

THE MILITANT

INSIDE

Fidel Castro's speech after victory at Bay of Pigs

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A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

VOL. 65 NO. 10 MARCH 12, 2001

U.S. used cluster bombs in assault against Iraq

Weapons used in February attack 'will kill for years to come'

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

U.S. warplanes fired 28 cluster bombs—each equipped with 145 anti-armor and anti-personnel incendiary bomblets—as part of Washington's February 16 assault against Iraq. Dropped on the outskirts of Baghdad, the country's capital city, most of the bombs missed their target, despite the Pentagon's earlier claims of pinpoint hits by the satellite-guided weapons.

These facts have only come to light in the on-line edition of the *Washington Post*, in a February 26 article by William Arkin, a former Army intelligence analyst and consultant. The print edition of the paper did not carry the article, and the use of cluster bombs has been covered up in the big-business media.

The Bush administration also dispatched Secretary of State Colin Powell to the Middle East, with the purpose of explaining to regimes in the region U.S. government decisions to adjust the sanctions against Iraq—modifications made with the goal of more effectively sealing the borders and controlling the flow of goods and people in and out of the country.

Arkin explains the cluster bombs are anti-personnel weapons and have "no real aimpoint." As with cluster bombs used by Washington in its assault against the Iraqi people a decade ago, those dropped February 16 will "kill and wound innocent civilians for years to come," he writes.

Washington's choice of cluster bombs highlights the character of the 10-year ag-

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Meat packers strike Excel



Sean R. Crosier/Fort Morgan Times

Strikers meet outside Excel meatpacking plant in Colorado after walking off the job the day after a union meeting rejected a proposed six-year contract.

BY RÓGER CALERO

Nearly 400 meat packers at Excel Corp.'s plant in Fort Morgan, Colorado, staged a wildcat strike February 26 to protest working conditions and to de-

mand a three-year contract with higher wages and benefits.

The walkout began one day after the union members, most of whom are Mexi-

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Pay dispute forces raisin farmers out of business

BY ROLLANDE GIRARD

FRESNO, California—Raisin farmers in this region face foreclosure or are being forced to sell their land because they have not been paid for the fall 2000 harvest. A deadlock between the growers and the packers, who could not agree on a field price for raisins, led to the issue being submitted to arbitration. The three arbitrators, who will determine the price, have yet to meet. Meanwhile the growers have to keep paying taxes, loans, and other operating expenses.

The 2000 crop, at 427,396 tons, was one of the biggest in the history of California and a 43 percent jump over 1999. The Raisin Administrative Committee (RAC), the panel that oversees the inventory and flow of raisins under a Federal Raisin Marketing Order, says there is only a market for 233,344 tons of raisins. The capitalist companies that control the packing and marketing of raisins are trying to turn the bountiful crop against the growers, setting a price far below the cost of production because of "oversupply."

At a meeting of the RAC January 12, the panel approved a "free tonnage" of 53 percent of the crop to go on the market for sale this year, with the rest being set aside in a reserve. The growers only get paid for the free tonnage. The RAC also voted for a diversion program of 155,000 tons. This was supported by the growers while the

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Seoul voices concern over shift in U.S. policies

BY PATRICK O'NEILL

As Kim Dae Jung, president of south Korea, prepares to visit Washington next month, "signs of uneasiness have been multiplying here about a possible change in direction in U.S. policy toward the divided Korean Peninsula," reported the *International Herald Tribune* from Seoul on February 20. In the last month, the White House has assumed an openly hostile stance towards the government in north Korea, curtailing diplomatic contacts, showing little enthusiasm for recent agreements, and stepping up Washington's ongoing propaganda offensive a notch.

"In private," the paper continued, "Seoul officials have expressed alarm that the administration is rushing ahead with plans to develop a missile shield before seriously testing Pyongyang's willingness to abandon its long- and medium-range missile programs."

Kim's spokesperson, Park Joon Young, expressed this unease at a news conference in mid-February. "The most important element of inter-Korean relations is that there is no more war," he said. "And that outweighs considerations of whether we give more or take more. Peace is the most im-

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Celebrate at East and West Coast meetings

The 40th anniversary of U.S. imperialism's first defeat in the Americas, the victory of the Cuban people at the Bay of Pigs, in defense of their socialist revolution.

A public launching of Pathfinder's campaign to sell *Bay of Pigs: Washington's First Military Defeat in the Americas* and *Making History: Interviews with Four Generals of Cuba's Revolutionary Armed Forces*; as well as *Fertile Ground: Che Guevara and Bolivia*

The program will feature:

MARY-ALICE WATERS, Pathfinder president and editor of *Making History* and of *Fertile Ground*, launched at the February 2001 Havana book fair

JACK BARNES, Socialist Workers Party national secretary, author of introduction to *Bay of Pigs*

STEVE CLARK, an editor, *Bay of Pigs*

MARTÍN KOPPEL, editor, *Militant* and *Perspectiva Mundial*, organizer of Books for Cuba Fund, and chair of Havana book fair meeting to donate 300 copies of *Haciendo historia*, the Spanish edition of *Making History*, to the Association of Combatants of the Cuban Revolution

OLYMPIA NEWTON, member, Young Socialists National Leadership Council and *Militant* reporter at Havana book fair

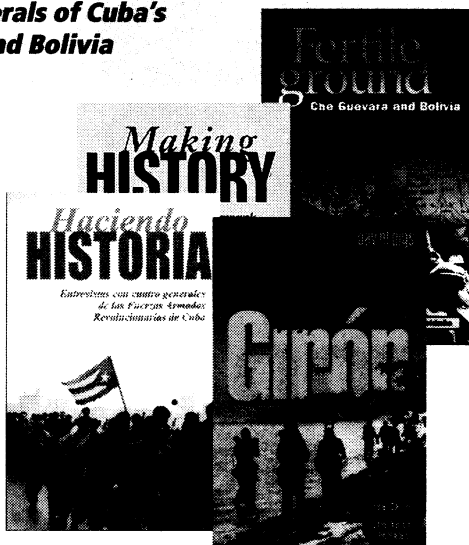
NATALIE STAKE-DOUCET, YS leader from Canada

The meetings will coincide with a March 10–11 SWP trade union leadership meeting and a March 17–18 meeting of the YS National Leadership Council. They will feature efforts by SWP supporters to produce and sell Pathfinder books, and celebrate two successful Red Weekends of volunteer work at the Pathfinder Building in New York, and the new headquarters of the SWP branches in Brooklyn and Seattle.

New York City, March 11

Reception 1 p.m. Program 2 p.m.

Columbia University, Roone Arledge Auditorium
Lerner Hall, 2920 Broadway



Seattle, March 18

West Coast: Hosted by the Seattle, San Francisco, and Los Angeles branches of the Socialist Workers Party and Young Socialists. For more information call: 206-323-1755, 415-584-2135, or 213-380-9460

East Coast: Hosted by the Brooklyn, Garment District, Newark, and Upper Manhattan branches of the Socialist Workers Party and Young Socialists. For more information call: 212-695-7358, 212-740-4611, 718-398-7850, or 973-643-3341.

Turkish working people devastated by financial plunge — page 9

Marchers oppose rate hikes, 'bailout'

BY BERNIE SENTER

SAN FRANCISCO—Chanting "No rate hikes, no bailout, public power now," 75 people marched in the rain to Pacific Gas & Electric Company's (PG&E) collection office on February 24.

Carolina Rodriguez, who joined the demonstration, has worked for 12 years as a janitor and is a member of Service Employees International Union Local 87. "I pay \$300 a month for energy costs in my house. This is for only me and my daughter," she said. "The president of Able Building Co.," Rodriguez explained, referring to her employer, "said that because of the energy crisis the company wants to save money by changing workers' schedules and laying people off. The president of our local union says because of the energy crisis workers need to make concessions and work with [California governor] Gray Davis. There is no democracy."

Rodriguez mentioned that she votes for the Democratic Party but disagrees with the bailout of PG&E, which the Democratic Party governor and the state administration are pushing. The demonstration was one of the few public protest actions in response to the government's moves to make working people pay for the bailouts of the state's two main utility companies, PG&E and Southern California Edison, which have gone nearly \$13 billion in debt.

For the first time in more than a month, the utilities have not issued daily stage 2 or 3 energy alerts when reserves have fallen to dangerously low levels. But the crisis remains at the center of politics in the state. The steps by the government include relaxing air standards for the electric generation plants; long-term rate hikes, which will hit working people the hardest; the use of state funds to purchase electricity at sky-high prices from energy monopolies; and a massive \$10 billion bond issue for long-term state purchases of electricity, arranged to insure the capitalist oil, gas, and electric companies keep raking in record profits.

In addition, Governor Davis announced February 23 that the state will purchase transmission lines owned by Southern California Edison for \$2.76 billion, 2.3 times

their book value. The state is also in negotiations with PG&E to purchase its power lines, but the insolvent company is holding out for more lucrative terms.

The bond offering will be the biggest state bond issue in U.S. history. The *Los Angeles Times* reported that more than half of the 26 financial firms hired by the state to oversee the bond offering have business ties to utility and energy companies. State Treasurer Phil Angelides said he does not believe the ties pose any actual conflicts of interest.

Meanwhile, PG&E scored a victory when federal regulators upheld an earlier decision allowing it to shield valuable assets from creditors in case of bankruptcy. In a practice known as "ring fencing," PG&E's parent company has insulated itself from \$7 billion in debts accumulated by the utility. Dynegy Inc., a major power supplier, and the state of California accused the company of playing a shell game to protect its lucrative power-generating assets.

The parent company owns dozens of power-generating facilities nationwide and is a major supplier of natural gas to PG&E, which owes a large percentage of its debts to the parent company. Neither the state nor PG&E are saying anything about the fact that the utility paid billions of dollars in the last few years in dividends to stockholders



Militant/Bernie Senter

Seventy-five people marched to the Pacific Gas & Electric Company's collection office in San Francisco February 24. The \$13 billion cost of the 'bailout' being pushed by California governor Gray Davis will fall on working people.

and bondholders. One-third of the utility's cash flow in the first nine months of last year were channeled to the parent company.

In Washington February 26, Republican senator Frank Murkowski from Alaska presented a bill that would permit oil drilling inside the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, located in that state. According to the *New York Times*, the legislation would also "promote production of natural gas, coal, and nuclear energy, and increase home-heating

assistance for the poor."

Republican senator Trent Lott cast his support for the bill in nationalist terms, saying, "American dependence on foreign oil threatens our national security and our freedom." Murkowski added the goal of the bill was to reduce U.S. dependence on oil imported from "unstable nations," such as Iraq and Iran.

Bernie Senter is a member of United Food and Commercial Workers Local 120.

Pennsylvania residents fight effects of oil spill

BY TOM MAILER

HAZLETON, Pennsylvania—Residents of the Laurel Gardens neighborhood that straddles the northern edge of the town of Hazleton and adjacent Hazle township are stepping up their fight for a government buyout of their homes. For at least eight years a plume of gasoline and fuel oil has spread through the soil under their homes, releasing toxic fumes of benzene, toluene, MTBE, and ethylbenzene. In recent weeks, they have placed green ribbons all over the affected area, put up signs warning of the presence of dangerous gases, attended a city council meeting to gain support for a state of emergency in their area, and confronted federal

and state officials over their lack of action.

Calling themselves the Group Against Gas (GAG), the residents have been organizing meetings to educate each other about the hazards they face, get the facts about the spill from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), and discuss out ways to keep the pressure on local, state, and federal officials to take action to clean up the spill.

About 400 homes in this working-class community are affected by the spill so far, estimated by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) at a minimum of 50,000 gallons. The main source of the pollution came from leaking underground storage tanks at Tranguch Tire Service, Inc. Three other gas stations in the area also had leaking tanks. Benzene, a component of gasoline, is a known cancer-causing agent when inhaled.

Two years ago, most residents had no idea how large the leak was or what dangers were posed to their health by the fumes. In an interview, Pat Tomsho said she remembers coming home to strong gas fumes as far back as 1993. Officials of the Department of Environmental Resources (DER), the predecessor to the DEP, advised her to leave the windows of her house open for a week to air it out. Following that, tests indicated there were no fumes left, and no further tests were done until last year. Tomsho was never informed of the potential health hazards, which can take as long as 15 years to de-

velop. Her home is two blocks downslope from Tranguch.

At a February 21 Hazleton City Council meeting attended by 50 members of GAG, a resolution was adopted calling on the mayor to declare a state of emergency in the Tranguch Spill Site. This would be one step toward having Pennsylvania governor Thomas Ridge declare the area to be in a state of emergency, opening up access to state funds. At a February 1 meeting of GAG, Robert Stevens, a resident of the polluted area and a member of the city council, received loud applause when he stated, "There is no alternative for us but to get out. We must impress this upon our elected officials. And, if it takes for us to go to Washington, D.C., then I say do it!" Those attending the meeting supported a resolution calling for a rally in Harrisburg, the state capital, and then in Washington if necessary.

All this activity has forced several big-business politicians to show some concern. In one week, both senators from Pennsylvania, Arlen Specter and Richard Santorum, and Congressman Paul Kanjorski toured the spill site and heard complaints from the residents on the unhealthy conditions they face.

Mauro Cabell told them that the dangers from the gas are "invisible. It's like a silent bomb. Nobody sees it. Nobody hears it." In response, Specter wrote a letter to Christine Whitman, the head of the EPA, asking that the homes be bought out. Santorum agreed to meet with Whitman on the spill.

THE MILITANT

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The Militant

Vol. 65/No. 10

Closing news date: February 28, 2001

Editor: MARTIN KOPPEL

Business Manager: MAURICE WILLIAMS

Editorial Staff: Róger Calero, Hilda Cuzco, Greg McCartan, Maggie Trowe, Brian Williams, and Maurice Williams.

Published weekly except for two weeks in August and one week in December.

The Militant (ISSN 0026-3885), 410 West St., New York, NY 10014. Telephone: (212) 243-6392; Fax (212) 924-6040.

E-mail: TheMilitant@compuserve.com

The Militant website is: www.themilitant.com

Correspondence concerning subscriptions or changes of address should be addressed to The Militant Business Office, 410 West St., New York, NY 10014.

Periodicals postage paid at New York, NY.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to the Militant, 410 West St., New York, NY 10014.

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New Zealand rallies back rightist campaign

BY ANNALUCIA VERMUNT

CHRISTCHURCH, New Zealand—Rallies of hundreds of supporters of Mark Middleton were held at courthouses throughout New Zealand February 16 to coincide with his sentencing for threatening to kill Paul Dally. Middleton, sentenced to nine months in prison, suspended for two years, was convicted based on public statements he had made.

The February 16 rallies backed Middleton's reactionary campaign calling for instituting longer prison sentences in the country. In Christchurch, the media reported more than 200 people joined the rally, many holding pro-death penalty placards demanding "life for life." In Auckland, some 400 people marched from the courthouse to Queen Elizabeth Square in the central

city, according to the local media.

In 1989 Dally abducted Middleton's 13-year-old stepdaughter, Karla Cardno, raped and sodomized her, then buried her alive. Dally was convicted and sentenced to prison. When Dally was up for parole for the first time in 1999, Middleton threatened him, saying, "I want his life from him and that means you either keep him in for life, or I'll take his life." He went on to make numerous threats in the media calling for vigilante justice. His campaign rallied rightist forces who called for the reintroduction of the death penalty and longer sentences for those convicted of murder and other serious crimes.

Middleton previously gathered support for his reactionary campaign when he stood for parliament as an independent candidate in the 1999 general elections, advocating

longer sentences for violent criminals and the return of the death penalty. He polled third with 3,376 votes. In the same election, a national referendum calling for tougher sentences for serious violent offenders and greater "victim support" won with 92 percent of those voting in favor.

The *New Zealand Herald* reported February 19 that Middleton and his supporters plan to run for parliament in the next elections on "law and order tickets."

Middleton declared, "My supporters are going to shake this country. We are going to give it a good shake and we are going to get some things done.... There are a whole range of issues."

The Press, in a February 7 editorial titled, "No place for rough justice," commented: "Middleton's pursuit of a vigilante solution

was a dangerous breach of the rule of law." But at the same time the newspaper joined the campaign for tougher sentencing. A feature in the paper profiling "The Dirty Thirty... our worst criminals" argued, "As debate rages about New Zealand's approach to the sentencing of serious criminals, Justice Minister Phil Goff has pledged to change the law to keep murderer Paul Dally behind bars for longer before he can be considered for parole. But unless the law is made retrospective, many of the country's vilest killers and rapists, currently biding their time in jail awaiting release, will not be affected by new legislation."

It was in the climate of this political campaign that a 47-year-old man accused by police of being a pedophile was forced to flee his home in Napier at the end of January after being assaulted and told "leave within 24 hours or you'll get a bullet."

John Marsden, the police officer who headed the Cardno murder inquiry, came out publicly in support of Middleton, justifying his actions as due to grief he continues to suffer 10 years after the incident and isolating that from the reactionary political campaign he is waging.

Justice Minister Goff also expressed sympathy for Middleton, saying, "If it were my daughter I would feel exactly the same." He announced that proposals for tougher sentences will go before the cabinet shortly. Other proposed changes include not requiring the Parole Board to consider people for release every year even if they are eligible. Defending his position, Goff said, "This would reduce the trauma that those like the Cardno family endure every year."

Referring to the 1999 referendum, a February 17 editorial in the *New Zealand Herald* noted, "Judges have begun handing out longer minimum non-parole periods in jail." This has led to a rising number of working people behind bars, among the highest figures per capita in the world.

In a related development, Goff announced plans to introduce legislation that will enable the police to conduct DNA tests on anyone arrested for burglary and to use the evidence in court. Under current laws police can compel suspects to give samples only in serious cases involving murder, rape, and wounding. Otherwise, DNA samples can only be taken after conviction and with approval of a High Court judge.

Goff said, "You have to balance the rights of individuals, who may be suspects, with the needs of society... and acknowledge the civil liberties of the 60,000 to 70,000 families whose homes are broken into each year."

Annalucia Vermunt is a member of the Meat Workers Union in Christchurch.

Labor activists speak out at Seattle forum

BY CECELIA MORIARITY

SEATTLE—"Although the outcome didn't achieve what we wanted, the company wasn't able to crush us. Empowerment of workers is what we won," Naomi Ishisaka, a copy editor at the *Seattle Times*, said summing up the recent 49-day strike against the *Times* and *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* newspaper companies.

Ishisaka was part of a panel of labor activists speaking about recent labor struggles in Washington at a Militant Labor Forum here February 10.

Members of the Pacific Northwest Newspaper Guild, Ishisaka said, started preparing for the strike a year in advance by setting up committees to get members involved. The strike was provoked by the companies' long history of disrespect for the newspaper workers, demands by lower-paid workers for raises, and opposition to a two-tier system for reporters.

When asked during discussion the range of opinion among the strikers about the walkout, Ishisaka said the outcome "was most disheartening to those hit hardest economically and to those who had faith in the company. Their illusions were shattered," she said. "But even those with the least to gain speak fondly of the strike."

The *Seattle Times* has so far retained the replacement workers it hired, with a deadline of July 9 to recall the 200 strikers waiting to go back, and has instituted rules against "shunning" the replacement workers. "Not only do we have to say hello to them, we have to *smile* and say hello!" Ishisaka said of the company rules, which also forbid "congregating and talking about the strike at the workplace." Tactics like these are what brought Guild members together before the strike and the "grievances are piling up," said Ishisaka.

Ana Guzman, a Teamster who recently won her job back and three years back pay from Washington Fruit and Produce, also spoke. Guzman was fired by the company in 1997 for union organizing, after the union lost the election, and could not get hired for two years by other packing companies.

"There is another union election this year and workers are asking when I will go back to work," Guzman said, adding she will return soon and continue to fight to win union representation at the plant. She pointed to the marches for immigrant rights as important because they help "thousands of undocumented immigrants to not be afraid to organize and be represented by a union."

Rogelio Montes, a leader of a year-long strike against Valley Manufactured Housing in Sunnyside, Washington, said that he had met Guzman during the strike. Expressing solidarity with the struggle, he said, "I'm glad she didn't give up." Valley Manufactured Housing tried to get the union decertified during the strike, but replacement workers voted along with the strikers to maintain the union. Montes reported that the company is restarting negotiations and underscored the importance of international solidarity in labor struggles today.

Derrick O'Keefe, a young meat packer from Vancouver, British Columbia, gave forum participants an update on the fight by members of United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) Local 1518 at both Superior Poultry and Fletcher's Fine Foods in the Vancouver area. The 225 strikers at Superior Poultry, on strike since last July 23, are fighting for their first contract after voting overwhelmingly to join the UFCW.



Militant/Lisa Ahlberg

Striking Seattle newspaper workers rally December 16 in fight for decent contract

O'Keefe, who is a member of the Young Socialists, said, "Companies have to attack the union of workers in order to compete. This is the way capitalism works." The Young Socialists in Canada have organized a tour of youth from Cuba, a country "where you can't have Freds and Brues"—the first names of the bosses at Superior Poultry and Fletcher's Fine Foods—"and companies like them. Workers have political power in Cuba," he said. O'Keefe invited everyone to come to Canada during the tour to meet and talk with the visiting Cubans firsthand. Ernest

Mailhot, from the Socialist Workers Party and member of UFCW Local 81, also spoke.

Several forum participants reported on recent successful union organizing drives at the SeaTac airport by skycaps and other airport workers, and at Northwest Hospital. One person also reported there are organizing efforts underway in the computer industry in Seattle.

Cecelia Moriarity is a meat packer and member of the United Food and Commercial Workers union.

Puerto Rican rights fighters tour Bay Area

BY BARBARA BOWMAN

SAN FRANCISCO—Rafael Cancel Miranda and Luis Rosa were among former political prisoners who participated in a weeklong Bay Area tour sponsored by the Western Region United Front to Free All Political Prisoners. Meetings were held in San Francisco, Oakland, San Jose, Santa Cruz, and Seaside between February 2 and 13. Among the other speakers were Pam and Ramona Africa, spokespeople for Mumia Abu-Jamal.

Rafael Cancel Miranda is one of five Puerto Rican Nationalists who spent more than a quarter-century in U.S. prisons following an armed protest they carried out in Washington against colonial rule. He was freed from prison in 1979 through an international defense campaign.

Cancel Miranda thanked the audiences for their efforts on behalf of himself and other freed political prisoners. "It wasn't the goodwill of [former U.S. president] Bill Clinton that won the freedom" of the most recently released Puerto Rican prisoners, he said. "It was the power of the movement."

In a meeting in Oakland, Cancel Miranda described his own experiences as a political prisoner, beginning with his incarceration in Florida for refusing to serve in the U.S. Army during the Korean War. "Why should I go to kill Korean people I do not know? They are not the ones who invaded my country. They are not the ones who killed my people."

Later he spent time in many different U.S. prisons. "When they brought me to Alcatraz

they had chains around my hands and legs. When they transferred me, they put twice as many chains on me. That made me feel good! They knew I was twice as dangerous than before! In Leavenworth they accused me of leading a strike and put me in solitary confinement for five years. At Marion I was subjected to behavior modification. They tried to modify the Puerto Rican out of me. They tried to destroy the symbol the people had made us to be. But you gave us strength. I came out standing and I'm going to die standing."

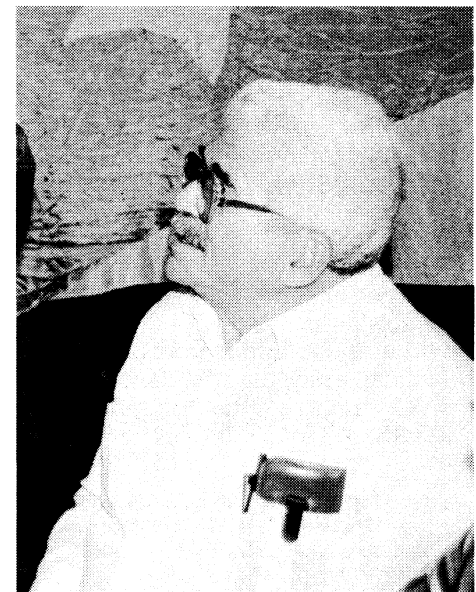
Luis Rosa, 38, was arrested in 1980 on charges of "seditious conspiracy" and was one of 11 Puerto Rican prisoners released in 1999. Rosa thanked activists for their support and pledged to continue to fight to free political prisoners still incarcerated.

"Our mission is not complete. We don't want to be treated as trophies, brought out at demonstrations. We need to be involved. We must constantly remind ourselves that we have achieved what many thought would never be accomplished," Rosa said.

"What happened in Puerto Rico because of the fight to free the political prisoners changed politics in Puerto Rico," he continued. "The unity forged in this fight moved the fight for national liberation forward. It broke the illusion we are helpless. It proved that this method of struggle can bear fruit. It broke the fear of being for revolution." Rosa pointed to people on the island of Vieques, Puerto Rico, who have stood up and demanded the U.S. Navy stop using the territory as a training ground. "They won't

allow themselves to be terrorized," Rosa said. "They are as strong as ever and still moving forward."

While in the Bay Area, Miranda and Rosa also attended a reception held in their honor by members of Comité '98 por un Puerto Rico Libre and a program organized by the San Francisco chapter of Irish Northern Aid, which commemorated the 20th anniversary of the H-Block hunger strike. There they met with Francie Molloy, a Sinn Fein member who along with Martin McGuinness represents Mid-Ulster in the new Assembly.



Militant/Rose Ana Berbeo

Rafael Cancel Miranda in New York, 1998

U.S., Mexican rulers discuss expanding 'guest worker' plan

BY MAGGIE TROWE

Immigration of working people from Mexico to the United States was a feature of discussions between presidents George Bush and Vicente Fox during their meeting February 16. The talks highlighted the desire of both the U.S. imperialists and the capitalist class in Mexico to better organize the toilers as a reserve army of labor.

Mexican president Fox pressed for starting a large-scale "guest worker" program similar to the "Bracero" plan that existed from 1942 to 1964. Bush said he was open to this proposal. Fox also floated the idea of the U.S. government granting amnesty and legal residence to Mexicans working in the United States who currently have no work permits.

Out of the talks the two governments set up a high level "immigration working group" to pursue these issues, headed on the U.S. side by Secretary of State Colin Powell and Attorney General John Ashcroft, and from Mexico, by Foreign Minister Jorge Castañeda and Interior Minister Santiago Creel.

Fox made his stance on Mexican migrants part of his election campaign last year. His proposals reflect both the interests of the Mexican ruling rich and the outrage of Mexican working people, who in substantial numbers have experienced miserable working conditions in the United States, the repressive force of Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) cops, discrimination and racist violence, and dangerous journeys across the border in search of work. These amount to a national humiliation for the Mexican people.

Last year nearly 400 Mexicans died, often by drowning or dehydration, as they attempted to cross the border illegally. An estimated 300,000 cross every year, and U.S. officials estimate that 5 million workers, more than half of whom are from Mexico, are working in the United States without immigration papers.

Fox has described these workers as heroes, and stood at highway checkpoints along the border for several days in December welcoming Mexicans returning from the United States for Christmas. On February 22 the Mexican government declared an amnesty for foreigners of all nationalities living in the country. The program applies to people resident in Mexico before Jan. 1, 2000, and expires Oct. 1, 2001.

Fox's demand for a guest worker program flows from the Mexican rulers' desire to reduce pressure and social unrest from unemployed and low-paid workers in Mexico. Fox said he is seeking "fair treatment" for Mexican citizens, and that "Mexico seeks

men and women who will gain skills and wealth and bring them home to build a new economy."

Fox's top adviser on migrant affairs, Juan Hernández, pointed out, "We need to create 1.3 million new jobs a year just to keep pace with all the new entrants into our labor force. We see a guest worker program as beneficial for both countries." Remittances to Mexico from relatives working in the United States amounts to between \$6 billion and \$8 billion a year, the third-largest source of foreign revenue after oil and tourism.

During the last few years of relatively low unemployment and a tight labor market, many U.S. employers, seeking to keep a stable workforce and drive down labor costs, have been clamoring for increasing the flow of immigrants to work in factories and fields.

Low pay and no option to stay

Touted as a program to "legalize illegal workers" from Mexico, "guest worker" legislation is being promoted by five U.S. senators. In addition to admitting on a temporary basis up to 150,000 workers a year to ensure a steady flow of workers to temporary jobs on farms, in food processing plants, and hotels, their plan also proposes tightening border security and increased penalties and other repressive measures for hiring undocumented workers.

The current guest worker law allows some 40,000 mostly agricultural workers into the United States each year. The conditions they face gives a glimpse of what the employers are aiming for with an expanded program. In fact, several lawsuits have been filed against giant forestry and sugar companies, charging they do not even pay guest workers the minimum wage. Some 15,000 workers, mostly from Mexico, come to the United States each year to plant trees. Few make more than \$300 for a 70 hour workweek. Jamaican sugar cane cutters who come to Florida to harvest cane under the government's "H-2" program, are suing some of the big sugar growers for cheating them out of \$51 million in wages.

For workers without documents the situation is even worse. In one recent case, Chinese garment workers in Brooklyn, New York, filed suit against the owners of two sweatshops there for unpaid wages, unpaid overtime, and for pressuring them to work more than 100 hours a week on many occasions.

The bipartisan group of legislators sponsoring the new bill includes Republican senators Phil Gramm from Texas, Pete Domenici from New Jersey, Jim Bunning of Kentucky, Mike Crapo of Idaho, and Democrat Zell Miller of Georgia. They traveled to Mexico to meet with Fox in early January.



Militant/Shirley Peña

Immigrant rights demonstration in Oakland, California, January 27. As U.S. bosses clamor for immigrants to work in factories and fields, the "guest worker" program aims to curtail workers' ability to unionize and demand equal rights.

Gramm's plan would allow participants to stay no more than one year, and projects that workers would seek employment "primarily but not exclusively in service and agricultural areas." It would replace payroll taxes with "an IRA-like account" ostensibly to finance medical care. These accounts would be considered the guest workers' property. Funds remaining in them at the conclusion of each year's employment agreement would be made available directly to the worker upon his or her return to Mexico.

'A pair of arms'

The guest worker proposals have stimulated an intense debate, and a new examination of the old "bracero" program, which means a pair of working arms in Spanish. The program aided capitalist agricultural outfits, employing 5 million Mexican workers for temporary, cheap labor in the fields of the Southwest and in the factories of the Southeast over a 22-year period.

During the 1940s, 10 percent of the workers' pay was deducted and supposedly put into savings accounts in Mexican banks. These funds, however, "mysteriously disappeared," according to an article in the *Dallas Morning News*. Few workers ever collected the money owed to them. Lawyers representing these workers, however, plan to file a lawsuit by the end of February seeking recovery of the money, estimated to be between \$300 million and \$1 billion with accrued interest.

The Bracero program ended in 1964 after reports of abusive treatment of the workers and a series of deadly farm accidents. That program, as is the case with the new proposals, lent itself to employer intimidation of workers standing up for their rights and attempting to unionize. It made Mexican workers easy prey for racists and rightist thugs, who were part of the employers' system of keeping the immigrant workforce in line.

Farmers who employ substantial numbers of laborers, such as the asparagus and lettuce farmers of California's Imperial Valley, are clamoring for more low-paid agricultural workers that a guest worker program would provide. Some 18,000 Mexican workers cross the border every day from Mexicali, a city of more than 1 million, to work in the valley on the lettuce harvest at its height in March, but the large farmers say they need more.

John Welty, executive vice president of the California Tomato Growers, said, "The immigrant workforce has become a critical part of our success during the boom economy."

Opposition to plan

Some immigrant rights organizations, such as the El Paso-based Border Farm Workers Center and the Immigration Law Enforcement Monitoring Project, support amnesty and oppose the guest worker legislation on the grounds that it offers no option for immigrant workers to apply for permanent legal residency. The National Council of La Raza, a Latino rights group, supports amnesty.

In February 2000 the AFL-CIO executive council reversed its previous policy and called for amnesty and for repeal of the law that imposes sanctions on employers who hire undocumented workers. Some business groups, such as the American Hotel and Motel Association, support amnesty.

Over the past year tens of thousands of immigrants rights supporters have held marches, rallies, and vigils calling for amnesty and other demands. These include 20,000 who gathered at an AFL-CIO-sponsored forum in Los Angeles last June; several thousand in New York City, May 1; hundreds in Miami, May 19; 1,000 in Washington in July; and 3,000 in Oakland, California this past January. Most of these actions included union contingents.

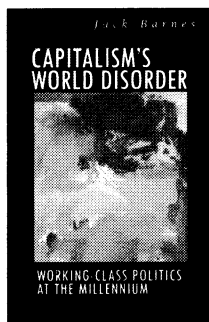
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April rally to back framed-up Native American

BY NAOMI CRAINE

RALEIGH, North Carolina—Supporters of Eddie Hatcher plan to rally outside the Robeson County courthouse in Lumberton, North Carolina, April 9, when he is scheduled to go on trial on frame-up murder charges. If convicted, the Tuscarora Indian activist could face the death penalty.

Hatcher's case was the topic of the opening panel of a conference on "Youth Seeking Justice Now" at North Carolina State University February 17. About 75 students and others from throughout the region listened as Thelma Clark, Hatcher's mother, appealed for support. She described the latest attack on her son's rights by officials at the Robeson County Jail. "He tried to help people, so they've labeled him a troublemaker and put him in lockup," she said.

In January Hatcher tried to assist a fellow prisoner, Jimmy Smith, to compile evidence of his beating at the hands of the Robeson County Sheriff's Department. On January 24 Smith was moved to a different cell and Hatcher has been kept in solitary confinement since. Clark and others called the jail to ask why Hatcher was in isolation but received a runaround from officials.

On January 30 about half a dozen guards ordered Hatcher out of his cell and proceeded to search it, supposedly for contraband. When Hatcher was allowed back in, he found at least four legal files related to his defense were missing. A walkman, nail clippers, and other contraband items—which had been in clear view—were still there. Defense attorney Woody Bowen has filed a motion to dismiss the case based on this blatant violation of Hatcher's rights.

Prison officials now claim that Hatcher is being kept in isolation for fear he will spread the HIV virus. Hatcher, who has AIDS, noted in a statement on these events that "my HIV status had been broadcast on every television station and had been reported in every newspaper for five years," making it clear the sudden health concern is a fraud.

In response to a student's question of what could be done to support Hatcher, Clark encouraged people to write to state attorney general Roy Cooper to ask him to investigate the justice system in Robeson County. She also reported that Court TV is considering showing Hatcher's trial. "If enough people encourage them, they may broadcast

it, and that may help him to get a fair trial."

Also speaking at the Raleigh conference in support of Hatcher's defense were Pam Africa, a leader of the Concerned Family and Friends of Mumia Abu-Jamal, and Willena Cannon, of the prison reform group Jubilee 2000.

History of fighting for justice

Hatcher faces the hatred of county and state authorities for his longtime stance against police brutality and corruption. A large portion of the residents of Robeson County, in rural southeastern North Carolina, are Native American or Black. The unemployment rate is about double the statewide average, with the main industries being textile, apparel, and more recently meatpacking.

In February 1988 Hatcher and Timothy Jacobs, also a Native American activist, took over the office of the local newspaper, *The Robesonian*. They wanted to expose racism, corruption, and alleged drug dealing in the sheriff's department and district attorney's office. Among other things they demanded a state investigation into the county govern-

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Seoul voices concern over U.S. policies

Continued from front page
portant thing."

The statement reflects the fact that the wealthy capitalist class in the south, which has grown up only over the past four decades, knows it would be severely damaged, if not overthrown, in a war with the north. For this reason, the president's "sunshine policy" aimed at talks and increasing exchange with north Korea, enjoys widespread support among south Korea's rulers.

Selig Harrison of the Century Foundation in Washington, described as a "specialist on Korean affairs," summarized the arguments of Seoul as, "we are on the firing lines here; please be careful."

Yang Sung-chul, south Korean envoy to Washington, urged the Bush administration to not go "back to the drawing board." The ambassador was referring to talks and agreements over the past half-decade opening up limited trade and diplomatic links between Washington and Seoul, on the one hand, and Pyongyang on the other.

These warnings and appeals to the Bush administration from the capitalist class in south Korea come amidst a deepening economic crisis in the country and resistance by unionists to company attacks, such as the protests by thousands of auto workers at the Daewoo car manufacturer, in face of layoffs and concession demands by the employers.

Some of the nervousness among south Korean ruling figures comes as a result of the determination of the government and people of the workers state in north Korea to press for reunification of the country and implementation of accords reached with Washington over the past several years.

Korea has been divided since 1953, at the end of the imperialist military assault aimed at reversing the socialist revolution underway in the country. For several decades after the defeat of that assault and the creation of separate states—a workers state in the north and a neocolonial capitalist regime in the south—Washington and Seoul maintained a consistently hostile stance toward the northern government, marked by the presence of 37,000 U.S. troops armed with nuclear weapons alongside Seoul's half-million-strong army, wide-ranging economic sanctions, and an unremitting anti-communist propaganda barrage.

Evolution of Washington's stance

Beginning in 1994, talks between Washington and Seoul, and with Pyongyang, led to a series of agreements between the two countries and increased momentum in talks between the governments in the north and south on reunification. Washington and Seoul agreed to provide the north with food, fuel, nuclear power plants, and other resources in exchange for Pyongyang's agreement to end various programs aimed, the U.S. government claimed, at deploying long-range nuclear-tipped missiles.

In an unprecedented visit to Pyongyang in October, U.S. secretary of state Madeleine Albright held talks with north Korean president Kim Jong Il. At the same time Washington and Seoul said that U.S. troops would stay in the south, whatever the progress toward closer ties.

Seoul is concerned not to see the process of negotiations brought to a halt. For its part, the government in the north has reacted sharply to the Bush government's antagonistic policy moves.

"If such [hostile] policies are the new U.S. government's official position, then the problem is extremely serious," stated the

north Korean foreign ministry on February 22, noting the falling away of contacts between the two governments. "The new U.S. government is not even trying to learn the details," of previous agreements, it said.

Pyongyang has threatened to end its moratorium on missile testing and development of its nuclear program. It has accused the "new U.S. foreign and security team [of taking] a hard-line stance towards us." The statement said, "If the U.S. does not change its position, we won't allow ourselves to be bogged down by old proposals made to the previous U.S. administration." Adding, "The leaders of the U.S. are hopeless fools if they think we will accept" such an approach.

Bush's national security adviser, Condoleezza Rice, replied, "We have said that we are concerned about the proliferation of missile technology that is coming out of North Korea.... If that's a hard-line position then so be it."

Bush administration officials claim to be "interested in pursuing the Clinton administration's efforts to assist North Korea, but only in a verifiable way." Another official added, "We're not going to jump on a train that we believe was already moving too fast."

The partial steps toward reunification have proved immensely popular across the peninsula, including in the south. In late February a third round of reunions of family members from both sides of the border



Auto workers in South Korea picket to demand a halt to Daewoo Motor Co.'s plans to slash jobs.

was held. Talks continue about opening up rail links and increasing economic cooperation. Seoul and Pyongyang have also conducted negotiations about constructing a dam in the border area to try to limit the catastrophic effects of flooding during the monsoon season.

Some of the capitalist corporations in the

south are building up investments in north Korea. The Hyundai corporation, for example, has won approval to build a huge industrial park near the border, "hoping to lure hundreds of labor-intensive factories from the South and elsewhere with low North Korean wages," in the words of the *Washington Post*.

Daewoo workers protest

The capitalists in neocolonial south Korea face other problems. Immense pressure from imperialist investors to clip the wings of the giant conglomerates, or chaebols, that dominate the economy, is driving them to confront the industrial workers and their unions.

The battle against the lay-off of 1,750 workers by the Daewoo Motor Co.—carried out at the behest of General Motors, which is bidding for ownership of the company—continues unabated. On February 13 the regime mobilized 4,000 cops to assault and evict several hundred workers and family members occupying the company's plant in the city of Incheon.

One week later, Daewoo workers commenced a sustained protest in the town of Bupyeong, 18 miles west of Seoul, the location of

Daewoo's main plant. On February 24 protesters marched along the road that runs near the factory, occupied an eight-lane boulevard and burned tires, and confronted thousands of riot police blocking a square where a mass rally had been planned. Using steel pipes, they fought back against police assaults.

Supreme Court deals blow to civil rights

BY MAGGIE TROWE

The U.S. Supreme Court struck a blow to civil rights February 21 when it ruled in a 5-4 decision that state workers cannot file employment-related discrimination suits against their employers under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990. The decision reinforced the trend of recent high court rulings to roll back gains of working people under guise of "states' rights."

The rationale of the majority decision, written by Chief Justice William H. Rehnquist, was that the states are protected by the 11th Amendment from damage suits, unless there has been a valid abrogation, or repeal, of that constitutional protection. Rehnquist stated that the incidents of discrimination against people with disabilities documented in the case "taken together fall far short of even suggesting the pattern of unconstitutional discrimination" on which such legislation must be based.

The dissenting opinion, written by Justice Stephen Breyer, noted the "vast legislative record documenting 'massive society-wide discrimination' against persons with disabilities." Breyer also cited evidence that two-thirds of all disabled people of working age in the U.S. do not work, "even though a large majority wanted to, and were

able to, work productively."

The case concerned two suits brought against the Board of Trustees of the University of Alabama. The first was by a nurse who was put in a lower-paying job when she returned to work from breast cancer treatment. The second was by a security guard for a state agency who said his asthma was aggravated by his employer's failure to implement a no-smoking policy.

Andrew Imparato, the president of the American Association of People with Disabilities, responded that the high court "has weakened a law that protects more than 56 million Americans from egregious discrimination at the hands of State employers." Imparato explained that the Americans with Disabilities Act "was passed in part because of the history of egregious discrimination and exclusion of people with disabilities by the States." Imparato said the Supreme Court "is systematically turning the clock back on

civil rights. The disabled community is outraged that our highest court has chosen to weaken a law that is our ticket to full citizenship."

Only days later, the Supreme Court declined to take on a broader challenge of the ADA, and turned aside a case that could have made states immune from lawsuits alleging discrimination against the disabled in access to public services, programs, and buildings. The case challenged ADA regulations stipulating the government provide wheelchair ramps, Braille elevator buttons, and other facilities to make them accessible to people with disabilities. In another ruling, the high court refrained from reviewing legal efforts by disabled people seeking to overturn fees charged by states for "handicapped" parking tags.

Many unions support the ADA and the AFL-CIO held a Disability Rights Conference last December.

Kmart workers hold walkouts, pickets to defend union contract

BY NAOMI CRAINE

CHARLOTTE, North Carolina—About 75 workers picketed outside the Kmart distribution center in Greensboro, North Carolina, February 21 in defense of their contract and working conditions. The members of the Union of Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Employees (UNITE) rallied after day shift, and included a few second shift workers who went in late to work.

Workers at Kmart warehouses in Georgia, New Jersey, and Ohio, where the company is trying to get around provisions in a contract signed last July, also organized protests. At the North Bergen Distribution Center in northern New Jersey, union members staged a one-hour walkout.

Kmart recently sold its North Carolina warehouse to Advance Logistics, an outside contractor who will continue to run it for the retail giant. The new company has reportedly agreed to sign a contract with

UNITE honoring the current contract terms. But Kmart maintains that if its deal with Advance Logistics doesn't work out, it can retake control and, as a "new" owner, scrap all deals with the union. Kmart has so far refused to sign an agreement stating it will not carry out this threat.

"We can't trust Kmart," UNITE representative Phil Cohen told the *Greensboro News and Record*. "All we want here is this guarantee. Without it, in the future they could legally say, 'We're not going to hire you' to our members and bring in other people."

The Greensboro warehouse employs more than 600 workers. After a hard-fought organizing campaign, workers voted to join UNITE in 1993, and then waged a three-year battle to win a contract.

Naomi Craine is a member of Union of Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Employees Local 1501.

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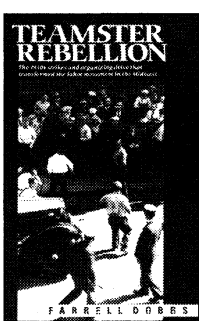
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U.S. gov't dropped cluster bombs on Iraq

Continued from front page

gression as a brutal assault on the people of Iraq. From the sanctions imposed in 1990, to the six-week bombardment and invasion, to the massacre of workers and farmers retreating from Kuwait on the road to Basra, to the burial in trenches of surrendering Iraqi troops, U.S. imperialism has sought to break the Iraqi people and strip them of their national sovereignty.

Arkin explains that the weapon used in the bombing, "still unnoticed by the American media, is likely to prove controversial." The bomb is called the Joint Stand-off Weapon (JSOW) and "was first used in combat in Iraq on January 25, 1999, when Marine Corps F-18 Hornets fired three weapons at an air defense site," he reports. The 1,000-pound, 14-foot-long weapon—each costing at least \$250,000—disperses the bomblets over an area that is approximately 100 feet long and 200 feet wide. Twenty-eight of these JSOWs were fired by U.S. warplanes in the February 16 attack, along with guided missiles and laser-guided bombs. The Pentagon now admits that 26 of the 28 JSOWs missed their "aimpoint."

These bombs, which Pentagon spokespeople describe as "precision-guided weapons," can be launched from a range of 40 nautical miles and at altitudes of 20,000 feet. They then spray the bomblets from 400 feet above the ground. Six bombs fall in every 1,000 square feet.

The *Post* article further states, "The JSOW uses a gasbag to propel the sub-munitions outward from the sides. Once ejected, the bomblets, each the size of a soda can, simply fall freely at the mercy of local winds. A few almost always land outside of the center point of the football field size main concentration. On average 5 percent do not detonate. These unexploded bomblets then become highly volatile on the ground."

Kills for years to come

Washington used a similar type of cluster bomb during its assault on Iraq during the 1990-91 Gulf War. Iraqi civilians continue to be killed and seriously injured by these unexploded bomblets that detonate upon contact. A February 20 Agence France Press (AFP) report described the wounding of a shepherd near Nasiriyah in southern Iraq by one of these bomblets. Five days earlier, Reuters reported that two boys in western Iraq, also tending sheep, were injured when another cluster bomblet exploded. AFP also reported February 9 that a child was killed and six others were wounded by similar submunitions near Basra.

"Recently, U.S. Air Force engineers in Kuwait found an entire unexploded CBU-87 [cluster bomb] at an airbase that had been attacked during the Gulf War," Arkin writes. "The weapon had apparently malfunctioned and ripped open upon impact, burying bomblets up to six feet deep in the vicinity. To destroy them in place, a series of 10-foot high barriers had to be built inside a 700-foot wide safety cordon."

After initially presenting a glowing assessment of its February 16 bombardment of Iraq, Pentagon officials admitted several days later that most of the bombs dropped by the U.S. warplanes missed their target by an average of more than 100 yards. The Pentagon claimed they were aiming at 25 components of Iraqi radar stations, but confirm damage to only eight of these targets.

"Although the mission was to 'degrade' rather than destroy Iraqi air defense, all it degraded was our air force technology's reputation for accuracy," complained *New York Times* columnist William Safire in a February 26 op-ed piece.

U.S. warplanes continue to bomb sites in Iraq. Six days after the bombing near Baghdad, U.S. missiles were launched against targets in the northern "no-fly" zone.

Reinforcing sanctions

U.S. secretary of state Colin Powell insisted in a February 12 CNN interview that Washington's decade-long policy of economic sanctions and ongoing military attacks by U.S. warplanes patrolling "no-fly" zones over Iraqi air space is really a humanitarian one. "What we have to do is make sure we continue to tell the world that we are not after the Iraqi people," he cynically

stated.

Powell conducted a six-nation tour of the Mideast February 24-27, with stops in Egypt, Israel, the occupied territories, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Syria. He discussed with leaders of the Arab regimes proposals for revamping and reinvigorating Washington's sanctions policy against Iraq. A headline in the *Financial Times* read, "U.S. toughens line on Iraq oil sanctions violations."

A February 25 article in the *New York Times* pointed to recent fraying of the sanctions, noting that at least "a dozen countries have broken the air embargo by flying planes belonging to their national carriers into Baghdad, and three, Egypt, Jordan and Syria, have begun scheduled flights." Several days before Powell's visit to Egypt, Cairo and Baghdad authorities also signed an accord to boost transportation links.

Washington is seeking to undercut criticism of the devastating impact of the sanctions on the Iraqi people, at the same time as it moves to tighten its grip on oil and the country's other major imports and exports. The *Washington Post* reported Powell's view that new U.S. proposals "strengthen the core sanctions by raising the idea that countries that violate them will face real penalties."

"Right now the consequences have less currency because things are in, I must say, a state of disarray," said the secretary of state.

In exchange for agreement on these more effective sanctions, Washington says it would be willing to discuss revamping the list of products that the United Nations prohibits or restricts for sale to Iraq. Currently about 1,600 contracts worth an estimated



U.S. fighter jets aboard aircraft carrier *USS Enterprise* in the Persian Gulf in December 1998, when the United States was carrying out intensive bombing of Iraq.

\$3 billion are on hold because of objections, many from the U.S. government.

Powell won support from several governments for the plan. Syrian president Bashar Assad agreed to place Iraqi funds generated from the sale of oil being sent through a recently reopened oil pipeline in Syria under UN control, denying Baghdad any benefit from the oil exports.

In Kuwait City Powell was joined by former president George Bush and Norman Schwartzkopf, the U.S. commander in the Gulf War, and former British prime minister Margaret Thatcher, for official ceremonies marking the end of that brutal offensive 10 years ago.

In Cairo, Powell also spoke with Russian foreign minister Igor Ivanov. Moscow is concerned about recent statements by top Bush officials that represent a step-up in threats against Russia. In mid-February, U.S. defense secretary Donald Rumsfeld said that

Russia was "part of the problem." Recently, Condoleezza Rice, Bush's national security adviser, said Russia was "a threat for the west in general and our European allies in particular."

Meanwhile, Germany's Federal Intelligence Service issued a report at the end of February claiming that the Iraqi regime may have the capacity to launch nuclear weapons in the Mideast region within three years. The secret police agency also charged that Baghdad may be able to hit Europe with missiles within five years.

The *Wall Street Journal* reported February 26 that "Israeli weapons experts responded with some skepticism" to this report. "It has very much to do with American internal politics," stated Yiftah Shapir, a weapons expert at Tel Aviv University's Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies. He instead argues that Iraq would need another decade to produce nuclear weapons.

Detroit picket lines protest killing by guards

BY ILONA GERSH

ROYAL OAK, Michigan—Antiracist fighters have organized two picket lines at a Kroger grocery store here to protest the February 8 killing of Travis Shelton, a 38-year-old father of four, by security guards.

Shelton was apprehended by store guards, who say they suspected him of shoplifting two packages of meat, then killed him as one sat on him. The protests are demanding the guards be prosecuted.

On February 18 around 80 people held a brief picket line and prayer vigil in front of the store. Close to 100 again turned out four days later, chanting, "No justice, no peace," and "You didn't have to lie, he didn't have to die." Rev. Horace Sheffield, a local spokesperson of the National Action Network, representatives of the network from New York and of the Detroit Coalition Against Police Brutality, and family members spoke at the protest.

Four members of United Auto Workers (UAW) Local 157 participated, carrying signs that said, "Fighting together for justice" and "Prosecute the security guards." Danny Oakes, chairman of the local's unit at Textron Automotive Corp., was the first speaker at the rally.

The crowd cheered when Sheffield announced the UAW's participation and in-

vited Oakes to speak. "We need to show our support in more than just the union shops," Oakes said in an interview. "We need to show it in the community also."

The picket line was the first political protest for Kevin Gardner-Ushery, a 26-year-old production worker at Textron. Asked what he thought of the event, he said, "It was well organized, and we got our point across. It was important for the union to get involved."

According to Joannette Quinn, who witnessed Shelton's death, "The taller [guard] choked him, the other one put an elbow on his neck.... Then the large one grabbed him by his pants leg, and the back of his head hit the pavement. The guard rolled him over, putting his hands behind his back, and sat on him."

Another witness, Royal Oak firefighter Sylvester Foote, told reporters that he heard Shelton complaining that he couldn't breathe. The guard who sat on him was said to weigh 377 pounds.

The coroner ruled the death a homicide caused by asphyxiation due to chest compression. The guards have not yet been charged. "The security guards should be prosecuted," said Gardner-Ushery at the picket line. "Anyone else would be. Murder is murder."

Shelton's death is the second this year in the Metro Detroit area of a Black worker at the hands of security guards. Last June, Frederick Finley was choked to death at a Lord & Taylor store by security guards, who stopped Finley's 11-year-old daughter for allegedly stealing a \$4 bracelet.

"These [security] people don't do this to certain folks," Sheffield told the rally. "They wouldn't do this to a white male or female—even if they look like they stole 10 bags of groceries."

The killing of Finley sparked protests, including one July 5 led by Rev. Alfred Sharpton, president of the National Action Network, where 5,000 people gathered in the parking lot of Fairlane Mall where the store is located. Security guard Dennis Richardson was charged with homicide July 6, but the charges were dismissed in September by Dearborn District Judge Virginia Sobotka. Wayne County Judge Brian Sullivan reversed that decision, and ordered Richardson to stand trial. But as of this time, he has not yet signed the paperwork.

Family members of Finley participated in the protests against the killing of Shelton.

At the picket line Jennifer Shelton said she welcomed the support of those who turned out for the protests against the killing of her husband, Travis. "Nobody should have to feel this way. And I feel the same way for the Finley family," she said. "People should know: next time it could be your loved one."

The night before the picket line at Kroger, a woman was brutally assaulted by a security guard at a Rite Aid in Detroit. Gail Hardy, 47, said she went there to pick up a prescription. While waiting, she saw a pail of 99-cent nail clippers, used one, and put it on a table. As she was leaving the store, a security guard accosted her and said she had to pay for the clippers.

"She took her fists and hit me in the face twice. Then she took her stick and hit me across my shoulder, my back, my chest, and my head. When she hit me in the head, it knocked me out," Hardy said.

According to police, the guard dragged Hardy to the back of the store, handcuffed her, and called the police. Hardy received eight stitches in her head. In this case, the guard was arrested and taken to jail.

Ilona Gersh is a member of United Auto Workers Local 157, and works at Textron Automotive Corp.



Militant/Ilona Gersh

At a February 22 picket line marchers in Detroit protested the killing of Travis Shelton by Kroger store guards. The coroner ruled the death a homicide caused by asphyxiation due to chest compression, but the guards have not been charged.

European powers bow to 'missile shield' plan

BY PATRICK O'NEILL

Both the European imperialist powers and the government in Russia are adjusting their stance towards the U.S. National Missile Defense (NMD) program in face of Washington's insistence that it will press ahead with its development. The shift by the German government has been among the most significant, going from concern about a new arms race in the middle of last year to qualified acceptance today.

After expressing strong opposition to the scheme no more than a month ago, Moscow has changed tack somewhat, offering its own variant on a "missile shield" to European governments, and engaging in talks with the Bush administration on the question. At the same time, President Vladimir Putin has expressed sharp opposition to the Washington-driven expansion of NATO eastward toward Russia.

The Bush administration is pushing ahead on two fronts. One is to expand the NMD program initiated under the Clinton administration, which justified the antimissile system as a necessary measure against strikes by "rogue nations," such as Iraq and north Korea. This theme is also being used by the new administration.

The U.S. rulers hope they can develop the technology, designed to knock incoming nuclear missiles out of the sky, to give them a first-strike capacity over other countries, especially the workers states of China and Russia.

Bush laid out the other front with his proposal for "deep, perhaps unilateral cuts in long-range nuclear arms," according to the *New York Times*, from the current arsenal of 7,000 nuclear warheads to 2,000.

With the exception of Paris, Washington's European allies have begun to bow to Washington's plans, in spite of continuing reservations. "While there is little love in Europe for the idea [of NMD]," editorialized the *Wall Street Journal* on February 22, "most of America's partners—France notwithstanding—seemed to have resigned themselves to missile defense. Germany, an early skeptic, has made it clear it won't try to stand in the way of Washington's plans."

At a Franco-German summit in June of last year, German chancellor Gerhard Schröder warned that Washington risked triggering an accelerated arms race with its missile shield program. French president Jacques Chirac said he was of the "same opinion." Since then differences between Berlin and Paris have emerged on this and other questions.

British prime minister Anthony Blair traveled to Washington in later February for his first meeting with Bush. Blair stopped short of a clear public endorsement of the missile program, but the *Financial Times* reported February 24 that Blair "expressed optimism...that the U.S. and Russia could reach an accommodation before Washington proceeds with controversial plans for a missile defence system." Radar sites in the United Kingdom are expected to form a part of any system that is eventually deployed.

European force and NATO

After the talks, Bush claimed that Blair told him the projected European rapid reaction force would be subordinate to the Washington-dominated NATO alliance. "He assured me that NATO is going to be the primary way to keep the peace in Europe," said the U.S. president on February 23.

The planned European force, initiated by Paris and London, will comprise 60,000 troops. Blair, declaring himself "gratified" by Bush's words, said that the force will be used only in "circumstances where NATO as a whole chooses not to be engaged."

Several days later Blair's defense secretary, Geoffrey Hoon, stated that "there were 'low-level' operations where [the force] could act autonomously," according to a *Financial Times* report. Iain Duncan Smith, the defense spokesperson for the opposition Conservative Party, seized on the statement, saying, "Tony Blair has given assurances to President Bush which are simply untrue."

Until recently, the Russian government has rejected Washington's missile program and the political justifications that cloak its real purpose, pointing out that it violates the terms of the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty, signed by Washington and Moscow in 1972. In a widely trumpeted change, Russian foreign minister Igor Ivanov said at a February 20 Kremlin news conference that "we are ready and interested in starting a direct dia-

logue with the U.S. administration."

Representatives of the Russian government, who met with NATO secretary general Lord Robertson in late February, outlined a missile shield under consideration by the Russian military, and offered its protection to the European powers. The *Wall Street Journal's* editorial writers opined that the Kremlin's policy shift seems based on "the assumption...that the Bush Administration is committed to an effective missile defense program and that it is fully prepared to withdraw from the ABM Treaty," and "the false hope...[that] Russia can aggravate cracks within the Atlantic Alliance over missile defense."

Putin and ABM treaty

White House spokesperson Ari Fleischer commented February 22 that "the president was pleased to see the Russians indicate a level of support for a national missile defense concept."

In spite of this shift, Russian president Putin has not dropped his defense of the ABM treaty, and won support for that position in a recent visit to south Korea. In a joint statement released February 27, Putin and south Korean president Kim Dae Jung "agreed that the 1972 [ABM] Treaty is the cornerstone of strategic stability and an important foundation of international efforts on nuclear disarmament and nonproliferation."

The government in south Korea is particularly concerned about the Bush administration's belligerent stance towards the government in the north, including its advocacy of the missile program. The *New York Times* speculated that "it is also possible Mr. Kim's criticism reflected a general concern in Asia that the American missile defense plans will isolate China by rendering ineffective its tiny nuclear arsenal."

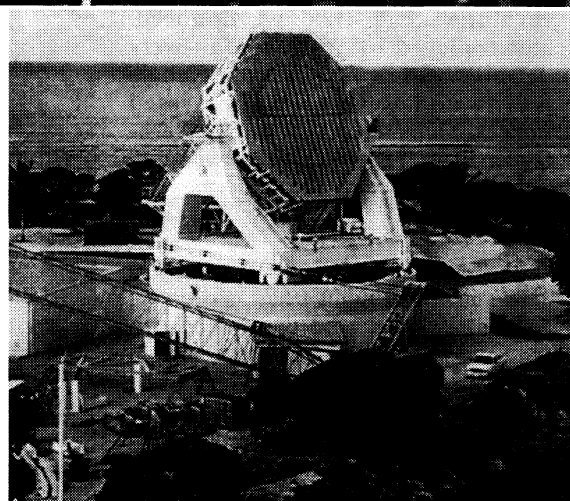
NATO's 'threat to Russia'

Talks between Robertson and Putin in Moscow also included U.S.-sponsored plans to further expand NATO to include the former Soviet republics of Lithuania, Estonia, and Latvia, which border Russia.

Moscow had also objected to a previous eastward expansion of NATO in the 1990s,



U.S. president Bush inspects troops in West Virginia February 14. White House has assumed strong pro-military stance, focused on development of national missile system. Right, prototype of radar under development for the system.



when Hungary, the Czech Republic, and Poland were accepted into membership. The governments of Denmark and Poland have joined Washington in sponsoring the application of the three Baltic states.

The membership of the three countries, wrote the *Wall Street Journal* on February 22, "would allow NATO jets to reach vital sites in western Russia within minutes." Putin told Robertson that the "expansion of the defensive union to the borders of Russia cannot be explained by anything else than a threat to Russia."

One week earlier, Russia's military had launched a demonstrative series of strategic long-range bomber and ballistic missile tests. The exercises showed that "Russian strategic forces are capable of overcoming any anti-missile defense, be it a currently existing or potential one," said Col. Gen.

Valery Manilov at a ceremony in the Kremlin. The government of Japan protested that the Russia military exercises violated its airspace.

Just before the tests, Moscow's defense ministry's foreign relations chief denounced the "anti-Russian overtones" of "the rhetoric of the new administration's officials." He was referring to remarks by U.S. defense secretary Donald Rumsfeld, who had accused Moscow of contributing to the spread of nuclear missile technology.

Colorado meat packers strike Excel

Continued from front page

can and Central American immigrants, rejected a six-year contract in a 917-59 vote. The proposed pact had been approved by the company and the union negotiating committee of Teamsters Local 961. Some 2,050 workers employed at the plant process 4,200 cattle a day.

After the vote Local 961 president Douglas Whestine and Secretary-Treasurer Joe Hartl swore out complaints with the sheriff's department against two workers who walked out of the union meeting stating they would go on strike. Adan Morales, 28, and Enrique Soto, 31, were arrested by police that evening and charged with inciting a riot and harassment.

"We cannot continue to work under the conditions we now have," Morales said later. Morales has had wrist surgery and has lost movement in his hands.

"Tres años!" "Three years only!" shouted workers on the picket line. The pickets went up before first shift started in the early morning hours. Workers told reporters they planned to remain on strike until the last shift ended around 11:00 p.m. Company officials talked with the pickets on February 26 and agreed to have the strikers elect representatives to bring their views to the company. A meeting between the managers and the workers' representatives scheduled for February 27 was delayed, but Excel's spokesperson affirmed that it would take place.

Hartl, calling the strike "illegal," stated that he had no idea who was leading the walkout since Morales and Soto were locked up.

The contract offer included an immediate wage increase to \$10 an hour and further raises to \$11.40 by the end of the pact. It also included wage hikes for graded jobs and an increase in short-term disability payments from \$165 per week to \$200 per week. A workers' representative said that while the increase in pay looks good up front, the six-year period leaves workers no

negotiating room for too long. Both Excel bosses and the officials of the union local told the press that a "misunderstanding" was at the root of the strike. Union officers said they had met with the membership before the negotiations started and said they would fight to increase their wages to \$12.40 an hour by the end of the contract. "We told them that was only where we started negotiations from, but that we would end up with less than that," Whestine explained.

Excel has agreed to abide by terms of the expired contract until the company and the union can negotiate a new pact. Excel

spokesman Mark Klein said that if the meeting goes well the company could reopen negotiations with the union as early as March 2.

A window was opened on working conditions at the plant in November 1998 when Excel was cited for 45 work violations by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, making the company subject to fines of up to \$315,000, according to the *Denver Post*. The article reported that in May 1998, 24 workers were hospitalized after a spill of 12,000 pounds of ammonia at the plant.

Polarization marks Australian vote

Continued from Page 16

scrapping land-clearing controls. Hanson also advocated lowering education qualifications in police recruitment and called for punishing rather than "rehabilitating" prisoners. Hanson raised the One Nation refrain for a referendum on capital punishment and relaxation of recent gun-control laws.

One Nation's "call to arms" is aimed at small businesspeople and working people in rural, regional, and working-class areas hit hardest by the crisis. In rural areas Hanson taps into the resentment against the Coalition, with its policy of milk and dairy wholesale price deregulation and tax increases on diesel fuel. These policies, along with increased competition and falling commodity prices on world markets, are driving many family farmers off their land.

The Australian rulers are alarmed at the conservatives' defeats. Well-known conservative Robert Manne wrote February 19, "The unanticipated West Australian election results and the truly astonishing results in Queensland confirm something that has been obvious since the defeat of the [Liberal] Kennett Government [in Victoria] in 1999. In contemporary Australia, the con-

servative side of politics is in a condition of crisis, from which it is difficult to imagine its recovery, at least in the short term....

"The National Party is involved in a mortal struggle with One Nation over which is to prevail among the rural battlers," he continued. "The decision of the National Party to deal with One Nation may create a crisis in its relations with the Liberal Party if the Howard leadership holds firm. Alternatively, if Howard relents, the issue may create a crisis within the Liberal Party."

Under increasing strain, the National Party itself is fracturing. In South Australia, the NP state organization announced February 23 it is splitting from the federal party. And Ronald Boswell, the party's leader in the federal Senate and a vocal critic of Hanson, has been publicly warned by other Nationals to back off his attacks or face losing party endorsement for his candidacy at the next election.

A continuation of these trends will mean the defeat of the Coalition by the ALP in federal elections later this year, a prospect working people are already anticipating.

Ron Poulsen and Doug Cooper are members of the Maritime Union of Australia.

'We began with a revolutionary people'

Fidel Castro's 1961 speech after defeat of U.S.-backed invasion at Bay of Pigs

Printed below are excerpts from the soon-to-be-released Pathfinder book *Bay of Pigs: Washington's First Military Defeat in the Americas*. The piece excerpted is from the chapter titled "Imperialism relied on cannons and tanks, we began with a revolutionary people," a speech presented by Fidel Castro on April 23, 1961. In the speech Castro reported to the Cuban people on the victory won against the invasion by some 1,500 Cuban mercenaries of the country's southern coast at the Bay of Pigs on April 17, 1961. The counter-revolutionaries—trained, financed, and deployed by Washington—were defeated within 72 hours by Cuba's militia and Revolutionary Armed Forces. Copyright © 2001 by Pathfinder Press, reprinted by permission. Subheadings are by the *Militant*.

BY FIDEL CASTRO

On Monday morning [April 17] at 3:15 a.m.—that night I had laid down, because we had held the demonstration—I and the other comrades were told that fighting was occurring at Playa Girón and Playa Larga, that the enemy was landing, and that platoons on watch in that area were putting up resistance.

We ordered that the information be verified; in this type of thing you must always be certain. Otherwise you start having ships at this place and that place. Then we received news reporting with absolute certainty of the first wounded men, reports that an invading force was giving heavy fire with bazookas, recoilless can-



Militia members celebrate victory after 72 hours of battle against 1,500 Cuban-mercenary force who with U.S. backing invaded Cuba, April 17, 1961, at the Bay of Pigs.

nons, 50 caliber machine guns, and seaborne artillery, that Playa Girón and Playa Larga in the Zapata Swamp were coming under heavy attack.

There was no longer the slightest doubt that a landing was taking place there, and that it was strongly supported with heavy weapons.

Our people there immediately began to put up a heroic resistance. The short-wave stations at Playa Girón and Playa Larga established communication, and they gave information on the attack, until the very moment when, as a result of the attack itself, the radio stopped functioning. Between 3:00 and 4:00 a.m. news about Playa Girón and Playa Larga stopped coming in over the short-wave stations established there, since communications had already been silenced.

By then we were fac-

ing this situation.

Look, [points to a map] this is the Bay of Pigs, this is Cienfuegos Bay. We had considered this zone as one of the possible sites for a landing.

At that time, there was a battalion from Cienfuegos posted at the Australia Sugar Mill. There were various platoons of armed charcoal makers, throughout the zone of Cayo Ramona, Sopllillar, and Buena Ventura, small groups that immediately joined forces with those guarding these positions. They were the first to confront the aggressors.

This other map is bigger [goes to another map], Playa Larga is here, Playa Girón over there.

I am going to go back here to explain something. [Goes back to the first map.] The Zapata Peninsula has the following characteristics: It is a region of solid ground right next to the shore: there is solid ground for several kilometers away from the coastline. It is rocky and wooded up till here. But north of this solid ground is an absolutely impassable swamp.

This is an absolutely impassable swamp. Previously there were no means of communication whatsoever; there was a narrow gauge railroad from the Australia Sugar Mill to the Bay of Pigs, and from Cavadonga to Girón. So it was a completely impassable place; the residents of this zone had only a single narrow gauge railroad for communication.

'Where revolution worked hardest'

The Zapata Swamp is one of the places where the revolution has worked hardest. It has built three main roads that cross the swamp; these are the points of access for anyone going there. The charcoal workers of the swamp—thousands of people live here, and they used to live under the worst conditions imaginable. They were paid 80 or 90 cents for a bag of charcoal, and had to pay rent for a bit of land, and then the middleman who took the charcoal out through here, through this narrow gauge railroad, sold it at a price two or three times higher.

That is, it was the poorest and most forgotten population in the country. And the Zapata Swamp is one of the places where the revolution has done the most. It has built tourist centers at Laguna del Tesoro, Playa Larga, and Playa Girón; communication routes have been built; not only this highway, but more than two hundred kilometers of highways and roads have been built in the Zapata Swamp, through which the residents take out their charcoal and wood. The income of the population in this area has in-

creased dramatically; there are people who earn 8, 10, 12 pesos a day or more, extracting wood. These are people who once lived in terrible conditions.

When the invasion took place there were two hundred teachers in the Zapata Swamp region participating in the literacy campaign. That gives an idea about the place these people chose.

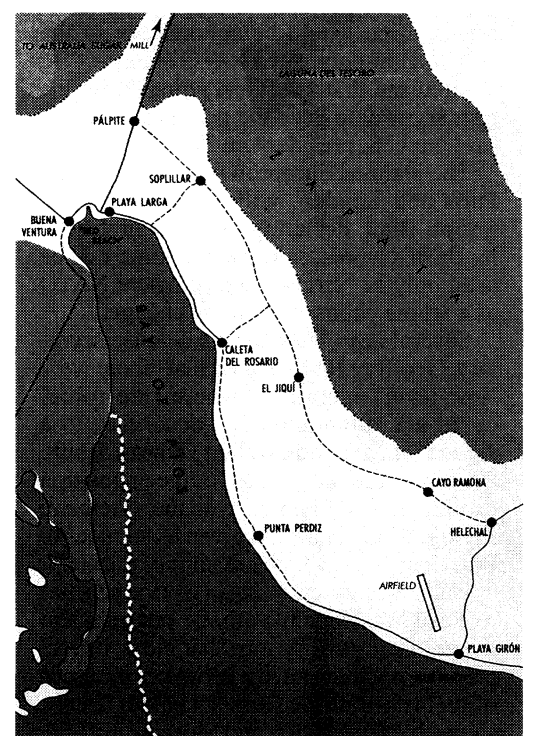
This is very important, because it shows what the imperialist mentality is—the reverse of the revolutionary mentality. Imperialism examines geography; it analyzes the number of cannons, planes, tanks, it assesses positions. The revolutionary, on the other hand, examines the social composition of the population, what the population consists of. The imperialists don't give a damn what the population there thinks or feels, they could care less. The revolutionary thinks first of the population, and the population of the Zapata Swamp was entirely with us.

Why? Because it was a population that had been rescued from the worst misery, from the worst isolation. A child around here—in this area there are places called Santo Tomás, Vínculo, and Medioderos, which are little villages in the area, where before the main road was there—it has already reached Santo Tomás and will soon reach Vínculo—they had to use a road through Canaliso to take out what they produced, as well as everything else. And it took them three days to reach Batabanó. Children used to die there without a chance to reach the doctor, because from certain areas of the Zapata Swamp it took three days for anyone to reach civilization.

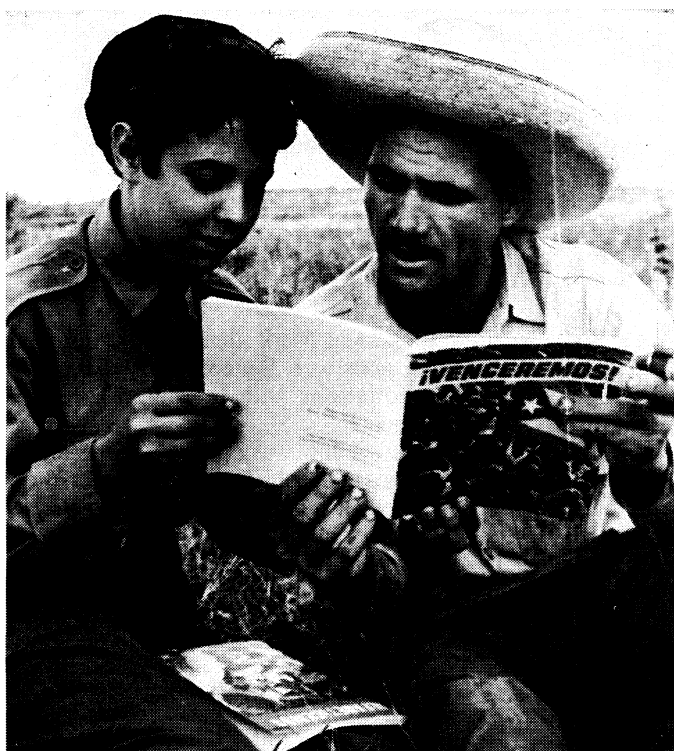
I remember a conversation I had with some residents of that area, around the zone of Santo Tomás. They told me: "Look, man can withstand more than a dog, because here there were dogs that died of starvation, while we didn't." [Applause] "There were dogs that starved to death while we didn't. Man can withstand more than a dog." That is the phrase of a resident of the Santo Tomás area.

Literacy campaign

The literacy campaign that was being carried out in those places was a fantastic thing. It was one of the pilot areas of the literacy campaign. All these towns—Jagüey Grande, Cavadonga, Australia, all these towns around here—had no access to the sea, they were exclusively swampland. Now all these people have beaches; thousands of people visit Playa Girón and Playa Larga on Sundays, even though construction is not yet finished. There was a plan to officially open Playa Girón on May 20; and they were also working intensively on Laguna del Tesoro and Playa Larga.



Map shows land area located between Bay of Pigs and Zapata Swamp where U.S.-backed mercenary Cuban forces invaded.



Top, youth teaching peasant to read as part of nationwide literacy campaign, launched 40 years ago after triumph of Cuban Revolution. Bottom, picket in front of White House protesting announcement of U.S. naval blockade of Cuba, Oct. 22, 1962. A year after suffering defeat at the Bay of Pigs, Washington set in motion but then pulled back from plans to invade the island.

le' Bay of Pigs

There are three hundred children of residents from the Zapata Swamp studying in Havana. They are studying ceramics, leather tanning, mechanics, carpentry; because a number of leather tanning, mechanical, ceramics, and carpentry shops are going to be established there. And we have three hundred boys and girls studying in Havana. Incidentally, the mother of two girls that were studying here was killed in the air attack by the mercenaries.

There is a story about one of their little sisters, who had an obsession with a pair of white shoes. Right in the middle of the bombing, the little girl wanted to go and get her white shoes that were in the house. Finally she got the shoes, but they were all shot up, almost destroyed. And she lost her mother during the mercenaries' attack there.

But the fact was that there were two hundred teachers in the Zapata Swamp, and three hundred local children studying in Havana, in the wealthy Cubanacán area. And the standard of living of the population of the Zapata Swamp was very high: roads, doctors, jobs. It had become one of the most frequented places, one of the most visited.

Gains for poorest working families

Those were the conditions of the population in the place where the mercenaries landed. They disembarked at Playa Girón, where there is a town that has 180 new homes, and will have the capacity to house more than a thousand people. Because these are tourist centers, which will be organized so that the workers can go there, the poorest working families.

Playa Girón and the Zapata Swamp are places that we have filled with main roads. It is a town completely built by the revolution, with an airfield and everything else. This is where the mercenaries intended to establish their territory. There, of all places, is where imperialism was going to establish



May Day march in Havana in 1961, shortly after mercenary invasion at Bay of Pigs was beaten back. Signs carried by demonstrators say, "Arms for the fathers and mothers of the martyrs of the revolution."

its occupied territory, at the place where the most has been done for the population in the least amount of time. Possibly there is no place in the world where more has been done for a population than in the Zapata Swamp over the last two years.

See how unaware they are. See how completely indifferent they are to how the population thinks...

'Our determination to resist'

Why did they need to provoke this bloodshed in our country? Why did they have to

come here, in a fruitless attempt? Not to mention getting themselves all worked up because they failed. Why do they threaten us with intervention? That's the odd part; these gentlemen have such a lack of conscience and are so irresponsible, so obsessed, that after they have made our people bleed, after they took a number of valuable lives, they still threaten to kill even more, to intervene even more.

That is why we must have an answer for them. And our answer is our determination to resist, our determination that if they dare

launch an attack, that will be the end of imperialism, even though it may cost us our lives. Because to us, death, a glorious death, will always be a thousand times preferable to living in slavery, living in shame under the yoke of these gentlemen! [Prolonged applause]

Death does not frighten any man or woman of dignity. What does frighten a man or woman of dignity, what frightens the people, is the idea of the yoke, the idea of some day seeing themselves governed and oppressed by this group of gentlemen who have so little respect for the peoples, for the rights of the peoples, for the aspirations of the peoples, for the independence of the peoples, the sovereignty of the peoples, the people's hope for peace, the people's hope for progress.

That does cause fear—fear that those gentlemen could be dictating the law here, imposing their law of the scaffold and the sword, imposing their yoke upon the people. Those compañeros who fell in battle at Playa Larga, Playa Girón, San Blas, Yaguaramas, in all those places, died in a glorious manner, fighting successfully to inflict a defeat on imperialism.

They deserve the most beautiful of monuments. They deserve a great monument built right there in the Zapata Swamp, in memory of the fallen, with the names of all those killed listed there. A monument telling the world that on this day in history, Yankee imperialism suffered its first great defeat in the Americas!

New financial crisis, austerity drive are devastating for working people in Turkey

BY HILDA CUZCO

A political crisis in Turkey's fragile coalition government precipitated a devastating financial collapse in the country last week, the second in four months. Turkey is being crushed under the weight of the combined effects of the world capitalist economic crisis, an austerity plan dictated by the imperialists through the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and a \$104 billion foreign debt.

Articles in the big-business media report that working people, whose standard of living has already been in a downward spiral, lost one-third of their buying power last week, as the Turkish currency, the lira, plunged 36 percent against the dollar after the government allowed it to float on the world market.

"Turkey's leaders, struggling to gain control of a financial crisis that threatens the economic and political stability of one of the most important U.S. allies in the Middle East," announced the move after "the stock market plunged 18 percent, its worst single-day loss ever, and interest rates on overnight bank loans zoomed to annualized levels of 7,500 percent," the *Washington Post* reported.

Turkey, a country of 65 million people and a member of NATO, is strategically located, bordering the Balkans, Russia, Iraq, Syria, and Iran. Washington also relies on Turkey's airbases to patrol the "no-fly" zones in Iraq and for other military operations in the region.

The crisis began February 19 after a stormy meeting of Turkey's National Security Council, a powerful unelected body made up of top civilian and military leaders. At the opening of the meeting, President Ahmet Necdet Sezer accused Prime Minister Bulent Ecevit of blocking his investigation of corruption that has left the

banking system in a shambles. The president, brandishing a book containing the country's constitution, tossed it in the direction of the prime minister, charging Ecevit with "humiliating me in the eyes of the public." When Ecevit left the room he told the press that the government faced "a serious crisis."

Investigation of the banks, a number of which are in government receivership and suspected of widespread corruption, is part of a three-year anti-inflation loan package signed by Turkey last year to guarantee a new infusion of \$8 billion by the IMF. The imperialist financial institution, which is dominated by Washington, also mandated the country to keep its currency tied to a "crawling peg" against the dollar to curb inflation.

The IMF had to step in again with a \$7.5 billion line of credit after a market meltdown in November, when a run on the banks saw investors withdraw \$6.2 billion from the country. In exchange for the IMF intervention, the Turkish government pledged to privatize 33.5 percent of Turk Telekom, the telecommunications giant valued at \$10 billion, and to sell off a 51 percent stake in Turkish Airlines, the national carrier worth around \$1 billion. Parliament was also committed to pass a law selling off the electricity sector to private capitalists early in 2001.

The growing economic crisis was met by a December 1 general strike, in which thousands of workers marched in Ankara, the capital, against unemployment, low wages, and cuts in social benefits. Public employees participated in the march, even though they are banned from striking. With workers' incomes ravaged by inflation, the protests condemned as inadequate a wage increase of 10 percent promised public employees by the government. The strik-

ers also opposed the austerity measures laid down by the IMF in exchange for the "rescue" loan packages.

'Strict adherence required'

Within minutes of Ecevit's February 19 announcement of the government crisis, a new financial meltdown was under way, with wealthy investors concerned about the ability of the government to press forward its austerity program. Markets were hit with a selloff of the lira and of stocks on the Istanbul exchange. Overnight, some \$10

Continued on Page 14

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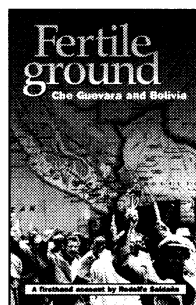
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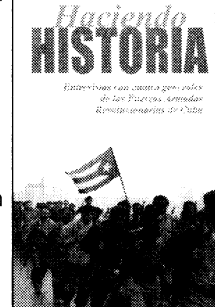
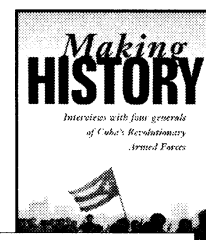


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Marxism explains role of family within class society

As part of celebrating Women's History Month, the *Militant* is reprinting this excerpt, which is taken from the pamphlet *Feminism and the Marxist Movement* by Mary-Alice Waters. Copyright ©1972 by Pathfinder Press, reprinted by permission.

BY MARY-ALICE WATERS

From the inception of the Marxist movement to today, for nearly 125 years, revolutionary Marxists have waged an unremitting struggle within the broad working-class movement in order to establish a revolutionary attitude toward the struggle for women's liberation. They have fought to place it on a

sound historical and materialist basis; and to educate the entire vanguard of the working class to an understanding of the significance of the struggles by women for full equality and for liberation from the centuries-old degradation of domestic slavery.

This battle has always been one of the dividing lines between revolutionary and reformist currents within the working-class movement; between those committed to a class-struggle perspective and those following a line of class collaboration. Women's oppression and how to struggle against it has been an issue at every turning point in the history of the revolutionary movement. Our ideological and political forebears, the revo-

lutionary Marxists, both male and female, have led the fight against all those who refused to inscribe women's liberation on the banner of socialism, or who supported it in words but refused to fight for it in practice....

The first dividing line came as early as the founding of the Marxist movement itself. The *Communist Manifesto* in 1848 boldly proclaimed:

"On what foundation is the present family, the bourgeois family, based? On capital, on private gain.... The bourgeois sees in his wife a mere instrument of production. He hears that the instruments of production are to be exploited in common, and,

naturally, can come to no other conclusion than that the lot of being common to all will likewise fall to the women.

"He has not even a suspicion that the real point aimed at is to do away with the status of women as mere instruments of production."

The line of division established here and in all the subsequent writings of Marx and Engels on this subject was that between utopian and scientific socialism. The pre-Marxian utopian socialists—such as Fourier and Owen—were also fervent champions of the emancipation of women. But their socialism, as well as their theories on the family and women, rested on moral principles and abstract desires—not on an understanding of the laws of history and the class struggle rooted in the growth of humanity's productive capacities. Marxism for the first time provided a scientific materialist foundation, not only for socialism but also for women's liberation. It laid bare the roots of women's oppression, its relationship to a system of production based on private property and a society divided between a class that owned the wealth and a class that produced it. Marxism explained the role of the family within class society, and the function of the family in perpetuating the oppression of women.

More than that, Marxism pointed out the road to achieving women's liberation. It explained how the abolition of private property would provide a material basis for transferring to society as a whole all those onerous social responsibilities today borne by the individual family—the care of the old and sick; the feeding, clothing, and educating of the young. Relieved of these burdens, Marx pointed out, the masses of women would be able to break the bonds of domestic servitude, they would be able to exercise their full capacities as creative and productive—not just reproductive—members of society. Freed from the economic compulsion on which it necessarily rests, the bourgeois family would disappear. Human relationships themselves would be transformed into free relations of free people.

And finally, Marxism took socialism and women's liberation out of the sphere of utopian yearning by proving that capitalism itself produces a force—the working class—strong enough to destroy it, capable of carrying through the momentous task of abolishing the tyranny of the possessing few over the overwhelming majority of humankind. For the first time, socialists could stop wishing for the new and better society and begin to organize to bring it about.

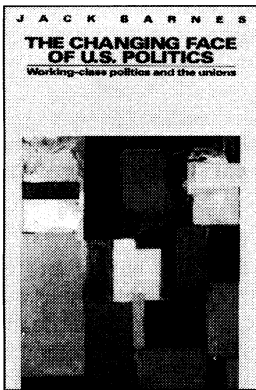
The struggle for women's liberation was thus lifted out of the realm of the personal, the "impossible dream," and unbreakably linked to the victory of the progressive forces of our epoch. It became a social task in the interests of all humanity. Thus, Marxism provided a materialist analysis and a scientific perspective for women's liberation....

When the First International was founded by Marx and Engels in 1864, socialist theory was put into large-scale organizational practice for the first time. In a radical departure from the laws and customs of the time, the International Workingmen's Association elected a British woman trade union organizer, Henrietta Law, to its General Council. How far in advance this step was from the practice of other political organizations of the day can be judged from the fact that Marx tells of receiving letters asking if women would even be allowed to join the International. Marx himself made a motion in the General Council that special working women's branches be organized in factories, industries, and cities where there were large concentrations of women workers, adding that this should in no way cut across the building of mixed branches as well.

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The Changing Face of U.S. Politics

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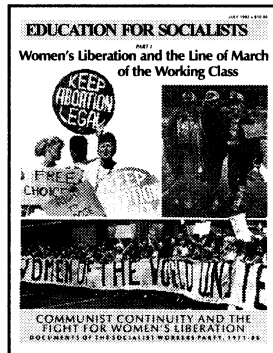
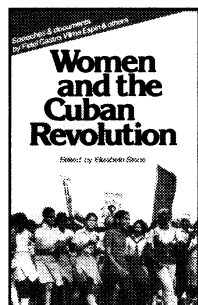
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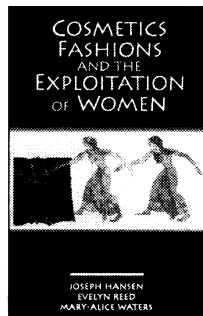
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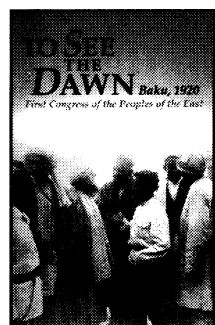
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Estate tax debate reflects worries over coming social conflicts

BY MAURICE WILLIAMS

A group of superwealthy individuals in the United States, calling themselves the Responsible Wealth Project, have banded together to urge Congress to vote down President George Bush's proposal to repeal inheritance taxes. The group is promoting a petition stating that "the estate tax exerts a powerful and positive influence on charitable giving. Repeal would have a devastating impact on public charities."

Some 450 business executives and investors are members of the Responsible Wealth Project. They include William Gates, Sr., father of Microsoft magnate William Gates; billionaire financier George Soros; David Rockefeller Jr., former chairman of Rockefeller & Company; and Agnes Gund, a philanthropist whose family owns stakes in many companies.

Another voice opposing a change in the estate tax laws is the *New York Times*, most of which is owned by the Sulzberger family. "Eliminating the estate tax could dry up bequests to charitable, philanthropic and educational organizations," the paper stated in an editorial.

Some, like Warren Buffett, advance anti-working-class notions as they oppose elimination of the estate tax. He argues wealthy people are rich because they are talented. "We have come closer to a true meritocracy than anywhere else in the world," he said. "You have mobility so people with talents can be put to the best use. Without the estate tax, you in effect will have an aristocracy of wealth, which means you pass down the ability to command resources of the nation based on heredity rather than merit."

Estate taxes are levied on the net worth of an individual when that person dies. There is no tax on the first \$675,000 and under the current law the exemption will rise to \$1 million by 2006. Farms and family businesses currently have a \$1 million exemption. Amounts above the exemption threshold are taxed at rates that rise to 55 percent when assets reach more than \$3 million. Only about 2 percent of estates in the country are affected by inheritance taxes. The wealthy have numerous ways to get around the tax and pass on the maximum amount of capital possible to the next generation, ensuring it remains in the individual bourgeois family.

Bush is proposing elimination of taxes on assets held at death as well as gift taxes. Various articles in the big-business media estimate savings for the 2 percent of the most wealthy families who have to pay the tax at \$236 billion over the next 10 years.

Tax cut skewed toward the rich

The president is also pushing a huge income tax rollback, which together with the estate tax cut amounts to a \$1.6 trillion savings during the same time period. The income tax reductions are structured so that those in higher income brackets receive the largest tax breaks, placing a greater share of the overall tax burden on working people and the middle class. The richest 1 percent of taxpayers will receive 40 percent of the tax breaks under Bush's plan. "The Washington lawyers, the executives who make \$1 million or more, are going to get the big cuts," Sheldon Cohen, a tax lawyer and former commissioner of the Internal Revenue Service, noted.

According to the *Wall Street Journal*, as many as 14 of the 17 cabinet members in the Bush administration as well the president and Vice President Richard Cheney, are wealthy enough to benefit from the repeal of the estate tax. Bush filed financial disclosure forms during the presidential campaign that indicate his heirs could save between \$6 million and \$12 million from the proposed repeal, if his estate remains at its current value.

The president's plan to abolish estate taxes is opposed by at least one person in the administration: John Dilulio, director of the White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives, a religious charity post set up by Bush. Dilulio said the repeal of the estate tax would devastate large donations to charities, cutting across the pro-

gram he is to head up. "I don't think the estate tax should be eliminated—modified maybe, but not eliminated," he said in an interview February 8.

The debate on repeal of estate taxes reflects anxiety among a layer of the ruling class who see social conflicts and class battles looming on the horizon as working people resist the effects of the economic crisis of capitalism and attacks on their rights and unions.

Combined with the bipartisan assault on the social wage—including elimination of Aid to Families with Dependent Children and other attacks on Social Security, and cuts in welfare—they fear cutbacks in charitable programs will mean there is nowhere left to turn for working people facing hard times.

For example, in his open letter, William Gates, Sr., wrote: "Already, states are cutting back as the economy slows, tax revenues drop and state budget surpluses disappear. It would be unconscionable to give the wealthy a massive tax break at a time when crucial programs assisting children and seniors are on the chopping block."

By advocating charitable giving rather than government-funded cradle-to-grave social security coverage for all, the wealthy liberals who oppose repeal of the estate tax advance a reactionary campaign that plays into Bush's proposal to direct tax dollars that would normally come into the federal treasury to churches and private charities. Advocating "charitable and independent sectors" taking a more prominent role in "confronting social problems" in effect reinforces the bipartisan drive to undermine government entitlements.

The president has already started a "compassion fund" aimed at encouraging rich individuals to donate large sums of money that would be matched with federal funds

Meetings hear testimony on effects of farm bill

BY ROLLANDE GIRARD AND MARY LOU MONTAUK

PASO ROBLES, California—Farmers across this state have participated in nine meetings held since November about the conditions of agriculture in California and on federal farm legislation due to be drafted this year. Some 60 percent of farmers in the state cultivate 49 acres or less and more than half work jobs off the farm to make ends meet.

The forums were sponsored by the California Department of Food and Agriculture and NFACT, a coalition of the New Mexico, Florida, Arizona, California, and Texas departments of agriculture. In addition to working farmers and representatives of farm organizations, officials from state and local government agencies also testified. Sessions ranged from 40 people here and in Ventura to 150 in Woodland.

The 1996 federal farm bill, known as the Freedom to Farm Act, was an assault on working farmers. Under this bill, scheduled to be renewed in 2002, all price supports and farm subsidies were scheduled to be eliminated by the year 2002. But due to the deepening farm crisis, Congress has been forced to pass emergency farm subsidy legislation in each of the last three years, hitting a record \$23 billion last year.

Farmers at the meeting pointed out that although they are affected by natural disasters, the biggest problem they face is that the price they receive for their commodities has fallen below the cost of production. Under the current farm legislation, price supports are allocated to large agribusinesses rather than to working farmers, they point out. Many farmers also proposed the government enact measures to limit imports of food, using various restrictions, from "quality" guarantees to protection from "exotic pests."

John Comino, a barley farmer, said he is "overburdened" by some of the environmental regulations in the farm bill that penalize working farmers. Comino has old diesel tractors and can't afford to buy new ones or make repairs needed to comply with emission standards in the law. "We are in farm-

Machinists at United picket in San Francisco for a contract



Militant/Deborah Liatos

Three hundred members of the International Association of Machinists picket at the San Francisco airport February 22 demanding a contract from the company. The union, which represents 15,000 mechanics at United and has been in negotiations for more than a year, asked the National Mediation Board in January to release it from talks in order to begin a 30-day countdown to a possible strike.

and given to charities and religious and other nonprofit organizations to provide social services.

One element of the debate around the tax cuts is the rise in payroll taxes working people are paying. The Congressional Budget Office reported that 80 percent of working people in the country today pay more in payroll taxes—Social Security and Medicare deductions—than they do in income taxes.

Bush is touting his proposal as a measure to ease tax burdens on middle-income and working-class families, downplaying the windfall it will mean for the rich. "No matter how the data is sliced in the upcoming debate in Congress and the country, most

of the tax cut dollars go to wealthier Americans," said a February 7 article in the *Washington Post*.

According to an Internal Revenue Service report, between 1989 and 1998 the after-tax incomes of the richest 1 percent of the population grew about eight times as fast as the bottom 90 percent, as the share of income they paid in federal taxes in 1998 fell to its lowest level since 1992. The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities says that the top 1 percent of taxpayers had an average after-tax income of \$594,814 in 1998, up \$69,000 or 13.1 percent over 1997. The bottom 90 percent—those who make less than \$83,220 a year—saw their average income rise only 3.9 percent in 1998.

ing," he said, "because we do like the land and want to take care of it. Twenty years ago, the price [of barley] was better then it is today. I continue to farm," he said, "for the enjoyment of growing things and to get it better, to improve the place. It is the only reason to be there." Most working farmers interviewed said that in order to keep their land either they or their spouses work a second job.

Frank, a farmer who attended the January 30 session in Woodland, said in an interview that he would "like to talk about the problem of corporate consolidation in the food industry, such as the Tyson-Smithfield

merger and that of General Mills and Pillsbury. Talk about the loss of markets!" he said. "I can only sell to one buyer now. And you know what that means? You can't get a decent price. They dictate it. You take it," he added.

At that same session, Jeanne McCormick, a farmer from Rio Vista, added, "Farmers are in a worse crisis than the 1980s, probably the worst since the '30s."

Rollande Girard is a meat packer, and member of the United Food and Commercial Workers in Selma, California. Barbara Bowman also contributed to this article.

Raisin farmers face foreclosure

Continued from front page

packers favored a much smaller amount. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) decided February 5 to set the diversion program at 96,532 tons to reduce the next crop. Growers who participate in the program prune or remove their vines to slash production.

Many of the approximately 5,000 farmers in the region have applied to participate in this program, including 118 for vine removal and 1,415 for aborting the crop, while leaving vines in the ground.

Walter Shubin, a second-generation farmer with 85 acres, said he is participating in the program, pruning his vines so they don't bear any fruit this year. "During the Savings and Loan fiasco, they were bailed out with \$500 billion," he said. "Now with the power crisis situation, we pay a lot to the power company, PG&E. If we can bail out big corporations, why can't we bail out family farmers?" he added.

Mike Jerkovitch, a third-generation farmer, is not part of the diversion program but he decided that it was better for him to prune his vines and not produce any raisins this year. "To cultivate 100 acres of raisins," he explained, "you spend around \$140,000. With what we will get from the packers, which would probably be around \$500 a ton

or \$45,000 for a hundred acres, I am losing money. This affects the community," he said. "I told the workers who work for me that after the pruning there won't be any work. It also affects the parts sellers. It affects the stores. Since we don't have money, we are not spending. There are many "for sale" signs, some farmers are going bankrupt, and some are having their land taken away," he added.

The packers are in no hurry to resolve this problem. Enough raisins have been released to them to meet current market demands, Jerkovitch explained. And the companies are only paying \$300 a ton to the growers for the raisins until the deadlock is resolved.

George Flagler, who owns 500 acres and has been growing raisins since 1965, will be harvesting this year, but the rising cost of energy is affecting him. "We need energy to pump water," he said. "Then the cost of diesel has doubled or tripled, and they say that the cost of fertilizer will double this year. Many of the farmers here are selling and two of my neighbors are facing foreclosure," he added.

"It would be like if workers were working for free and didn't get paid for five months, going on six months," said Shubin. "What would happen? They would be evicted from their homes."

Rally planned to defend Native American

Continued from Page 4

ment and an investigation of the death of a young Black man in the county jail.

Hatcher and Jacobs were acquitted by a jury on federal charges of hostage-taking and illegal possession of firearms following this incident. The state government re-indicted them, however, and both eventually pled guilty to kidnapping. Hatcher spent five years in prison before being released on parole in 1995. When his parole ended in 1997 he returned home, where he continued to speak out on corruption and injustice in the county.

Police have now accused Hatcher in the May 31, 1999, death of Brian McMillan in a drive-by shooting. Amelia Chavis, who was visiting McMillan, was injured in the shooting.

Hatcher was also charged with felony assault for shooting Michael Locklear a few days earlier. He acknowledged that he shot at the ground by Locklear, who was slightly injured, but said he acted in self-defense. In an October trial, a jury found Hatcher guilty of a lesser misdemeanor charge and he was sentenced to 75 days in jail, which he had already served.

In a May 2000 motion for dismissal of the murder charges, Hatcher stated that the entire case "rests solely on manufactured evidence, concealed evidence which would show Defendant's innocence, and perjured testimony." He insists he is innocent of any involvement in McMillan's death.

Hatcher and his supporters point to evidence, including an eyewitness whom police refused to interview, that the shooting was carried out by two people.

District Attorney Johnson Britt has repeatedly delayed the release of test results on bullets found at the scene that could indicate the number of guns involved. He has also opposed a motion by the defense to remove a bullet from Chavis's hip, though she has agreed to the operation.

Witnesses say they were threatened and intimidated by the cops to give statements incriminating Hatcher. The police also cooked up an alleged "confession." A Hamlet, North Carolina, cop testified in court that after he told Hatcher he was charged with killing McMillan, Hatcher said, "Hell, they ought to give me a medal for that." This "never happened," Hatcher said. The supposed confession, heard by no one else, came moments after Hatcher told State Bureau of Investigation officers that he refused to make a statement and insisted on his right to an attorney.

In an indication of the court's desire to convict Hatcher, Robeson County judge Dexter Brooks faxed letters to community groups soon after he was charged, including

an editorial that called Hatcher a "terrorist," "coward," "murderer," and a "disgrace." During a pretrial hearing last September, Judge Jerry Martin denied most of Hatcher's defense motions, including a request for data that would show how the death penalty is applied in an arbitrary and racially discriminatory way in North Carolina.

At the February 17 conference Thelma

Clark commented that district attorney Britt "has no evidence [against Hatcher], like in other murder charges. He tries to do this to get people to take a plea bargain." It's not uncommon for defendants to spend two to four years in jail awaiting trial, she said, leading many to plead guilty just to get the ordeal over with.

Supporters are planning teach-ins at cam-

puses across the state and are asking people to turn out at the courthouse for the opening day of the trial. They are also raising funds for the defense effort. Information is available on the Internet at www.eddiehatcher.org or phone 910-582-2764. Contributions can be sent to the Eddie Hatcher Defense Committee, P.O. Box 2702, Pembroke, NC 28358.

Gov't must pay Native Americans for land use

BY RÓGER CALERO

"The unanimous ruling of the U.S. Court of Appeals, D.C. Circuit, represents a major court victory for over 300,000 individual Indians whose trust funds have been egregiously mismanaged by the federal government for over a century," the Native American Rights Fund (NARF) said in a February 23 news release.

Five years ago the NARF initiated a class action lawsuit over the mismanagement of trust accounts set up in 1887 to compensate Native Americans for use of their lands. Each year, around \$500 million in royalties are collected from the sale of oil, timber, and other natural resources and put into individual trust accounts. The plaintiff estimates the U.S. government diverted roughly \$10 billion from the accounts and is fighting to get the monies reinstated.

In December 1999, U.S. District Court Judge Royce Lamberth ruled the trust beneficiaries were entitled to a full accounting of the money over the decades. He ordered the Interior and Treasury Departments to overhaul the trust fund and find out how much they were owed.

In reference to the mismanagement, Lamberth called it "fiscal and governmental irresponsibility in its purest form." At one

point the judge held both Bruce Babbitt and Robert Rubin, interior and treasury secretaries during the Clinton administration, in contempt of court for failing to produce records ordered by the court.

Babbitt, in one of his final acts before leaving office, ordered a statistical sampling of the trust to determine how much account holders are owed. Attorneys for the Native Americans proposed instead that data for oil well production and grazing records among other variables be used to put together a model of the accounting system.

The decision by the appeals court to uphold Lamberth's ruling also gives him jurisdiction over the case for five years in order to follow the execution of the order and overhauling of the system. In writing for the appeals court, Judge David Sentelle stated that "what little progress the government has made appears more due to the litigation than diligence in discharging its fiduciary obli-



Eloise Campbell, Blackfoot tribe member and lead plaintiff in Native Americans' class action lawsuit demanding government compensate them for use of their land.

gations." He asserted, "Since the founding of this nation, the United States' relationship with the Indian tribes has been contentious and tragic."

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Defend S. Carolina dockworkers

Support five dock workers and members of the International Longshoremen's Association in Charleston, South Carolina, facing frame-up charges.

Atlanta: Rally at Spelman College. Fri., Mar. 9, 7:00 p.m. Cosby Center Auditorium. Contact: The Brisbane Institute (404) 681-2800 ext. 2199; Region 5 AFL-CIO (404) 766-5050.

New Orleans: Meeting at Tulane University. Fri., Mar. 16, 4:00 p.m. Jones Hall, Room 204. **Panel: Community Labor United Breakfast.** Sat., Mar. 17, 10:00 a.m. to 12 noon. Tulane University. Contact: John Arena (504) 314-6218.

March for Women's Lives

Sun., April 22 in Washington, D.C. Sponsored by the National Organization for Women. For information, call: (212) 627-9895.

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Stop the Bombing of Iraq! End the Sanctions! Speaker: Elizabeth Lariscy, Socialist Workers Party. Fri., Mar. 9, 7:30 p.m. 2546 W. Pico Blvd. Tel: (213) 380-9460.

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What's Behind the Continuing U.S. Attacks on Iraq. Speaker: Betsey Stone, Socialist Workers Party. Fri., Mar. 9, 7:00 p.m. 1212 N. Ashland, 2nd floor. Donation: \$5. Tel: (773) 342-1780.

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Slowdown in the U.S. Economy: Why Working People Should Demand Jobs for All. Fri., March 2, 7:30 p.m. 1068 Fulton St., 3rd floor. Tel: (718) 398-7850.

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The Struggle Against Austerity in Ecuador. Speaker: Dan Fein, Socialist Workers Party. Fri., March 2, 7:30 p.m. Dinner at 6:30 p.m. 545 8th Ave., 14th floor. Donation: \$4 for program, \$4 for dinner. Tel: (212) 695-7358.

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A Big Apple with a rotten core—Walk through the “better” areas of New York City and things look pretty good. Meanwhile, it’s reported that 25,000 people are in



Harry Ring

the city’s homeless shelters—the greatest numbers since the 1980s. Some three-quarters of these are families, including more than 10,000 children. (And there’s the

untold numbers sleeping in the streets, in cars, subways, etc.)

Cops off campus!—In the wake of a student outcry, officials at Ohio’s Kent State University backed off on a decision to equip campus cops with M-16 rifles, which were used by the military during the Vietnam War. The Ohio National Guard in 1970 killed four and wounded nine in an assault on Kent State students who were protesting that war. Shopping for a replacement for their present guns, the campus cops said they’ll look for something other than the M-16s.

It ain’t funny, but it is—“Runway error marred LAX ceremony—Two 737s almost collided as airport officials gathered to re-

ceive a recent safety award”—Los Angeles news headline.

Don’t try redeeming it at your grocery—The Colorado legislature is weighing a measure to bestow certificates of recognition to couples who have remained wedded for 25 or 50 years. The sponsor of the measure said there would be no cash awards, “just the idea of some recognition.”

Century of ‘progress’—The *Times* of London reported that researchers found that in many parts of the inner city, “the divisions between rich and poor [remain] just as rigid as they were 100 years ago.”

That’s a comfort—General Elec-

tric denied a *Business Week* report that its takeover of Honeywell would mean a cut of 75,000 jobs. GE said they had merely reported there would be “significant” cuts, but the number remains to be decided.

Tick-tock, there goes the doc—In a major advance for the quality of medical care, the American Medical Assn. reported that doctors are spending more time in their office visits with patients. From 1989 to 1998 the typical office visit expanded from 20.4 minutes to 21.5.

Why?—Associated Press reported that New York City’s commissioner of homeless services attributed the swelling number of homeless to: “staggering housing

costs, more evictions, and a decline in subsidized housing.” He noted it was part of a national trend. And, it was added, the N.Y. increase came despite tougher city screening procedures.

Meanwhile, freeze your butt—With the energy crisis gripping California dwellers by the throat, Oakland’s Fruitvale Presbyterian church went into the trenches to assure light and heat for the needy. Initially, they declared they would help the aging meet their inflated bills. But it then dawned on them this would cost money. They switched strategy. Those who sign a pledge to conserve energy get a sweatshirt bearing the logo: “We believe in the power of God.”

Why semicolonies can’t become imperialist powers

Printed below is an excerpt from “What the 1987 stock market crash foretold,” a resolution adopted by the August 1988 convention of the Socialist Workers Party. The entire text can be found in *New International* no. 10. Copyright © 1994 by 408 Printing and Publishing Corp., reprinted by permission. Subheadings are by the *Militant*.

The overwhelming majority of countries in the semicolonial world remain dominated by the world capitalist market and oppressed by the imperialist system. Most are saddled with neocolonial governments that represent domestic exploiting classes subservient to varying degrees to imperialism. The operation of the law of value, combined with the policies of finance capital and its various state powers, have maintained and reinforced the division of the capitalist world—first called attention to by Lenin, and later by the Communist International—into a handful of imperialist countries and the great

economy, not fully part of a modern class structure.

Unlike the imperialist powers, most countries with semicolonial economic structures do not even have a single wholesale market price for most agricultural commodities, nor a single average rate of industrial profit of domestic capitalists.

Stock and securities markets, to the degree they exist, have not taken on the function described by Engels of centralizing the accumulation and redeployment of domestic agricultural, industrial, and commercial capital. This is a barrier to the mobilization of the various local pockets of national capital on a substantial enough scale to contribute to sustained economic development comparable to that in the advanced capitalist countries.

A great deal of attention has been focused by the big-business press on a handful of semicolonial countries in Latin America and Asia—Brazil, Mexico, South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Singapore—that have managed to increase their share in world industrial production by a few percentage points in the more than forty years since the end of World War II. For the rest of the semicolonial countries, however, the total share in world industrial output has fallen over this same period. Moreover, even in the so-called newly industrializing countries, the economic and social conditions of working people drastically limit the home market.

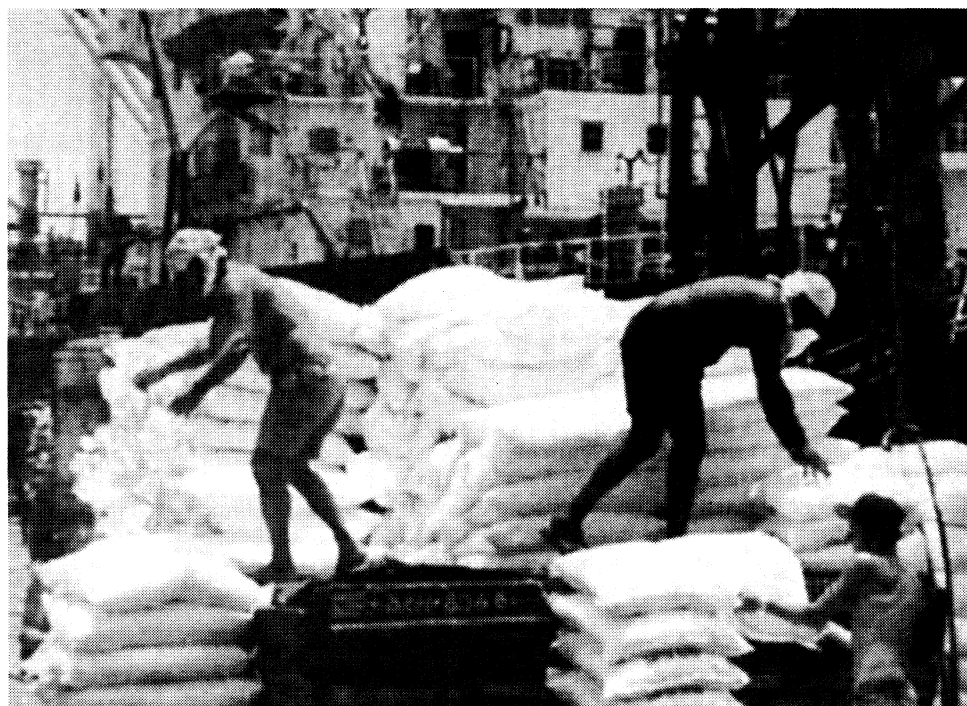
Dispossession of the peasantry

The proliferating U.S. and other imperialist-owned assembly plants (*maquiladoras*) that are allegedly “developing” northern Mexico, for example, pay workers \$3 to \$5 per day. In Brazil and South Korea average wages of workers employed in manufacturing are well below \$1.50 an hour.¹ The expansion of manufacturing in these countries has been predicated on dispossession of the peasantry and superexploitation of the growing proletariat, which has driven down average real wages, not on developing a broad working class capable of purchasing a wide range of consumer goods and durables.

In none of the cases where neocolonial governments have carried out what have been billed as “land reforms” has the result been a thoroughgoing land distribution and state provision of cheap credit. As a result, nowhere in these countries has there developed a broad, modern class of small farmers whose income and living standards on average are equal to that of skilled workers. Instead, a thin layer of well-off farmers has been created and the superexploitation, dispossession, and pauperization of the toiling rural majority has increased.

This lack of a broad home market puts the capitalists in these countries at a severe disadvantage in the intensifying trade competition, on the world market. It makes the economies of these countries particularly vulnerable to inflation, recessions, monetary fluctuations, trade restrictions, and other

¹As a result of a wave of hard-fought strikes in the late 1980s and early 1990s, industrial wages in South Korea increased more than 55 percent between 1987 and 1991, while industrial wages in Brazil continued to decline, ending the 1980s lower than at the beginning of the decade. Wage increases slowed by 1993 in South Korea, and industrial strikes in 1994 have been at the lowest level since 1987.



Workers loading sugar onto ships at a port in Brazil, the world’s largest sugar producer. While semicolonial countries like Brazil have increased their share in world industrial production, not a single one has crossed into the ranks of industrialized imperialist countries, even as a junior partner.

factors that slash demand for imports in the capitalist world. Imperialism, nonetheless, continues to accelerate the export-orientation of agriculture and industry, both native and foreign-owned. The semicolonial coun-

tries, most of them originally with substantial acreage of rich soil and plentiful forests and water resources, have been transformed into importers of food, clothing, and other basic necessities.

—25 AND 50 YEARS AGO—



March 12, 1976

The Supreme Court dealt *mexicanos* and Chicanos a cruel blow when it upheld a reactionary California law making it an offense for employers to “knowingly” hire so-called illegal aliens.

On February 25, the high court ruled 8 to 0 that the California Court of Appeals had been in error when it struck down the Arnett Law, named after Assemblyman Dixon Arnett, who sponsored the reactionary measure in the California legislature.

The law is designed to increase the victimization and exploitation of workers without citizenship papers, not to provide additional jobs for U.S. workers as its backers claim. It will also contribute to further discrimination against Chicanos and anyone else in California who may look Mexican.

The Arnett Law is simply one more regulator to better control the flow across the border and increase even further the vulnerability of the cruelly abused workers without citizenship papers.

When there is a shortage of low-paid labor, the border cops will still look the other way as undocumented workers slip across the border. And when there is a surplus—as there is now, with California unemployment officially estimated at 10 percent—the border controls will be tightened and the deportations stepped up.

One particularly invidious aim of the Arnett Law is to further pit “legal” workers against “illegals.” Hopefully, this will not be as easily achieved as was thought when the bill was approved in 1971.



March 12, 1951

The walkout of the labor representatives from all government war agencies has ushered in a new stage in the crisis of American capitalism. This crisis, beginning with the reverses of the imperialist adventure in Korea, became aggravated in the “Great Debate” over foreign policy and has now reached its sharpest expression in the rift between the labor leadership and the Truman administration.

The labor bureaucracy did not want this crisis. These “labor lieutenants of the capitalist class” did everything to avoid a political showdown with their capitalist superiors. But the break came despite their wishes, and it has drawn a sharp line between labor and capital on the political field. Only the most compelling pressure of working class discontent forced them to challenge the exclusive domination of Big Business in the war mobilization set-up.

The last question the labor officials want to raise is the right of Big Business to dominate the capitalist state apparatus; what they are objecting to is exclusive domination. The most striking feature of the labor officials’ statements is their demand for “real partnership.” The bureaucracy demands a “real” coalition on the model of the Social-Democratic governments that used to flourish in Europe in the heyday of capitalism, with security for labor officials, stable unionism, and a “real” partnership between capital and “labor,” that is with the labor bureaucrats.

But this is no longer the heyday of capitalism, but the epoch of its death agony.

U.S. war against Iraqi people

Washington's recent cluster bombing of Iraq on the outskirts of Baghdad is a continuation of the brutal character of the U.S. rulers' 10-year assault against the Iraqi people. This policy has included the killing of as many as 150,000 human beings in the Gulf War in 1991 through a six-week bombardment and one-hundred-hour invasion of the country; sanctions imposed by Washington under the auspices of the United Nations since 1990; and the imposition of "no-fly" zones over northern and southern Iraq patrolled by U.S. warplanes that regularly bomb the country. In fact, over the past two years these bombing attacks have killed an average of one Iraqi civilian about every other day. Washington has made it clear that there will be no letup in these attacks.

The 28 cluster bombs, each weighing 1,000 pounds put the lie to Secretary of State Colin Powell's claim that Washington is "not after the Iraqi people." Cluster bombs are designed to kill and maim people. Despite Washington's claims about the pinpoint accuracy of their "precision-guided" weapons, these cluster bombs have no aimpoint, except to disperse thousands of highly explosive bomblets over a wide area. And those that don't explode become imbedded in the ground, ready to go off as Iraqi workers, farmers, or children travel through the area.

Washington has been dropping the Joint Stand-off Weapon—the Pentagon's latest brand of cluster bombs—on Iraq since January 1999, under the Democratic Clinton administration and now by Republican George Bush.

The ongoing bombing drive against Iraq and the

Pentagon's use of such weapons against the Iraqi people show the true face of imperialism. Yet the capitalist media has been virtually silent about the use of the weapons. A story that finally did appear in the *Washington Post's* web site never did make it into its print edition.

In his recent visit to the Mideast region, Powell succeeded in winning some support from Arab leaders for the Bush administration's plan to ease some aspects of the overall sanctions, while tightening up those deemed most damaging to the country. Washington's aim is to reinvigorate a policy that in recent months has been cracking at the edges. Its goal is to more effectively seal the borders around Iraq, and tighten its grip on oil and the country's other major imports and exports.

Another indication of the Bush administration's intentions to further step up its assault upon Iraq is reflected in his nomination of Paul Wolfowitz to be deputy defense secretary. Wolfowitz is an advocate of Washington arming the Iraqi opposition groups. In the spring of 1999 he wrote in *Foreign Affairs* magazine that "the United States should be prepared to commit ground forces to protect a sanctuary in southern Iraq where the opposition could safely mobilize." The big-business media did take notice of Wolfowitz's views when Bush announced his nomination for the high-level Pentagon post.

Working people can respond to these stepped-up threats by defending Iraq's sovereignty and demanding: Hands off Iraq! Halt the bombing! End the sanctions and the "no-fly" zones.

Tax the rich, not working people

In the midst of all the hoopla about the tax cut proposed by President George Bush, and countermeasures by the Democratic Party, workers and farmers can raise one demand: Tax the rich, not working people! From its earliest days the modern working-class movement has fought for a steeply graduated income tax—up to 100 percent—on the wealthiest individuals. Working people, who create all wealth and who face a capitalist government that does not represent them, should not pay one penny of any kind of tax whatsoever.

Bush promotes his tax cut as one that will "add up to significant help" for working-class families, while downplaying the huge windfall it will give the superwealthy bourgeois class that lives off the labor of workers.

Recent figures from the Internal Revenue Service indicate that the wealthiest U.S. citizens are paying a shrinking amount of income tax, even as they amass more wealth, and the gap continues to grow between the rich and the vast majority of the population. The IRS data also shows that the income of the top 1 percent of taxpayers grew eight times as fast as the bottom 90 percent over the 10-year period between 1989 and 1998. And as if all that were not enough, the president's budget plan ensures that the rich get the lion's share of the new tax breaks.

These figures underestimate the real extent of the shift in income because they do not take into account the impact of the massive cuts in the social wage—including in

Social Security and other entitlements—carried out in a bipartisan manner in an accelerated way over the past six years. The dramatic increase in the incomes of the wealthiest families is one result of the offensive against working people by the employers on the job and by the Democrats and Republicans at every level of government.

Both the appeals by Bush for support of "faith-based" charitable organizations and a "compassion fund," and those by more liberal big-money families for keeping the estate tax to encourage charitable contributions are ideological rationalizations used as cover for the rulers' continued assault. They are designed to undermine human solidarity and the right of workers and farmers to social entitlements won through decades of working-class struggles.

The liberals' claptrap over maintaining estate taxes merely reflects their anxiety about capitalism's ability to absorb and deflect coming social conflicts and class battles by workers and farmers who confront the rulers' offensive against their living standards and democratic rights.

Regardless of whatever amount of money the rich give to charity, it will not and cannot eliminate the irreconcilable class antagonisms that are inherent in capitalist society. It will only seek to perpetuate a class-divided society and divert workers and farmers from demanding government-funded, cradle-to-grave social security, education, health care, and other social answers to the arbitrary and devastating effects of the crisis of world capitalism.

Defend immigrant workers

The latest "guest worker" proposal being discussed in the U.S. Congress and in recent talks between U.S. president George Bush and Mexican president Vicente Fox is one more piece in the U.S. employers' assault on the rights of immigrant workers.

The program is designed to offer capitalist farmers and factory and hotel owners a stable workforce and guaranteed profits, while isolating a section of the working class and institutionalizing their pariah status. Workers coming to the United States should have the same rights as all other working people, including the right to unionize, freedom of movement, the right to seek any work they choose, and all social entitlements.

The plan is a refurbished version of previous contract labor programs, which wealthy U.S. ranchers and businessmen have relied on for a low-paid pool of labor since the early 20th century. The U.S. government contracts for the temporary importation of workers from Mexico, the Caribbean, and elsewhere to fill the needs of U.S. agribusiness. These workers are not allowed to freely move, change jobs, or fight for better wages and working conditions. They are forced to accept the conditions of superexploitation that the employers and government dictate. When the bosses no longer need their labor power, they are to be shipped back like cattle to their countries of origin.

This setup is designed both to legally restrict the rights of these workers and to isolate them from other members of their class in the United States. It will be used by employers to undercut unionization drives and pit the "guest workers" and other workers against each other.

This move goes hand in hand with the broader immigration policy of the U.S. rulers. The ongoing factory raids across the country and the deportations of hundreds of thousands of workers are aimed not at keeping out immi-

grant workers but at maintaining their second-class status—with lower wages, intolerable conditions, and minimal social benefits and democratic rights.

Workers and small farmers in the United States have every interest in opposing the "guest worker" attack on our fellow working people from Mexico and other countries, while giving no quarter to those who oppose the plan because they want to keep immigrants out, often in the name of defending "American jobs." There is no such thing as "American jobs"—a boss-inspired notion—only jobs, which working people of all nationalities need. The only effective way to address this need is to band together and organize a fight to demand jobs for all.

Labor must demand full and equal rights for all workers in this country, including immigrants working under the "guest worker" contract. These workers should not be approached as rivals but rather welcomed as fellow toilers and organized into unions. They are not merely victims but potential fighters in the battles against our common exploiter, the employer class. Many immigrant workers bring with them substantial trade union experience in the class struggle—as demonstrated by the role of such workers in the recent strike at the Excel meatpacking plant in Colorado, union-organizing drives at several industrial laundries, and the fight by Chinese-born workers against garment factory owners in Brooklyn.

Similarly, the union movement should join forces with working people across the border. Rather than oppose the U.S. bosses' moves to set up *maquiladoras* in Mexico—which only feeds into reactionary demands for "American jobs"—unionists should embrace and link up with the struggles that workers in many of these plants are engaged in, such as the unionization battle at Kukdong International in Puebla, Mexico.

Crisis in Turkey

Continued from page 9

billion was withdrawn from the country.

Before devaluing the lira, the government spent one-sixth of its foreign reserves trying to defend the currency. Ecevit consulted IMF deputy director Stanley Fisher, Washington's man in the imperialist financial institution, about what to do. Fisher, according to the *Financial Times*, told the Turkish prime minister, "Either you agree to float the currency or there is nothing to talk about," adding that it was out of the question to give Turkey more IMF loans.

Just two weeks earlier the *Wall Street Journal* ran an article entitled, "Turkey's Inflation Plan Wins IMF Praise." Reporter Hugh Pope wrote that the IMF's year-old "anti-inflation program" "is one of the IMF's two biggest, along with that in Argentina, and is central to the IMF's efforts to show that its belt-tightening recipes for economic stability work in major developing countries."

Michael Deppler, director of the IMF's European region, said, "Policy implementation has been most encouraging. This is our conviction. The [Turkish] authorities have lived up to the letter...of what had been agreed." Asked how serious the IMF was about Turkey following its prescriptions, Deppler, speaking for the masters of finance capital on Wall Street and in other imperialist centers, said, "Strict adherence was required."

A number of big-business newspapers have reported on the impact of this ongoing crisis on working people and small shopkeepers. Official unemployment stands at 14 percent and inflation at 34 percent. In the past year, "nearly 14,000 family-run shops, small grocers and other small establishments have closed across the country," the *Washington Post* reported February 24. "As recently as last year it was virtually impossible for a new shopkeeper to find space" in Istanbul's famous Grand Bazaar, some renting for \$72,000 a year, the paper reported. "Today, at least 100 storefronts are vacant, and some rents have plunged to as low as \$500 a month—with no takers."

"The situation is terrible," said Zeki Cide, whose family has run a shop of hand-painted ceramics for 120 years in the bazaar. "You become poorer and poorer after every crisis," said Ergun Duran, 54, who runs a small Istanbul newsstand, after learning about the latest economic crisis. "But at some point, you cannot be poorer than you already are—you are on the bottom. This is how most of the people are living now. You work and work for 20 or 30 years, you still can't make ends meet, you still wear the same clothes every year."

Ali Riza Kilic, 43, a small grocer, has been battling to keep his store by taking a second job. He said that 70 percent of his customers buy on credit as they run out of cash. "Five years ago I lived a luxurious life.... Now I can't even take my wife out for a cup of tea; we can't do anything extra," he said.

Excel strikers give demands to company

AS WE GO TO PRESS....

The wildcat strike strike by workers at the Excel meatpacking plant in Fort Morgan, Colorado, ended with the striking unionists drafting a list of 14 demands to the company to be included in the contract negotiations. The workers, who are members of Teamsters Local 961, also elected three representatives who will be part of the local's negotiating team that is meeting with company officials.

The meat packers' demands include dropping the incitement-to-riot and other charges against Enrique Soto and Adan Morales, two leaders of the walkout; a three- or four-year contract instead of the proposed six-year pact; elimination of mandatory overtime; setting the speed on the production line based on the number of workers who are working on that line on a given day; a guarantee that every worker get at least one day off each week; and the increase of short-term disability payments to \$200 per week. The strikers requested union representation on the factory floor throughout the workday to help deal with conflicts arising between workers and supervisors.

The workers also called for wage increases for each job classification, and an immediate raise in the base pay from \$9.40 an hour to \$10 an hour. They want the Excel bosses to ensure that workers get one week of vacation after one year on the job, two weeks after three years, three weeks after eight years, and four weeks after 12 years. The *Fort Morgan Times* reported that Teamsters Local 961 president Douglas Whetstine has asked the district attorney to drop charges against Soto and Morales. Soto is one of the three workers elected to the negotiating committee.

Correction

In *Militant* issue no. 9, a caption accompanying the article "Havana fair shows thirst for books, politics" misidentified one person in the photo of the meeting where a donation of books was made to the Association of Combatants of the Cuban Revolution. The speaker appearing third from left was Brig. Gen. Gustavo Chui Beltrán, a leader of the Association.

Seafarers' struggles show way forward

BY TOM LEONARD

HOUSTON—Over the past 10 years merchant seafarers have won modest but important gains as a result of their stiffening resistance to shipowner attacks on wages, safety, and living conditions at sea. This is despite the fact that during this period capitalist owners have continued their efforts to deepen competition among seafarers by hiring many from poverty-stricken sectors of the world. Wages for these mariners are far below those paid on union-organized ships with home ports in the United States and other imperialist countries.

This competition for jobs has meant higher profits for owners, especially as wages on ships from imperialist countries have begun to shrink toward those paid workers from Third World countries. At the same time, wages for some seafarers from underdeveloped countries have risen. This narrower wage gap was revealed in studies released by the International Labor Organi-

AS I SEE IT

zation (ILO) prior to a January meeting of its Joint Maritime Commission in Geneva, Switzerland. That meeting raised the need for a revised recommended minimum wage and for a new bill of rights for merchant mariners.

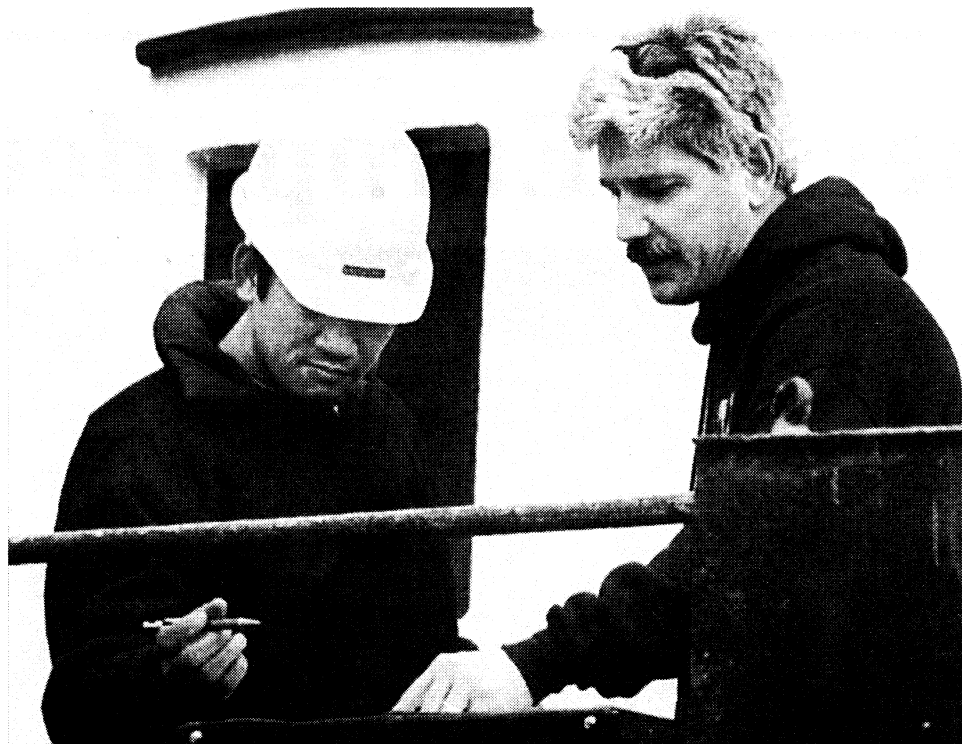
The ILO is part of the United Nations, and its proposals are not binding either on member countries or on shipowners and seafarers unions—although representatives of the body says its decisions are used in bargaining sessions between the latter two groups.

The Geneva meeting was opened by ILO general secretary Juan Somavia, who said, "I strongly encourage the social partners in the shipping industry to intensify their social dialogue in order to ensure decent work for seafarers." By "social partners" Somavia means on one hand the exploiting shipowners, and on the other the International Transport Federation (ITF), which has the affiliation of some 600,000 trade union members around the world with jobs in the transportation industry, including quite a few seafarers.

In recent years the growing resistance by seafarers to attacks by shipowners has pressured the ITF to begin to respond. That's the real motive force behind the ILO's attempt to forge a new social contract between the ITF and shipowners—an attempt that continues to exclude the active participation of rank-and-file seafarers. Their next-to-nothing class-collaboration proposal is better understood by looking at the world maritime industry today.

Small minority covered by contracts

The industry includes seafarers from around the world competing for 1.25 million jobs on 50,000 vessels, including large bulk carriers, container ships, passenger ships, and giant supertankers. Not included in this total are offshore supply boats, ferries, and river craft. Only a small minority



Filipino seafarer and union official from International Transport Federation and Seafarers International Union prepare legal claim for back pay on merchant ship *Evangelos*, in Port of Cleveland in October. Multinational crews are organizing resistance to owners' attacks. Such struggles, not a "social contract," point way forward for seafarers.

of seafarers—mainly from imperialist countries—are on ships covered by union contracts. The majority are from economically underdeveloped countries, have little or no union protection, and earn far less than the ILO's minimum wage guideline of \$435. In addition, they subsist on poorer quality food, and face deteriorating safety conditions and the lengthening of the working day to as much as 16 hours without overtime.

One result is that 2,200 seafarers are estimated to lose their lives annually, according to a joint study by researchers at the universities of Wales and Hong Kong. The study's authors explain that half these deaths are due to ship sinkings and other maritime disasters. Their estimates include a figure of 100 seafarers a year dead from suicide and homicide.

At the 1996 commission meeting, ILO head Michel Hansenne said that the "dangers to which shipowners and governments are exposed are financial or political in nature, but seafarers are exposed to physical risks which threaten their very lives. It has, for example, been emphasized that since the last tripartite meeting of 1994, 180 ships of more than 500 tons have been lost at sea, causing the death of 1,200 seafarers and many passengers. In the first six months of 1996, twice as many human lives were lost at sea [as] in the whole of 1995."

Prior to the 1996 conference, an ILO press release noted that while many "new ships are typically larger than in the past many are highly automated resulting in a reduction of personnel and placing a greater responsibility on the seafarers who remain on board." The release said that in 1950, for example, a 12,000-ton oil tanker had an average crew of 40. Today, a tanker 20 times as large has an average crew half that size.

An ILO report says that in the 1980s, seafarers' wages fell and work conditions on ships sharply worsened. That deterioration leveled off in the 1990s, when resistance by multinational crews began to escalate. Many of the seafarers involved are recruited from an international industrial labor reserve army from the Philippines, Indonesia, and Latin America. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, increasing numbers are from East European workers states like Bulgaria, the Ukraine, and Romania. Then, since the end of British rule in Hong Kong, more workers from mainland China are going to sea. This has helped to raise the already high percentage of Far East seafarers on deep sea ships today.

Internationalization of the workforce

Many seafarers are recruited by labor contractors in their home countries, then flown to work on nonunion ships in other parts of the world. A large percentage of these ships are registered in countries which have weak or nonexistent maritime laws protecting seafarers' rights. This places mariners more at the mercy of profit-hungry absentee shipowners.

During the 1980s and 1990s, attacks on wages and conditions aboard merchant ships escalated, affecting both union and non-union seafarers. The success of this shipowners' assault on the wages of seafarers in imperialist countries is reflected in statistics compiled by the ILO. They point out that between 1992 and 1999 the percentage of wages for able seafarers in imperialist countries declined an average of roughly 50 percent. Hardest hit were workers in Australia, with a 65 percent decline. Wages fell in Germany and Japan by 53 percent, in Belgium by 51 percent, and in Denmark and

the Netherlands by more than 40 percent.

The ILO also pointed out that wages for seafarers from Bangladesh, Myanmar, China, India, and Poland increased during the same period by between 25 to 91 percent.

In the mid-1990s, Chinese workers were among the lowest paid. The difference in wages paid to an all-European ship's crew of 24, and a comparable Chinese crew, for example, totaled \$58,200 each month, or \$694,400 a year. This makes quite clear how shipowners profit from the competition they breed.

That same decade, however, a pattern of resistance to shipowner attacks began to grow, including work stoppages and other forms of protest aboard ships. The same pattern continues today. Such struggles often take place in ports in countries where seafarers have over the years won some legal rights. One such ship was the 740-foot *Delta Pride*, which left a port in Mexico and anchored off the port of Brownsville, Texas. The company left 22 Pakistani seafarers marooned with only rain as a source of drinking water. Their food was rotting cabbage, a couple of tomatoes, and whatever fish they could catch.

Workers use ships as base of struggle

The ITF reported that during 1998 the crews of more than 35 ships had been abandoned in seaports around the world by profiteering owners eager to avoid paying wages, taxes, and other shipping costs. An increasingly common tactic by seafarers has been to refuse to leave these ships until they are paid, in effect using them as a base of operations to demonstrate and win support for their rights.

Another example of miserable working conditions aboard luxury cruise ships was given reporters in 1998 by a Filipino crew member on the luxury cruise ship *Westerdam*. "We work very long, [up] to 14 hours a day," he said. "They only pay for 10.5 hours. Even when you are sleeping they knock on your door to help clean up."

Similar grievances provoked action by the 27 officers and crew of the *Epta*, a cargo vessel, when it arrived in Galveston, Texas in 1998. Demanding the payment of \$173,000 in back wages, they refused to finish unloading, sealed the ship's hatches, and hung banners over the side of the ship to publicize their struggle.

Many of these actions have been successful in helping pull the ITF into the struggles of unorganized mariners. This has led to some legal successes in defense of multinational crews, including sometimes winning back pay and family allotments.

The ability of these multinational crews to begin to organize a collective fightback is helping stamp a union presence on worldwide shipping. These workers are an inspiration for all working people under attack, and deserve all-out solidarity when they go into struggle. And their growing ability to fight back is a far better formula for beating off continuing shipowner attacks than the hoopla for a social contract being promoted by the ILO.

LETTERS

New battle with WalMart

I am a member of Teamsters Local 541 in Kansas City, Missouri, and drive a ready-mix concrete truck around the Metro area. Every day is a battle for me. From my truck I spread the good news of the union to nonunion drivers. On February 17 we had a union rally that was attended by local union leaders. They told us that we are about to be in the fight of our lives. Harrison, Missouri, a small town about 30 miles south of here, is the battleground. Our enemy is the WalMart corporation. They are building, under strict security, a super warehouse with imported non-union workers. This warehouse is the biggest of its kind anywhere in the world.

We need all the help we can get. If we cannot get this thing organized it will destroy the Teamsters in five years. Could you do some coverage of the Teamsters and the United Food and Commercial Workers' fight against this capitalist enemy

that is out to smash the union?

Edward Stephens
Kansas City, Missouri

Victory against railroad

One point regarding the lawsuit reported by Brian Williams in the February 26 issue on the fight to end Burlington Northern Railroad's use of genetic testing to deny claims for carpal tunnel was that it was the Brotherhood of Maintenance Way Employees (BMWE), the track workers union, who actually forced the issue.

Gary Avary, a track maintenance man with Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) in Alma, Nebraska, for 27 years, had surgery for carpal tunnel syndrome last September. "It used to be there were enough workers that we could trade off and get a rest from the vibration," he explained in an article posted on the BMWE web site. With fewer workers, we just keep working, and the equipment keeps vibrating."

In the months after the surgery,

Avary received several certified letters from the company for mandatory "further testing." Avary's wife Janice, a registered nurse, became suspicious and called the BMWE's attorney. When Gary refused to provide blood for the testing, he was charged by the company with insubordination and rules violations. As a result of Janice's inquiries the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission filed their lawsuit. At the same time the BMWE filed a similar lawsuit against BNSF and Athena Diagnostics, a commercial genetic-testing laboratory.

Janice Avary later said, "I had absolutely no idea what my phone calls were going to lead to. We are just normal people who want to do a good job in our work and enjoy our family. We had no idea we were going to be writing history for so many people." Gary Avary explained, "I have always watched out for the other men working around me, but I never thought we would be put in this position."

The Federal Railroad Administration is now investigating why the BNSF, which employs 40,000 people, has reported zero cases of carpal tunnel syndrome over the past five years. The company later disclosed that 125 workers filed carpal tunnel claims last year.

Bill Kalman
Albany, California

Enjoyed article on Mexico

I enjoyed the article "Mexican president probes shift in energy and land ownership" in the February 26 *Militant* and am looking forward to getting it around at the Swift plant where I work in Marshalltown, Iowa—a plant with a large number of Mexican workers. I thought other readers might be interested in some of the discussions I've had with these workers about newly elected Mexican president Vicente Fox.

Many told me they have great hope that Fox represents the kind of "strong hand" that will be needed to take on problems like govern-

ment corruption and complicity in drug trafficking. This has led to some good discussions on how real social changes can only take place as the result of millions of hands in struggle—as was the case with the Cuban revolution—and not through the actions of individual strong men like Fox or Hugo Chavez in Venezuela.

One co-worker told me that Fox's promise to create more jobs by further opening the country to U.S. investment meant that "Mexican workers will have to start building stronger unions."

Pete Seidman
Des Moines, Iowa

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.

Beef farmers in Europe demand aid

BY NAT LONDON

PARIS—Belgian riot police, some on horseback and others wielding water cannons, were unable to hold back thousands of angry farmers converging on the European Council Building in Brussels February 26. Farmers blocked surrounding streets with some 1,000 farm tractors, putting the building under a virtual state of siege.

The protest occurred as the 15 European agricultural ministers met in emergency session to deal with the deepening crisis around "mad cow" disease, or bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE). The farmers wore T-shirts reading, in the Flemish language, "We are being led to slaughter."

The French borders with Belgium and Spain were closed by coordinated actions of farmers' organizations from the three countries. Five hundred French farmers closed the Pont d'Europe in Strasbourg, the bridge that is the principal link between France and Germany.

According to French agricultural minister Jean Glavany, some 35-40,000 cattle producers in France alone risk losing their farms if immediate aid is not provided. Sales of beef have plummeted in Europe in the wake of the spread of BSE, dropping 50 percent in Germany and more than 25 percent in France. Prices have dropped proportionally in the two countries, leaving cattle producers, most of whom are small family farmers, in desperate conditions.

Luc Guyau, president of the National Federation of Agricultural Producers Unions (FNSEA), the main French farmers organization, warned, "If we do not receive immediate aid, we will no longer be able to control our troops."

Claiming that the annual budget has already been used up by the measures adopted in early December when the BSE crisis broke out, the European agricultural ministers were unable to make any decisions at the meeting on aiding the farmers. Totally paralyzed by an acrimonious debate between officials from France and Germany, the meeting ended with one of the most serious failures of the European Common Agricultural Policy since its inception 40 years ago.

As the meeting ended, the French agricultural minister announced that Paris would adopt its own national policy of aid to cattle farmers. The Common Agricultural Policy had previously forbidden such direct national aid. Glavany invoked Article 87 of the European Treaty, never before used in an agricultural question, which allows temporary national direct aid "in cases of natural calamities and other extraordinary events."

One anonymous European official complained that farmers in Belgium and Luxembourg were demanding that their governments "follow the French example" and provide direct aid to farmers as well. This would lead to a "creeping re-nationalization" of European agricultural policies, he warned.

At the heart of the failure of the European Union to meet the challenge posed by the outbreak of BSE is the growing tension in the French-German alliance, which has been at the center of the European Union since its inception. France has dominated European agricultural policy since the Treaty of Rome was adopted in 1957. Germany has been the major contributor to the agricultural fund that France has used to modernize its agriculture.

Today France is the second largest agri-



Farmers block streets of Brussels outside EU agricultural ministers meeting

cultural exporter in the world, and its 30 million hectares (one hectare = 2.47 acres) of cultivated land equal that of Germany and Britain combined. But the Common Agricultural Policy's budget is still 40 billion euros (one euro = US 92 cents), half the

amount of the budget of the entire European Union. Germany, saddled with a growing financial burden since reunification 10 years ago, limits its contribution to the Common Agricultural Policy budget. The huge expenses arising from the BSE crisis have

brought to a head what the French daily *Le Figaro* calls "the slow erosion of France's agricultural 'diktat.'"

In December, using the BSE crisis as an excuse, German chancellor Gerhard Schröder named Renate Künast, a member of the German Green party, as the new agricultural minister. Künast immediately proposed doing away with the entire system of European aid, which hundreds of thousands of European farmers depend on. "I'm not afraid of a farmers' revolt," she said. "It's a particularly French problem."

More problems are looming on the horizon with the outbreak of a major epidemic of foot-and-mouth disease in Britain. Hundreds of thousands of sheep, cattle, and pigs are being destroyed in a desperate effort to contain the highly infectious disease. The virus that causes foot-and-mouth disease can be carried as much as 37 miles by wind, enough to cross the English Channel to France. If the epidemic starts on the continent it will further fuel conflicts between France and Germany on agricultural and other questions.

On February 28 Glavany officially announced a 1.4 billion franc (one franc = US 14 cents) aid package for French cattle farmers, limited to 30,000 francs maximum for each farmer and financed exclusively by the French government.

Polarization marks state elections in Australia

BY RON POULSEN
AND DOUG COOPER

SYDNEY, Australia—Deepening political polarization is fracturing the support base of the conservative parties in Australia, leading to victories for the Labor Party in two state elections last month and another show of strength by the ultrarightist One Nation party. Both outcomes surprised the wealthy ruling class here.

Many working people welcomed the dumping of the conservative government of Liberal premier Richard Court in the state of Western Australia February 10 in favor of the Australian Labor Party (ALP). This mood gathered steam February 17 as vote totals in Queensland gave the incumbent ALP government of Premier Peter Beattie the largest parliamentary majority in the party's history. Commentators in the big-business media had said the elections were too close to call.

Mark Davidson, a wharfie [dockworker] at Patrick Stevedores here, commented, "It seems more and more people are seeing that the Liberal Party is a big-business party."

Three major parties dominate in Australian state and federal politics: the ALP, the Liberal Party, and the National Party. The ALP, a social democratic party linked to the unions, is the country's oldest, and receives the largest plurality of votes nationally.

The Liberal Party is the dominant conservative big-business party and has been in a half-century partnership called the Coalition with the smaller conservative party, the National Party. The Nationals' support comes mainly from rural and regional areas outside the main cities. The Coalition parties have formed the federal government since the 1996 election, with Liberal Party leader John Howard as prime minister. The deputy prime minister is National Party leader John Anderson.

A number of smaller capitalist parties, single-issue groupings, and other parties contest elections. These include the Greens and the Australian Democrats. The Democrats currently hold the balance of power in the federal Senate, thus having deciding votes on legislation. Pauline Hanson's ultrarightist One Nation party burst onto the scene following the 1996 election when she won a seat in the federal House of Representatives.

Volatility in capitalist politics is sharpening, arising from a continuing process of social polarization. Longtime National Party voters mainly defected to One Nation, whose candidates won seats in both West-

ern Australia and Queensland, while many Liberals voted Labor for the first time ever.

Popular anger and discontent have risen around the country in the wake of the imposition of a 10 percent federal goods and services tax that took effect in July 2000 with an onerous quarterly reporting requirement for small businesses, as well as rising petrol and diesel prices, continued moves to privatize telephone services, cuts to government and other services, and the Howard government's refusal to acknowledge Aboriginal rights. In some cases, the anger has spilled over into protests. Truckers briefly blockaded fuel depots in Victoria and Queensland last year to protest fuel price hikes. Hundreds of thousands turned out for "walks" for "reconciliation" with Aborigines aimed implicitly at the Howard government.

For working people, there have been attacks on union rights and conditions, increasing speedup, and the growth of casual and part-time jobs at the expense of "permanent" jobs with a modicum of security. Those who have jobs are working harder and longer hours. The stalling world economy has added to falling prices for agricultural and mining commodities. And the unemployment rate has been creeping up again since October 2000. Recent announcements of sharp losses in profits, for example, by Qantas airlines, will mean further job losses. Strikes and actions by coal miners, iron ore miners, steelworkers, textile workers, dairy farmers, and others have taken place.

Conservatives routed

In the February elections, the number of Liberal and National party MPs was sharply reduced in both Queensland and Western Australia. Most big-business commentators described the outcomes as a "rout" with devastating implications for the ability of the Howard government to win a third three-year term when it must go to the polls late this year.

Most elections here over the past two decades have been decided not by a candidate receiving a majority but through the system of preferential voting, where voters number candidates in order of preference. Ballots cast without all candidates marked are invalid.

When the votes are counted, candidates with the fewest first-preference votes are eliminated. Those votes are then distributed to the remaining candidates, based on the preferences indicated by the voter, until a winner is established. This trend continued

this year, with the ALP winning a majority of seats in each state only after the rounds of preference votes were tabulated. The Labor victories come in the wake of crushing ALP wins over the Coalition in Victoria and New South Wales (NSW) in 1999. Tasmania also has a Labor government.

One Nation

In the 1998 Queensland election, 11 One Nation state MPs were elected and in the 1998 federal election they won one Senate seat. The ruling class then went after the rightist outfit, using electoral laws to impose massive fines and deregistration, accompanied by a media barrage. These pressures, the heterogeneous nature of the ultraright current, Hanson's "autocratic leadership," and internal wrangling led in 1999 to all the Queensland state MPs resigning from the party and either becoming independents or forming the rightist City Country Alliance. No MPs from this group were reelected February 17.

Hanson lost her federal seat in 1998 after its electoral boundaries were redrawn and no other party would give her their preference votes. Despite all this, and to the surprise of many, Hansonism has been resilient. One Nation vote percentages remained similar in these elections to what they were in 1998.

Journalist Anne Summers, writing in the February 15 *Sydney Morning Herald*, noted, "Despite losing her seat, losing her party, being deserted by her elected members in Queensland and NSW, and being forced to scramble for funds to avoid bankruptcy, she is still there as a political force because there is still a constituency for her primary call to arms."

Demagogically calling for One Nation to be given a "fair go" against the "big boys" of the major parties, Hanson campaigned on now-familiar scapegoating and racist themes. She demanded a stop to all immigration, forcing refugees to return home, and for "young Australians" to be given job training over immigrants. Hanson also called for ending all native title deeds and funding to Aborigines. She claimed that calls for a government apology over the "stolen generations," when for decades Aboriginal children were forcibly and systematically removed from their families by authorities, was only for monetary compensation.

The radical, rightist proposals also included cheap credit for small business and

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