of the circulation campaign and get hundreds more fighters reading the socialist publications each week. A serious, well-planned effort is needed to get the subscription drive on schedule. Last week supporters of the campaign to win new readers to the socialist press sold 89 subscriptions to the Militant, 25 PM subs and 32 copies of New International. Supporters sold 169 Militant subscriptions, 43 PM subscriptions, and 79 NIs each week for the remaining five weeks to make the international goals.

The April 29-May 7 target week is on
Machinists in Texas shut Lockheed down

BY BOB BRUCE

FORT WORTH, Texas—Machinist union members went on strike against Lockheed-Martin's fighter jet assembly plant here on April 10. The local represents 2,800 workers, 500 of whom are currently laid off.

The previous day the membership of International Association of Machinists (IAM) District 776 voted 993-778 to reject the contract proposal, one recommended for approval by the union's negotiating committee.

The offer was similar to those approved last year at Lockheed-Martin's Marietta, Georgia, and Palmdale, California, plants. It included wage increases of 4 percent per cent in the first year, and 3 percent in each of the remaining two years of the contract, and improvements in retirement and insurance benefits.

Many workers here expressed the view that their incomes had been hit by the company at this plant where there was room for a better offer from the bosses. After a slim majority voted against the contract, the membership voted overwhelmingly to go on strike. This vote 1,392 to 273, well over the two-thirds majority required.

The company's offer was rejected in part due to the lack of a signing bonus or improvements in the cost of living protection. Outsourcing is also an issue in this plant, which has experienced layoffs over the years. In the 1980s there were about 15,000 workers in the Machinists bargaining unit.

Larry Ritchey, a 20-year employee in final assembly, said, "We wanted to get a signing bonus like we've gotten in the last contracts in part as a way to help some of the workers who are laid off or facing layoff."

There was a signing bonus of $1,500 in the last three-year agreement, and he also said that there has been a lot of talk by the company about being "better than Boeing" and that the company should put its money where its mouth is since Boeing workers average $25 an hour more than the Lock heed workers. According to Mitch Stanley, who has 15 years with the company, the wage disparity is part of the lack of living protection being paid at only one-third of the index rate for the last six years.

The striking Machinists are covering the 10 gates of the plant around the clock and have organized to avoid run-ins with the cops. In 1984 when workers at the plant—which was then run by General Dynamics—went out on strike, seven strikers were arrested and some were fired over "strike violence." According to Larry Ritchey, the company and police used doctored videotapes to go after the strikers.

This time around the union has its own watchtower across from the main gate and does its own videotaping to counter that of the company. The picketing has been self- limited by the union to six at each gate at this point, and the company has failed to obtain any injunction against picketing.

The strike has halted production at the plant, although the company claims that that is the work force personnel are being reassigned to parts of the planes.

After the company's proposal was rejected, Lockheed sent letters out to all striking workers and every other company employee explaining it will withdraw its offer 'cause "all of us have parents in the farm industry and the service sector. My mom is an immigrant and she's a housekeeper. This strike helps all of us."

As popular support for this strike spreads, other trade unionists and youth have joined the frequent marches and rallies of a thousand or more. Union officials from the Longshoremen's union the United Farm Workers, and SEIU locals in other cities are attending strategy sessions.

Letter to the Contra Los Angeles Times and La Opinion overwhelmingly supported the strike, although some have called for deporting the majority immigrant workforce. Democratic and Republican party politicians, including Republican mayor Richard Riordan, have supported the janitors in general terms but not on their specific demands. Some have gotten arrested as part of civil disobedience actions.

According to Alta Gracias and Raquel Munoz, both office cleaners for more than 25 years, this is the first time in their memory the union has organized a strike. Gracias and Munoz make $11.40 an hour, which is the top of the scale. A new hire picking up with them said he makes $8 for the same work.

The strikers expressed solidarity with a second group of janitors whose contract was set to expire on April 15 and have organized to fight the Suburban Contracts Association. As just the city janitors ended their short strike, 1,000 of these workers walked off the job, with thousands more expected to join them this week. These janitors are paid $6.65 an hour, and unlike city janitors, have no medical benefits.

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

Janitors in Chicago win contract after one-day strike

BY BETSY STONE

CHICAGO—The 5,500 janitors who clean Chicago's downtown commercial buildings went out on strike April 17 and within hours won a new union contract.

The strike began around 3:00 p.m., when thousands of janitors, members of Service Employees International Union Local 1, rallied in downtown Chicago, stopping traffic at the streets with cries of "strike! strike!" and "BOMA No! Union Yes!" BOMA is the Building Office Management Association, the employer's organization.

At around 10:00 p.m. a vote was taken and an agreement announced, providing for pay increases of 45 cents an hour in the first year of the contract, 35 cents in the second year and 30 cents in the third. According to Alta Gracias and Raquel Munoz, both office cleaners for more than 25 years, this is the first time in their memory the union has organized a strike. Gracias and Munoz make $11.40 an hour, which is the top of the scale. A new hire picking up with them said he makes $8 for the same work.

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Protesters in Canada oppose Ottawa’s attempt to privatize health-care system

BY VUK KRCMAR-GRKA\VC

EDMONTON, Canada—“Kill the bill! Kill the bill!” chanted a foot-stomping, hand-clapping crowd of 6,000 people that gathered here April 16 to oppose the privatization of portions of the public-health-care system.

The provincial Conservative government, under Premier Ralph Klein, has put forward legislation that would give private, for-profit clinics the right to perform a significant number of surgical and other health-care services currently available free or at low cost through the public system. The legislation, known as Bill 11, has been the focus of ongoing protests. The day before the Edmonton rally a similar protest, held in Calgary, had attracted some 3,000 people.

The rallies have been the largest actions to date to demand public funding for health care to date in Canada. Nurses, farmers, youth, older and retired workers, and others took part in the actions, many of them with homemade signs.

The presence of many union members, some of them engaged in strikes and other struggles, marked the rallies. One of the signs read, “Better a left-wing nut than a right-wing screw,” referring to a statement made by the premier that health-care workers are “left-wing nuts.” Many of the participants wore ribbons with nuts attached to them.

A feature of the rally was the presence of groups of farmers and rural residents who came in buses from small communities in the province. Many people are actively campaigning to stop the bill, including through the public canvassing and lunchtime and after work vigils in the provincial legislature in Edmonton.

The rally speakers included actress Shirley Douglas. She is the daughter of Tho­mas Douglas, founding leader of the social­democratic Cooperative Commonwealth Federation (CCF), the government in Saskatchewan that was brought to power in 1944 by the movement of workers and farmers in the prairies demanding the first public health-care system in North America. This gain won by working people in Saskatchewan was later extended to all the provinces and became known as the Canadian Health Act.

Douglas’s statement that the government “forgets how hard we have fought for this, and how hard we are going to fight to keep it,” brought the crowd to its feet.

Other speakers included Dr. Harold Swansson, a surgeon whose hospital privileges were revoked after he publicly spoke out against Bill 11, and other opposition candidates.

Some of the speakers presented the attacks on health care as an example of the growing onslaught on the working class and the capitalist state.

The fighting spirit at the rallies reflected a deepening resistance of workers and farmers in this region, according to the people who had assembled, against the effects of the capitalist economic crisis. Journalists at the rally included Ralph Klein denouncing “the CCF’s” fight against his proposed legislation and promising, if his bill becomes law, to “dollarize” the public health-care system to make it a “system of the state.”

The rally speakers included Dr. Vuk Krcmar-Grkavc, who was a member of the Young Socialists.

Washington, NATO deepen intervention in Yugoslavia

BY BRIAN TAYLOR

Washington and its imperialist allies are pressing ahead with their military interventions in the former Yugoslavia on several fronts. As it entrenches its military occupation of the northern part of Kosovo, it is arming Serb paramilitaries and setting its prerogatives in Bosnia under the UN’s “peacekeeping” banner.

In early April French troops stormed the home of Momcilo Krajinovic and arrested him. Krajinovic, a high-ranking Bosnian Serb polit­ician, who served under Radovan Karadzic, now faces trial before an interna­tional war crimes tribunal at The Hague.

Krajinovic is the conspiracy’s principal respon­sibility for the killings of thousands of Mus­lims and the raping of women in the mid-1990s during the brutal military onslaught carried out by the Belgrade regime against people living in the so-called “safe areas” in the province of Kosovo. Krajinovic was a key figure in the planning and command of that military operation.

An April 10 New York Times article com­ments, “Western governments...find it more politically convenient to have their [U.S.] soldiers arrest important suspects like camp command­ers and Bosnian Serb generals...than to admit responsibility.” It cited a French government statement for “providing a de facto safe haven for key suspects in their sector of Bosnia.” There are currently 39 people being detained by the French military in Kosovo, according to human rights groups.

The description of Krajinovic’s arrest gives an insight into the freedom the imperialist establishment values in dealing with the war criminals who have been the targets of imperialist “humanitarian” interventions. The imperialists have long dragged their feet when it comes to arresting the leaders of the Holocaust, for example, and are not even bothered by the fact that the ultra-nationalist Serbs of Kosovo and Bosnia have been responsible for the deaths of tens of thousands of people.

The French government and the NATO-led United Nations war crimes tribunal have turned a blind eye to the crimes committed by these Serb war criminals.

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Stock market volatility highlights crisis of capitalism

BY PATRICK O’NEILL

In the last two weeks the stock markets in the United States, followed by others around the world, have been subject to a roller-coaster ride. A steep fall in share values in the week ending April 14 was followed by an equally steep rebound. The big-business media exuded a sense of relief with the turn around, tempered with caution. “No one can know if the market will snapback will last,” wrote the editors of the New York Times April 18. The underlying volatility of the stock market—which has ballooned up in a speculative bubble—highlights the underlying weakness of the world capitalist economy. Even amidst a continued modest yearly upturn in the U.S. economy, the stock market jitters reflect the lack of long-term confidence in what the future holds.

Now, Nasdaq Enter Free Fall,” shouted the Washington Post in its front-page headline on April 15. The Nasdaq, which is dominated by “high tech” companies, fell a “nick­ening” 25.3 percent in value over the week, in the words of one journalist. This was the worst decline in its 50-year history.

The loss wiped out the large gains registered this year on the Nasdaq index, which has been the scene of the wildest speculation and sky-high share prices, which have no relation to a company’s future earnings or prospects. More than $2 trillion was wiped off the value of U.S. stocks in those five trad­ing days—almost half on Friday alone. Newsweek reported that “many Internet stocks...are down 70 percent or more from their highs,” and named Palm Inc., Ameritech, and VA Linux Systems as examples.

But the bottoming out of the drop, and record one-day increases that reflect the heels of the precipitous fall, demonstrates that the wealthy exploiters will put their money where they perceive the highest returns. The long-term trend in the capitalists’ falling average profit rate and stagnating mass of profits lies behind the run-up in stock prices and explosion of other forms of commercial paper.

These developments revealed once again the looming catastrophe a financial break­down in the center of world-finance holds for the semicolonial countries, as well as other imperialist centers. The stock “ rout,” as the decline was described in one newspaper, took an immediate toll on overseas markets. In Tokyo, shares suffered their fifth-largest fall ever of nearly 7 percent, and their largest since the worldwide stock market crash in Octo­ber 1987. European stock markets also fell. A particularly destabilizing factor is the huge growth of debt taken on by the employers to pay for their stock market forays. One form of this debt is money borrowed in the same market, where an investor borrows from a broker to buy stock. If the stock declines, they are subject to a “margin call” to pay back the broker. The customer has to put up more money to make up for the short­fall, potentially sparking further sell-offs. By May, no more than 50 percent of a stock purchase can be financed by debt, but such measures have not stopped “margin debt” from reaching record levels.

The Militant April 20, 2000

New York: ‘No more cop killings!’

Thousands of people—many of them Haitian—from New York and New Jersey converged at Grand Army Plaza in Brooklyn, New York, to participate in an April 20 protest against cop brutality. Above, students from Mount Sinai School of Medicine, who took a near-hour train ride to join the march, line up with others as a contingent. “We organized this action because the community called for it in response to the killing of 26-year-old Patrick Dorimont by New York cops, said Daniel Simidor of the Haitian Coalition for Justice, who sponsored the protest. ‘These cop killings are not accidents, but a matter of policy,’ he said.

Socialists raise funds for 2000 campaign

April 19, 2000

Dear Friends,

In a few weeks the Socialist Workers Party is announcing its presidential ticket. The candidates and their campaign will chart a course of action and present a program to advance the interests of work­ing people in the United States, together with workers and farmers around the world. The socialist candidates for president and vice president, along with numerous campaigns for other federal and state offices, are workers and youth deeply involved in the struggles and resistance of working people today. We salute the growing numbers of people throughout the country, from janitors striking in Los Ange­les and Chicago, to actions demanding the U.S. government get its Navy out of Nan­quees, to Wal-Mart meat cutters standing up for a union. From union actions in South Africa, to actions demanding freedom for Cubans, to actions demanding freedom for Haitian workers, to mass actions in Bolivia and Costa Rica, and strikes in Korea and New Zealand. These socialist candidates will discuss with workers, fighting farmers, and youth why it is capitalism—the policies of the big­business parties that define it—that are the cause of the economic hardships, attacks on our unions, the devastation of working people, and assaults on democratic rights, denial of women’s rights, police brutality and killings, and the racism and discrimination that come with national oppression.

There will present to tens of thousands at speaking engagements, at rallies, on street corners, on picket lines, and through the mass media, a new political party—a socialist party to build a revolutionary movement that can replace the capitalist government in Wash­ington. They are one of workers who are opening the road to the struggle for social­ism together with working people in other countries around the world.

The fighting course and socialist perspec­tives of the campaign are needed now more than ever. The volatility of the giant bubble on the stock markets exposes the fact that under capitalism, the “economic miracle” ber­fied by the Clinton administration, the threat of a financial breakdown and bank­ing crises is now felt over the entire capitalist economy, something that would devastate industrial production and the lives of hundreds of millions of workers worldwide. This uncertainty is in all capitalist states as possible. Travel, publication, following up on those interested in the campaign, and media work are essential parts of the campaign that need to be financed by working people and youth who support the perspectives of the socialist alternative.

Funds are needed now to help get the campaign underway. Please send your con­tribution to the Socialist Workers National Campaign Committee, PO Box 14239, St. Paul, MN 55114.

In solidarity,

James Harris
James Harris
Socialist Workers Party candidate for president in 1996

The Young Socialists (YS) is an inter­national network of young workers, students, and other youth fighting for socialism. For more information about the Young Socialists, call (466) 263-8974, or send an e-mail to: young_socialists@hotmail.com

Socialists National Organizer, Young Socialists

PATRICK O’NEILL

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Patrick Dorimont by New York Newsday; Young Socialists National Organizer, Young Socialists National Executive Committee

The Militant May 1, 2000

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‘Militant’ to step up pace of sales drive

Continued from front page

Opportunities for supporters around the world to wage a full-court press to get back on target. Supporters in the unions need to discuss how they may be selling the paper to co-workers, and making that one of the central components of the subscription drive. The sales chart will be posted on the Militant’s website on Tuesdays so participants and readers can follow the progress of the campaign.

Many youth involved in political activities, like those who attended the OCLAE conference in Havana, will be eager to read the Militant’s coverage of the Cuban revolution and the increased working-class resistance unfolding all over the world. One student at a rally of 6,000 people in Edmonton, Alberta, to defend health care bought five Pathfinder pamphlets on the Cuban revolution, women’s rights, and the fights for independence of Quebec, wrote Rosemary Ray. “He was disappointed when we told him there was no Pathfinder Bookstore in Edmonton and said, ‘Why don’t you open a bookstore here? We need revolutionary books in this city.’

Ray was a sales and reporting team of Militant supporters traveling across Canada to build the upcoming convention of the Communist League of Canada, which is reaching out to workers and farmers involved in protest actions. “We visited two cattle farmers in Colonias who met supporters of the Militant at protests by farmers in Saskatchewan several months ago,” she said. “They welcomed us into their home. One bought a copy of New International no. 4 because she wanted to read Fidel Castro’s speeches on land reform and farm cooperatives in Cuba.”

From Washington, D.C., Janice Lynn wrote, “We talked to scores of young people who came to this city April 8–17 to protest the policies of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank.” We pointed out that the main enemy was the rulers in Washington, rather than institutions like the IMF or World Bank and that it is the lawful workings of capitalism in crisis that is responsible for the evils young people are repelled by—poverty, low wages and working conditions, degradation of the environment, and other social injustices.”

Lynn said participants in the IMF protests purchased 16 subscriptions to the Militant or Perspective Mondial, 100 copies of the socialist newsmagazine, and $700 worth of Pathfinder literature.

The circulation drive in Los Angeles was given a jump-start by “the janitors” strike here with rallies of thousands and daily pickets,” wrote Mark Friedman. “We have sold six subs to strikers and their supporters at rallies, and a couple of New Internationals.”

Wal-Mart workers vote for union

Continued from front page

Friedman said they aim to maintain sales of the Militant and PM at factory plant gates as “another component of our efforts.” Bringing co-workers to the picket lines and striking janitors to union meetings are also part of the subscription campaign, he added. “The Militant Labor Forums are larger and more literature and subscriptions are being sold there, too.”

In Australia a sales team participated in a meeting of the Cuba Friendship Societies where they sold a PM sub and a copy of Nueva Internacional no. 5. “The team also sold a Militant sub to a farmer who we met earlier this year at one of a series of meetings called by the New South Wales Dairy Farmers Association to discuss a government compensation package to farmers hit by a proposed ‘deregulation’ of milk prices,” said Bob Aiken. “This weekend we plan to hook up with a coal miner we know from a long strike at Gunnedah a few years ago, and with another dairy farmer who we met earlier this year.”

Militant/PM Subscription Drive

March 25-May 21

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May 1, 2000 The Militant
Neoliberalism is nothing but the latest phase of the assault of capitalism ...

Neoliberalism can only be replaced by socialism...

government introduced in Costa Rica's parliament March 20 seeking authorization to sell off the power and telecommunications companies that have been state owned for more than half a century. "FEUANA organized a hunger strike and occupation of the universities," Soto said. "Labor conflicts were archetypal in the country. Peasants took over highways and organized other political and social demonstrations have swept the country demanding the regime withdraw the privatization bill from parliament. In one such protest, 100,000 people shut down the streets of the country's capital, San José, March 23.

The president of the opposition, Ricardo Martinelli, was quoted as saying workers and people in that country experience dramatic rises in electricity and telephone rates if the bill goes through, and, as a result, a rapid deterioration in the standard of living. "There is no law," Soto said. "Clubs, tear gas, and bullets in some cases. We know of at least six people who have been killed. But people are determined to fight. The 'labor peace' the ruling oligarchy negotiated with workers, Soto charged, is an "empty promise." "The workers and peasants have had enough. They are demanding the withdrawal of the bill."

Drawing conclusions from an even more deep-going popular rebellion in Ecuador only two months earlier was the subject of a number of presentations by delegates and of informal discussion.
The people of Puerto Rico have no nuclear weapons. But they may be on the verge of forcing the U.S. Navy to stop bombarding Vieques.

Fidel Castro expressed the sentiments of the big majority of the delegates when he said in his concluding speech that the people of Puerto Rico was about to make an important victory against the most powerful empire in the history of humanity. "Puerto Rico is the poor man in the face of imperialism, the poor man in the face of the United States military forces, the poor man in the face of the U.S. government." Castro said, adding the quote to its feet. The U.S. government is not as powerful as it seems, the Cuban leader said, it is in fact weaker than ever.

The final declaration adopted by the congress pointed to the underlying debt burden that squeeze all countries in Latin America and the Caribbean. "The foreign debt in Latin America now exceeds $706 billion, and is ever increasing despite the fact that countries have paid $730 billion to service it in the last 14 years," the resolution said.

During the 1990s, a decade that bourgeois politicians and pundits touted as an economic success for the continent, the gap between rich and poor widened in Latin America and poverty rates grew or at least persisted. According to the Inter-American Development Bank, 150 million people in Latin America today live on $2 a day or less. All this was due to the U.S. rulers, who tied social instability in the offing.

Attempts to advance anti-imperialism

Given these realities, the efforts by the leadership of the Federation of University Students (FEU) and Union of Young Communists (UJC) of Cuba—the two main organizations—to put forward a revolution against the "cultured high bourgeoisie." He walked through some of the common points of the resistance, the agrarian reforms to the nationalizations of industry and the land, to the quick victory by the militia and the Revolutionary Army Forces against the U.S.-organized mercenary invasion at the Bay of Pigs in 1961, to the October "missile" crisis the next year.

Castro also elicited loud laughter and applause when he asked, "How was it possible for Cuba to increase the value of its currency from 150 to the dollar to 20 in the last four-and-a-half years?" While others go from devaluation to devaluation and even speak of dollarization, which means permanent enslavement to the U.S. Federal Reserve," the Cuban leader said. "Instead of the IMF and the World Bank we turn to the wonderful collective called the Cuban people. That’s how we’ve been able to withstand the tremendous pressures of the Special Period."

This is a term widely used in Cuba to describe the period, triggered at the opening of the 1990s by the cutoff of trade in preferential prices with the former socialist countries, during which Cuba has had to face more directly the ravages of the world capitalist market and has experienced a drop in industrial and agricultural production.

Diverging class perspectives

The attraction to a clearly anti-imperialist stance was not Pinochet’s problem. Where students had gone through protracted struggles, differentiation among diverging class lines was clear.

This was evident among those who led the U.S. student movement, for example. Quite a few students did not share the revolutionary conclusions that Alberto Torres and Virginia Sánchez were inclined towards. While this was not palpable during the commissions, it became clearer at a roundtable discussion on the UNAM strike. Students from Mexico organized the activity one evening at the Polytechnic School Jose Antonio Echevarria where they were housed, along with delegates from North America and others.

A number of students who spoke at that session were clearly influenced by the policies of the bourgeois PRD and put forward social democracy as the way forward.

Continued on Page 10

From Pathfinder

Che Guevara Talks to Young People

“We are attacked a great deal because of what we are. But we are attacked much more because we speak to every nation of the Americas what it’s possible to be.”

—Che Guevara, July 28, 1960

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May 1, 2000 The Militant 7
Fight continues to get Navy out of Vieques

Continued from front page

On Vieques, U.S. Navy moved its March training exercises to the Gulf of Mexico and northeastern Florida. In early April, U.S. warships carried out joint maneuvers with forces from Britain, Canada, and other governments off the coast of Puerto Rico, but away from Vieques. Navy spokespeople said they had not decided whether the exercises would precede or follow the next round of talks in Washington.

Meanwhile, in face of ongoing protests over the sale of Vieques, U.S. military officials have announced their intention to carry this out. Meanwhile, right-wing Congress killed a proposal by the Clinton administration to offer $40 million to Vieques residents if they accept the Navy’s continued presence, an offer many islanders and other Puerto Ricans have indignantly rejected as blackmail.

In New York City, organizers of the June 11 Puerto Rican Day Parade have dedicated it to Vieques and to Pedro Albizu Campos, the historic leader of the modern fight for Puerto Rico’s independence. Albizu Campos spent decades in U.S. prisons for opposing U.S. colonial rule of his country. The dedication has sparked a big controversy in New York as well as Puerto Rico. The mayor of San Juan, Silla Calderón, and officials of the Rosello government condemned the decision. Former governor Carlos Romero Barceló, currently the non-vested delegate to Puerto Rico’s U.S. Congress and a leader of the PNP’s wing, condemned the decision, accusing Albizu Campos of having been a “fascist.” During World War II, U.S. officials and pro-imperialist forces slandered Albizu Campos as a fascist because the Nationalist Party leader steadfastly refused to support Washington’s policy toward Puerto Rico’s colonial oppressor.

Nonetheless, the organizers of the New York parade have reaffirmed their decision, pointing out that in previous parades they have honored figures holding a range of political views. Robin Berinstein, president of the Puerto Rican Independent Party (PPD) and leader of one of the Vieques protest camps, has rebutted the slanders against Albizu Campos in statements that have received wide coverage in the press.

The coming parade has sparked greater interest and curiosity among many Puerto Ricans, especially youth, about who Albizu Campos was and the relevance of his ideas today.

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

Hartford, CT May 26, May 5

For more information, contact
David Santiago at (202) 223-3915 ext. 206


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Ruling-class institutions weaker than they seem

From the pages of Capitalism’s World Disorder

five or ten years ago it was nearly impossible to do so without being arrested or worse.

Communist workers see the hunger for ideas everywhere we go abroad, whether it is on the Silk Road in Iran or Azerbaijan, or at a conference of the African National Congress in South Africa, or amongst young people we meet at a gathering somewhere in the U.S. We find that same interest among workers and young people we meet in Cuba and fellow revolutionists we collaborate with.

But there is frustration as well. The fact that world capitalism has been weakened does offer the greatest of opportunities. It offers a burst forward of working-class struggles or an advance for independent labor political action and organization. The greatest gift is a shift in working-class consciousness and political opportunities.

Similarly, the collapse of the Stalinist apparatuses does not, on its own, increase the size of the communist movement. It is one thing to say that the collapse of oppressive regimes and to recognize that this tears down the greatest obstacle to drawing workers into world politics and to leading the best of them to communist conclusions and organization.

But it is another thing to say the working class in these countries has been strengthened politically or organizationally. It hasn’t been. In order for communist leadership to be qualitatively expanded, the class struggle must obviously be made more intense.

The most important thing for class-conscious workers to understand, however, is that communists are in a better position to make the most of these great opportunities for the movement than they ever have been before. The world social movement has gone for so long without any mass revolutionary leadership that speaks and acts in the interests of the working class and challenges the petty-bourgeois misleaders who parrot and trail after the bourgeoisie.

“For most of the political lives of many of us, we thought of NATO as a thing. Even at its strongest, however, NATO was never a thing; it was the registration of a certain international relationship of class forces. It was a name for a collection of international nation-states, each with its own government, its own armed forces, its own currency, and its own class interests.”

Avery, French envoy to the organization that joined NATO in Macedonian February 1999, one month before U.S.-led bombing of Yugoslavia.

Let’s look at another ruling-class institution: the Catholic Church. The Holy Apostolic Church of Rome is today weaker than at any time in the modern period. Pope John Paul II is Time magazine’s man of the year for 1994; the issue is on the stands at grocery counters right now. This is telling us something right there. I’m sure some of us can remember when Richard Nixon was Time’s man of the year; or a while later Mikhail Gorbachev!

But bourgeois revolutionaries have sought to create an image around John Paul of a new church militant, a church on the march. The First Central European pope, a Polish pope who allegedly brought down commu­nism. A church that will not only speak its mind but will also glamourize and wage a fight against abortion rights and contraception.

But the truth is that the Catholic Church is weaker than ever in its modern history. Never before has there been such a gap between the real views, the real practices, and the real doubts of the faithful, on the one hand, and the official pronouncements on the other. The hierarchy cannot get a majority of the faithful to agree with their line on birth control, their line on abortion. And this phenomenon is not limited to the United States; even in Ireland the grip of the hierarchy has slipped, and perhaps the greatest gap of all is in Italy, the Vatican’s home base.

Why is it, then, that institutions that are actually so weak can be presented as so strong? What is it about NATO that per­sists?

The answer, above all, is that the international labor movement has gone for so long without any mass revolutionary leadership that speaks and acts in the interests of the working class and challenges the petty-bourgeois misleaders who parrot and trail after the bourgeoisie.

May 2, 1975

Baltimore—A proposed city curfew ordinance against young people, which would fine parents of violators up to $100 and/or require a jail sentence of up to ten days, has been met with strong protests from the Black community here.

The ordinance would make it illegal for people under the age of seventeen to be on the streets or in public places after 10:30 p.m. on weekdays and 12:00 midnight on weekends.

The proposed ordinance follows a well-orchestrated press campaign against “youth crime” and “juvenile unrest.” Blacks are the main targets of the campaign.

The city council has held public hearings on the proposed ordinance and opposition to it has built up at each successive hearing.

At the final hearing, more than 200 people turned out to demand that the proposed ordinance be killed. The city council, stung by the great majority of opposing speakers, abruptly terminated the hearing long before its scheduled end, and fled out the back door.

“I don’t want my freedom taken away,” explained a Southern High School student.

“Besides, it’s not young people who are causing the problems in this country.”

The sentiment of the gathering was that communists are in a better position to make the most of these great opportunities for the movement than they ever have been before. The world social movement has gone for so long without any mass revolutionary leadership that speaks and acts in the interests of the working class and challenges the petty-bourgeois misleaders who parrot and trail after the bourgeoisie.
**Wal-Mart workers fight for union**

Wal-Mart meat cutters in Texas are standing up to noxious antunion bosses and the hardball tactics the company is employing against the workers’ organizing efforts. As with many worker unrests these days, the roots are in automation and the resulting layoffs. Fewer and fewer workers can make a living wage in this economy, so they cannot afford to ball out against the union busters and union busting employers. Many workers who have been laid off at Wal-Mart are starting to follow suit.

A reporting weight to bear, bind this fight and oppose the company’s moves to break the incipient union organization before it gains a toehold. We can no longer place the blame for Wal-Mart’s operation on the numbers alone. Now the company is challenging the right of current employees to even vote for a union because the company has plans to lay off every employee in an attempt to eliminate the union.

Wal-Mart worries that if this small number of workers can stand up, it is only a matter of time before tens of thousands of other employees at this retail giant might get the same idea. The company has built a multimillion dollar empire on low wages, part-time work, arbitrary work rules, and substandard benefits.

At the same time, “Si se puede”—yes, it can be done, is the cry of the people who are fighting for a wage increase and dignity. The janitors, and growing numbers of workers across the country, are resisting the bosses assaults on our living and working conditions. Thousands of janitors who work in downtown Chicago won their demands hours after walking off the job.

These struggles highlight broader developments in the labor movement and the change in thinking among many working-class people about the role of movement developing among fighters, who are extending a hand of solidarity from one struggle to the next.

One more step in this widening movement will stem the widening movement. Instead, the cry of one more struggle only leads to substandard wage increases and more low-paying jobs. Instead, the struggle brought the buildings of the IMF and World Bank for most of the week. At the height of the protests 90 downtown blocks were closed to traffic. Police clubbed demonstrators, used pepper spray, smoke canisters, and threatened them with their cars and motorcycles. Police helicopters often hovered low over demonstrators.

An early morning raid April 16, cops and city fire representatives of the National Executive Committee, were also announced. The elections, as well as the final declaration the delegates approved.

The results of the election for OCLAE’s leadership were heavily criticized by the executive secretariat. The election was held the previous day by representatives of the organization’s member groups. FEU of Cuba was re-elected to the presidency, and Yosvani Diaz Romero resultados that aroused the most interest had several chances to also get a firsthand glance at the reality of Cuba today.

Those who came prior to the congress visited the Museum of the Revolution and a number of neighborhoods in Cuba. The delegates were asked to take one day for an alternative program that included visits to schools, hospitals, the pion­ner movement. Ysrael Elías, the executive secretary of the WFDY, said that the activity along these lines that aroused the most interest was spending an evening with Cuban families at a variety of neighborhoods. These families show how the activity and the activity in Cuba we call it so­cialism. We look to José Martí and our own history on how to achieve this. But we must also learn from the people of Europe...
Striking unionists march in Washington state

BY SCOTT BREEN

SUNNYSIDE, Washington—Striking workers at a housing developer led a relatively tame march through this city April 8. Estimates varied on the number of pickets; a few dozen. A local official said, "It was a very good crowd." The march started on the officials’ block, was blocked by the Kaisor Aluminum plant in Spokane, 350 workers, their families, and supporters paraded past Vickers (a metal-milling firm) and through the downtown district, and then to a nearby park for a solidarity rally and barbecue.

As the marchers walked, many onlookers clapped and cheered. A few young people watching from the sidewalk joined in as they passed. The route was purchased by the union, mostly in Spanish and English of "Si, Se Puede" (Yes, we can!), and "No contract, no peace," and many others. A few billboards were passed between the strikers, who are mostly Mexican immigrants, and the Steelworkers union.

According to the workers who had struck Iowa Beef Processors (IBP) last summer, in that conflict 15% of the workers were African Americans, and the IBP locals are part of the United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) union.

The only strike that the strike at Vickers might be compared to was the 1923 Seattle general strike that ended in a bloody explosion.

\**Construction workers rally for union***

*BY BRIAN TAYLOR*

NEW YORK—Thousands of construction workers and their supporters amassed at 14th Street and Third Avenue in Manhattan April 13, solidly condemning a decision by New York University management to use nonunion contractors to build a student dormitory.

Carpenters union members marched April 13 against use of nonunion contractor Forkshor by New York University management in construction of a student dormitory.

The mood of the 30 or so pickets was buoyant. Their songs are running very well, Carole Francis, who has worked at the factory for 27 years. "We know now they're making a lot of money, but it's not showing on the shop floor. They've even stopped the sick pay for strikers," she said.

The action was supported by the Washington State Labor Council of the AFL-CIO, which sent out a letter to all its affiliated unions announcing the April 8 march and asking for donations for the WCWI Food Bank.

Several of those who participated in the action talked about important battles shaping up in the Yakima Valley, a medical center in Washington state. Workers at Boise Cascade lumber mill in Yakima explained that their contract, along with the Boise Cascade contracts in the Northwest, is up June 1. They think a fight is likely.

Shane Says, "Most of the workers are men, workers. Where they're located is where the picketing lines are being crossed." The picketing lines are being crossed by the workers, leaving about 135 workers.

Since October, a large number of workers have been walking the picket lines, some 700, hoping for a settlement.

In May, the action was supported by the Washington state Labor Council of the AFL-CIO, which sent out a letter to all its affiliated unions announcing the April 8 march and asking for funds for the WCWI Food Bank.

The demonstration came a day after 5,000 striking workers took to the streets demanding better wages and working conditions.

The action was supported by the Washington State Labor Council of the AFL-CIO, which sent out a letter to all its affiliated unions announcing the April 8 march and asking for donations for the WCWI Food Bank.

The march after protesting at the state legislature ended with the union negotiators for just five minutes, but that stops them from coming to a decision. The march ended with the union negotiators for just five minutes.

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**LETTERS**

Longshore workers fight

I noticed when I read Lauren Hart’s article in the April 17, 2000, issue of The Militant. She reported a story about a letter to the Longshore and Warehousemen’s Union in Seattle.

The union on the west coast is the ILWU, a labor union that is part of the International Longshoremen’s and Warehousemen’s Union, not the International Longshoremen’s Union. The ILWU is part of the Amalgamated Building Trades Unions, which includes the Local 1500. The Longshore and Warehousemen’s Union in Seattle is called Local 14.

I think this is a good article, one I will point out to people I sell to at the BC Maritime Employers’ Deputies’ Workshop.

Lucien Lenoir, Vancouver, Canada

New rail union in N.Y.

On February 28, 2000, the overwhelming majority of conductors and engineers at Metro-North Commuter Railroad in New York City, decided to form a union called The Association of Commuter Rail Employees (ACRE).

Prior to the formation of ACRE, they were members of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers (BLET) and the Brotherhood of Railroad Trainmen (UTU).

The idea of splitting from the Internationals was initiated and organized by the local leaders of the BLET and the UTU, and the locals in the metropolitan area.

The strike and the decision to organize ACRE were stopped by the local leaders.

This is a new organization that I believe will put an end to the strike.

Debbie Delange

Electric workers pick ‘for dignity’

BY DEBBIE DELANGE

SUNNYSIDE, Washington—Workers at the Electrum electrical assembly plant here have set up pickets in pursuit of a pay raise. The workers are members of the Amalgamated Engineering and Electrical Union (AEEU).

The union began the action March 6 and has organized a different section of the workforce to go on strike one day per week. "We’re picketing at least once a week," said one worker, "and we won’t do it. There’s no point in us doing it at all, and it’s not showing on the shop floor. They’ve even stopped the sick pay for strikers," she said.

The bosses offered a 2 percent pay raise and improvements to the sick pay scheme. The workers rejected the offer.

"We’re going to continue to picket until July, but the bosses recently threatened strikers with losing the lump sum payment back wages if the strike continued," the worker said.

This has hardened workers’ attitudes, with many saying that since they received the letter, they have become more determined to continue the strike as long as it takes. "The back pay is quite important to us," said one worker.

Carole Francis, who has worked at the factory for 27 years, explained that although the strike was solidarity supported by union members from the start, picketing was overwhelming.

A handful of workers left the union early in the strike, but they have been heartened by some others joined them. "At first we could only stand at this gate, but now we can go to the other gates as well. That stops them from coming to a decision," she said.

Debbie Delange is a member of the Amalgamated Engineering and Electrical Union.
Kaiser fines ‘justified,’ say locked-out workers

BY MIYO YAMAMOTO
BIRMINGHAM, Alabama—The federal Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) on March 15 fined Kaiser Aluminum $533,000 for 21 violations connected with an explosion in 1999 at the Kaiser Aluminum facility in Louisiana. Alumina refining is the July 5, 1999, explosion that killed 14 workers, destroyed most of the plant, blanked windows throughout the neighborhood and rained caustic chemicals on an adjacent community.

“MSHA’s investigation estimated that between 60,000 and 100,000 people took part. The marches have met with disapproval from the big-business press and spokespersons for capital, along with some government officials, who declare that they are for creating jobs, but that protests are “counterproductive.”

Economist Tony Twine said that COSATU’s campaign “makes business want to employ less labor rather than more. It does not do our image abroad any good and that image is vital in our attempts to attract investments.”

“Workers are not buying into this argument. Leonard Molesete from Gold Ukraine marched here on April 5. ‘How can the government speak of economic growth when thousands of people are losing their jobs?’ he asked. Vincent Maledinous from Soshangue said, “I’m here because our jobs are being given away in the name of privatization.”

“Workers demand a job-creating economy,” read one poster. “Retrenchment equals hunger.”

Last month, COSATU said that since 1994, more than 500,000 jobs have been destroyed by capital, and as a result of government policy.

“Thousands of quality jobs have been replaced by casualized, subcontracted, sweatshop workers. Those jobs that push more and more of the working class into poverty. As a result, the strategies and the persistence of low wages in many sectors, the army of the working poor is growing by the day. According to the 1996 census, 26 percent of workers earned less than R500 a month [$76 at current exchange rates],” said a statement issued by the federation for the Johannesburg demonstration.

Willie Madisha, the COSATU president, told the Johannesburg protesters that there was an “investment drought” in the country. Addressing his words to the employers, he said, “This is your chance to show your patriotism and create jobs that are desperately needed. We urge you to refrain from investing your money in the Johannesburg Stock Exchange and the New York Stock Exchanges. You have until May 1 to respond, or else you will face an unprecedented general strike on May 10.”

Specific demands put forward by COSATU include amending labor law to make employers who engage in lockouts or layoffs; slowing the pace of import tariff reductions; a halt in the employment of casualized, subcontracted, sweatshop workers; and union involvement in talks on privatization of state assets.

Until now there has been no wholesale privatization of government-run enterprises. Instead, hanks of state-run companies have been sold off, with the proceeds going to employed workers; and union involvement in talks on privatization of state assets.

For further reading

The Struggle for a Proletarian Party

James P. Cannon

In this companion to Trotsky’s In Defense of Marxism, Cannon and other leading members of the Workers’ Party defend the centrality of proletarianization within the political and economic struggle against the principle of Marxism in a polemic against a petty-bourgeois current in the party. The debate unfolded as Workers World was bringing U.S. working people into the slaughter of World War II.

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