

THE MILITANT

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Protests in Peru mark Fujimori inauguration

BY PATRICK O'NEILL

Tens of thousands of people poured into the streets of Peru's capital city, Lima, in late July to protest the inauguration of President Alberto Fujimori for a third five-year term. The events underscore the dramatic plunge in popular appeal and authority enjoyed for a decade by a demagogic figure who came to power in 1990 vowing to take single-handed action and bring stability to a society in the throes of crisis.

The protests were reportedly the biggest since Fujimori assumed the presidency. The *Miami Herald* reported, "The peaceful overnight outpouring [on July 27] united workers, students, and Peruvians from all walks in a raucous, torchlit rally, marked by bottle rockets screaming over a downtown plaza and drums pounding loudly on the cool night air." Protests also took place in Arequipa, the country's second-largest city.

Capitalist opposition politician Alejandro Toledo headed the demonstrations, using them as a platform to call for new elections. Toledo ran for president against Fujimori in May. Although the pro-business policies of his "Peru Posible" party differed little from those of the incumbent, his campaign became a lightning rod for many seeking change. Unable to win a clear majority, Fujimori was forced to concede a runoff

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Minnesota meat packers defend their new union

BY TOM FISHER

SOUTH ST. PAUL, Minnesota—Just days after meat packers at Dakota Premium Foods here voted 112-71 to join United Food and Commercial Workers Local 789, the company, which earlier had vowed never to recognize the union or agree to a contract, began a campaign of harassing workers, speeding up the line, and challenging the election.

At the origin of the conflict is the speed of the production line. Over a period of time in the spring, the company increased the rate of processing from 450 cattle in 10 hours to 700 cattle in seven and a half hours.

The slaughterhouse workers responded June 1 with a seven-hour sit-down strike, demanding that the line speed be decreased and workers not be forced to work while injured.

The company granted some concessions on these points, and workers launched a campaign to organize a union to safeguard and extend these gains.

On Monday, July 24, the first workday after the July 21 union representation vote, the company cranked up the line speed beyond the 95 cattle per hour it had agreed to on June 1.

The workers' designated monitor raised a complaint and the company was forced to turn down the line speed. But workers say

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Western coal miners: 'No 12 hours! We win!'

UMWA strikers beat back concessions, ratify contracts

BY DANNY WILSON

KEMMERER, Wyoming—"No 12 Hours!" "We Win! You Lose!" "UMWA Proud!"

Triumphantly holding up signs with these slogans, members of Local 1307 of the United Mine Workers of America celebrated the ratification of a contract by a vote of 148 to 32. They had been on strike against Pittsburg and Midway Coal Co. (P&M) for

"hard work and the willingness of our members to stand up and say no to P&M," said Mike Hunzie, a shovel operator who has worked at the mine for 32 years. "In all my years I've been in the union I have never seen us as strong as we are now."

"Unity and solidarity is what helped us win," stated Annette Juvan, a member of Miners' Backbone whose husband works in the mine. "We had solidarity among ourselves and we got strong support from the

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Utah coal mine blast kills two workers—see page 7

two months.

A few days later, the Kemmerer miners' sister local in New Mexico had a similar celebration after ratifying a contract with P&M, a division of Chevron Corp. The 330 miners there, members of United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) Local 1332, had been on strike at P&M's McKinley mine since May 15 (see article on page 6).

Just after the August 1 vote results in Kemmerer were in, 100 members and supporters held a victory celebration at the "three-way," the street intersection where trucks hauling coal from the nonunion Black Butte mine go into the Pacific Power and Light power plant. The Kemmerer mine was the sole supplier to the plant prior to the strike. The three-way was a regular scene of rallies organized by Miners' Backbone, the organization of miners' wives and other supporters of the strike.

The 230 members of Local 1307 struck P&M May 28 after rejecting the company's demand of a seven-day work schedule and 12-hour shifts. The company, which under the expired contract covered health-care costs, wanted the workers to pay part of their medical premiums. Other disputed issues were pensions, wages, the right to retire after 20 years of service, and overtime pay.

The celebration was the culmination of



Militant/Jacob Perasso
Communications Workers of America members in Brooklyn, New York, picket Verizon offices August 6. Strike spans the East Coast from Maine to Virginia.

BY OLGA RODRÍGUEZ
AND JACOB PERASSO

BROOKLYN, New York—"There is nobody here that feels this is not going to be a successful strike," said one of more than 40 union members on the picket line outside one of the area's largest telephone installation and repair yards.

The picket was one of hundreds from Maine to Virginia that went up when 86,000 workers in 12 eastern states and the District of Columbia walked off the job August 6 after the expiration of their contract with Verizon Communications. Verizon was formed through the merger of Bell Atlantic and GTE Wireless Communications and is now the largest provider of local telephone and wireless service in the nation.

In addition to 72,000 strikers represented by the Communication Workers of America (CWA), 14,700 members of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) are also on strike against Verizon.

Key issues in the strike are Verizon's expansion of its nonunion wireless operations, outsourcing of work, and forced overtime. The strike is being closely watched in the big-business media because of the union's challenge to the rapid growth of the tele-

communications industry that is not organized. Verizon, BellSouth, and SBC are the only three companies with more than 50 percent of the workforce in the CWA or IBEW. Sprint, Worldcom, Nextel, VoiceStream, and other companies in the rapidly growing and profitable industry have few union members.

The *New York Times* and other pro-company newspapers began pushing Verizon's line that the strike will not affect phone service, due to what they say is a largely automated system. But three days into the strike, Verizon's 30,000 managers doing the struck work are unable to keep up with demands for installation and repair. In New York City, for example, it is estimated that there are 2,600 requests for new telephone installations and 4,500 repair requests daily.

More than 450 workers who do repairs, service, maintenance, and cable and telephone installation for South Brooklyn work at the facility here.

Tony Barone, a service technician, Local 1109 shop steward, and a picket captain, disputed Verizon's claim that service would not be affected by the strike. "There is no automated computer system that can replace

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NEW!
FROM PATHFINDER

The Working Class and the Transformation of Learning
The Fraud of Education Reform under Capitalism
By Jack Barnes

"Until society is reorganized so that education is a human activity from the time we are very young until the time we die, there will be no education worthy of working, creating humanity. That is the historic truth." \$3

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LISTED ON PAGE 12.

German bosses move to catch up with U.S. rivals — page 3

Black farmers: 'We want our land back'

BY JANICE LYNN

WASHINGTON—One hundred farmers and their supporters rallied at the federal courthouse steps here, then packed the courtroom July 31 for a "fairness" hearing held on a motion to reconsider the April 1999 settlement of *Pigford v. Glickman*, a class-action lawsuit that charged the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) with widespread discrimination against farmers who are Black.

"Lawsuit Becomes Death Trap for Black Farmers" and "Justice Department and Agriculture Department: Coconspirators in Black Farmers Lawsuit" were among the handmade signs carried.

Griffin Todd Sr., a farmer from Zebulon, North Carolina, who like many of the Black farmers has been at a number of Washington protests, declared, "We have to fight for what we won." He was referring to the fact that nearly 40 percent of some 20,000 farmers who applied for the promised \$50,000 settlement have been denied funds and only 111 have had their debts written off, as stipulated in the settlement known as a consent decree.

"We will not stop until justice has been done for the Black farmer," stated Gary Grant, president of the Black Farmers and Agriculturalists Association (BFAA), which organized the action. Grant estimated that farmers from 18 states were present that day, including from Georgia, Mississippi, Oklahoma, Texas, and Utah.

At the hearing, attended by close to 200 people, attorney Stephon Bowens of the Land Loss Prevention Project argued that the consent decree should be set aside or at least modified. He reviewed the arbitrary way decisions on claims have been made.

Many farmers are losing their farms and livelihoods as they wait for the process to run its course. Even for farmers approved under the consent decree, \$50,000 hardly begins to make up for the land, equipment, and homes that were taken away.

The consent decree stipulates that farmers who are Black must prove government discrimination by identifying "similarly situated white farmers" who were not denied USDA loans. Alexander Pires, attorney for the class-action suit, admitted to the court, "This has proven harder than I thought, especially obtaining these records in states like North Carolina." Pires also asked the court for an interim award of \$28 million in attorneys' fees and court costs.



Farmers rally in Washington in March 1999 to back suit against racist discrimination by USDA. Forty percent of farmers have been denied promised settlement.

U.S. district judge Paul Friedman echoed the government's excuse for the delays, saying that 10 times as many claims were received than expected. He did reject the government's request to throw out the mo-

tion to reconsider the fairness of the consent decree. Friedman is supposed to rule within 30-45 days on the motions.

"It was powerful to see everyone here from all over the U.S.," remarked Pennsyl-

vania farmer Kelvin Poole at a meeting of 100 farmers after the hearing. Poole said he had just filed for bankruptcy. "We're not going to give up," he declared. "This is bigger than just losing my tractors. I believe we will be victorious."

Leroy James Jr., a Georgia peanut and cotton farmer, said, "I don't think the judge was taking this seriously." In an interview he said his claim was denied, then won on appeal, but after a year and a half he has yet to receive his \$50,000—only two "late payment letters," each one saying he should receive something within 60 days, and then 60 days more. His brother received a settlement but is still fighting for his loan to be written off.

The demonstrators gave a standing ovation to 86-year-old Rosa Murphy, a Georgia farmer who "came this far for the fight." Her claim was turned down because the authorities said she didn't have the farm, which she has had since 1938.

Many farmers have held protests in their states. A march of some 50 farmers took place in Little Rock, Arkansas, in early July. Vegetable farmer Abraham Carpenter told the media, "We will continue marching and letting people know that just because the government says they will give money, it's not that easy. We have a fight on our hands and we will continue to fight for our money and our rights."

Mushroom workers rally in Pennsylvania

BY PETE SEIDMAN

KENNETT SQUARE, Pennsylvania—Mushroom workers rallied here July 17 to demand that the owners of one of the largest mushroom farms in Chester County, Pennsylvania, end their seven years of stalling and negotiate a contract with the Kaolin Workers Union.

"We're here today because we're very unhappy with the economic proposal made by [Michael] Pia," union leader Luis Tlaseca told a crowd of workers, supporters, and reporters gathered in a park just outside the plant, referring to the owner of Kaolin Mushroom Farms. "What he calls a wage increase, we call a mockery. We are asking for a contract and good-faith negotiations. We are the ones who are putting thousands of dollars in his pocket so he can continue

with his business.

"The 5-cent-per-box wage increase Pia offered is an insult," Tlaseca stated. "In 1993 we were asking for a 10-cent increase when Pia made a counteroffer of 5 cents and we went out on strike for a month. After seven years of struggle asking for better wages and conditions, he comes back with the same proposal."

Tlaseca and 32 other union activists had been fired during the strike and blacklisted in the area. During the course of legal battles after the owners appealed the union victory in the bargaining election and workers filed unfair labor practice charges against the company, the state labor board ordered Pia to rehire Tlaseca.

The unionist told those at the rally, "Today is special for me because after seven years, I am back to work at Kaolin Farms. This is a demonstration of *si se puede* [we can do it] in our struggle. I'm back after Pia said he'll never have me again. If the negotiations do not move forward, we will continue having demonstrations."

The mushroom workers at Kaolin are almost all immigrants from Mexico. Following a strike in April 1993, they won a bargaining election for the Kaolin Workers Union, which the company fought for more than five years in the courts. In December 1998, the state Supreme Court finally upheld the Pennsylvania Labor Board's rulings in favor of the union and ordered Pia to begin negotiations. The July 17 rally marked the beginning of a stepped-up campaign by the Kaolin Workers Union to win

a contract. Of the 90 pickers in the plant, who were the center of the strike, some 35 took part in the rally.

"We're very concerned about disciplinary actions by Pia. He refuses to hire back workers when they return from visiting their families in Mexico, particularly those who participated in the strike. He's trying to hire young workers, preferring to replace those over 40 and ignoring seniority," Tlaseca said.

Reporters at the rally quoted Pia as claiming that his employees earn \$9 an hour, much higher than the average retail wage of \$6 in Chester County. A number of workers at the rally explained that they are paid by the box, not by the hour, and that any average hourly rate is deceptive because they are not assured a 40-hour week or a full work year, or that conditions for picking will always be the same.

"We are supposed to be paid \$1.30 for a 10-pound box of mushrooms after three months on the job," Tlaseca explained. "But Pia is now demanding 14 pounds of mushrooms in order to be paid for a 10-pound box. We now must sort the mushrooms into four or five different categories to receive that rate. 'This benefits the industry because it eliminates the need for the packing plant to repack the mushrooms,' he stated. 'We are saving them jobs by packing as we pick. We are asking for a 20-cent-a-box increase, and a 26-cent increase for sorted and packed mushrooms.'"

Pete Seidman is a member of the United Steelworkers of America.

THE MILITANT

Fight for safety in coal mines

The death of two miners in the explosion at the Willow Creek mine in Utah spotlights the deadly conditions workers are forced into by bosses who put profits before safety. The 'Militant' covers the miners' battle for safe working conditions and the rising social movement in the coalfields for lifetime health benefits.



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German bosses seek to catch up with U.S. rivals

BY CARL-ERIK ISACSSON

STOCKHOLM, Sweden—Capitalists in Germany hailed the July 14 passage of a tax cut bill by parliament that will boost their profits and improve their competitiveness in relation to imperialist rivals in Europe and North America.

The vote was an unexpected victory for the government of Chancellor Gerhard Schröder of the Social Democratic Party. The estimated tax breaks of nearly \$30 billion would far exceed the \$6 billion in lower income taxes the ruling coalition of Social Democrats and Greens promised when it won the 1998 elections.

In the days leading up to the vote in the upper house of parliament, the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) and its sister party, the Bavaria-based Christian Social Union (CSU), threatened to block the tax bill. Seeking to score points against the Social Democrats, they argued that it failed to provide enough relief to small and medium-sized businesses. But the ruling coalition won a resounding victory over the conservative opposition.

"The term 'German disease' now belongs to the past," Schröder declared triumphantly. Big-business commentators use that phrase to describe the German bosses' slow progress in undermining social gains won by working people over the decades, which to them is an obstacle to catching up to their capitalist rivals' competitive edge.

Share prices in Germany's biggest commercial banks and insurance companies soared after the vote.

Corporate taxes lowered

Under the new law, corporate taxes will be lowered from 40 percent to 25 percent as of January 2001. A year later capital gains tax on sales of big corporate cross shareholdings will be abolished. The latter provision clears the way for corporations to sell subsidiaries or shares in other companies without paying taxes on their profits; they were previously subject to a 58 percent capital gains tax.

The largest holders of stakes in Germany's industrial companies are the banks and insurance companies, which provided capital through cross shareholdings instead of cash on loans when German industry was rebuilt after World War II. Deutsche Bank, for example, holds large stakes in the automaker Daimler Chrysler, the building material group Heidelberger Zement, and Metallgesellschaft.

The measure is expected to accelerate the kind of corporate mergers and downsizing—and the accompanying layoffs and attacks on job conditions—seen in the United States and United Kingdom in the 1990s.

To buy the votes of some of the opposition CDU politicians, the Social Democrats offered further tax breaks—lowering the top income tax rate to 42 percent, from 51 percent, and passing a \$900 million package to extend some of the big companies' tax advantages to the millions of small businessmen in Germany who are part of the CDU's electoral base.

The CDU's divided vote has caused a further crisis in that party, which has not

recovered from the financial scandals that plagued the party last year.

The German rulers have been more successful this year than their rivals in Europe in holding down wages. Several major unions in Germany have settled for low wage increases.

The chemical workers union set the tone by signing a contract with only 2.2 percent in wage increases. The metalworkers union then accepted an agreement in the state of North Rhine-Westphalia with raises of only 3 percent this year and 2.1 percent next year.

In comparison, wage increases won in Norway and Finland through strikes are higher than those in Germany today.

In another setback, wage negotiations by the IG Metall union are no longer carried

out nationwide but rather in a given region, and then a pattern agreement is set in the other regions.

The next step in the German government's offensive against labor is over pension cuts. As the *International Herald Tribune* put it, Schröder's success in getting the tax cuts approved clears the way for the government "to tackle the more explosive issue of pension reform this autumn."

Retirement pensions are currently 70 percent of wages, and the government has declared its intention to lower them considerably. To "cover" the gap created by smaller pensions, the government proposes that workers buy their own private retirement accounts mainly by offering them tax incentives. This would be a move toward gut-

ting pensions as a social entitlement of the entire working class and instead forcing working people to fend for themselves with individual retirement accounts.

Although these moves allow the German rulers to begin to catch up with their U.S. rivals, they still remain far behind on "labor flexibility"—their code word for giving bosses a freer hand in hiring and firing workers as well as extending the length of the workday.

The recent steps in Germany will now put pressure on other governments in the euro zone, such as France and Italy, to take similar measures attacking labor.

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

Toronto protesters defend arrested activists

BY ROBERT SIMMS

TORONTO—One hundred supporters of democratic rights rallied outside the courtrooms in Old City Hall here July 22 to call for the release of John Clarke, main organizer of the Ontario Coalition Against Poverty, and three other OCAP activists arrested by police. They demanded all charges against them be dropped.

Police arrested Clarke, OCAP organizers Gaetan Heroux and Stefan Pilipa, and OCAP supporter Patricia Lilley the day before for their participation in a June 15 demonstration against homelessness held at the Ontario provincial legislature. Their arrests brought the number of those charged since last month's protest to 32.

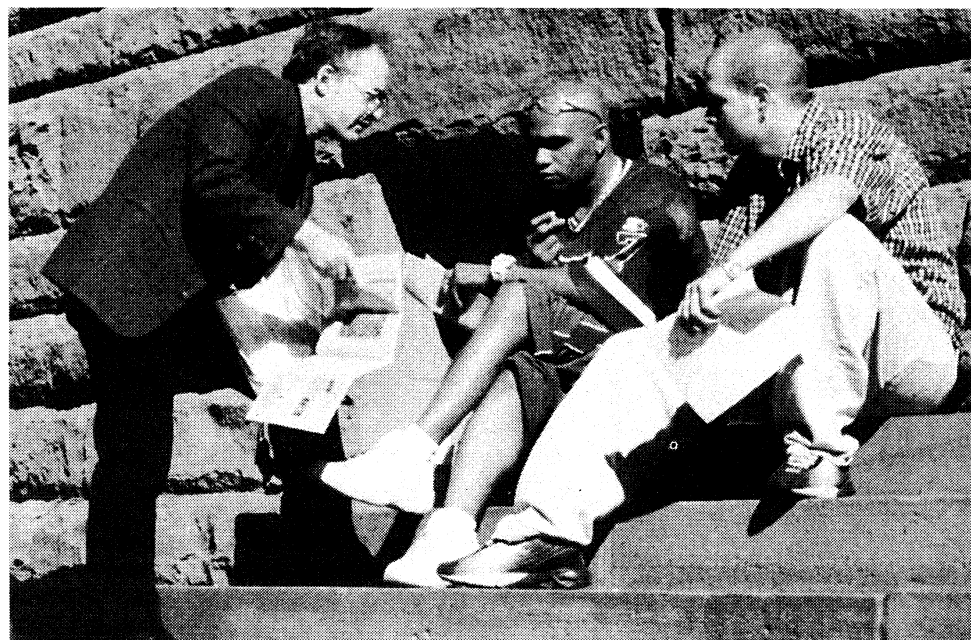
Clarke was charged with participating in a riot and counsel to commit an indictable offense.

The June 15 protest turned into a police riot after some of the estimated 1,000 demonstrators pushed against the barriers set up by more than 200 cops. The police charged the demonstrators with truncheons and pepper spray. Then about 20 mounted riot police stormed into the crowd. Dozens of protesters were injured. Police claimed 29 of their members also suffered injuries.

Among those participating in the July 22 rally outside the OCAP activists' bail hearing were representatives of the Canadian Auto Workers, Canadian Union of Public Employees, Metro Network for Social Justice, and Canadian Union of Postal Workers.

The four OCAP activists were released on bail, under particularly undemocratic conditions imposed by the judge. Clarke was forbidden to talk with or associate with other OCAP members while awaiting trial, to participate in any demonstration, to go near the provincial legislature, or to leave the province of Ontario, and he must report to police if he changes jobs. He is a staff worker for OCAP.

The police have used the five weeks since the protest to view videotapes seized by police from several news organizations for their case against the accused. On July 20, lawyers for TV networks CBC, CTV, Global Television, and ONtv, and for the newspa-



Militant José Lagman
John Steele, Communist League candidate for mayor of Toronto, talks to participants in rally against police brutality and frame-up of advocates for homeless workers.

pers *Globe and Mail*, *Toronto Star*, and *Sing Tao Daily* announced their intention to argue in court that police should not be allowed to use photographs and videotapes shot by the media to investigate the protesters.

Socialist candidate: 'Drop charges now'

BY ROBERT SIMMS

TORONTO—John Steele, Communist League candidate for mayor of Toronto, was among those taking part in the July 22 rally to demand the release and dropping of all charges against four detained activists for the rights of the homeless.

"The Toronto city authorities are covering up police brutality and clamping down on the democratic right to protest by carrying out these arrests backed up by the bail restrictions," said Steele following the rally at the courthouse. "The frame-up charges and bail restrictions against Clarke and all the others should be dropped immediately," he added.

Steele, a meat packer and member of the United Food and Commercial Workers union, addressed a Militant Labor Forum here the next day, where the Communist League campaign in the November 13 municipal elections was officially launched.

"Toronto mayor Melvin Lastman represents the class of super wealthy families that control the economy and government in Toronto, in Canada, and around the world. They live in homes costing many millions while thousands of homeless workers and their families sleep in hostels each night and hundreds of working people sleep on the streets, even in freezing weather," said Steele.

"Attacks on democratic rights by capitalist governments, such as the police assault on the July 22 demonstration against homelessness, are increasing," said Steele, as political polarization sharpens in Canada and the employers anticipate greater working-class resistance.

"Stockwell Day, the new leader of the Canadian Alliance, who is more openly rightist than any major bourgeois politician in recent memory, calls for return of the death penalty, additional laws and police to 'fight crime,' sending undocumented Chinese immigrant workers immediately back on a plane without the hearings they are currently entitled to, and the recriminalization of abortion."

Steele urged working people and their unions to fight to beat back the effort by the Lastman administration and the cops to victimize those involved in the June 15 protest. "Our watchword has to be 'an injury to one is an injury to all,'" he said.

March against cop brutality picks up steam

BY MAURICE WILLIAMS

Momentum is building for the August 26 national march on Washington against police brutality and racial profiling.

Organizers for the "Redeem the Dream" march say buses are set to leave from several states, including New York, New Jersey, Georgia, Alabama, Louisiana, Ohio, Michigan, and Illinois. According to initial reports, at least 65 buses are being organized in New York City and 19 from New Jersey. In Atlanta and Birmingham the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) has chartered buses.

In Boston the local chapter of the NAACP has called planning meetings on August 11 and 21 to build local participation. The Northeastern University Black Student Association is among the groups putting out publicity to reach out to students

around the city.

The August 26 demonstration, which according to organizers will demand "legislative and executive orders on police brutality and racial profiling," will commemorate the 37th anniversary of the 1963 civil rights march led by Martin Luther King. The action was called at a May 24 press conference in Washington by Alfred Sharpton, president of the National Action Network; Martin Luther King III, president of SCLC; the NAACP; and other Black rights organizations. The press conference also included relatives of people killed by the police violence, including the parents of African immigrant Amadou Diallo, who was slain in a hail of 41 bullets fired by New York cops last year.

For more information about the march, call (877) 9-REDEEM.

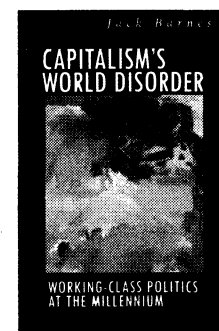
FROM PATHFINDER

Capitalism's World Disorder

WORKING-CLASS POLITICS AT THE MILLENNIUM

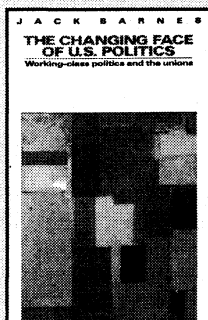
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Harris meets with strikers at Verizon, Domino Sugar in NY

BY JOE BROOKING

NEWYORK—"Our campaign backs the union members on strike against Verizon 100 percent," said Socialist Workers presidential candidate James Harris on the final day of a tour stop here. Picket lines were being set up as Harris headed to Boston, where he joined unionists who have mounted a solid strike against the telecommunications giant.

"Workers at Verizon know the reality of the 'miracle economy,'" Harris said. "Company profits and expansion have come from intensification of labor, lengthening the workweek, and a drive to dilute and ultimately get rid of the union itself. These strikers are standing up against the assaults by the industrial giants in the United States, joining the resistance being waged by coal miners, meat packers, aluminum and tire workers, and others."

The socialist candidate called on the government to end court-imposed restrictions on picketing and condemned the portrayal of the strikers as violence-prone by the big-business media.

In a three-day swing here, Harris also met with workers on strike against Marriott hotels and Domino Sugar in Brooklyn. Some 300 members of Local 1814 of the International Longshoremen's Association (ILA) have been striking Domino Sugar since June 15, 1999, when they walked off the job after working without a contract for nine months. Joe Crimi, vice president of Local 1814, and a dozen other workers filled in Harris and Socialist Workers senatorial candidate Jacob Perasso on the latest developments in the strike and described the solidarity they are receiving from other unions in New York.

Harris is a member of the Union of Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Employees, on leave from his job in Atlanta at a large garment distribution center of the Marshalls retail chain. His tour coincided with the drive to collect 30,000 signatures to place the Socialist Workers candidates on the ballot in New York.

So far 26,387 have been collected. During his visit he also took part in a discussion session over dinner hosted by the Young Socialists, was interviewed by WBAI radio,

and spoke at a citywide campaign meeting.

At the campaign rally, Harris reported that one of the pickets had asked him if he has spoken on college campuses, adding, "I hope you do, because we need educated young people who understand what you're talking about to help lead us." Harris noted that his campaign is always on the lookout for opportunities to speak on campuses, but he had explained that "the hardest thinking, the most sophisticated thinking, about what we face and what to do about it is occurring on that picket line and on others like it around the country. It is from struggles such as those at Domino Sugar, Verizon, and elsewhere that we will forge a leadership of the working class and fight to transform the unions into revolutionary instruments of struggle."

Under capitalism, Harris explained, workers are taught to see themselves not as actors, as the subjects of history, but as its objects. Workers, he said, "hope that the educational system will provide some solution to their problems. We are offered a voucher program, a magnet school, or some other scheme that will supposedly mean a better life for us or our children. But there are no individual solutions to the social problems we face."



Militant
Socialist Workers Party presidential candidate James Harris, second from left, talks with striking cleaners at Marriott Hotel in Brooklyn.

"Our campaign brings the history and lessons of working-class struggle to fighters today, such as those on the picket line at Domino Sugar, so we can begin to build the kind of revolutionary leadership that can resolve the social crisis we face. That's what all these books are about!" Harris concluded, pointing towards the large display of revolutionary literature at the back of the room.

Carlos, an immigrant worker from Suriname and a veteran of union battles in that country, was attending his first socialist campaign event. He said in an interview that he agreed with what Harris had to say. He first met campaign supporters who were

collecting signatures for ballot status. "Someone said something about opposing police brutality and the death penalty. That seemed like a good idea, so I signed the petition. Then I got a copy of the newspaper [the *Militant*]. I couldn't buy a book because I only had \$20 left for my food. But I read the paper at the bus stop and went back to the table and bought *Capitalism's World Disorder*. That's why I'm here tonight!"

Jacob Perasso, Socialist Workers candidate for U.S. Senate in New York, contributed to this article.

'Jail killer cops,' say SWP candidates

BY MARTY RESSLER

ST. LOUIS—Socialist Workers vice presidential candidate Margaret Trowe joined more than 200 Black youth and others in the town of Kinloch August 5 to protest the police killing of two unarmed Black men.

Under the pretext of a "drug investigation," cops on June 12 surrounded the car of Earl Murray and Ronald Beasley in broad daylight in the parking lot of a fast food restaurant. Eyewitnesses said that a police vehicle rammed into the back of their car, trapping them. The cops then fired 20 or more times, killing them both.

"This is another example of how the state carries out the death penalty," Trowe said. "Cop killings, state-sanctioned murder, deaths in prison, and workers being killed on the job are a result of the increasingly brutal system of capitalism. Our campaign demands the jailing and prosecution to the full extent of the law of the cops who killed Murray and Beasley."

Alyson Kennedy, Socialist Workers candidate for U.S. Senate in Missouri, a garment worker, and member of the Union of Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Em-

ployees, has attended a number of protests against the killings.

Mary Williams, who met the socialist candidates at one of these protests, attended a public meeting for Trowe and Kennedy August 6. "The killings were uncalled for," Williams said, "and served to put fear in other people. We're not safe in the streets—because of the cops." She said she is glad to see a response to the killings. A young worker who also met the socialists at one of the marches against police brutality attended the meeting and expressed interest in getting involved with the campaign.

Trowe said the socialist campaign "comes from within struggles of working people and gives a voice to these battles." Trowe spoke out against increasingly unsafe conditions on the job, pointing to the mine explosion in Utah earlier in the week where two coal miners died. "Farmers are also facing an unprecedented crisis," she said, reporting on a July 4 milk dumping by dairy farmers in several states.

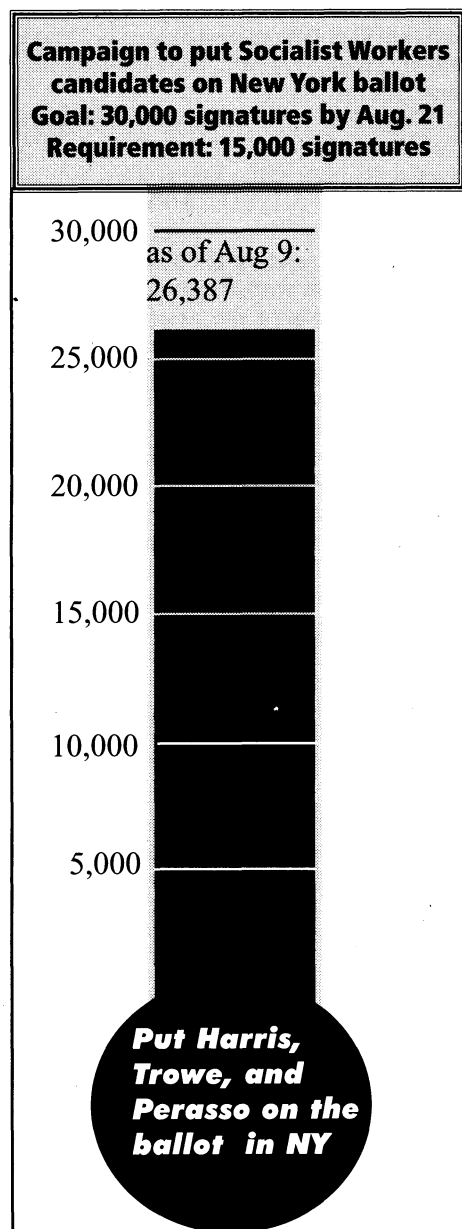
One farmer said he was "making a statement with this. We have had enough and can't take anymore," Trowe said, noting "a

white farmer in Wisconsin is saying the same thing as Black youth in St. Louis."

Kennedy and Trowe both spoke out in defense of campaign volunteer Bill Arth. The auto worker was staffing a table June 25 outside a store with the owner's permission. Arth and another campaign supporter were passing out campaign statements with the headline, "Prosecute and Jail the Cops Who Killed Earl Murray and Ronald Beasley."

Some cops came up and took a copy of the statement and later came back and demanded to see Arth's business license. He explained that he was part of a political campaign, and did not need one. The cops proceeded to write a summons. Arth faces a court date on August 16, and maximum penalties of one year in jail and a \$1,000 fine. Kennedy explained that the attempt to silence the socialist campaign is an attack on the rights of all working people.

"We are encouraging everyone who defends democratic rights to send a letter to the mayor demanding the citation be dropped and this harassment of our campaign be immediately ended," Kennedy said.



Manchester rail station cleaners fight for union

BY JULIE CRAWFORD AND DEBRA JACOBS

MANCHESTER, United Kingdom—Workers who clean the passenger railway station at Manchester Piccadilly here have been fighting for union recognition over the past three months.

The big majority of the 28 workers, seven of whom are on temporary contract, have signed up to join the National Union of Rail, Maritime, and Transport Workers (RMT). The company, however, has not yet responded to a letter from the RMT local union branch demanding union recognition for the cleaning workers.

Pall Mall, the company that took over the cleaning contract at the rail station in April, has been trying to intimidate workers to get them to carry out their jobs under dangerous conditions, such as cleaning platform edges while trains are moving, as well as doing maintenance jobs that include fixing electrical equipment without training.

One worker explained, "In the past these jobs were covered by SERCO [the previous company], who would bring in maintenance workers to do them. Now they expect us to cover the job. My father was a union man and he said that this is taking the job of another worker."

Workers responded to the atmosphere of intimidation by organizing a meeting, where they put together the demands they were going to take to the company. They demanded not to be assigned unsafe work, that the company cover jobs that are not theirs, and that the employer supply them with protective clothing and equipment.

They are also fighting for a contract that includes a cost-of-living pay raise, which they have not had for 18 months, as well as premium rates for shift work, weekend work, and overtime.

Currently the cleaning workers earn £3.83 (\$5.75) per hour plus 50 pence for day shift, and an extra 60 pence per hour for night shift. They also receive an "attendance allowance," but the bosses can withdraw it if workers are late.

The cleaners work six 12-hour shifts—three day shifts and three night shifts—before getting three days off. So one of their demands is to work an eight-hour day.

The bosses have refused to respond to any of these demands.

The workers at Piccadilly station are looking to meet with workers employed by Pall Mall at Leeds station to strengthen their fight for the union. Other workers at Manchester Piccadilly, members of the RMT, have ex-

tended solidarity with the fight for union recognition.

Julie Crawford and Debra Jacobs are members of the RMT at Piccadilly. Andrew Brown, a member of the RMT who works for Pall Mall, contributed to this article.

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Poultry workers in British Columbia strike for contract

BY BEVERLY BERNARDO

COQUITLAM, British Columbia—Some 225 unionists fighting for their first contract at Superior Poultry walked off the job here July 23. The workers, who are members of the United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) Local 1518, voted by a 98.5 percent margin June 11 to strike for improved working conditions and higher wages.

Conditions in the plant are deplorable. Workers start at \$7.15 per hour—the minimum wage in the province of British Columbia. Few make \$10 an hour, even after several years of employment. There are no medical, dental, or pension benefits. Overtime is mandatory with workers regularly putting in 12 hours a day, six days a week. During the busy season around Thanksgiving and Christmas this climbs to 14-16 hours a day. Over the last few years the line speed has increased as the number of chickens killed daily has soared from 25-30,000 a day to 60-65,000.

The company ignores seniority rights, which have been standard in the industry for more than 30 years. When there is a shortage of work, the bosses arbitrarily pick who goes home after four hours. "If you question their decision you're told you don't have a right to ask. They say leave now or clean out your locker," said a female worker who asked that her name not be used. The need to end company harassment and for workers to be treated with respect is expressed by everyone on the picket line.

Superior Poultry is part of the Pollon group—the largest producer of poultry in the province. Hallmark Poultry in Vancouver remains unorganized but 80 workers at Colonial Farms near Chilliwack won the right to be represented by the UFCW about two years ago. They won a contract similar to what Local 1518 members are fighting for.

The employers at Superior Poultry have transformed the plant into a fortress. Tarps and garbage bags cover the fences to pre-



Militant/Paul Kouri

Poultry workers walk picket line against Superior Poultry company. The UFCW members went on strike July 23 for better working conditions and higher wages.

vent strikers from seeing inside. The bosses have also put barbed wire on top of the fences and hired a troop of private security goons called the "White Knights," who harass strikers from atop platforms on a raised forklift.

"What's a white girl like you doing on this picket line?" one goon provocatively asked a strike supporter. This racist com-

ment referred to the fact that the vast majority of workers at Superior Poultry are immigrants—from India, the Philippines, and other semicolonial countries. "Stop Immigrant Exploitation at Superior Poultry," reads one of the picket signs. One worker from Central America was happy to receive leaflets about an immigrant rights march taking place August 6 across the border in the state of Washington.

The plant is still operating with about 50 workers who have crossed the picket line. The strikers explained to *Militant* reporters that the company had used small favors to convince a section of the workforce that they were better off without the union.

Tension is high on the picket lines when the scabs enter and leave the plant, driving vans and trucks very aggressively. An accident nearly occurred when a striker fell under the wheels of a truck exiting the premises. On August 2, Superior Poultry's application for an injunction limiting the number of picketers was rejected.

The strikers are reaching out and winning support for their fight. During a union information session on developments around the contract at Fletchers Fine Foods, where workers are also members of UFCW Local 1518, one unionist pointed to the strike by Superior Poultry workers as an example of how to fight back. The bosses at Fletchers are demanding major wage and benefit roll-backs in a new contract. The previous agreement expired May 31.

At the picket line, Richard, a worker in a nonunion recycling plant, said that he "really wants the workers to win because now they make people go so fast for the money they make." One striker's husband, who works at Tree Island Steel, a Teamsters-organized plant, has been getting his co-workers to visit the picket line to show their support.

UFCW Local 1518 has posted material on its web site (www.ufcw1518.com) to inform people of developments in the strike.

Beverly Bernardo is a member of UFCW Local 1518 at Fletchers Fine Foods in Vancouver. Paul Kouri, a member of the Teamsters, contributed to this article.

Union fighter throws Buchanan off balance

BY EVA BRAIMAN

ASHLAND, Ohio—Supporters of ultrarightist Patrick Buchanan's campaign for president as the Reform Party candidate held a rally here July 8 attended by 80 people, most of whom were sympathetic to Buchanan's views. The all-white audience was entirely elderly or middle-aged.

Ashland is adjacent to the town of Mansfield, where 600 members of the United Steelworkers of America (USWA) Local 169 have been locked out by AK Steel for nearly a year. The lockout is a daily fact of life for people living in the area. They have been subject to the influx of scores of armed guards and scabs hired by AK Steel and regular attacks on the union through court injunctions and full-page ads run by the company in the local paper accusing union members of acts of terrorism.

Buchanan's campaign organizers made an effort to attract locked-out Steelworkers to the event. The *Mansfield News Journal* published a letter to the editor and a news article announcing that "locked-out workers from AK Steel will be admitted free to the rally," which was held at Ashland University.

Supporters of the Buchanan campaign also went down to the union hall to encourage attendance at the rally. Only one member of the local attended the meeting.

At the campaign rally, an hour-long video was shown recounting Buchanan's life story and playing up his past Republican credentials, his close political relationship with and admiration for Richard Nixon, Barry Goldwater, and Ronald Reagan. The video

details the ultrarightist's electoral successes, including excerpts from his "culture war" speech at the 1992 Republican National Convention. It shows pictures of industrial workers as Buchanan declares that "beneath the surface prosperity there is a quiet depression and deep economic insecurity. Real wages for the working class and rural people have declined." He invites supporters to sign up for the Buchanan brigades and join his supporters' efforts against a woman's right to choose abortion, affirmative action, and "free trade."

In his talk, Buchanan appealed to patriotic chauvinism and economic nationalism. Among other themes, he railed against the North American Free Trade Agreement and the General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs, called for expanding the U.S. border patrol to prevent workers from immigrating to the United States from Mexico, and vowed that as president he would use the U.S. military to "take back" the Panama Canal.

The one locked-out Steelworker in attendance came with his strike T-shirt and buttons, and held up a union picket sign through the entire meeting. When Buchanan finally called on him during the question-and-answer period, the union member was barely able to speak the few words "Sir, I am locked out by AK Steel" before he was interrupted by the rightist politician, who launched into a tirade against the "dumping of foreign steel" on the U.S. market, arguing that this was the source of the "pressure they [the steel manufacturers] are under because of the competition."

The USWA member replied that, far from being on the verge of financial ruin due to competition, Armco, which was subsequently bought by AK Steel after the lock-out began last September, "made a million dollars last year."

The company is trying to force unlimited mandatory overtime on the workers, which would also enable it to eliminate jobs.

Buchanan, whose presentation up to that point had been delivered with calm assurance, grew flustered. A few others in the audience confirmed in their comments that Armco had been very profitable and that the goal of the company in the lockout was to bust the union.

At that point, event organizer Virginia Brooks stood up and said to the unionist, "I invited all your people from that steel group to come free tonight. It's too bad you're the only one who came." Buchanan remarked that he was not "familiar with the situation" and quickly turned to address other questions.

After the meeting, the locked-out Steelworker told the *Militant* that he didn't like Buchanan's answer to him because he believes it is greed and not dumping that is behind the company's actions. He explained that he had attended the meeting to publicize the issues in their union fight.

The unionist pointed out that Buchanan was bragging about being in the White House during the Reagan administration, "which means he was part of firing all the air traffic controllers," a serious blow the government dealt the labor movement in 1981.

Strikers at Pepsi plant reject contract offer

BY TOM FISHER

BURNSVILLE, Minnesota—Striking workers at the Pepsi Bottling Group plant here overwhelmingly rejected a contract offer from the company July 30. Many of the 440 striking workers say the offer was similar to the one they rejected before the strike began June 11. The solid rejection of the company's proposal registers workers' renewed confidence and determination to continue their strike.

"I haven't sat out here for seven weeks for nothing. This was a nothing contract offer." That was how striker Jim Erb, a member of the negotiating committee with 31 years at the company, summarized the attitudes of many striking workers.

The members of Teamsters Local 792 voted down the bosses' proposal 319 to 18, a similar margin to the 356-14 vote that launched the strike. According to Erb, workers in the union meeting "tore apart" the contract offer in a 45-minute discussion. Another member of the negotiating committee, Jerry Ernst, told the Minneapolis *Star Tribune*, "It was a pretty emotional meeting. I would guess the ball is in [the

company's] court."

At issue in the conflict are wages, pensions, and jobs. Workers at Pepsi are demanding a 4 percent annual raise for three years, the same raise won by unionists at the nearby Coca-Cola bottling plant at the beginning of June. The company is offering a 2.7 percent annual raise for four years.

The strikers are also demanding an early retirement plan of "30 and out." This would enable workers to retire after 30 years of employment with the company and to receive a pension. Workers on the picket line say that the work is backbreaking and that they shouldn't have to wait until age 65 to receive a pension. The demand of "30 and out" has been won by some union auto workers and some workers in other industries in which the work is especially physically demanding.

The workers at Pepsi are also fighting a company proposal that would eliminate 50 jobs over three years by cutting the direct delivery of fountain products to restaurants in the area.

The mood of the strikers is combative, especially in the afternoons when the scab

trucks return from their runs. About 20 strikers staff picket lines at three different entrances to the plant.

The company claims it is maintaining production at 95 percent of pre-strike levels by bringing in supervisors and workers from other bottling plants. However, union spokespeople point out that some convenience stores have been running out of Pepsi products in the summer months and that the company is making extreme efforts to maintain production.

"The company forced its supervisors to work on the 4th of July. This is the first time ever that anyone worked on the 4th of July," Erb said in an interview.

The union also dispatches cars with strikers to follow the scab trucks and set up picket lines at stores, restaurants, and warehouses where the products are delivered. On July 22 the union organized a march and rally of 500 in front of the plant. Union officials have also called for a boycott of Pepsi products. Union members go to fairs and festivals in the Twin Cities area and pass out leaflets asking for other to observe their call for a boycott.

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Western coal miners: 'No 12 hours! We win!'

Continued from front page

community, along with other unions and individuals we didn't even know from other parts of the country."

In a press release issued after the vote, local president Elbert Harman stated, "Because of our solidarity we were able to achieve a contract that has no concessions." The statement added that Local 1307 pledged to support striking members of UMW Local 1332 in "whatever they need: finances, food bank, and bodies to help resolve their ongoing labor dispute."

The miners began returning to work the next morning. Greeting the first workers going in were 20 members of Miners' Backbone. They held signs saying, "We Won!" while passing out red armbands to miners as they went into the gate to signify their victory and show solidarity with those who were still on strike against P&M at McKinley.

No major concessions

The approved contract, which lasts six years, drops all references to 12-hour shifts and a seven-day production schedule. In fact, the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) demanded by the company was reduced from eight pages to one paragraph. The shortened MOU gives the company the right to propose alternative work schedules, but they must be approved by a majority of the workers affected.

The new contract gives miners a \$1,000 signing bonus and raises in hourly pay of 30 cents per year for a \$1.80 across-the-board raise. It allows miners to retire after 20 years of service if the mine is closed or a miner will not be recalled after a layoff. This provision brings them up to par with UMW locals where the companies are members of

the Bituminous Coal Operators Association (BCOA).

Monthly pensions were increased by \$8.00 per year of service retroactive to a miner's seniority date. Under the old contract a miner who retired after 20 years of service and was 62 years old would receive a pension of \$750.50 a month, and after 30 years \$1,017.50. With the new contract, a miner after 20 years of service will receive a pension of \$910.50, increasing to \$1,257.50 after 30 years of service.

The company will continue to pay 100 percent of the miners' health-care premiums. On the other hand, miners will pay an increase from \$5.00 to \$7.50 for prescription drugs and from \$5.00 to \$15.00 for doctors' visits.

Retired and disabled miners and widows of miners will receive yearly bonuses over the life of the contract, and those 65 and older will have no increase in co-payments for prescriptions or doctors' visits. Retirees will also see an increase in their pensions.

Marlin Long, a dozer operator who has worked at the Kemmerer mine for 27 years, explained in an interview, "This contract is not a perfect contract and I don't think there is anyone in the local that would tell you it is. I was not all that concerned about the wages. When the company proposed the 12 hours I knew right then I and others were not going to change our lifestyles. We've been taking it on the chin for so many years from companies like P&M.

"I was really concerned at first that P&M would have its way. I thought: we might get hammered on 12 hours. As the support and solidarity from inside and outside our local kept growing we just kept getting stronger. And after that first vote where we rejected P&M's proposal by a strong majority, I knew



Militant/Jack Parker

Striking miners in Kemmerer, Wyoming, defeated P&M's concession demands.

we were a different union than before."

Long added, "We showed a lot of people you can fight a company and win. We didn't win for ourselves. We showed if you stick together and get support, you can come out of fights like this a lot stronger."

He cautioned, "We've won this battle but the war is not over. We have to get ready for more battles. The whole labor movement has to get stronger, including the nonunion workers."

For most of the strike P&M refused to negotiate with the miners. Six weeks into the walkout, four strikers crossed the picket line, two of them union members.

That week, more solidarity began to arrive for the strikers. Members of the Steelworkers union from the nearby trona (soda ash) mines brought important contributions. A lunch and rally was held with their delegation. Women supporters of the strike organized a march and expanded picket to "greet" those who crossed the line and to show P&M they were standing firm. They also organized a pro-union honk-a-thon in the downtown triangle in Kemmerer. These actions were an important turning point in the miners' fight.

The local newspaper ran articles quoting P&M officials accusing strikers of violence. According to local president Harmon, P&M spokespeople visited businesses in the area and threatened them with withdrawing their accounts if the store owners didn't stop supporting the UMW strikers.

On July 19, after the first contract proposal in the strike was overwhelmingly rejected, P&M sent a letter to Jerry Jones, UMW international vice president and chief union negotiator. The letter declared that an impasse had been reached and that the rejected contract was now in force. It invited the strikers who wanted to come back to work to do so.

The strikers responded by holding more rallies and expanded pickets, leading up to the successful July 26 march and rally organized by UMW Region 4 in front of P&M's headquarters in Denver.

During the course of this fight the workers faced harassment from cops and private security guards. Pickets were videotaped. Strike supporters were stopped arbitrarily and threatened with arrest for disturbing the peace and other frivolous charges.

At a local motel where coal truck drivers who hauled coal into the power plant stayed, members of the Miners' Backbone began organizing regular rallies. A few days prior to the contract vote they held a rally, winning support from some passing Teamster drivers. The Teamsters stopped their trucks and joined the protest, only to have cops threaten some unionists with arrest for obstructing traffic.

Many of the miners at Kemmerer expressed the need to turn now to the UMW members whose contracts expire at the end of August at four coal mines owned by Peabody Coal. These are the Kayenta and Black Mesa mines on the Navajo Nation in Arizona, Seneca mine in Colorado, and the Big Sky mine in Montana.

"This was an important victory for us," said Matt Krall, who has worked at the Kemmerer mine for 27 years. "There were no major concessions. In fact, we went forward from the last contract. We have never been stronger in this local." He added, "Now we have to help the McKinley workers, and we may need to help the miners against Peabody. What we were able to do here will be a plus for their negotiations and what they face with the company."

Local 1307 president Elbert Harmon said

in an interview, "I honestly believe we have set a pattern for the Western Division and for the whole UMW. Out of this, already several of the nonunion miners have asked to join the union."

"The solidarity the miners got was the key to winning this thing. I believe without it they could not have done it. The whole UMW owes a debt of gratitude to these fighters. If 1307 didn't beat back the 12 hours we would be facing a lot of grief," Ed Hinkle told the *Militant*. Hinkle, a member of UMW Local 1984 at Blue Mountain Energy's Deserado mine in Rangely, Colorado, helped his local organize solidarity with the strikers at Kemmerer.

Local 1307 received many contributions from area store owners and individuals, as well as locals of the Teamsters, Letter Carriers, Communication Workers, International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, and other UMW locals in Region 4, along with state AFL-CIO bodies in the West.

Some of the largest contributions came from two United Steelworkers of America locals from the nearby trona mines near Rock Springs, Wyoming. Sizable donations came from workers at the Chevron oil refinery in Los Angeles who belong to the Paper, Allied-Industrial, Chemical, and Energy Workers International Union (PACE). Strikers from P&M went to the Chevron plant gate and leafleted workers there. The miners were planning similar visits to workers at the Chevron refinery in Salt Lake City and a protest at Chevron headquarters in San Francisco.

The UMW local at P&M's North River mine, just outside Birmingham, Alabama, organized solidarity with the strikers. Unionists there wore red armbands to work in solidarity with the strikes and organized at least two miners "memorial days"—days off work—to show their support.

The contributions helped keep the strikers' Food Pantry, organized and run by the Miners' Backbone, well stocked.

Miners' Backbone

Miners' Backbone was formed shortly after the four workers crossed the picket line. Mary Service, one of its leaders, explained to the *Militant*, "I have never been on a picket line before this strike. I was scared my first time on the line. I saw the look on the miners faces the day when their own members crossed that picket line. After that I said to myself: we have got to help these guys."

Service said, "That's when this strike became everybody's. We pulled together as a union family. We formed the Miners' Backbone and started to organize rallies and solidarity for our strike. We started our weekly meetings with 15 women. We then went to 25 and then we had 35 and then 40 women coming to our Wednesday meetings helping to organize our work. At the beginning of the strike, who would have thought we would have gotten as strong as we have? We're going to keep this going."

Sue Hunzie, another leader of the Miners' Backbone, told the *Militant*, "We are not going to stop organizing now that the strike is over. With the Peabody contracts coming up, maybe we can help them with organizing support and solidarity with what we learned here."

She stated, "We are going to do what we can to help other unions on strike. We owe a lot of people for the support they gave to us but we learned that you have to have solidarity and unity to win."

On August 19 the Miners' Backbone will be hosting a "Victory Dance" at the Eagles Lodge to celebrate the strike victory.

New Mexico miners beat back concessions, celebrate victory

BY LARRY LANE
AND LESLIE DORK

TSE BONITO, New Mexico—Members of United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) Local 1332 voted 214-31 on August 6 to ratify a new six-year contract with Pittsburg and Midway Coal Co. (P&M). More than 300 miners had been on strike since May 15 at P&M's McKinley mine, located on the Navajo Nation, near the town of Gallup. The Navajo Nation covers parts of New Mexico, Arizona, and Utah.

The vote came less than a week after workers at P&M's Kemmerer mine in Wyoming ratified a similar agreement.

At union headquarters in nearby Window Rock, Arizona, an all-day celebration was in progress. Miners and their families arrived throughout the day, mostly in pickup trucks. They voted inside the union hall and a lunch was served by the women's auxiliary while Navajo drummers played in a tent in the parking lot next to the canteen. More than 90 percent of the workers at the McKinley mine are Navajo.

At an open mike rally at strike headquarters, several people thanked the substantial number of miners and members of the women's auxiliary who had been on the picket line daily throughout the long strike.

"We're proud we were able to secure the same improvements as our brothers and sisters in Wyoming," said Lawrence Oliver, UMW Local 1332 president. "More important, we were able to defeat a proposal that would have required us to give up our hard-won health care benefits and enter into the federal government's Indian Health Services [IHS] program."

Oliver was referring to a bribe that P&M proposed to Local 1332 members—that if the miners gave up their fully funded health care and used IHS, the company would pay each Navajo miner \$100 a month.

Most of the miners *Militant* reporters talked with at the ratification vote agreed with Oliver. Beating back the company's attempt to place Navajo miners in IHS was seen as the biggest victory in the strike.

Local UMW members were also happy about beating back the company on overtime pay. P&M's original proposal was that miners would get paid time and half only

after a 40-hour week instead of an 8-hour day, eliminating time and a half for Saturdays and double time for Sundays.

Local 1332 was also able to push back P&M's attempt to implement an "alternative work schedule" that would have meant 10 to 12 hour workdays.

Oliver noted that in the last big strike, in 1987, one-third of the workforce had not participated. "I would like to thank all those new miners for striking with us," he said. "Your solidarity made us a whole lot stronger."

Phyllis Shanklin, speaking for the women's auxiliary, related that they had organized many fund-raising events throughout the strike, such as dances and music events, that provided lots of food and meals. She felt one of their most important successes was that they had raised \$1,600 to pay utility bills for miners so their electricity and gas wouldn't get turned off.

John Wilson, a miner who has worked at McKinley for only three years, related how he had been part of a team that traveled to San Francisco at the end of July to meet with San Francisco labor officials to map out plans for a union rally at the headquarters of Chevron, P&M's parent company.

During the strike, Local 1332 members traveled to Los Angeles, where they won support from workers at Chevron's El Segundo refinery. Miners spoke before the New Mexico State AFL-CIO in Las Cruces and sent 40 members and supporters to a rally at P&M's corporate offices in Denver on July 26, where they were joined by a similar number of UMW strikers from Kemmerer, Wyoming.

"Chevron did not like the image the *Denver Post* projected," Lawrence Oliver said, referring to the newspaper coverage of the Denver action, where workers drew attention to the company's anti-worker practices.

"The paper presented them as using discrimination and racial tactics. I'm sure that helped push their decision to renegotiate."

Local 1332 was planning a rally for August 13 that was to include miners from the Black Mesa and Kayenta mines, also on the Navajo Nation. Their contracts with Peabody Coal are to expire August 31. Because of the victory at McKinley, that action has been turned into a victory celebration.

St. Paul meat packers defend new union

Continued from front page

the company continues to increase the line speed.

"On the average, people in the cut department are working only seven hours because of the speedup," said Amy Roberts, a worker in the department. "One day we worked only six hours, until 12:30 p.m. and processed 520 cattle. The company is trying to squeeze every penny of profit from our labor and punish us for voting for the union."

A special issue of the *Workers' Voice*, the bilingual newsletter of the in-plant organizing committee, urged workers to monitor the speed of the line and take action against the company for its violation of the agreement. "The commitment made by the company should be honored. They should be concerned about the number of injuries incurred when it is so high. You can help stop that. Each worker at Dakota Premium needs to become a protester of the speed of the line. This can only happen by working collectively. Both kill and processing need to watch out for unfair increases."

Some 220 workers are employed in the beef slaughterhouse, the big majority of them Spanish-speaking immigrants. The company is owned by Rosen Diversified Industries, the country's seventh-largest beef processor. It owns nonunion packing operations in Omaha, Nebraska, and Yankton, South Dakota; and a union-organized plant in Long Prairie, Minnesota, 100 miles north-east of the Twin Cities.

Company challenges election

The company has filed a challenge to the July 21 election with the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB). It makes three claims. First, that a representative of the union was offering \$10,000 to each worker at Dakota Premium who changed their mind and voted for the union. Second, that representatives of the union were threatening to turn in the names of undocumented workers to the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) if the union lost the election. Third, that union supporters organized such a noise of pro-union slogans near the voting area that workers were prevented from having a free decision.

"Absurd and baseless," was how Local 789 president William Pearson described the charges in an interview with the St. Paul *Pioneer Press*.

The *Workers' Voice* explained the falseness of the company claims. In an article titled "Workers Demand a Fair Fast Contract and Respect for Their Vote," the in-plant organizing committee replied, "The lopsided win (112-71) should have sent a loud, clear message to [company manager] Mr. Steve Cortinas and the owners of Rosen Diversified. Workers demand a fast, fair contract and they want to be members of Local 789. Unfortunately the company lived up to their self-fulfilling prophecy. They had repeatedly told workers they would not recognize the union and that they would never get a contract. Rather than begin to negotiate, they chose to use a legal system and pay attorneys out of Omaha bushel baskets of money instead of paying their own employees what we are worth."

Rebutting the charge that representatives of the union threatened legal enforcement action against workers by the INS, the *Workers' Voice* pointed out that the union has a record in defense of immigrant rights. Workers who came to the union hall for meetings heard speeches by union, community, and religious leaders that informed them of their rights. It is the company that has a long record of trying to use the immigration question to intimidate workers from asserting their rights.

Company threatens immigrant workers

In fact, the company sent home two workers at the plant for alleged problems with their immigration papers. One, from the boning department, was sent home the day after his name was published in the *Workers' Voice* as a member of the leadership committee in the plant. The other worker, from the packaging area, was sent home from work the same day. Leaders of the in-plant committee organized to get another issue of the *Workers' Voice* in print to answer this attack.

"Yesterday morning, the management of Dakota Premium Foods sent home two well known union activists in a clear escalation of their efforts to destroy the fight to unionize the plant," the paper said. "Victimized

because of alleged problems with their immigration status, both workers have been known as responsible and productive individuals. Since the beginning of the drive to organize the union in the plant, launched with a sit-down strike last June 1st, the company has been floating threats to workers about using potential immigration problems as a weapon against anyone who would consider supporting the union. It has now carried through with its threats. This attack, combined with the company's effort to overturn the election victory, is part of an effort to reverse the gains made by the workers' newly won union, and to intimidate and demoralize the union fighters in the plant. Their goal is to ignore the democracy of the vote and to try to take away from the workers any decision-making power."

In large, bold type at the end of the newsletter, it was added: "Yesterday's events are similar to what happened to the Holiday Inn Express workers. Our leadership committee will be working with the victimized union members to restore their jobs and we will go after the company with the same tenacity the Hotel and Restaurant Employees Union did."

Eight workers at the Holiday Inn Express hotel in downtown Minneapolis who were active in a successful union-organizing drive were arrested last fall. The hotel manager called the INS and said he had just discovered irregularities in their immigration papers. Demonstrations by unions in alliance with organizations fighting for immigrants' rights prevented seven of the workers from being deported by the INS. The case received broad publicity both locally and nationally.

The day after the *Workers' Voice* exposed the company's whole scheme, the worker from packaging who had been sent home was recalled. The worker from the boning department has still not been brought back.

More attacks on worker leaders

Meanwhile, two members of the in-plant leadership committee of the fight at Dakota Premium have been harassed in recent days. One is José Flores, a worker in the kill department. The other is Samuel Farley, in the cut department. On August 4 the supervisors loaded extra slabs of beef above Farley's station on the boning line and then threatened to remove him from the line for not being able to keep up. Farley, however, is known as a hard worker and faster than almost all the other boners in his area. The attack by the supervisors is an effort to remove Farley from the boning lines, where he is effective in gaining support for the union, and to move him back to work in isolation from other meat packers.

To keep up the pressure on the company and answer these attacks, supporters of the union have organized a 16-person interim Leadership Committee. Each of these workers can be relied on by workers in their areas to take notice of company attacks in their areas and help to initiate a response. There have been several meetings of the Leadership Committee since the July 21 victory. In addition, a general membership meeting

was called for August 10 after work.

In a development related to the Dakota fight, 500 people participated in a vigil on Sunday, July 30, outside the Holy Rosary Church in Minneapolis to protest the forced resignation of Father Ed Leahy, a Catholic priest who has helped organize the demonstrations for the rights of immigrants in the Twin Cities area in recent years and has been outspoken in defense of the meat packers' cause at Dakota Premium. The congregation at Holy Rosary Church, led by Father Leahy, supported and defended the eight Mexican workers from the Holiday Inn Express after they were arrested by the INS.

Leaflets building the vigil, posted in areas around meat packing plants, cited his support to the meat packers' fight as a reason to defend him.

Among the speakers at the vigil was Local 789 president Pearson, whose remarks

were received with an ovation and chants of "Si se puede" (Yes we can).

Pablo Tapia, a member of the congregation and a leader of the local immigrants rights group ISAIAH, told the *Militant*, "This firing is a big blow to the Latino community. However, it is also just another battlefield for us."

According to Francisco Picado, a full-time union organizer for Local 789, members of the Leadership Committee have begun to talk to workers at Long Prairie Packing, the unionized sister plant of Dakota Premium in Minnesota, to discuss the need for solidarity and share experiences on how to answer the problem of the increased line speed. Workers at Long Prairie have told them that line speed there is a constant problem and that workers there are constantly getting injured. They are giving the workers from Dakota Premium a warm response.

Immigrants in Florida demand rights



Militant/Eric Simpson

At August 5 and 6 events in Miami, West Palm Beach, and Homestead, Florida, hundreds of immigrant workers demanded full legal rights in the United States. Above: participant in Miami march of 1,000, many of them immigrants from Haiti. Placard in Spanish reads: "Committee of Honduran families — immigrants today, citizens in the future: we demand general amnesty."

Utah coal mine blast kills two workers

BY JACK PARKER

HELPER, Utah—On the morning of August 1, an explosion ripped through Willow Creek mine here, killing two miners and injuring eight others, two of them seriously. The crew of 10 had been operating a long-wall mining machine.

Around midnight a small fire broke out and all 10 miners tried to put it out. Before they were able to get the fire under control, the blaze ignited a pocket of methane gas. Killed in the explosion were Cory Nielson 28, a propman who had worked in the mine for 16 weeks, and Shane Stansfield, 29, a mechanic who had been at Willow Creek for 24 weeks.

Two other miners were flown to University Hospital in Salt Lake City: Tyson Hales, 21, and Kyle Medley, 27. Hales was listed in critical condition on August 8, with a closed head injury and burns, and Medley was in serious condition with multiple fractures and burns to his face and arms.

Hales and Medley were saved when Willow Creek's mine-rescue team ignored warnings and entered the mine to carry out the workers.

Willow Creek is a nonunion mine. It is managed by Cyprus Plateau Mining Corp., a subsidiary of RAG American Coal, one of the world's biggest coal producers. When in operation, the mine, which employs 325 workers, produces about 5 million tons of coal annually.

This was not the first safety problem at the mine. Willow Creek, which miners report has a reputation of being a gassy mine, was closed for a year beginning in November 1998 after methane gas ignited, causing a blaze that took 12 months to put out. The 46 miners who were working at that time managed to escape without serious injury. In December 1999, RAG resumed operations, but only recently had begun to mine the section where the August 1 fire and explosion occurred.

Records show that the federal Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) cited Willow Creek management for 615 safety violations between October 1996 and the mine's last inspection, on July 30, 2000. MSHA deemed 286 of the violations "substantial and serious" and the fines exceeded \$270,000. The rules infractions included

lack of proper roof controls to prevent collapses of coal or rocks, and failure to test for explosive methane gas every 20 minutes where mining occurs.

To suffocate the fire, all five mine portals and the 120-foot ventilation shaft have been filled with dirt. RAG officials said they did not know how long it would take to extinguish the blaze, which carbon monoxide tests indicated was still burning.

MSHA inspectors said that it will be several days before they expect to release a preliminary report on their findings of the cause of the explosion.

Four miners have been killed in Utah so far this year, up from one in 1999. In a related development, Claud Butler, 45, a haul truck driver, was killed July 29 at Black Butte, a nonunion mine near Rock Springs, Wyoming. Butler ran off the road and was thrown from his vehicle. Miners at Black Butte have been working a substantial amount of overtime because of the UMW strike in nearby Kemmerer. Coal from Black Butte has been used to fuel the PP&L power plant outside Kemmerer. Prior to the strike, PP&L burned coal from the Kemmerer mine.

Socialist conference attracts young and working-class fighters

BY PATRICK O'NEILL

OBERLIN, Ohio—"This conference was it for deciding to join the Young Socialists. I got a chance to really see how it operated—it was detailed, structured, enthusiastic, and driven. I want to be part of it."

Angela Abernathy, from St. Paul, Minnesota, was one of four attending the Active Workers Conference here who asked to join the Young Socialists. Some 450 people attended the conference, held July 27-29 at Oberlin College, including members of the Socialist Workers Party, Young Socialists, and communist leagues in several countries, together with supporters of the communist movement and other working people engaged in struggle around the country.

The growing labor and farm struggles in this country, and the building and structuring of the communist movement through participation in these fights, were the focus of the feature talks, panel sessions, classes, and other discussions at the Active Workers Conference. They found a keen audience among the more than 20 people at their first such gathering.

Many had already been involved in working-class and social protest actions, and often had first met communist workers and Young Socialists—and had begun to read the *Militant*, *Perspectiva Mundial*, and Pathfinder books—through such activity.

Moses Williams, who works as an X-ray technician at a Newark hospital, helped lead a successful effort to organize his workplace into the Service Employees International Union. As a longtime unionist, he has be-

come an avid reader of Pathfinder books. "The ruling class doesn't have a good sense of history," he said. "They're taking us back to the conditions even before the Depression, when we came close to revolution here."

Sharon Russ, a 39-year-old worker from St. Petersburg, Florida, met Socialist Workers vice-presidential candidate Margaret Trowe and campaign supporters at the conference of the National Organization for Women, held in Miami in early July. She described joining a demonstration in Tallahassee, Florida, in March in which thousands of students, workers, farmers, and others condemned the efforts by the administration of Gov. John Ellis Bush to undercut affirmative action programs.

Example of Cuban revolution

Ronald Orelie, a young hotel worker and Haitian immigrant living in Miami, was struck by the relentless profit drive of the U.S. bosses. "The bourgeoisie is putting their foot on the neck of the workers," he said. Orelie also follows the class struggle in Haiti closely. "I am critical of the government there," he said. "I compare it with what happened in Cuba, where within a few years everyone knew how to read and write through a literacy campaign. Haiti still has a population that is 85 percent illiterate," he said. "Only one person in 10 has a job. We need a total revolution to change the system and the state."

Pedro Rubén Jiménez listened closely to the presentations by representatives of the Cuban revolution at the conference. "The



Militant/Dave Wulp (top), Aaron Armstrong (bottom)

At Active Workers Conference: browsing Pathfinder books, participating in fund rally.

Cuban comrades who addressed the conference provide a motivation to follow the Cuban road," he commented. Jiménez, 26, is originally from the state of Oaxaca in southern Mexico, where he has been active in an organization of peasants, teachers, and other working people.

"I've learned about the strike by laundry workers in Chicago," he said, referring to the union battle at the Five Star Laundry in

that city.

Jiménez himself works at an industrial laundry in Rome, Georgia. "And the resistance by our fellow workers in the tire industry is very important," he added. Two representatives of striking workers at Titan Tire in Natchez, Mississippi, attended the conference. Jiménez returned to Georgia eager to study books such as *Capitalism's World Disorder* that explain a course for building a revolutionary movement through today's class battles.

Building a trust among workers

Arnar Sigurdsson, 17, a member of the Young Socialists in Iceland, said, "The first working-class struggle that I felt like I was in the middle of was the bus drivers' strike in Reykjavik." Some 160 drivers in the capital of Iceland walked off the job in June, protesting their work conditions, defending their union, and demanding an across-the-board wage increase.

"By going to their picket lines I have begun to understand the importance of steadily building a political trust and relationship with other workers as we do our political work as communists," he said.

Sigurdsson added that he appreciates the importance of having an international communist movement. "As a small group in Iceland, we are able to function as communists because there is the Pathfinder printshop and the Socialist Workers Party here. We can't function without that. It broadens our horizons."

Militant/Perspectiva Mundial Fund launched

BY MAURICE WILLIAMS

OBERLIN, Ohio—At the closing event of the July 27-29 Active Workers Conference here, a campaign was launched to raise \$125,000 for the *Militant/Perspectiva Mundial* Fund 2000, which runs through November 13. It will help finance operating expenses, reporting trips, and other costs of producing the two socialist periodicals.

"Launching this fund is a good way to celebrate what we've accomplished at the conference," said Margaret Trowe, a leader of the Socialist Workers Party who led the appeal for funds. "Workers who read the *Militant* and *PM* know how important it is for them in resisting the capitalist offensive and in charting a revolutionary perspective."

The audience, which had just heard a presentation by Socialist Workers Party national secretary Jack Barnes closing the three-day gathering, responded enthusiastically to Trowe's fund pitch.

They stomped their feet, shouted out pledges being made to the fund, wrote out checks and envelopes with pledges, and generally enjoyed themselves. By the end of the evening, \$62,500 has been raised in pledges and contributions.

Those at the Active Workers Conference returned to their respective cities to begin the work of organizing a broad fund-raising campaign to raise the \$125,000 over the next four months.

They are mapping plans to approach co-workers who read the *Militant* and *Perspectiva Mundial*, workers and farmers who are engaged in struggles around the country, and others who value the irreplaceable role of the two socialist publications.

Contributions from workers and farmers are the chief source of funding for the *Militant* and *Perspectiva Mundial*. They get no financing from wealthy businessmen, bankers, or commercial advertising in their pages.

A growing number of miners have become regular readers of the *Militant*. Over the past year the number of subscribers who are members of the United Mine Workers of America rose from 12 to 62. This increase is an indication both of the rising social movement of working people in the coalfields and the efforts by communist workers to reach out to them—from the suc-

cessful strikes in New Mexico and Wyoming that beat back the concession demands of Pittsburg and Midway Coal Co., to the campaign to defend lifetime health benefits for miners and their families.

The two socialist publications not only present truthful news of interest to working people. They also provide a Marxist class explanation of the main questions facing working people.

This was captured in the front page of the May 8 issue of the *Militant*, headlined "INS assault in Miami strikes blow to the working class: In defense of the Cuban revolution, in defense of the working class!" which condemned the April 22 commando-style raid by 150 federal cops on a Miami home that seized Cuban child Elián González. The socialist press campaigned both to demand that Washington return six-year-old Elián González to Cuba and to ex-

plain why the INS raid in Miami, far from being a blow for justice—as the overwhelming majority of the forces in the Cuba solidarity movement argued—was a move by the U.S. ruling class calculated to reinforce the powers of the hated *migra* police. They pointed out how the Clinton administration used the federal court rulings on the Cuban six-year-old's case to affirm the broad authority of the executive branch to determine and carry out immigration and foreign policy—to be used against the interests of working people.

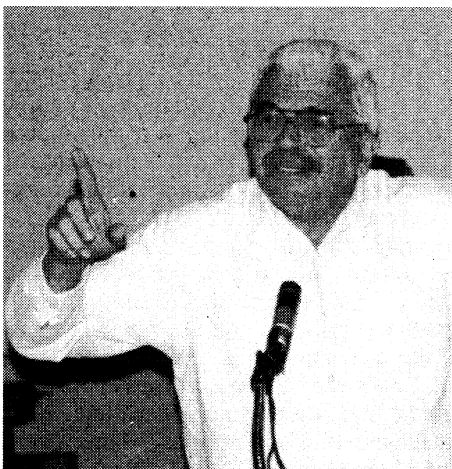
To help with the fund campaign or to make a contribution, contact your nearest distributor of the *Militant* and *Perspectiva Mundial* (listed on page 12). Please make checks and money orders payable to the *Militant*, earmarked *Militant/Perspectiva Mundial* Fund, and send them to: *The Militant*, 410 West Street, New York, NY 10014.

'A defeat of our enemy is a victory for all of us'

The following is a message sent to the Active Workers Conference held July 27-29 in Oberlin, Ohio, by Rafael Cancel Miranda, one of the best-known leaders of the Puerto Rican independence movement. Cancel Miranda was one of five Puerto Rican Nationalists who spent more than a quarter century in U.S. prisons following armed protests they carried out in Washington against colonial rule. He was freed from prison in 1979 through an international defense campaign, and has remained active in anticolonial and anti-imperialist struggles ever since.

Compañeros who are delegates to the Active Workers Conference sponsored by the Socialist Workers Party and the Young Socialists:

Brothers and sisters: Regardless of where we happen to be, our struggle is *one*, whatever the various forms it may take according to each one's circumstances. What is happening in the meatpacking industry in the Midwest, in the miners' strikes in the West, in the protests against the criminal death penalty and against police violence—



Militant/Bill Estrada

Rafael Cancel Miranda sent message to Active Workers Conference.

the developments in each of our countries affect us all, whether positively or negatively. From that flows the necessity of globalizing our struggle against the globalization of "neoliberal" oppression—feudalism reincarnated—which is directed

at the working-class and national forces.

For example: if we Puerto Ricans succeed in ridding our national territory of the deadly U.S. Navy (for we are a country that is militarily occupied), if we win the release of our imprisoned patriots, and if we are able to liberate Puerto Rico from the bloody claws of Anglo imperialism—then we will all be stronger! Because a defeat for the enemy of all is a victory for each one of us. Every tentacle we tear off the imperialist octopus is one tentacle less that can be used to strangle us. Only by understanding that we have common interests can we mutually reinforce each other and advance toward victory.

I don't want to conclude before giving you a strong Puerto Rican embrace. You are at the conference because you believe in yourselves, because you believe in the dignity of working people, because you believe in social justice and in the capacity of men and women to attain it. Capitalism is the law of the jungle; socialism is the law of social justice. An embrace of solidarity for you all—*pa'lante siempre* [forward always]!

Rafael Cancel Miranda

YOUNG SOCIALISTS AROUND THE WORLD

YS leaders discuss development of cadre

The Young Socialists is an international organization of young workers, students, and other youth fighting for socialism. For more information write to the Young Socialists, P.O. Box 33, Times Square Post Office, New York, NY 10018, or call (212) 695-1809, or send an e-mail to: young_socialists@hotmail.com

BY JACOB PERASSO

OBERLIN, Ohio—The Active Workers Conference, held here July 27–29, registered important gains for the Young Socialists, which cosponsored the event together with the Socialist Workers Party (see front-page article on the conference).

YS members spoke in the panel discussions on their experiences both in strengthening the discipline and efficiency of Pathfinder's printshop, which produces the revolutionary periodicals and books that working people need, and in working-class fights like the battle for a union at Dakota Premium Foods in St. Paul, Minnesota.

In addition, two YS meetings took place during the conference. The first was an expanded National Committee meeting that voted to dissolve the NC and elect a new leadership body called the National Leadership Council, which incorporates those leading the most important political fights and activities of the organization. The second was a meeting of the YS membership and those at the conference who were considering joining the organization. Over the course of the conference, four young people requested to join the YS.

At both meetings, the YS was able to generalize the lessons from its recent accomplishments and gain a deeper understanding of the type of youth organization needed in the fight for a workers and farmers government in the United States.

Much of the discussion at the two meetings centered on the importance of building



Militant/Eric Simpson

Young Socialist Michael Martinez from Miami speaks at Active Workers Conference. YS members held meetings that discussed importance of building a cadre organization, developing the political consciousness, discipline, and competence of every member.

an organization of cadres. Doug Nelson reported on this theme. "This means maximizing the development of political consciousness, discipline, selflessness, and competence of every individual member," he stated.

"We will see great openings and mass social protests," he continued. "In this context a cadre organization will be able to expand rapidly and lead broad layers of youth to join the working class and farmers in their fight for socialism."

In the meetings the YS recognized that there are two main places it is developing cadre today.

One is in Pathfinder's printshop, work-

ing alongside members of the Socialist Workers Party from different generations. The Pathfinder printshop produces books by revolutionary leaders that workers and their allies need in order to fight effectively. Reporting on this in the leadership meeting, Olympia Newton said, "We have decided to concentrate some of our leadership in the printshop. The hours are long and the work requires a high level of discipline. YS members are helping to lead the printshop in building a disciplined, efficient factory today."

"YS members have taken on responsibilities in organizing production, training, and increasing our efficiency," said Newton.

"Members of the YS are part of the leading body of the printshop and also make up two out of three members of the probation committee, which is responsible for integrating new employees into the shop, monitoring their speed of training, safe work habits, and discipline."

The other place where the accelerated development of cadre can be seen is in joint fractions with the Socialist Workers Party, like in St. Paul, Minnesota, where YS members are involved in the fight for a union with vanguard workers at Dakota Premium Foods. Newton stated in the National Committee meeting, "We need to internalize the fight at Dakota Premium. We have YS members in the center of real class battles. They are working with a cross-section of comrades with decades of experience."

YS member Roberta Niles said, "The future of the YS is in the front row of that picture of Local 789," referring to the young workers from the meatpacking plant in a photo taken the night before the union victory there. "I have been in the YS only eight months and I have learned from this experience. Other members here in the Twin Cities involved in this fight have transformed themselves through participating with their co-workers in struggle."

Reaching out to farmers

Justin Hovey commented, "My parents are farmers, and I know how important the struggle of working farmers is today. In Alabama we have been working with some of the farmers from the BFAA [Black Farmers and Agriculturalists Association]. I'd like to know what YS members are doing to reach out to farmers."

Amy Roberts, a newly elected member of the YS National Leadership Council and participant in the fight at Dakota Premium, where she works, responded, "The Twin Cities chapter of the YS is learning to work together as part of a broader vanguard. Our next step in the Dakota fight is winning a contract. As part of that, we will figure out how to reach out to working farmers. They're an important part of the class struggle in Minnesota."

Young Socialist Arrin Hawkins had just returned from a July 26 rally in Denver of coal miners on strike against P&M mines in Wyoming and New Mexico, where she talked with young workers interested in revolutionary politics.

The meetings discussed the involvement of the YS in working-class struggles breaking out around the world. A YS member from the United Kingdom, Frances Smith, reported that she was on a team that sold 120 *Militants* at a plant gate in Scotland. "The best way to recruit is through talking to workers in struggle, it convinced me to join the YS," she said.

Nelson also spoke on the themes of discipline, comradeship, and recruitment. "What we see growing in the YS is a craving for this discipline, driven by our increased confidence and imagination of what we can accomplish together. We are breaking down the different prejudices that exist among many young people and learning to relate to each other in an objective, undifferentiated way as fellow fighters and comrades. This is a precondition for building a proletarian youth organization."

"Our biggest problem is the same that faces the working class: not recognizing what we're fully capable of. Understanding this doesn't come by will or explanation, but through experiences like those we are part of today."

The YS took steps just before and coming out of the conference to put itself in a better position to respond to the increased openings to build the organization. YS members Roberto Guerrero and Romina Green have transferred to Des Moines, Iowa, to be part of building a fraction in the meatpacking plants there. Arrin Hawkins was transferred from Twin Cities to Chicago to help build the chapter there, and another YS member left Los Angeles to be part of the Twin Cities chapter.

The National Leadership Council elected a National Executive Committee of five: Jason Alessio, Doug Nelson, Olympia Newton, Jacob Perasso, and Elena Tate.

Miami workers vote in Iron Workers union

BY MARK HOLLAND

MIAMI—Taking a big step forward in their struggle for better wages, working conditions, and dignity on the job, workers at RC Aluminum voted in the Iron Workers union on July 21.

Two elections were held that day. Workers who install aluminum windows at the company's job sites voted 160-64 to be represented by Iron Workers Local 272. The union has been certified by the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB).

Other workers at an RC Aluminum plant that produces the windows voted 63-50 in favor of Iron Workers Local 698, but the NLRB has challenged 35 ballots, which are now being investigated. A hearing on the challenged votes has been scheduled for August 18.

Fighting to organize workers in both a company's factory and construction sites is unusual in the building industry, and union members are proud and thoughtful about the victories they have won.

Rogelio Garcia, a young worker in the glazing department at the factory, said, "The result of the election is super good. It seems that we have won. The bosses have worked hard to intimidate people. We were not as successful as we thought a few days ago of getting a victory with a wide margin. We must pay attention to talking with and trying to win to our side as many as possible of the 50 who voted 'no.'"

The unity behind the organizing drive was clear at a June 15 rally at the plant gate. Factory workers were joined by large numbers of installers from RC Aluminum as well as other companies, and by many young workers from the union's apprenticeship program.

Noel Johnson, an installer who used to work for RC Aluminum who attended the rally, said the company "would probably be a lot happier if they hadn't put the workers from the plant on the same job as us. We didn't mind telling them how much we made, and when we told them they said 'but we make only \$7,'" which can be as little as

one-half of what a union installer can earn.

Johnson pointed out that as they discussed together the conditions they face, "that's when all the union organizing got started." A July 15 picnic organized by the Ironworkers brought together some 300 unionists with their families and supporters. They gathered to confidently prepare for the final week leading up to the election, knowing the company would continue its campaign of slanders against the union.

In the weeks before the vote the company fired four factory workers—one on the morning after the June 15 rally in front of the plant—and then fired two installers the day of the vote.

The bosses held in-plant meetings to show workers Spanish-language anti-union videos, and on election day had 16 office secretaries go to cast ballots. These are among the 35 votes being challenged by the NLRB. In the first week of August the NLRB ruled that RC Aluminum must take back to work the four factory workers it had fired.

At a July 25 meeting called by the Iron Workers union, workers celebrated their victory and discussed the company's campaign to wear workers down in the hope that another election could then be held under conditions more favorable to the company. Workers reported that on the day of the vote the employers announced they were cutting out overtime.

Union supporter Orlando Lopez later stated that the bosses are now offering it only to opponents of the union. Because most workers in the plant make about \$6–7 per hour, many depend on the 50–60 hours per week they'd been working to pay the bills. Lopez added that after the election company security guards were given guns, provoking an incident in which workers called the police. Under pressure, the company was forced to disarm the guards.

Workers at the meeting encouraged each other to stay strong in the fight. When one worker became worried that the union didn't win by an "overwhelming majority," Alba Huentes, the only woman worker on the

production line, responded, "This is the wrong way to look at this. We scored a victory. We have the majority on our side. Let's begin there and try to make the majority bigger."

Many liked the way Orlando Lopez put it: "We swam in the deep for so long. Are we going to drown now that we are near shore? United we are strong and I have confidence we can win."

Unionists at the meeting were especially concerned about reports that the company was trying to blame workers for low production. Enrique, the lead of a crew in the glazing department made up overwhelmingly of union supporters, said his crew found itself without work on Monday morning after the vote and had to stand around work tables for hours.

Several parts necessary to complete the window assembly were missing, and the workers were not allowed to go look for them, as they had done previously. Enrique said this was unprecedented. Workers welcomed the suggestion by union officials that they document in detail every such case and turn it into the union as evidence, which can be presented to the NLRB, of the company's dirty practices.

If the union is certified at the factory, then another union meeting will be called where workers can put forward their demands for wage rates, hours of work, union representation on the shop floor, and benefits. Union officials said they will then put these together in a contract proposal to be discussed by the workers before it is presented to the company.

Production worker Manuel Urcuyo commented, "We still have a big challenge in front of us after the representation vote. But we're not going to stop struggling. After three years of trying, and talking, and arguing for a union we finally see the light at the end of the tunnel. In about two weeks we may get the final word that we won the vote. Then we'll face the battle for a contract. That will be the big one. We need to work for more unity in the plant."

Cuban unionists meet workers from Los Angeles to N. Carolina

BY MARK FRIEDMAN

LOS ANGELES—In a stop here in early August that was part of a national speaking tour, three representatives of the Central Organization of Cuban Workers (CTC) spoke at several meetings and met a range of unionists and young people.

The visiting trade union delegation was comprised of Leonel González, CTC director of international relations and a deputy in Cuba's National Assembly; Olga Rosa Gómez, general secretary of the National Union of Cultural Workers and also a deputy in the National Assembly; and Manuel Montero, head of the CTC's department of international relations for the Americas.

The three union leaders, whose speaking tour is being organized by the U.S.-Cuba Labor Exchange, had visited Massachusetts, New York, Ohio, Tennessee, and North Carolina before arriving in California. In this state they also spoke at meetings in San Jose and San Francisco.

A citywide meeting of 100 people was a highlight of the tour stop. The event was held at a hall of the Union of Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Employees (UNITE). Before the program the Cuban unionists met a number of garment workers.

The guest speakers were introduced by Christina Vasquez, a West Coast UNITE official, and John Connolly, an official of the Screen Actors Guild. Actors in the guild have been on strike for more than three months against advertising production companies over issues of pay and job conditions.

The visit also included a reception hosted by AFL-CIO County Federation of Labor secretary-treasurer Miguel Contreras. Among others at this gathering were representatives of the Service Employees International Union and the Hotel and Restaurant Employees union, both of which have been involved in recent organizing drives.

At the reception, González spoke of the history of the Cuban revolution, and of the impact of the economic embargo imposed on Cuba by successive U.S. governments. "Cuba affirms its sovereignty, the right to construct the type of system we want," he said. The Cuban unionists urged AFL-CIO officials they met with to oppose the embargo.

González enthusiastically told of meeting fruit pickers who are members of the United Farm Workers union in Farmersville, California. The union leaders were also guests of honor at a informal meeting with 11 members of the International Association of Machinists and Aircraft Mechanics Fraternal Association who work at the Los Angeles international airport.

The CTC representatives attracted interest from media in the Los Angeles area, appearing on two radio shows and interviewed by an online journal. On one talk show Montero said that certain bills now

before the U.S. Congress that purportedly aim to ease the embargo do nothing of the kind. "The U.S. government cannot extend credit [to finance sales to Cuba], U.S. banks are forbidden from loaning us money, ships delivering goods in Cuba cannot dock in the United States for six months...how does this ease things?" he said, adding, "Even if U.S. business could sell to us, Cuba cannot sell its products in the United States. We can buy but cannot sell: what kind of change is this?"



BY DONALD HAMMOND

RALEIGH, North Carolina—About 40 people turned out to hear the Cuban union leaders speak at the Fruit of Labor meeting rooms on August 2. After a buffet supper, the gathering was addressed by CTC leader Olga Rosa Gómez.

She outlined some of the gains made by working people as a result of the revolution, pointing out, as one example, that even during extremely tough economic times throughout much of the 1990s, Cuba's infant mortality rate remained similar to that of industrialized nations and better than U.S.



Militant/Eric Simpson

Cuban CTC leader Olga Rosa Gómez speaks July 28 at Active Workers Conference in Oberlin, Ohio. Cuban union delegation is conducting a tour of several U.S. cities.

cities such as Washington. Gómez also noted that Cuban workers have not lost their access to free education and health care, or lost their jobs, even during the worst of the crisis.

In response to a question about Cuban farmers, Leonel González said that Cuba's small farmers association has decided to increase the proportion of farm produce sold at special markets that have lower, fixed

prices—instead of agricultural markets with unregulated prices. This move, making food more affordable for city workers, will strengthen the alliance between farmers and workers.

Mark Friedman is a member of International Association of Machinists Local 2785 and works at Los Angeles International Airport.

Minneapolis cops crack down on protests

BY SANDI SHERMAN

MINNEAPOLIS—Activists and civil libertarians are protesting the massive use of police force during demonstrations against the International Society of Animal Genetics Convention, which took place at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in downtown Minneapolis July 21–26.

In the weeks leading up to the convention, police attempted to soften up public opinion with warnings on the evening news about planned disruptions, along with footage from the Seattle anti-WTO demonstrations. The Minneapolis police department drew up a plan to screen those who would be allowed access to sections of downtown Minneapolis during the conference, using what they termed a "stop, question, and search" tactic.

The plan was shelved after protests from civil liberties groups, but police proceeded to cordon off protesters from an area near the hotel while they visited downtown business owners, showing them videotapes from the Seattle protests. Their campaign forced the cancellation of a number of events, including several programs by the Minnesota Orchestra, which also boarded up its theater.

Up to 600 cops from Minneapolis, St. Paul, and nearby jurisdictions were readied for deployment against protests that did not materialize until Sunday and Monday, July 23 and 24. On Monday afternoon, a march

of some 100 protesters was confronted by four times as many cops in riot gear, according to television news reports.

Police closed off every avenue to the march, and then attempted to herd the protest towards a downtown park. Another police line at the park prevented people from entering. In the ensuing struggle, which lasted the rest of the day, protesters were pepper-sprayed and clubbed. Seventy four were arrested. Some protesters said that even when they indicated to police they would leave the area they were prevented from doing so.

That night cops raided a duplex in South Minneapolis that had served as an organizing center for the protest, using a warrant saying they were looking for narcotics. Twelve people were arrested after police claimed to have found a small amount of drugs. In addition, two computers used to send e-mail messages about the protests to the media and others were confiscated.

Jeff Borowiak, an activist who rents one of the duplex's units, told the *Star Tribune* that the apartment had been used as a meeting space for the protesters in the weeks leading up to the demonstration. "This was about activism, not drugs," he said.

Police Chief Robert Olson defended the

massive police response to the protests, which has come under fire in the aftermath of the event. It was designed to "make it very clear to them that you are prepared," he said. The cops "looked weak in other cities where there were problems with protesters," he said. "If you seem weak, that encourages illegal behavior from the protesters. We wanted to set the tone that we weren't going to let them roam the streets downtown."

The Twin Cities area has been the scene of a number of important labor struggles recently, including a strike by hotel workers, a current strike by Pepsi workers, and the organizing drive at Dakota Premium Foods. Immigrant rights demonstrations, farmer protests, and actions against police brutality have also taken place.

"The police actions in Minneapolis are a blatant violation of the rights of people to organize, assemble, and speak out," said Rebecca Ellis, Socialist Workers Party candidate for U.S. Senate, in an interview with the *Militant*. "The danger exists that these same methods will be used against workers, oppressed nationalities, farmers, and youth as they move into action to defend themselves."

Cops conduct mass arrests, impose steep bail on protesters at Philadelphia convention

BY BOB STANTON

PHILADELPHIA—After organizing a multistate police surveillance operation in advance of the Republican Party convention here, the city government deepened its attacks on democratic rights through police arrests and jailings of hundreds involved in the protests.

"No Break for Protesters, Street Vows," was the headline in the August 5 *Inquirer*. Mayor Milton Street and police commissioner John Timoney called the organizers of demonstrations at the Republican National Convention outside agitators. At a news conference Timoney further described them as "conspirators and criminals and cowards." He asked federal agencies to "look into these groups" of protesters.

Nearly 400 people were arrested out of the more than 5,000 participants in various demonstrations that occurred during the Republican Party convention from July 31–August 3.

Many of those arrested were engaged in sit-ins in intersections. City officials are throwing the book at the protesters, holding them on much higher bail than customary and refusing to release more than a hundred of those detained.

Two of the demonstrators, John Sellers, a leader of the Ruckus Society, and Kathleen Sorensen of the Direct Action Group, are being held on \$1 million bond each, as leaders of the actions. A judge on August 7 reduced Sellers's bail to \$100,000. He had been arrested August 2 while walking along a city street. Terrence McGuckin, a leader of Philadelphia ACT UP, has also been held on \$500,000 bail on misdemeanor charges.

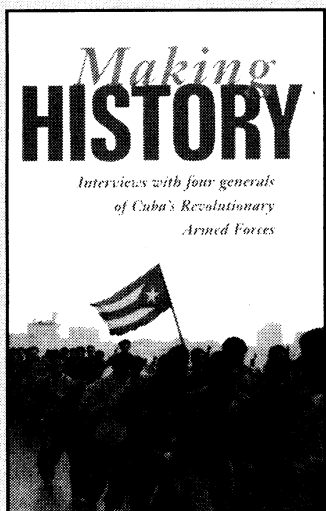
Prior to the week of demonstrations, the city initially refused permits for any demonstrations outside the "protest pits." The City Council outlawed the wearing of face masks, and the police increased open surveillance of organizations and individuals. The city also raided one organizing center, closing it on the pretext of "building code violations." The office was reopened after an uproar in the media.

Permits were issued for two of the larger actions, one July 30 and the other against police brutality and the death penalty on August 1. The same day, the cops raided a warehouse in West Philadelphia that served as an organizing center and production site for puppets for street theater. The police had no warrant for the seizure and subsequent arrest of 83 individuals at the warehouse.

FROM PATHFINDER

Making History

Interviews with four generals of Cuba's Revolutionary Armed Forces



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On January 1, 1959, men and women of Cuba in their millions ceased being simply the objects of history. They became its makers as well. By their actions they opened the door to the first socialist revolution in the Americas.

The human beings who fought to accomplish that feat were ordinary working people. Most were still in their teens or early twenties when they began. Who they were, where they came from, and the experiences that transformed them are the subject of these interviews with Néstor López Cuba, Enrique Carreras, José Ramón Fernández, and Harry Villegas. Edited and with introduction by Mary-Alice Waters.

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86,000 strike Verizon

Continued from front page

us. The 30,000 managers cannot do what 86,000 workers can do." More than one striker added that the computer system is designed to "scrub jobs," which means that even if your phone line has constant static, the computer is programmed with an option to refuse a repair request.

Strike picket lines, which sprang up throughout the states where Verizon is the main carrier, have been spirited and boisterous. According to *Times* reports on August 7, the first full day of picketing, striking workers blocked the entrances of the main switching facility in Philadelphia, which helped to prevent managers doing struck work from entering the building. The same article reports that strikers also blocked access to Verizon facilities in Delaware. By the second day of the strike some 14,500 union members were on picket lines outside of 550 company buildings.

Job security and union jobs main issues

Barone told the *Militant* that the main issue for the striking workers is job security. Verizon wants the freedom to force employees to transfer to any of the other locations it services within the 13 states. In their original offer, Verizon proposed that it have the right to transfer up to 10 percent of the workforce each year. This would mean that the company can force workers to move or face being fired.

While press reports said the company was willing to drop this figure down to 4 percent, strikers in Brooklyn said that they did not want the company to be able to move anyone. They explained that under the contract negotiated after Bell Atlantic merged with Nynex in 1997, the company could transfer up to a half a percent of the workers each year.

The strikers explained that this has been an issue for them from the outset, and they had hoped to remove any provision for arbitrary transfer from the new contract, pointing out that the company can move union workers with such a provision to a nonunion job, thus weakening the union.

The company also wants to be able to contract out jobs. Anthony Muzio, a maintenance cable splicer in Brooklyn, offered the example of Time Warner, the television cable giant. "For every Time Warner truck on the road," he said, "there are five contracted trucks doing Time Warner installation." Strikers said that they would not vote to return to work if outsourcing is allowed in any contract proposal. This is a major sticking point for Verizon, which regularly subcontracts out work installing high-speed Internet lines. The announcement on the third day of the strike that Verizon made a deal to acquire NorthPoint Communications, which installs high-speed Internet access lines, for \$800 million, gives an indication of Verizon's unwillingness to halt subcontracting. NorthPoint Communications is a nonunion installer.

Most of the strikers in Brooklyn were quick to say the issue in the strike is not wages. At the same time, some spoke to the question of proposed increases in co-payments that workers have to make on their health and dental plans under the company's

original offer.

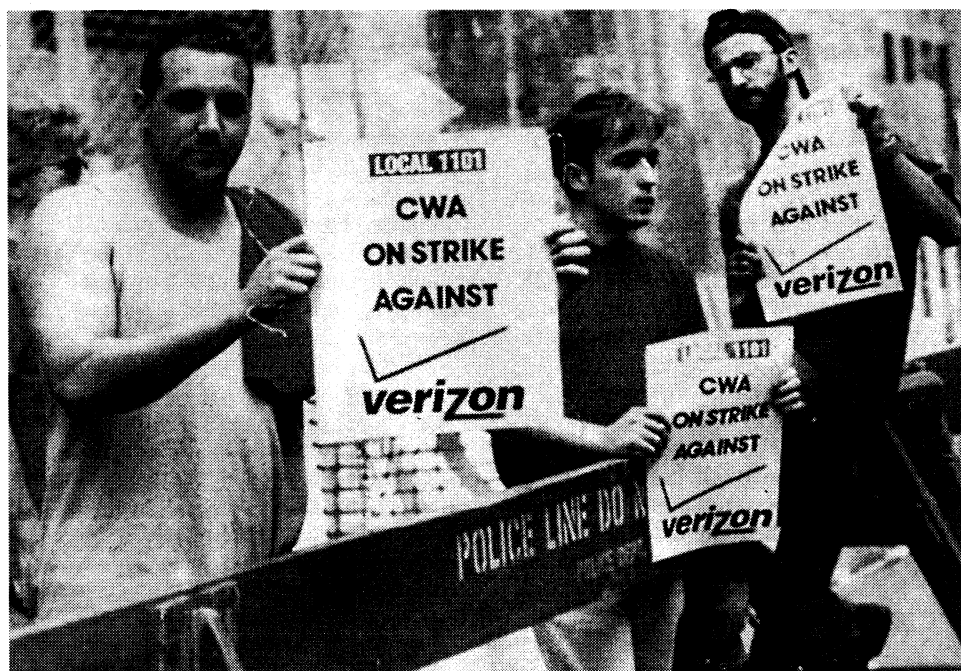
Barone said the union wants to make it easier for the wireless workers, currently nonunion, to join the union if they choose. In an article in the business section of the August 8 *Times*, entitled, "Communicators Saying Little on Walkout," Seth Schiesel wrote, "The unspoken secret is that the established communications carriers that still have unions basically wish that they did not. And the younger companies that do not have them will do just about anything to keep them away."

One unnamed "Wall Street analyst" was quoted as saying that the cost to the company if a union was organized at Verizon's wireless division would be in the range of \$300 million annually. But, the article also explains that Verizon's wireless unit expects to generate \$5.5 billion or more in cash flow this year alone. Only a few dozen of Verizon's 30,000 wireless workers are unionized, compared with more than 80 percent of the 120,000 workers employed in the local telephone division.

As the strike continues, telephone workers are organizing rallies and picket lines across New York and in New Jersey. Workers on the picket line in upper Manhattan were confident and spirited in the early hours just after the strike began. Many workers there commented that they had experience in previous strikes and had emerged stronger for their fight.

Violence baiting, court injunctions

From the first day of the strike, Verizon, the cops, and the capitalist media have been on a campaign to violence-bait the strike.



Members of Communications Workers of America walk the picket line at Verizon on the first day of the strike in New York August 6.

Newspapers have echoed company charges that sabotage of cables, lines, and switch boxes had interrupted phone service for residents in the Bronx and parts of Manhattan. The August 9 *Times* reported that "the most strident and sometimes violent front lines of the walkout have been in New York City and its suburbs." Verizon claims 455 "strike-related incidents" of assault, harassment, and vandalism have occurred in 12 states and Washington D.C. More than half, according to Verizon, have taken place in New York State.

At least two dozen strikers have been arrested throughout the region so far. In one incident, a striker was arrested by cops on petty larceny charges for allegedly remov-

ing lug nuts from the wheels of a maintenance truck. Another arrest took place outside of the company's headquarters on 42nd Street. A striker who ventured out of the police line set up to pen in the picket line was arrested on disorderly conduct charges.

At the same time, a New York State Supreme Court judge in Manhattan granted Verizon's request for a temporary restraining order that bars pickets from trying to block managers or replacement workers from entering work sites or carrying out struck work. The injunction will be in effect until August 14.

Jacob Perasso is the Socialist Workers Party candidate for U.S. Senate in New York.

Contraceptive bill vetoed in Washington

BY SAM MANUEL

WASHINGTON—A city bill fought for by women's health organizations here, which would mandate employers and health care insurers offering drug prescription plans to also cover prescribed contraceptives, has been vetoed by congressional opponents and Mayor Anthony Williams.

Within days of its passage the bill came under attack by members of Congress, Catholic church officials, prescription drug insurers, and the *Washington Post*. Members of Congress opposed to the bill imposed a so-called "conscience clause" as a condition of its approval. This would allow employers and individuals to opt out of the provisions of the bill on "religious or moral" grounds. Mayor Williams has let the bill die by not signing it.

The city council will take up the bill again when it returns from summer recess.

The *Washington Post* opined, "The insurance industry warns, further, that the mandate will raise the cost of coverage." Women's rights activists have argued for the mandate as the only way to take the decisions over vital issues of reproductive health care out of the hands of insurers and employers and in put them in the hands of women. According to the National Abortion and Reproductive Rights Action League, while 97 percent of health plans cover prescription drugs, nearly half of those do not routinely cover contraceptives.

Catholic church officials have argued that the ordinance would force the church to violate basic tenants of doctrine. In the days leading up to the council vote on the bill, priests throughout the city were instructed to read a letter from Auxiliary Bishop William Lori opposing the bill and calling on Catholics to lobby the mayor and city council.

But city officials noted that existing federal insurance law already exempts many of the city's largest employers associated with the Catholic church, including Georgetown University and the Archdiocese, because they are self-insured. These exemptions have been opposed by women's health organizations.

Twelve other states have laws mandating coverage of prescribed contraceptives with exemptions narrowly framed on religious grounds.

The exemption imposed by congressional opponents of this city's bill would be one of the broadest of its kind.

Republican representative Thomas Davis, chairman of the House Government Reform subcommittee on the District, said, "There is no way this ordinance is going to fly on Capitol Hill in its current form." And Representative Ernest Istook, chairman of the appropriations subcommittee on the District, accused council member James Graham of "religion bashing." During debate on the bill Graham argued that public health policy should not "defer to Rome."

Working people here, however, must first defer to Capitol Hill. Until 1973, city officials were appointed by Congress or the President. Since then working people have been allowed to elect a local government but all laws, administrative appointments, and regulations are subject to review and approval by Congress.

In the mid-1990s Congress imposed a financial control board over the city. Under the guise of "fiscal responsibility" it drove through austerity measures in health care, education, employment, and other social benefits. At the same time it paid enormous sums to the wealthy holders of the city's bonds and loans.

The is not the first time members of Congress have used their veto prerogative over city officials. It has consistently removed provisions from the city's budgets which provide funding for abortions. Last year it overrode an ordinance that would have provided benefits for same sex partners of city employees. In 1998 members of Congress held up public announcement of the result of votes on a medical marijuana initiative. And in 1992 Alabama Senator Richard Shelby forced the city to hold a referendum on the death penalty, which was rejected.

Sam Manuel is the Socialist Workers Party candidate for Delegate to the House of Representatives and a member of the United Transportation Union.

Strikers resist concessions at Revere Copper

BY MARTIN BOYERS

NEW BEDFORD, Massachusetts—Members of United Auto Workers Local 168 at Revere Copper and Brass Inc. are standing tough in a strike that began May 1.

The plant, which makes copper and brass plates for shipbuilding, electrical generation, desalination, and other industrial uses, has reportedly turned down new orders as it maintains minimal operations with managers and supervisors.

The company is trying to impose severe concessions in a new contract. These include a wage freeze, the elimination of a tonnage bonus that added up to \$3 an hour to the basic wage, the freezing of pensions for senior workers, and employee co-payment for medical insurance. Just the co-pay requirement would save the company a reported \$500,000 per year.

Revere Copper is also demanding a work-week of four 10-hour days, allowing it to

add a weekend shift of three 12-hour days, and to run the plant seven days a week without paying overtime or weekend premium rates. A delegation of strikers participated in a rally of the Communication Workers of America held July 11 in nearby Fairhaven to protest AT&T's blocking of union organizing in cable television and wireless phone services.

The company and the union have met only once since the strike began. The union offered to return to work under the old contract on a day-to-day basis while continuing to negotiate. The company refused. No other negotiations are scheduled.

In visits to the picket line, many workers interviewed expressed pride in the fact that there is no talk of accepting the company's demands, even after 14 weeks on strike.

Although some workers have been forced to get other jobs, not one of the 82 workers has crossed the picket line. This is a marked

difference from previous strikes against concession contracts in 1990 and 1993, when the union divided and capitulated after three weeks.

The UAW held a rally at the plant attended by 200 people May 4. There is talk of other outreach activities, including sending a busload of strikers to Revere's Rome, New York, plant, which has a separate UAW contract that expires in January.

Bob Perry, who has 33 years in the plant, said, "The solidarity is great. The morale is great. We're still here."

Striker Gary Pollitt pledged to continue the fight. "We want a fair contract. We've been out here too long. We can't go back in on their terms now."

Martin Boyers is a member of the Union of Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Employees, and a former member of UAW Local 168 who worked at Revere Copper.

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Protests in Peru mark Fujimori inauguration

Continued from front page

ballot. Toledo boycotted that election, alleging fraud, allowing Fujimori to win his third term unopposed in the electoral arena.

The regime mobilized 40,000 cops to counter the mass protests July 27 and 28, firing tear gas and live bullets and leaving up to 100 people wounded. Several government buildings burned to the ground, fatally entrapping at least five people.

Striking a defiant posture as the tear gas mixed with smoke in the streets of Lima, Fujimori proceeded with his swearing-in ceremony in the congressional palace, ignoring the walkout by opposition leaders. In his inauguration speech he claimed credit for defeating the Shining Path guerrilla insurgency and for the cessation of military hostilities between the governments of Peru and Ecuador. Many governments in Latin America demonstratively boycotted the inauguration to distance themselves from the tarnished figure. The U.S. government was represented by its ambassador in Lima.

Posturing as a friend of democracy, Washington endorsed a call by the Organization of American States, which it dominates, for Fujimori to publicly reverse some of his regime's most blatant restrictions on the judiciary, freedom of the press, and the electoral process. The rulers of the United States, the predominant power in Latin America, are worried about the instability in Peru as well as more broadly—in Ecuador, Colombia, Venezuela, and beyond.

Washington, however, has no ready-made alternative to Fujimori at hand to keep a lid on the rising discontent among Peru's workers and farmers. In spite of occasional protests at his curtailment of democratic rights, the U.S. rulers have been more than happy to work with Fujimori as a protector of their interests. He has moved to open up Peru's markets to deeper imperialist penetration and cooperated with Washington's escalation of its military presence in the region, organized under the pretext of combating terrorism and the drug trade.

Regime of social crisis

Fujimori's regime was the product of the sharp economic and social crisis in Peru. In the 1990 election campaign he ran on a platform of "honest government," in contrast to the discredited traditional capitalist parties. Presenting himself as a savior standing above class conflicts, he pledged to bring "peace" and stability by iron-fisted means when deemed necessary. His two promises were to end hyperinflation, which reached 7,600 percent, and to combat "terrorism"—targeting the Shining Path organization.

Shining Path is a Stalinist sect that during the 1980s won a degree of support in some of the most isolated and economically backward areas of the countryside. It offered to bring relief from economic desperation by battling the government through bombings, assassinations of hated figures, and other methods that relegated working people

to passive spectators, at best, or that made them targets of their brutal police if they got in the way.

Under the cover of his "antiterrorist" campaign against Shining Path, Fujimori expanded the use of executive power, gave the military a freer hand, and took aim at basic democratic rights.

In 1992, in the name of fighting government corruption and red tape, he staged a "self-coup," dissolving Congress and suspending the constitution. The army and rightist death squads waged terror against peasants. Unionists, left-wing political activists, and others were branded terrorists, dragged before "faceless" judges, and summarily sentenced with no right to confront accusers or cross-examine witnesses.

Fujimori's "shock therapy" economic policies prioritized debt payments to imperialist banks in order to qualify for more loans. Peru's foreign debt, however, stood at almost \$26 billion in 1996—\$4 billion

more than in 1990.

The government passed other measures favoring big business, including laws that making it easier for employers to lay off workers, and excluding young workers from the social security system and eligibility for the minimum wage. By 1997, 173 of 183 state-run enterprises had been privatized.

Decline of Shining Path

The regime dealt a deadly blow to Shining Path by going after its weak point—the central leadership. Once the sect's chief and cult figure, ex-philosophy professor Abimael Guzmán, was captured and paraded on television signing a humiliating "peace" agreement, the group shattered into pieces and, while still lingering on, has gone into decline.

Meanwhile, after a half decade of popularity, Fujimori's appeal began to wear thin as the living standards of working people and the middle classes continued to erode.

Unionists in Colombia stage nationwide strike

BY HILDA CUZCO

Some 700,000 working people in Colombia staged a 24-hour national strike August 3 to protest President Andrés Pastrana's hated austerity measures and a 20 percent joblessness rate, the highest in Latin America.

Standing up to riot cops and tanks firing water cannon and tear gas, 15,000 unionists marched through downtown Bogotá.

They voiced opposition to the new finance minister's proposed budget of "sweat and tears" that will cut 5,000 jobs of public employees and reduce real wages.

Unions in the cities and peasant organizations in the countryside marched against the government's "Plan Colombia," the U.S.-financed "antidrug" and counter-insurgency plan, which will lead to increased U.S. military intervention in the country. In the coffee-growing region, for example, peasants blocked highways between Pereira and Manizales.

Oil workers, telecommunications workers, teachers, and hospital employees were among those who took part in the strike, organized by three trade union federations, the United Confederation of Workers of Colombia (CUT), General Confederation of Democratic Workers (CGTD), and Confed-

eration of Workers of Colombia (CTC). Union officials warned they are planning an indefinite strike.

U.S. president William Clinton announced that he and a bipartisan delegation of 30 congresspeople, including House leader Dennis Hastert, will visit Colombia August 30. Clinton said the purpose of his brief visit—he plans to leave before sundown—is to "personally underscore America's support for Colombia's efforts to seek peace, fight illicit drugs, build its

Today, two-thirds of people of working age are unemployed or underemployed. Half the population lives under the official poverty line. Disease, illiteracy, and lack of decent housing afflict millions, with no change in sight.

These conditions have generated a gradual renewal of working-class confidence and combativity. On October 14, the construction workers union, teachers unions, and the General Confederation of Workers in Peru joined other organized workers in a national strike demanding jobs. The construction workers took action in January demanding a rise in benefits. Hundreds of landless families stepped up land occupations south of Lima and in the north.

The eruption of anger at Fujimori's third inauguration is further evidence of the exhaustion of his usefulness for the ruling classes. Washington hopes to work with him as long as it can, but the future is one of increasing turbulence and class struggle.

economy, and deepen democracy." The \$1.3 billion U.S. aid package to the regime includes 60 military helicopters, 500 troops, military training, a beefed-up spy network, and crop eradication, which peasants have protested.

Meanwhile, the Colombian government announced that the state-owned telecommunications company will be put on the auction block September 12 for two prospective bidders, Telefónica de España and Telecom Italia.

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MILITANT LABOR FORUMS

Massachusetts

Boston

End Police Brutality, Abolish the Death Penalty. Speaker: Brock Satter, textile worker and member of UNITE, and of Socialist Workers Party. Sun., August 20, 5:00 p.m. 683 Washington St., Dorchester. Donation: \$4. Tel: 617-282-2254

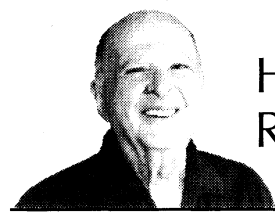
NEW ZEALAND

Christchurch

The Cuban Revolution—an Example for Workers and Farmers. Sat., August 19, 7:00 p.m. Gloucester Arcade, 129 Gloucester St. Donation: \$3. Tel: 3-365-6055.



The "ivory tower"—When some 1,730 nurses struck two Stanford University hospitals in



Harry Ring

California in June and July, the university turned to a strikebreaking outfit that specializes in nurses' walkouts. Some 500 replacements

from around the country were sent in. They were paid upwards of \$5,000 a week, according to *NurseWeek*, a biweekly California publication for nurses.

The considerate society—In Oklahoma, the execution time is being changed from just after midnight to 9 p.m. Officials said it will make it easier for victims' families to attend executions.

The not-to-worry society—"An estimated 60,000 babies born each year in the United States face a serious threat of learning disabilities

or other neurological damage because their mothers ate fish contaminated with mercury during their pregnancies, a national panel of scientists reported Tuesday."—News item.

Cool as cash—A reader advises that Lancelot Limos features Arizona's longest Hummer Limousine and that it's 'cool' to be seen in one. It features a bar, stereo, TV, etc. at only \$200 an hour.

The justice system—William Phillips, former chief financial officer of the American Electronics

Association, a major lobbying outfit, was convicted of embezzling \$820,000. The judge gave him the minimum allowed, two years in prison. His honor piously added: "If Mr. Phillips had walked into a bank and demanded this amount of money and received it, we wouldn't be talking about 24 months here, but decades."

Hey judge—Be assured we make no allegation, but we wonder if the judge in the Phillips embezzlement case (see above) was as intrigued as we were with the headline, "Bank Robber Fled Scene in

Limo, Police Say."

Probably so—"NEWYORK—The Astrologers Fund looks to the stars to predict the ups and downs of the world's financial markets. In these turbulent times it seems as effective as any other method."—AP.

Nothing's perfect—Nine railroad cars jumped the track 35 miles north of Anchorage. Four of the cars tumbled down a 25-foot embankment. A tank car spilled as much as 100 gallons of gasoline. The derailment spill was the third for the Alaska Railroad since November.

Sit-down strikes pose: 'Who is the boss?'

Printed below are excerpts from "The death agony of capitalism and the tasks of the Fourth International," also known as the Transitional Program for Socialist Revolution. The document was drafted by Russian revolutionary leader Leon Trotsky in April 1938. Endorsed by the Socialist Workers Party National Committee later that month, it was approved as a programmatic document in September 1938 by the founding conference of the Fourth International, which brought together communist organizations around the world seeking to build revolutionary proletarian parties based on

BOOK OF THE WEEK

political continuity with the Bolshevik party and the early years of the Communist (Third) International under the leadership of V.I. Lenin.

The Transitional Program was adopted at a time of sharpening class struggle and polarization internationally. It points to the June 1936 wave of sit-down strikes in France, "the unprecedented wave of sit-down strikes and the amazingly rapid growth of industrial unionism in the United States," as well as the development of fascist currents in a number of imperialist countries. Copyright © 1973 by Pathfinder Press, reprinted by permission.

BY LEON TROTSKY

Sit-down strikes, the latest expression of this kind of initiative [by the ranks of working people], go beyond the limits of "normal" capitalist procedure. Independently of the demands of the strikers, the temporary seizure of factories deals a blow to the idol, capitalist property. Every sit-down strike poses in a practical manner the question of who is the boss of the factory: the capitalist or the worker?...

Sit-down strikes are a serious warning from the masses, addressed not only to the bourgeoisie but also to the organizations of the workers, including the Fourth International. In 1919-20, the Italian workers seized factories on their own initiative thus signaling to their "leaders" the news of the coming of the social revolution. The "leaders" paid no heed to the signal. The victory of fascism was the result.

Sit-down strikes do not yet mean the seizure of factories in the Italian manner; but they are a decisive step toward such seizures. The present crisis can sharpen the class struggle to an extreme point and bring nearer the moment of denouement. But that does not mean that a revolutionary situation comes on at one stroke. Actually, its approach is signaled by a continuous series of convulsions. One of these is the wave of sit-down strikes.

The problem of the sections of the Fourth International is to help the proletarian vanguard understand the general character and tempo of our epoch and to fructify in time the struggle of the masses with ever more resolute and militant organizational measures.

The sharpening of the proletariat's struggle means the sharpening of the methods of counterattack on the part of capital. New waves of sit-down strikes can and undoubtedly will call forth resolute countermeasures on the part of the bourgeoisie. Preparatory work is already being done by



Workers in France occupy factory during June 1936 wave of sit-down strikes that involved 2 million workers. Sign reads: "On strike to fight against dismissal of 20 of our comrades. The bosses took our money due the workers."

the confidential staffs of big trusts. Woe to the revolutionary organizations, woe to the proletariat if it is again caught unawares!

The bourgeoisie is nowhere satisfied with the official police and army. In the United States, even during "peaceful" times, the bourgeoisie maintains militarized battalions of scabs and privately armed thugs in factories. To this must now be added the various groups of American Nazis. The French bourgeoisie at the first approach of danger mobilized semilegal and illegal fascist detachments, including such as are in the army. No sooner does the pressure of the English workers once again become stronger, than immediately the fascist bands are doubled, trebled, increased tenfold to come out in bloody march against the workers. The bourgeoisie keeps itself most accurately informed about the fact that in the present epoch the class struggle irresistibly tends to transform itself into civil war. The examples of Italy, Germany, Austria, Spain, and other countries taught considerably more to the magnates and lackeys of capital than to the official leaders of the proletariat.

The politicians of the Second and Third Internationals, as well as the bureaucrats of the trade unions, consciously close their eyes to the bourgeoisie's private army; otherwise, they could not preserve their alliance with it for even twenty-four hours. The reformists systematically implant in the minds of the workers the notion that the sacredness of democracy is best guaranteed when the bourgeoisie is armed to the teeth and the workers are unarmed.

The duty of the Fourth International is to put an end to such slavish politics once and for all. The petty-bourgeois democrats—including Social Democrats, Stalinists, and Anarchists—yell louder about the struggle against fascism the more cravenly they capitulate to it in actuality. Only armed workers' detachments, who feel the support of tens of millions of toilers behind them, can successfully prevail against the fascist bands. The struggle against fascism does not start in the liberal editorial office but in the factory—and ends in the street. Scabs and private gun-

men in factory plants are the basic nuclei of the fascist army. *Strike pickets* are the basic nuclei of the proletarian army. This is our point of departure. In connection with every strike and street demonstration, it is imperative to propagate the necessity of creating

workers' groups for self-defense. It is necessary to write this slogan into the program of the revolutionary wing of the trade unions. It is imperative wherever possible, beginning with the youth groups, to organize groups for self-defense, to drill and acquaint them with the use of arms.

A new upsurge of the mass movement should serve not only to increase the number of these units but also to unite them according to neighborhoods, cities, regions. It is necessary to give organized expression to the valid hatred of the workers toward scabs and bands of gangsters and fascists. It is necessary to advance the slogan of a *workers' militia* as the one serious guarantee for the inviolability of workers' organizations, meetings, and press.

Only with the help of such systematic, persistent, indefatigable, courageous agitational and organizational work, always on the basis of the experience of the masses themselves, is it possible to root out from their consciousness the traditions of submissiveness and passivity; to train detachments of heroic fighters capable of setting an example to all toilers; to inflict a series of tactical defeats upon the armed thugs of counterrevolution; to raise the self-confidence of the exploited and oppressed; to compromise fascism in the eyes of the petty bourgeoisie and pave the road for the conquest of power by the proletariat.

Engels defined the state as bodies of "armed men." *The arming of the proletariat* is an imperative concomitant element to its struggle for liberation. When the proletariat wills it, it will find the road and the means to arming. In this field, also, the leadership falls naturally to the sections of the Fourth International.

—25 AND 50 YEARS AGO—



August 15, 1975

James Eagle, one of the four Indians the FBI says it was looking for on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation last June, has been charged with the deaths of two FBI agents. The two agents and one Indian were killed in a June 26 shoot-out on the reservation.

Eagle, nineteen, had been the target of an intensive FBI search for several weeks before the shootings. He and his family are well known on the reservation as American Indian Movement supporters.

Eagle had turned himself in on July 9 for the earlier charges. On July 25 he was rearrested, and he now faces two counts of murder.

The charges against Eagle are based on an FBI claim that two prisoners who had been incarcerated with Eagle told agents he had admitted to the shootings.

The complaint filed against Eagle alleges he gave the two prisoners a detailed account of the deaths of the two FBI men, down to the caliber of the weapons used.

However, the version of the deaths detailed in the complaint contradicts what is known about the incident. It parallels instead initial reports put out by the government immediately after the Pine Ridge shooting, most of which later turned out to be false.

Eagle's frame-up is only the latest in a long series of charges the government has been busily fabricating and prosecuting against Indian militants in the past several years. The

purpose of these changes is to crush the struggle by Indian people for their rights.



August 14, 1950

Congress has launched a two-way war drive against the American people's standard of living. One thrust aims to impose the overwhelming burden of huge new taxes on the workers. The other seeks to "contain" wages while opening a breach for advancing prices.

The House and Senate are buzzing with schema to soak the workers for most of the \$5 billion of "interim" tax increases, that Truman has demanded as the first downpayment on his undeclared war in Korea and expanded militarization program.

Truman's proposals are already heavily weighted in favor of the rich and the war corporations. He has asked for \$3-1/2 billion more in personal income taxes, with the rate of increase on the lowest incomes double that of the highest. He did not even mention excess profit taxes.

The Senate has moved to safeguard the rich even more. The Senate Finance Committee eliminated from the proposed tax bill a section providing for a 10 percent withholding tax on dividends. They hold the position that it's all right to impose withholding taxes on workers' wages—but not on a main source of income for the rich. This is just a hint of the kind of tax bill the Democratic-controlled Congress has up its sleeve.

Back striking phone workers

The bosses underestimated the response of the telephone workers now on strike against the Verizon telecommunications giant.

They predicted a weak strike, small picket lines, and a quick union agreement to the company's demands. They claimed that with automated services the strike would have little impact on the phone system.

They were wrong. Some 86,000 workers in a dozen states in the east of the country have downed their tools. By the second day of the strike, more than 14,000 union members were on the picket lines outside 550 company buildings. The picket lines are boisterous and full of confidence. The company is unable to keep up with all the installation and maintenance orders, or to sustain its directory assistance service.

The unionists refuse to hand the company the power to transfer them where it pleases. They reject Verizon's demand to be able to impose compulsory overtime. They are asserting themselves as human beings who insist on having a life before and after selling their labor power to the capitalists.

And they are confronting the bosses over the issue of the right to be union. The capitalists aim to contract out more work. They are trying to keep unions out of their expanding, multibillion-dollar wireless and Internet operations. By taking on the bosses' attempt to build up an increasingly nonunion industry, the phone workers are

setting an example to working people everywhere who need a union.

The employing class, understanding the stakes involved in this battle, is mobilizing every resource at its disposal to attack the workers at Verizon. The cops have already arrested some pickets, and will look for opportunities to arrest more. Verizon quickly got a judge to issue a restraining order on pickets. The big-business press is doing its part by violence-baiting the strikers, accusing them of sabotage—a tactic used by GTE during the 1998 telephone strike in Puerto Rico that the strikers there defeated by standing their ground and mobilizing public support to their side.

The telephone workers' determined stand against the Verizon telecommunications conglomerate merits the support of all working people. These workers are taking on issues of importance to the entire working class. The bosses are deploying their weapons—the cops, courts, and the big-business press. Labor must mobilize our weapon: solidarity. Bringing fellow workers to join the picket lines, offering solidarity from other unions, joining strike support rallies, rebutting the bosses' lies—all these can make the difference and tip the scales in favor of our brothers and sisters on strike.

Drop the charges against the arrested strikers! Lift the restraining order on picketing!

Solidarity with the striking phone workers!

UMWA victory is for all labor

The strike victories by coal miners in Wyoming and New Mexico against the Pittsburg and Midway Coal Co. strengthen the entire United Mine Workers of America and working people everywhere. They deal a blow to the profit-hungry coal bosses, who pressed hard to weaken the union.

The bosses at P&M and its parent company Chevron thought they would be able to force 12-hour shifts down the throats of the miners. They thought they could get away with undercutting the health-care coverage won by Navajo miners. But those who believe the UMWA is on its last legs got a rude awakening. They didn't count on the willingness of the ranks of the mine workers to put up a tenacious fight, reach out for broader working-class support, and get it.

In grim contrast, a reminder of what happens when health and safety and other social rights are held hostage to the employers' profit drive was the recent fire and explosion at the Willow Creek mine in Helper, Utah, which killed two young miners and injured eight, as well as the death of a worker at the Black Butte mine near Rock Springs, Wyoming. Both mines are nonunion. That fact speaks volumes about why the union is a life-and-death question for coal miners and millions of other working people.

The miners in New Mexico and Wyoming point out that they could not have beat back the company without the labor solidarity they received during the strike. They won support from sister UMWA locals in the West. And UMWA miners at a P&M mine in Alabama wore red armbands to work and took off work on two miners' "me-

morial" days in solidarity with their brothers and sisters on strike.

The miners traveled to California and successfully appealed for support from oil workers at Chevron. The unionists from the two striking locals joined forces in a march and rally in Denver at P&M headquarters, which won broader working-class support.

The Women's Auxiliary and Miners' Backbone, the strikers' two auxiliary organizations, played a key role—both in the militancy they added on the picket lines and in garnering solidarity for the strikes far beyond the communities the strikes took place in.

These victories drew on the power of the May 17 march in Washington where 8,000 union retirees, active UMWA miners, high school youth, and other supporters rallied to defend cradle-to-grave health care, which is under concerted attack by the employers.

The strike victories in the West, like the march on Washington, are further expressions of the emerging social movement of miners in the U.S. coalfields. The UMWA is beginning to take initiatives in the eastern coalfields to organize nonunion contract miners at union mines as well as organize nonunion underground miners.

The miners who just won the strikes correctly point out that now they must turn to support the UMWA members whose contracts expire at the end of August at four Peabody mines. Other working people should follow their example. As the UMWA fighters point out, that course of struggle is the road to the whole labor movement becoming stronger.

Massive funds to combat AIDS!

The spread of HIV/AIDS to more than 24 million people in southern Africa is a direct consequence of imperialist pillage and capitalism's legacy of underdevelopment on the continent. Entire generations are being decimated, with several countries undergoing a radical drop in life expectancy.

HIV/AIDS claims the overwhelming majority of its victims in the working class and peasantry in the semicolonial nations oppressed by imperialism. Prevention of the spread of AIDS is completely possible within the current resources of humanity. The refusal of the wealthy imperialist powers that have plundered the continent for hundreds of years to mobilize the necessary medical and other aid is a moral outrage.

Massive funds—not loans—should be made available now to provide needed medical, educational, and social infrastructural personnel and resources to both care for those already infected and to bring an end to the spread of the disease. The decision on what services to establish and what drugs to use should be a sovereign African one, not made by the drug monopolies or imperialist powers. Africa's foreign debt should be canceled outright and immediately.

Working-class fighters should reject every argument that takes this question off the axis of the social catastrophe that it is—one that's a pressing question for all working people.

Any acceptance of the notion that the spread of the disease in Africa is an individual problem undercuts the need to demand that Washington and its imperialist allies act now, in a massive way, without strings attached.

While there is little information available on the spread of AIDS due to infection of the blood supply and sharing of needles—a source of a high percentage of the spread of the disease in a number of countries—it is clear that in

Africa the general lack of health care, including failure to treat venereal diseases, is a major cause of the rapid spread of the virus during sexual intercourse, including among heterosexuals.

There is a big jump in transmission of AIDS from mother to child during pregnancy as well, in part a result of the criminal lack of access to available drugs and follow-up medical attention. The second-class status and oppression of women means they are hit disproportionately with the disease, especially at a young age.

Drugs are available that allow many people to live longer, productive lives, but they are priced far out of the reach of workers and peasants in Africa by the profit-hungry drug companies.

Washington made its morally bankrupt position clear last month when it announced that the U.S. Export-Import Bank would "help" African governments by providing \$1 billion in loans at commercial interest rates for the purchase of AIDS medications, provided the drugs are made in the United States. This cynical maneuver would hand a blood-profits bonanza to the U.S. drug monopolies, while expanding Africa's \$315 billion debt burden.

While no HIV/AIDS vaccine is yet available, practical steps can be taken today to stem the spread of this pandemic and prolong the lives of those infected throughout southern Africa. Such steps include massive popular education campaigns conducted door to door in working-class townships, in rural villages, in mine and factory hostels, and in the schools to explain what HIV/AIDS is, how it spreads, and prevention techniques. Other realizable steps to check the spread of the disease include providing basic health care to all, early treatment of sexually transmitted diseases, distribution of condoms, and HIV testing and counseling—all free of charge.

10,000 protest in Puerto Rico against U.S. Navy

BY RON RICHARDS

GUAYNABO, Puerto Rico—Ten thousand people marched to the main gate of the U.S. military's Fort Buchanan here August 6 to protest the U.S. Navy's renewed bombing practice on the Puerto Rican island of Vieques. The protest was called on four days' notice at a press conference that included independence leaders representing a range of political viewpoints.

The protest was in response to the announcement that ships from the *USS Harry S. Truman* battle group would be training in Vieques throughout the month of August. The training will take place both in waters off the coast of Vieques and on the bombing range on the eastern tip of the island, where the Navy will drop bombs and artillery shells. Vieques, an island 26 miles long and six miles wide, has about 9,000 inhabitants.

Fort Buchanan is the new home of Army South, whose mission is to coordinate U.S. military intervention in Latin America. Known as the Southern Command, it was based in Panama until the recent closure of U.S. bases there—the result of decades of protests by the Panamanian people that eventually forced the return of the Panama Canal and U.S.-occupied zone to the people of that country.

Two marches converged on the rally site. As the demonstrators entered behind a sound truck, one person would call out over the microphone "Marina" and the crowd would lustily shout "Fuera" ("Navy Out").

Although there were no official union contingents, many marchers wore T-shirts and hats from the unions that have been most active in the fight against the U.S. Navy in Vieques and in the previous focus of the anticolonial movement, the 1998 telephone workers strike against the sale of the state-owned phone company to GTE. These include the electrical workers union UTIER, the Teamsters, the phone workers unions, and the teachers federation. The Teamsters provided the flatbed trailer used as a stage for the protest rally.

The anti-Navy groundswell was sparked in April 1999 when a U.S. warplane dropped a bomb that killed Vieques resident David Sanes. More than a dozen protest camps were set up on territory in Vieques used by the Navy for target practice. The protesters were evicted in May of this year by a force of 300 U.S. cops and 1,200 U.S. marines.

Since then, hundreds of people have defied the U.S. military by entering the Navy-occupied territory. Dozens of people have been arrested and brought to trial. Many are members of the Puerto Rican Independence Party (PIP), who were arrested for refusing to post bail because they do not recognize the authority of the U.S. government in their nation, and U.S. colony.

In response, the PIP has carried out a campaign in defense of its arrested members and leaders. It has set up a protest camp outside the federal prison in the San Juan suburb of Guaynabo. For the past month the camp has been staffed 24 hours a day and will remain open until all the PIP members are released from prison. There are a dozen tents for people to sleep, tarps for protection from the rain and sun, a kitchen, and portable bathrooms. People drop by to visit and talk. There are always domino tables. On Saturday evenings there is live music. There is a stage and regular rallies are held.

Meanwhile, the fight to rid Vieques of the U.S. Navy has been taken around the world. One group of activists, led by Carlos Zenón, a leader of the Vieques fishermen, was invited to Okinawa, Japan, to take part in the July 20 demonstration by 27,000 demanding the removal of all U.S. military bases from that island. Zenón was one of the featured speakers. "The Japanese suffered the brutal onslaught of World War II," Zenón declared. "For us, the residents of Vieques, World War II has not ended."

Japanese and Puerto Rican activists announced that they are creating a permanent Okinawa-Vieques action and information network.

At the same time, Ismael Guadalupe, a leader of the Committee for the Rescue and Development of Vieques, traveled to south Korea, where protests have taken place against the 37,000 U.S. troops stationed on 20 military bases there. Guadalupe took part in an International Solidarity Conference on Massacres Perpetrated by the U.S. Military on the U.S. Air Force Base at Muan. On July 15, hundreds of people protested near the area of Koon-Ni, where the U.S. Air Force carries out bombing practice.

In return, a delegation of leaders from that south Korean community visited Vieques on the August 5-6 weekend.

from Pathfinder

Puerto Rico: Independence Is a Necessity

RAFAEL CANCEL MIRANDA

"Our people are becoming aware of their own strength, which is what the colonial powers fear," explains Puerto Rican independence leader Rafael Cancel Miranda. In two interviews, he speaks out on the brutal reality of U.S. colonial domination, the campaign needed to free Puerto Rican political prisoners, the example of Cuba's socialist revolution, and the resurgence of the independence movement today. In English and Spanish. \$3.00

Available from bookstores, including those listed on page 12,

Mandela: action needed on AIDS in Africa

Continued from Page 16

undercutting patents and profits.

Second, Mbeki has allegedly questioned the link between HIV and AIDS. The main source of this assertion in the big-business press was the fact that he had invited a number of scientists who reject the view that HIV leads to AIDS to participate in an advisory panel discussing ways to combat the disease.

South African health minister Manto Tshabalala-Msimang emphasized during a press briefing at the Durban conference that "the president of this country has never denied either the existence of AIDS nor the causal connection between HIV and AIDS."

Opening the conference, Mbeki told delegates that "the world's biggest killer and the greatest cause of ill health and suffering across the globe, including South Africa, is extreme poverty."

He stated, "Some in our common world consider the questions I and the rest of our government have raised around the HIV/AIDS issue...as akin to grave criminal and genocidal misconduct. What I hear being said repeatedly, stridently, angrily, is—do not ask any questions!"

Mbeki said there was a generalized health crisis on the continent. "One of the consequences of this crisis is the deeply disturbing phenomenon of the collapse of immune systems among millions of our people, such that their bodies have no natural defense against attack by many viruses and bacteria. As I listened and heard the whole story told about our own country, it seemed to me that we could not blame everything on a single virus."

While the government waited for the advisory panel's conclusions, he said, it would continue to expand its anti-AIDS program.

Mbeki's speech failed to satisfy many delegates. Few had an argument with the connection between wretched social condi-

tions and AIDS. But many expressed concern that a lack of clarity and focus would undercut popular understanding of the spread of HIV and AIDS in a country where the infection rate is estimated by UNAIDS to be one of the fastest in the world.

Phil Wilson of the African-American AIDS Initiative was quoted by Reuters as saying, "The house is on fire and Mbeki is sitting around trying to decide whether it was started by a lighter or a match. He talks about a plan. He doesn't talk about action. This should have been a call to action."

Conference chairperson Hoosen Coovadia, a South African doctor, said, "What I'm sensing from people is an absolute sense of disappointment. Many people believe that the president would use the occasion to try and quell some of the disquiet around government's position on HIV/AIDS."

It is hard to tell, however, where such criticisms begin to meld with the campaign led by pharmaceutical companies against South Africa's stance on AIDS drugs. The drug monopolies themselves were among the principal sponsors of the conference. The *Washington Post*, which has campaigned against the South African government's AIDS stance, gave an internet story the tendentious headline "Hundreds walk out on Mbeki."

Mandela: 'People want action'

By the end of the conference, as the controversy over Mbeki's speech reached almost fever pitch, Nelson Mandela stepped in with a clear, forceful message.

"It is never my custom to use words lightly," he said. "If 27 years in prison have done anything to us, it was to use the silence of solitude to make us understand how precious words are and how real speech is in its impact upon the way people live and die."

"If by way of introduction I stress the importance of the way we speak, it is also because so much unnecessary attention around this conference has been directed towards a dispute that is unintentionally distracting from the real life-and-death issues we are confronted with," Mandela stated.

"I do not know nearly enough about science and its methodologies or about the politics of science and scientific practice to even wish to start contributing to the debate that has been raging on the perimeters of this conference. I am, however, old enough and have gone through sufficient conflicts and disputes in my lifetime to know that in all disputes a point is arrived at which no party, no matter how right or wrong it might have been at the start of that dispute, will any longer be totally in the right or totally in the wrong. Such a point, I believe, has been reached in this debate...."

"Now, however, the ordinary people of the continent and the world—and particularly the poor who on our continent will again carry a disproportionate burden of this scourge—would, if anybody cared to ask their opinion, wish that the dispute about the primacy of politics or science be put on the back burner and that we proceed to address the needs and concerns of those suffering and dying."

The South African leader insisted, "We

have to rise above our differences and combine our efforts to save our people. History will judge us harshly if we fail to do so now, and right now.... Something must be done as a matter of the greatest urgency. And with nearly two decades of dealing with the epidemic, we now do have some experience of what works."

"The experience in a number of countries has taught that HIV infection can be prevented through investing in information and life-skills development for young people. Promoting abstinence, safe sex, and the use of condoms and ensuring the early treatment

of sexually transmitted diseases are some of the steps needed and about which there can be no dispute."

"Ensuring that people, especially the young, have access to voluntary and confidential HIV counseling and testing services and introducing measures to reduce mother-to-child transmission have been proven to be essential in the fight against AIDS. We have recognized the importance of addressing the stigmatization and discrimination, and of providing safe and supportive environments for people affected by HIV/AIDS," Mandela said.

LA airport workers defend jobs, union



Militant/Carole Lesnick

Workers at Argenbright picket Los Angeles airport June 29. The ramp workers, wheel chair attendants, and security screeners won a victory in their fight to organize a union.

BY MARK FRIEDMAN

LOS ANGELES—A recent victory by airport workers here in their fight to organize a union has made another gain.

Baggage handlers, wheel chair attendants, and security screeners at Argenbright Security Inc. had voted overwhelmingly to join the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), adding 600 workers to the hundreds who have joined that union or the Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees union in the past year at companies with contracts at the Los Angeles International Airport (LAX).

In response, three airlines—Northwest, Air Canada, and Hawaiian—fired 200 soon-to-be-union workers June 24, a week before the vote, by terminating their contract with Argenbright and contracting Aviation Safeguards, another nonunion outfit.

The SEIU members counterattacked with several airport demonstrations, joined by a handful of other unionists, and packed hearings of the Los Angeles City Council. Under this pressure, the City Council and the Airport Commission threatened to pull Northwest's operating permit at the airport if it did not instruct the new contractor to hire all the former employees at Argenbright. The airlines felt compelled to do so.

Aviation Safeguards had used an "English language proficiency test" to screen out

scores of former Argenbright workers, while not giving the test to 120 new employees it hired. The July 20 *Daily Breeze* quoted Tommy Woo, a baggage handler with two years' service who was fired after he failed the 25-question test even though he speaks good English. "I haven't taken one of these tests for thirty years," he said. "I felt this was not fair."

The rehired workers, who are now in the union and who previously were paid between \$5.75 and \$6.20 an hour, will receive \$7.72 per hour with benefits or \$8.97 per hour without benefits, as stipulated under the city's Living Wage law.

One worker, Dionicia Robinson, said in an interview, "This victory is in the right direction. All workers will get an interview, with first preference to those who are not working another job. Most want to come back to the airport, where we have a relation with other workers."

"The biggest victors and those most responsible for the victory were the workers who said we are not going away," said Jono Shaffer, campaign director for "Respect at LAX," a coalition of unions, clergy, and community groups that has mobilized support for the airport workers.

Mark Friedman is a member of the International Association of Machinists at Los Angeles International Airport.

Further reading from *Pittsburgher*

The Coming Revolution in South Africa

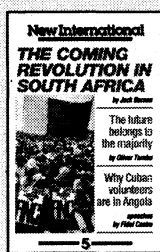
by Jack Barnes

In *New International* no. 5

Also

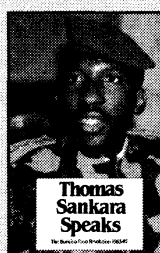
• The future belongs to the majority by Oliver Tambo

• Why Cuban volunteers are in Angola by Fidel Castro \$9.00



Thomas Sankara Speaks

—The Burkina Faso Revolution, 1983–87 \$18.95



Available from bookstores, including those listed on page 12.

LETTERS

Defending right to choose

It is always a high point in my reading of the *Militant* to see coverage on the fight for women's rights, with a centerpiece in this struggle being the fight to secure a woman's right to a safe and legal abortion if she wants one. In the July 31 issue there was an excellent article on just this determined fight—"Antiabortion thug stabs Vancouver doctor."

But I was disappointed to find, on the same page in an article entitled "Outspoken rightist to head Canada party," a line that stated an exception to antiabortion legislation with the formulation "unless the mother's life was in danger." *Militant* contributors and editors should clearly explain that it is women who seek abortions, not "mothers." The anti-choice movement tries to claim a false mantle by using manipulative language (i.e. "pro-life"), and

it is important for the *Militant* to pay special attention to language in its coverage of this aspect of the Culture War.

Elena Tate
New York, New York

Inhuman living conditions

The living situation of hundreds of thousands of workers in New York is steadily sinking into decaying conditions as the capitalist economic crisis deepens and social programs are further gutted. To anyone walking in many working-class neighborhoods from the Bronx to Brooklyn the sight of decrepit housing, rusted and useless vehicles, piles of rotting or smoldering garbage, and crumbling schools, streets, and subways—not to mention workers and their families increasingly in worn clothing and poor health—is the norm.

New York's capitalist political

figures delight in mocking the situation. Last week after a rat ran by Mayor Rudolph Giuliani on the porch of Gracie Mansion, a campaign was launched to "address" the vermin epidemic. (There was another \$8 million campaign in 1997.)

One day this weekend as we petitioned to put the Socialist Workers candidates on the ballot, we happened to have a copy on display of Frederick Engels's *The Condition of the Working-Class in England*. This, I think, is an excellent book to show how seriously communists view the question of social conditions.

In just one example, in a chapter called "The Great Towns," Engels writes of the inhuman living situations faced by workers in the 1840s. "What is true of London, is true of Manchester, Birmingham, Leeds, is true of all great towns. Everywhere barbarous indifference, hard ego-

tism on one hand, and nameless misery on the other, everywhere social warfare, every man's house in a state of siege, everywhere reciprocal plundering under the protection of the law, and all so shameless, so openly avowed that one shrinks before the consequences of our social state as they manifest themselves here undisguised, and can only wonder that the whole crazy fabric still hangs together."

Janet Post
Brooklyn, New York

Cover actors' strike

It would be great if you could provide coverage on the actors' commercial strike, which began on May 1. The strike involves the 125,000 members of the Screen Actors Guild and is a reaction to an attempted rollback of wages and residuals.

The entertainment industry's long-term goal is to break union

involvement with all major television, movie, and record production. This includes craft unions (such as the actors' and musicians' unions) and industrial unions such as the Teamsters.

Ben Roberts
Oakland, California

Editor's reply: The *Militant* has had coverage on the Screen Actors Guild strike against the advertising companies in the June 5 and July 10 issues, and welcomes further news reports from readers.

The letters column is an open forum for all viewpoints on subjects of interest to working people.

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

Mandela: need action on AIDS in Africa

BY T.J. FIGUEROA

PRETORIA, South Africa—"Let us not equivocate: a tragedy of unprecedented proportions is unfolding in Africa," Nelson Mandela told delegates at the 13th international AIDS conference in Durban, South Africa.

"Decades have been chopped from life expectancy and young child mortality is expected to more than double in the most severely affected countries of Africa. AIDS is clearly a disaster, effectively wiping out the development gains of the past decades and sabotaging the future," he said. The former South African president and African National Congress leader was addressing more than 12,000 delegates from around the world at the July 14 closing session of the conference held in the Indian Ocean port city.

Southern Africa is the epicenter of the AIDS pandemic. According to estimates published by the Joint United Nations Program on AIDS (UNAIDS), 4.2 million people are infected with HIV/AIDS in South Africa alone—the highest number of any country.

The spread of the disease in sub-Saharan Africa is fueled by the horrendous social conditions imposed on hundreds of millions of workers and peasants as a result of imperialist domination and capitalist exploitation, including the oppression of women.

Three developments stood out at the conference: the scope of the social disaster unfolding in Africa as a result of AIDS; the extortion practiced by capitalist pharmaceutical monopolies that manufacture AIDS drugs; and a controversy surrounding the views of South African president Thabo Mbeki on HIV and AIDS.

Pandemic in southern Africa

According to UNAIDS estimates, by the end of last year 34.3 million people were living with HIV/AIDS worldwide, 24.5 million of them in sub-Saharan Africa.

There are now 16 countries on the continent where more than one-tenth of the adult population (aged 15-49) is infected with HIV. In seven countries below the Sahara, at least one adult in five is living with HIV. In Botswana, 35.8 percent of adults are now infected with HIV, while in South Africa, 19.9 percent are infected, up from 12.9 percent just two years ago, says UNAIDS.

By 1998, AIDS-related diseases had killed 11.5 million Africans. One consequence of this scourge is that life expectancy is dropping throughout much of the continent.

Karen Stanek of the U.S. Census Bureau told the conference that by 2010, life expectancy is projected to fall to 29 years in Botswana, 30 years in Swaziland, and 33 years in Namibia and Zimbabwe. "These are a level of life expectancy that have not been seen since the start of the 20th century," she said.

These estimates, even given a degree of exaggeration, paint a devastating picture. They illustrate the oppressive social relations imposed by the imperialist powers on the nations of Africa.

Finance capital plunders African nations through unequal terms of trade, debt bondage, and every aspect of the normal functioning of capitalism, perpetuating the legacy of underdevelopment established through centuries of colonial pillage. World capitalist economic instability hits the continent with special force.

African nations are saddled with a foreign debt of \$315 billion to banks in imperialist countries; their interest payments alone amount to \$15 billion a year. As Washington, London, Berlin, Paris, and Tokyo demand budget-slashing measures to ensure payment of this tribute, already minimal services, including health care, simply collapse in growing parts of Africa.

The spread of HIV/AIDS is fostered by

these conditions. Poor general health and sanitation—particularly the presence of other sexually transmitted diseases—makes it easier for people to become infected during sexual intercourse, the primary method

cial said "it all starts from there," implying that men were "enticed" by young women's attire. The parliament also began debating a proposal to sterilize all HIV-positive people in the country.

ers may still hope to sell their product profitably in Africa."

"Even at 90 percent discounts," the *Times* article stated, "a typical cocktail of AIDS-suppressing drugs might cost \$2,000 a year for a single patient in Africa, more than four times the average per capita income in many of the worst-afflicted countries."

Earlier this year, five big pharmaceutical companies announced they would "offer" HIV/AIDS drugs to African countries at a discount. However, the health-care infrastructure needed to support use of such drugs—including HIV testing, measurement of viral loads in infected individuals, and dealing with the side effects and complications associated with the medications—does not exist in sub-Saharan Africa.

An article in the July 8 *New York Times* reported that a study in Tanzania, Uganda, and South Africa had dashed initial hopes that newborns could avoid HIV infection with several tested

drugs. "The new study, which involved 1,797 people and was the largest ever performed on the transmission of AIDS from mothers to children, followed children who were born to these mothers and found that by 18 months the initial benefit was completely lost as the infants who had been spared infection at birth later became infected through breast-feeding," the article stated.

'Poverty is world's biggest killer'

At the AIDS conference, the views of South African president Mbeki became a subject of controversy.

In recent months, Mbeki has come under attack on two fronts. First, the pharmaceutical monopolies are angry that Pretoria has, for now, decided to not distribute AIDS medications such as AZT at state hospitals. The South African government has questioned the efficacy of such drugs and denounced the high price at which they are sold. Legislation passed by the ANC government also aims to allow the purchase or manufacture of generic medications.

Continued on Page 15

Number of People Living with HIV or AIDS By region, at the end of 1999



SOURCE: United Nations Report THE WASHINGTON POST

of HIV transmission in Africa. Many people infected with HIV do not even know it due to lack of basic health care and testing. The second-class status of women makes them especially vulnerable to becoming infected with and transmitting the virus.

Once a person has HIV, their overall health, including nutrition, plays a key role in the rate at which the immune system collapses. Tuberculosis, widespread in South Africa, is one of the "opportunistic" infections that claims the lives of many people with AIDS.

There is insufficient education on HIV/AIDS and how it is transmitted. Until this is reversed, unscientific views and reactionary prejudices feed the spread of the disease. For instance, in some rural areas of South Africa there is a myth that sex with a virgin will cure AIDS in men. Even more widespread is opposition to using condoms.

Steps proposed by some governments in the region reinforce reactionary ideas on AIDS. In July, the parliament of Swaziland, where a quarter of the population is HIV-positive, declared it would ban short skirts for schoolgirls. An education ministry offi-

As the AIDS conference opened July 9, thousands of protesters took to the streets of Durban to demand that big pharmaceutical companies make their drugs available for free or at low cost.

Blood profits

In the profit calculus of the capitalist pharmaceutical monopolies, Africa is the place to win "market share" for AIDS drugs, ranging from life-prolonging agents to medications designed to prevent mother-to-child transmission of HIV.

Washington's approach to the AIDS health crisis was exemplified in its announcement in late July that \$1 billion in loans would be granted, at a commercial rate of about 7 percent, through the U.S. Export-Import Bank for African governments to purchase U.S.-made AIDS medications—a boon to the drug profiteers.

The *New York Times* reported July 19 that "the U.S. loans could help American pharmaceutical companies prevent the spread of generic knock-offs of their profitable AIDS drugs to Africa. Even with heavy discounts, of up to 80 or 90 percent...some drug mak-

S. Africa unions oppose labor law proposals

BY T.J. FIGUEROA

PRETORIA, South Africa—The Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) has denounced proposed amendments to labor law and warned it will mobilize a fight against the government over the issues.

The proposals, unveiled by Labor Minister Memphasi Mdladlana of the African National Congress on July 26, have angered many workers. If written into law, they would mark a sharp departure from the trend of the past six years. In 1994, following years of mass struggle, the country's first nonracial, democratic elections were held and apartheid rule was ended. Since then, many of the demands of the superexploited working class for basic protections on the job have been incorporated into law.

The government's proposals include the following:

- An end to premium pay for Sunday work.
- Increasing the amount of overtime employers can schedule to 15 hours a week, from a 45-hour base workweek. Currently overtime is capped at 10 hours a week.
- Giving the labor minister power to approve variances from the Basic Conditions of Employment Act, which sets rules for overall conditions of work.
- Establishing a six-month probation period for new workers and easing the bosses' ability to fire them.

Mdladlana said the proposals "will send a clear signal to local and foreign investors that we are seeking to create a labor market that is efficient and that is stable."

COSATU, the largest trade union federation in South Africa, said in a statement presented to a press conference by its secretary-general, Zwelinzima Vavi, that the package "represents an attack on the gains that organized labor has made in the past five years. We shall not take this lying down; the government, if it takes forward these amendments, must realize that they will set us on a real collision course."

Many of the proposed amendments "completely upset the delicate balance achieved through years of negotiations, and threaten to seriously destabilize the degree of labor stability which has been achieved by the new dispensation," COSATU said in its statement.

'Attack on hard-won rights'

"The worst proposals, particularly on retrenchments [layoffs], downward variation [variances from the law], Sunday work, bargaining councils, and probation, represent the most serious attack on hard-won workers rights and gains since the 1988 attempt of [then-president] P.W. Botha's regime to roll back workers' rights," COSATU said.

"COSATU has been upbeat about gains workers have made since 1994 following the transformation of the labor market, and mobilized workers for the ANC 1999 elec-

tions victory partly on this achievement," said Vavi.

"Today we don't know what to think. There appears to be an obsession with what the mythical 'investor' is supposed to think about our labor market, and a blocking out of the realities facing millions of vulnerable workers, still oppressed by the apartheid legacy."

Spokespeople for the employer class welcomed the proposals, but said they did not go far enough in establishing "flexibility."

Bosses call for more powers

Business Day, published in Johannesburg, said in a July 31 editorial that "Mdladlana's reforms are by no means perfect in such areas as working hours and retrenchment, dispute and collective bargaining procedures. But the package is a reasonable attempt to balance the competing imperatives of job creation, attracting investment and maintaining stability on the shop floor. One stark shortcoming is the failure to address the high overtime pay rate mandated by the Basic Conditions of Employment Act." The overtime rate is now time-and-a-half.

The proposals will be discussed in forums with representatives from the labor movement, employers, and government prior to being forwarded to Parliament. COSATU leaders said they hoped to roll back the proposals in negotiations and would reserve a decision on mass action pending the outcome of these discussions.