

THE MILITANT

INSIDE

**Cuban workers explain
sugar industry reorganization**

—PAGE 6

A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

VOL. 68/NO. 6 FEBRUARY 16, 2004

Minnesota union officer visits striking Utah miners

BY ANNE CARROLL

HUNTINGTON, Utah—Two important solidarity events for the Utah miners on strike here against CW Mining will take place the first weekend of February. One is a February 6 benefit for the miners in St. Paul, Minnesota, at the United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) Local 789 union hall. The next day, a labor rally and other activities will take place here. (See ad on page 5.)

The St. Paul meeting will feature a report back from Ben Miller, organizer and field agent for the Lakes and Plains Regional Council of the Carpenters and Joiners union. Miller visited Utah at the end of January to get a firsthand feel for the four-and-a-half-month union-organizing struggle of the

Continued on Page 5

Top UK judge whitewashes Blair gov't on suicide of arms 'inspector'

BY TONY HUNT

LONDON—In a victory for the war party here, the report by Lord James Hutton, a top British judge, on the suicide of David Kelly, a former government arms "inspector" in Iraq, has exonerated the government. Kelly had been a source for allegations that Prime Minister Anthony Blair lied and made exaggerated claims in a September 2002 dossier analyzing intelligence reports on "weapons of mass destruction" in Iraq. Blair said immediately he had been vindicated, stating the

Continued on Page 3

HQ Building Appeal extended to February 29, goal is \$225,000

BY NORTON SANDLER

SEATTLE—The January 2004 Headquarters Building Appeal has been extended through the last weekend of February to raise the funds necessary to complete a new international headquarters that will meet the needs of the communist movement for years to come.

Building on the tremendous response to date, the effort will culminate in a February 28–29 Grand Opening weekend for the new Socialist Workers Party national headquarters, the newsroom of the *Militant* and its sister Spanish-language monthly *Perspectiva Mundial*, and the New York Pathfinder Bookstore. (See adjacent ad.)

As of February 2, an international response to the appeal had brought the total to \$205,000 pledged, with \$180,000 collected. Because of this response, construction work is on schedule. Materials are being bought in a timely way to keep crews working to meet their deadlines. On February 1, a supporter of the communist movement who

Continued on Page 5

Two-day strike shuts down Dominican Republic

Unionists demand jobs, moratorium on foreign debt payments
Government deploys army, police; troops kill seven people

BY MICHAEL ITALIE
AND LUIS MADRID

A two-day strike against the government of President Hipólito Mejía effectively shut down most economic activity in the Dominican Republic January 28–29. It took place two months after a similar one-day walkout. The Coordinating Committee of Popular and Labor Organizations called the work stoppage, according to reports in the New York daily *Hoy* and the Dominican press, as well as telephone interviews by *Militant* reporters with union leaders in the Dominican Republic. Strikers demanded jobs and protested rising unemployment and skyrocketing inflation. Protest organizers also condemned the country's plunder by international finance capital through debt slavery, which, they said, is resulting in deteriorating living standards, including frequent, hours-long electricity blackouts. One of the main demands of strike leaders was for a moratorium on foreign debt payments.

Mejía answered the workers with a massive display of force, sending thousands of soldiers and police into the streets. Tanks were stationed at major intersections. Government forces killed at least seven people during the 48-hour period, wounded

Continued on Page 10



AP/Orlando Barrôa

Dominican army troops, above, patrol the streets of Santo Domingo January 28. Most of the country's economic activity was paralyzed during two-day strike, called to protest rising unemployment and inflation. Demonstrators in working-class district, left, set up barricades and burned tires the same day.



New York demonstrators demand: Prosecute cop who killed Black youth!

BY DON MACKLE

BROOKLYN, New York—Nearly 100 protesters marched here January 31 chanting, "No justice, no peace!" They demanded the prosecution of the cop who a week earlier had shot and killed Timothy Stansbury, Jr., an African-American youth.

Stansbury, 19, was killed on the roof of the Louis Armstrong Houses by New York Police Department (NYPD) officer Richard Neri.

"I want justice for my grandson," Irene Clayburne, Stansbury's grandmother, told demonstrators at the rally in front of the Housing Police Department office, where Neri was stationed. Stansbury lived with

Continued on Page 10

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Bill Estrada, on the organizing movement in Western coal.

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Also Inside:

Havana conference opposes imperialist-imposed trade pact 2

Former U.S. weapons 'inspector' backs Bush on Iraq war rationale 3

Wisconsin meat packers go back to work after 11-month strike 4

15,000 rally in Los Angeles to back striking grocery workers 4

Harper's runs excerpts from Cuban textbooks: lessons from 1961 literacy campaign or why Washington fears invading Cuba 11

Havana conference opposes FTAA pact

BY RÓGER CALERO
AND MARTÍN KOPPEL

HAVANA—Some 1,200 people from throughout the Americas gathered here January 26-29 for the Third Hemispheric Meeting to Fight against the FTAA. The Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) is the name used to designate a trade pact that Washington is seeking to impose from the Bering Strait to Tierra del Fuego in order to eliminate the protective trade and investment policies of the weaker capitalist countries of South America, in particular—opening them up to even greater exploitation by the imperial colossus of the North while maintaining tariffs that subsidize U.S. business. The U.S. ruling class will use the trade pact as one more tool in its drive to reinforce its imperialist domination of these semicolonial nations and strengthen Washington's edge over its imperialist rivals in Europe and Japan.

Those attending the anti-FTAA conference came from a range of social protest and lobbying groups as well as a few peasant, trade union, and student organizations. The views expressed in conference sessions were representative of those of the dominant currents in the labor and radical movements in the Americas, from social democratic organizations to Communist Parties to liberal and bourgeois nationalist groups. In addition, there was a delegation from revolutionary Cuba, which hosted the conference.

The largest delegations came from Mexico, the United States, Canada, Venezuela, and Brazil.

The four-day conference heard talks and panel discussions on the current stage of negotiations around the FTAA and issued a call for demonstrations and forums to oppose it.

In opposing the FTAA, most speakers at the conference argued that the problem is a “neoliberal economic model” associated with the Republican administration in the United States and particular capitalist governments in Latin America.

The solution put forward by virtually all the speakers at the conference was the election of new governments, critical of “neoliberalism.” None explained that no capitalist government will be capable of stopping the imperialist drive to export capital, conquer markets and territories, and wage wars of plunder. It is not a policy “option” for the U.S. government but an inherent need of all imperialist powers. One way or another, the U.S. rulers will keep pressing the weaker capitalist classes of the continent and keep

advancing toward the establishment of what they call a “free trade” area of the Americas.

The only alternative to this exploitation and oppression is the road taken by workers and farmers in Cuba, who 45 years ago broke the hold of imperialist domination in their country by making a socialist revolution.

Several representatives of Latin American radical groups discounted as “not on the agenda” such a strategy of organizing a movement of working people capable of taking power out of the hands of the capitalist class and embarking on a socialist course. They advocated a course of supporting a wing of the capitalist class in their own country that is supposedly “not dependent on imperialism,” as one delegate put it.

Speakers from the Alliance for Responsible Trade, Witness for Peace, and other U.S.-based groups argued for policies to “save our jobs,” echoing “save American industry” arguments used by U.S. employers to justify tariffs and subsidies that have been ruinous for Latin American and Caribbean nations.

‘Stop reelection of Bush’ course

Many speakers, both from the United States and other countries, advocated campaigning against the reelection of U.S. president George Bush as an urgent priority. One panelist, Cindy Domingo, an aide for a local legislator in Seattle, stated, “We must actively support a Democratic candidate that is responsive to the demands of the grassroots movement.” She insisted that “the traditional debate among the left about the lesser evil pales” beside the need to oppose the reelection of Bush. She and a number of other speakers—from the United States, Brazil, Argentina, and other countries—characterized Bush as a new Adolf Hitler.

The meeting took place at a time of growing economic crisis and sharpening conflict between the imperialist and domestic capitalist ruling classes, on the one hand, and working people throughout the continent, on the other. Many of these struggles were reflected in the discussions both on the floor of the conference and in the halls.

During the gathering, the Dominican Republic was shaken by a two-day general strike against austerity measures aimed at guaranteeing payments to imperialist bankers on the country's foreign debt. (See article on front page.) There have also been working-class mobilizations in Mexico against the Fox government's attempts to take steps toward privatizing the state-owned electrical



Militant/Martín Koppel

Venezuela delegates participate in Havana conference, which discussed opposition to imperialist-imposed “free trade” pact in the Americas.

industry, continuing land takeovers by rural toilers in Brazil, struggles by workers in Argentina against the ravages of unemployment, and the popular revolt in Bolivia that brought down the government of Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada in October.

Concerned by this increased resistance and social instability, especially the rising struggles of workers and peasants in Venezuela, Washington has been stepping up its military intervention in the region. In Venezuela, working people have gained confidence through their struggles to implement a land reform law and other efforts to improve their living standards in face of the drive by the Venezuelan ruling class and U.S. imperialism to overthrow the nationalist government of Hugo Chávez.

U.S. intervention under the banner of the “war on terrorism” is expanding in many parts of the continent, from support to the Colombian regime's repression against unionists and peasant leaders through the Plan Colombia counterinsurgency program, to the establishment of U.S. military bases in other countries.

Focus on elections in Brazil, Argentina

In this context, new governments have been elected over the past 15 months in several Latin American countries on the basis of promising some relief to working people. These include the governments of Workers Party leader Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva of Brazil and Peronist Néstor Kirchner in Argentina. To protect the interests of their national bourgeoisies and deflect efforts by working people to act in their own interests, the governments of Argentina and Brazil have taken their distance from some of Washington's policies. This was registered at several recent regional trade summits, most recently in Monterrey, Mexico, where these two governments, together with the Venezuelan government, led the opposition to elements of U.S. trade and other policies.

The elections in Brazil and Argentina were hailed by many delegates at the conference as a sign that “the left is making progress in Latin America,” as some put it. “We've left behind the hard times of the past decade,” said Víctor de Gennaro, general secretary of the Argentine Workers

Federation (CTA), which supports the ruling Peronist party.

Others pointed to the election campaign of Schafik Handal, presidential candidate of the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front in El Salvador, who is running on a platform of capitalist reforms, as an example of the road forward.

The conference heard feature presentations by Evo Morales, a leader of the Indian coca farmers in Bolivia and a parliamentary deputy of the Movement Toward Socialism (MAS); Joao Pedro Stédile of the Movement of Landless Rural Workers (MST) of Brazil; and Argentine professor Atilio Borón, among others. Ricardo Alarcón, president of Cuba's National Assembly, spoke about the campaign for the release of five framed-up Cuban revolutionaries locked up in U.S. prisons.

The closing session was addressed by Cuban president Fidel Castro. “Underdeveloped countries are not developing,” he said. “They are moving further away from development.” He cited a growing foreign debt by semicolonial countries that now surpasses \$2.5 trillion, including \$750 billion in Latin America.

Cuba, he said, was able to free itself from these conditions because of its revolution and “four and a half decades of struggle against this powerful empire.”

Castro answered the recent statements made by U.S. officials accusing the governments of Cuba and Venezuela of collaborating to destabilize governments in the region. He defended Cuba's normal relations with the government of Hugo Chávez and explained that Cuba's sending of thousands of doctors, teachers, and other volunteers to Venezuela is part of the internationalist course that has guided the Cuban Revolution for the last 45 years.

The conference adopted a final declaration and “action plan.” The plan called for a series of anti-FTAA protests and forums leading up to the next round of FTAA negotiations later this year, as well as protests against Bush's reelection timed to coincide with the Republican Party convention in New York in August. It also supported a call for March 20 rallies in countries around the world against the war and occupation of Iraq.

Help fund ‘Militant’ reporting trip to Cuba

Róger Calero and Martín Koppel, editors of *Perspectiva Mundial*, Alex Alvarado, a *Militant* correspondent from Miami, and Mary-Alice Waters, editor of the Marxist magazine *New Internationalist* are among the *Militant*/PM reporters currently in Cuba on a month-long assignment. Some of the fruits of such trips are in this issue—the article above on the Havana conference opposing the imperialist-imposed FTAA treaty and the centerspread feature on the reorganization of Cuba's sugar industry, part two of a series. Upcoming articles will include coverage of the 13th Havana international book fair.

The costs of this reporting trip amount to \$16,000. Please send your contribution to the *Militant* at the address below and earmark it “Travel Fund.”



Militant/Martín Koppel

Militant reporter Mary-Alice Waters interviews Graziella Pogolotti, member of the national secretariat of National Union of Artists and Writers of Cuba, during 1998 reporting trip.

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Weapons ‘inspector’ backs Bush on Iraq

BY SAM MANUEL

WASHINGTON, D.C.—While stating that Baghdad did not have in operation weapons programs “on the scale we anticipated” at the time of the Anglo-American invasion of Iraq, former U.S. weapons inspector David Kay defended the Bush administration from charges that it had falsified intelligence to justify launching the assault.

“Clearly the intelligence that we went to war on was inaccurate, wrong,” Kay told NBC TV January 28. “I think if anyone was abused by the intelligence, it was the president of the United States rather than the other way around.” “I came not from within the administration,” Kay said, adding that he had been subjected to “absolutely no pressure” before, during, or after his inspections work.

Kay spoke as the former head of the Iraq

Survey Group (ISG). Formed by the occupying powers in mid-2003, the ISG organized some 1,400 U.S., British, and Australian personnel in the hunt for Iraqi “weapons of mass destruction.”

“If the weapons program existed on the scale we anticipated,” Kay told the *Washington Post*, “we would have found something that leads to that conclusion. Instead, we found other evidence that points to something else.” That is, documents and testimony from Iraqis that Saddam Hussein’s regime had disarmed “at least partially before 1998,” in the words of the *Post*.

“We were almost all wrong, and I certainly include myself here,” Kay told the Senate committee. Furthermore, he said, this was a reasonable conclusion based on the “limited data.” He noted that the “French president, Chirac... referred to Iraq’s possession of WMD [weapons of mass destruction],”

and Berlin’s “intelligence service believed that there were WMD.”

In his 2003 State of the Union speech, Bush said his administration had evidence Hussein had sought uranium from a West African country. This assertion, based on CIA and British intelligence agencies, was prominent in the administration’s justification for the war.

Kay encouraged the committee to help “ensure that we are equipped with the best possible intelligence as we face these issues in the future.... I don’t think the problem of global proliferation of weapons technology of mass destruction is going to go away, and that’s why I think it is an urgent issue.”

At the same time, Kay emphasized, “In my judgment, Iraq was in clear violation of the terms of resolution 1441”—the U.S. and British-sponsored UN Security Council resolution of 2002 that placed an ultimatum

on Baghdad to list its weapons programs. The resolution rubber-stamped the U.S. government preparations to invade.

There were “multiple reasons” for the spies’ misinformation, said Kay. “Proliferation is a hard thing to track, particularly in countries that deny easy and free access and don’t have free and open societies.”

On January 23, before his round of interviews and testimony, Kay had resigned as the head of the ISG. Paying tribute to his successor, Charles Duelfer—a former deputy head of the United Nations Special Commission weapons inspection team—Kay told the Senate committee that when the ISG has finished its surveys, “there’s still going to be an unresolvable ambiguity about what happened.”

He placed much of the blame for this “ambiguity” on the “Ali Baba looting” that followed the invasion, “designed by [Saddam Hussein’s] security services to cover the tracks of the Iraqi WMD program.

“I’ve seen looting around the world and thought I knew the best looters in the world,” Kay said arrogantly. “The Iraqis excel at that.”

“We’re also in a period in which we’ve had intelligence surprises in the proliferation area that go the other way,” Kay said. Recent revelations had shown that spies had underestimated the extent of the Iranian and Libyan programs to develop nuclear weapons, he stated—implying that this was a more dangerous error than the exaggeration of the danger presented by Iraq. “Privately,” noted *USA Today* reporter John Diamond, “two high-ranking administration officials said they were heartened that Kay is not blaming Bush for the intelligence failure.”

National security advisor Condoleezza Rice echoed Kay’s points in appearances on television talk shows January 30. She told NBC’s “Today Show” that spy agencies in many countries had stated that Baghdad had weapons of mass destruction. “When you have a case of a very dangerous man, in a very dangerous part of the world, who refuses to account for large stockpiles of weapons of mass destruction, and who has used them before, I don’t know how you come to any other conclusion but that he has weapons of mass destruction,” she said. Hussein “was a dangerous man,” Rice added. “The world is better off without him.”

Speaking on CBS’s “Early Show,” Rice said: “What we have is evidence that there are differences between what we knew going in and what we found on the ground. But that’s not surprising in a country that was as closed and secretive as Iraq.”

U.S. president George Bush told reporters that he stood by statements in the lead-up to war, using Kay’s comments to back up his assertion. Hussein, Bush said, was “a grave and gathering danger—that’s what I said. And I believed it then, and I know it was true now. And as Mr. Kay said, that Iraq was a dangerous place.”

After Bush initially rejected Kay’s call for an independent inquiry into the performance of the spy agencies, U.S. officials announced February 2 that the president plans to set up a bipartisan investigation. The White House will set the commission’s terms and appoint its members.

According to the BBC, “Bush administration officials...said the inquiry would address the way security services received information about secretive regimes seen as a threat to the U.S. such as north Korea and Libya, as well as groups like al Qaeda.”

In his January 20 State of the Union address, Bush focused his rationalizations for the Iraq war on invocations of “freedom” and “democracy” that the forces occupying Iraq are supposedly heralding in the Middle East. “The people of Iraq are free,” he said. “As democracy takes hold in Iraq, the enemies of freedom will do all in their power to spread violence and fear.... The killers will fail, and the Iraqi people will live in freedom.”

While backing Washington’s “war on terrorism,” liberal politicians used Kay’s statements to buttress their “anti-Bush” campaigns. Front-runner for the Democratic Party presidential nomination, John Kerry, said: “we were told by the administration the Iraqis have a 45-minute capacity to deploy weapons of mass destruction. They didn’t.”

Kerry’s chief rival, Howard Dean, charged that Vice President Richard Cheney had pressured CIA analysts to provide intelligence reports that would support the administration’s case for war against Iraq.

U.S. gov’t frees minors held at Guantánamo

BY PAUL PEDERSON

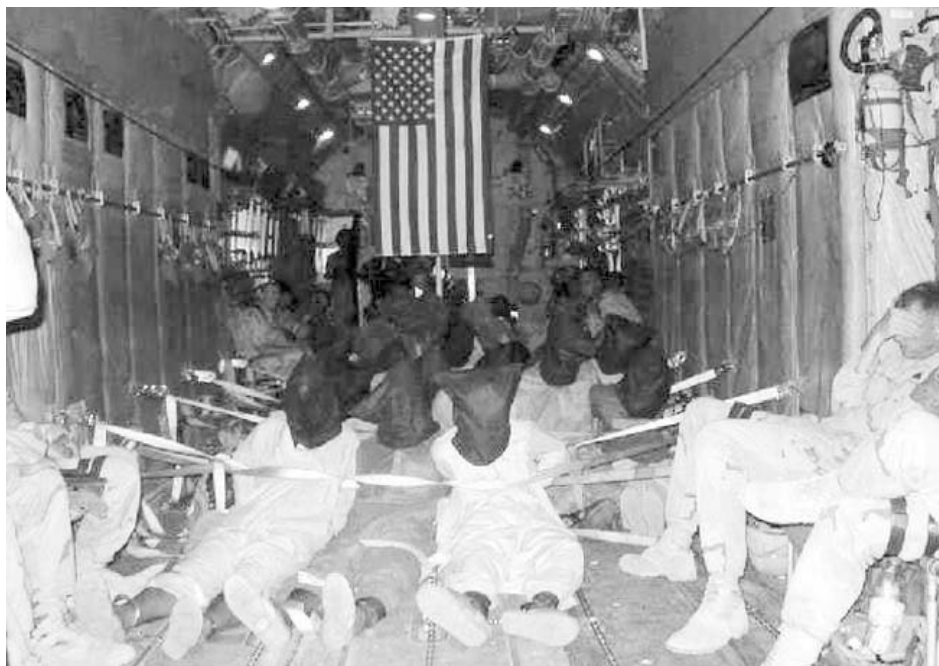
Washington has released three minors who were held incommunicado as “Juvenile Enemy Combatants” in the U.S. concentration camp built three years ago on illegally occupied land in Guantánamo, Cuba. The boys, aged 13 to 15, were rounded up and sent to the camp in the months following the U.S. war and occupation of Afghanistan along with more than 650 people from at least 42 countries.

The Defense Department statement said the release was motivated by the fact that the three “have no further intelligence value” and “no longer pose a threat to our nation.” Washington has come under fire for its indefinite imprisonment of the three minors, who, like their fellow inmates, have been denied access to lawyers, and subjected to regular interrogation and harsh prison conditions—often bordering on torture.

The Pentagon defended its practice of holding minors in its prison camp stating that “age is not a determining factor in detention.”

The U.S. military did not specify the nationalities of the three youths. A Pentagon statement said only that, “they have been released to their home country.” Other press reports indicated the boys have been flown to Afghanistan. Feigning concern for the well-being of their ex-prisoners, the Pentagon gave as justification for its refusal to release the names of the three youths that “Al Qaeda or Taliban sympathizers may threaten the safety of these juveniles.”

One of the teenagers thought to be held at the camp is Omar Kadr, a Toronto native who Washington had blamed for the killing of a U.S. Special Forces soldier in Afghanistan. It was not reported whether the 16-year-old Canadian, who was 15 at the time of his capture, was among those released.



Prisoners flown to Guantánamo prison camp, Nov. 8, 2002, in the hold of U.S. C-130 military transport plane. U.S. authorities have imprisoned indefinitely some 660 men at the U.S. Naval base at Guantánamo, Cuba, without charges or any legal rights.

Washington’s provocative use of Cuban soil as a concentration camp was roundly condemned in a December 23 statement from Cuba’s National Assembly.

“In the territory illegally occupied by the Guantánamo Naval Base,” the statement reads, “hundreds of foreign prisoners are subjected to indescribable abuses, in complete isolation, without the possibility of communicating with their families or arranging an adequate defense. Some of the very few who have been released have told of the horrors of this concentration camp.”

The statement condemned Washington for the hundreds rounded up and detained following September 11, “under the pretext

of a supposed fight against terrorism.”

The indefinite detentions and the military tribunal—which Washington is planning to put in place in order to try, convict, and possibly execute some of the prisoners—have also been contested in U.S. courts. Last November, the Supreme Court ruled that it would consider appeals on behalf of Guantánamo inmates.

A month later the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that Guantánamo detainee Falen Gherebi, a Libyan citizen, should have the right to see a lawyer and have access to U.S. civilian courts. On January 28, Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O’Connor, who has jurisdiction over appeals from the San Francisco-based court, prevented this ruling from being carried out after a request by the Bush administration.

White House officials asked the high court judge to block implementation of the ruling on the grounds that any outside communication with a prisoner would “interfere with the military’s efforts to obtain intelligence from Gherebi and other Guantánamo detainees related to the ongoing war against terrorism.”

This isn’t the first time the high court has come to the defense of antidemocratic moves by Washington carried out in the name of “fighting terrorism.” On January 12, the Supreme Court let stand a lower court ruling that the U.S. government was correct in withholding the names of the hundreds of Muslim and other men detained in the weeks and months after the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon.

Disclosing the names, the ruling asserted, “would give terrorist organizations a composite picture of the government investigation.” It further stated that, “the judiciary owes some measure of deference to the executive in cases implicating national security.”

The high court is expected to rule on the legal rights of those held at Guantánamo later this year. It will also review the case of Yasser Esam Hamdi, a U.S. citizen also labeled an “enemy combatant,” who is currently held incommunicado in a Navy brig in South Carolina.

Judge whitewashes Blair gov’t

Continued from front page

allegations against him “went to the heart of my integrity as prime minister.” The Hutton report, Blair added, was a “thorough, detailed and clear document that leaves no room for interpretation.”

The report also condemned the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), which had aired the charges against Blair’s administration. The chairman and director-general of the BBC, and the journalist who first reported the allegations, have been forced to resign. In a groveling statement, the new acting chairman of the BBC, Richard Ryder, apologized “unreservedly” for “our errors.”

The official clearing of Blair in the Hutton Report came the same week as former weapons “inspector” David Kay defended the administration of U.S. president George Bush from charges that it had falsified intelligence to justify launching the March 2003 assault on Iraq. (See article on page 3.)

The September 2002 dossier was prepared by British spy agencies as part of the UK rulers’ political preparations for assuming second-in-command of the subsequent U.S.-led invasion and occupation of Iraq. Among other claims, the dossier contended that the Saddam Hussein regime in Baghdad would be able to deploy “weapons of mass destruction” within 45 minutes of a deci-

sion to do so.

Last July, Kelly, a scientist who had been employed as a weapons inspector in Iraq, committed suicide. A week earlier he had been named as the source of a BBC report by journalist Andrew Gilligan, who claimed that Blair’s office had ordered the spy agencies to re-edit the dossier to beef up the case for war. In one early morning broadcast in May of last year, Gilligan made a claim, which he later retracted, that the government had inserted the 45-minute statement about Iraqi weapons knowing it to be false. This allegation became the center of a political fight between the Blair government and the BBC tops. After Kelly’s death, Hutton was appointed to conduct an inquiry into the matter, which began last August.

Hutton, a member of the House of Lords and author of the report that cleared Blair of wrongdoing, said Gilligan’s allegation was “unfounded.” He castigated the editors and managers at the BBC “for failing to investigate properly the Government’s complaints that the report... was false.” Hutton also exonerated the government from the charges that it caused Kelly’s suicide by naming him as the source for the journalist’s account. Blair had authorized the fingering of the scientist a week before his suicide.

Hutton’s background shows he was well

Continued on page 10

Nebraska poultry workers vote ‘union yes’

BY LISA ROTTACH

OMAHA, Nebraska—By a solid margin of nearly 2-1, workers at the MBA Poultry plant in Tecumseh, Nebraska, voted for union representation on January 23. Of 244 eligible votes, 161 voted “union yes” to the United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW), and 83 voted no.

“We were shocked and very happy,” said Jim Kelley, 26, a chicken yard driver at the plant, in an interview with the *Militant*. “Most of my co-workers couldn’t believe it. On Saturday, the day after the vote, the workers were upbeat, but management made themselves scarce.”

“At a certain point, the majority of us didn’t care if we got fired. We weren’t going to let the bosses continue their abusive treatment just because of one’s immigration status,” added Salvador Sánchez, a worker from Mexico.

“They are ecstatic,” Donna McDonald, president of UFCW Local 271, told the Omaha *World-Herald*, referring to the new members of the local. McDonald said contract negotiations will begin in approximately one month, when the union will seek a wage increase, more regular work hours, and better treatment.

MBA Poultry is located on the perimeter of a cornfield in the small town of Tecumseh. This rural community of 1,700

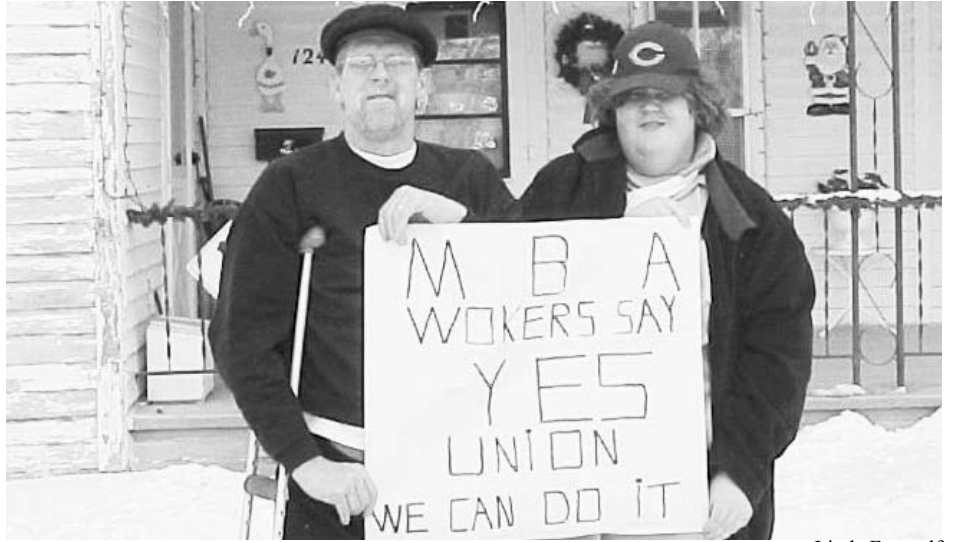
residents sits 90 miles south of Omaha. The plant manufactures the Smart Chicken brand from slaughter to packaging and distribution. Most of the workers hail from Latin America and Asia. A smaller percentage are U.S.-born.

“In this town, unless you’re a farmer or a businessman, the only two places to work are the State Penitentiary or MBA,” explained Bryce Fetterolf, an MBA worker since 2002. “At MBA about 80 percent of the workers are Hispanic. I commend my Hispanic co-workers for not letting the pressures blind them. The company tries to scare them, using threats of no-match letters and other things. And in a rural area, where else can you work? Commuting means gas, car, and expense. We all stuck together. They didn’t divide and they didn’t conquer.”

This union victory caps a number of efforts to organize MBA. In 1999, the workers voted down the union by a narrow margin. Another organizing effort in 2001 did not lead to a vote.

The union began this third attempt in September, coming on the heels of its September 2003 victory at the Casa de Oro tortilla plant in Omaha.

“The workers contacted us and said they wanted us to organize the plant,” said Javier Espinoza, a UFCW organizer. “They told us they wanted the union. Through the drive,



Linda Fetterolf

Bryce Fetterolf (left) and Jim Kelley, workers at MBA Poultry in Tecumseh.

a workers committee met with us to plan out activities to win their co-workers to the union. Without this committee, a victory couldn’t have happened.”

“We have no afternoon breaks,” said Fetterolf, who regularly attended the workers meetings. “Processing would work 6:00 a.m. to 7:00 or 8:00 p.m.—a 14 hour shift! Yet in the kill department we rarely clocked 40 hours. We have no access to drinking

water on the floor, and have only four paid holidays. We are allowed 20 minutes weekly for bathroom breaks, with workers being suspended or fired for exceeding their quota. This was the straw that broke the camel’s back. We won the union, and now they can’t run us over any more.”

The company aggressively campaigned to convince the workers that a union plant was not in their interest. “They hung up ‘vote no’ posters,” said Kelley. “They conducted three anti-union meetings, with the president himself speaking at the last one. They hung up three or four letters in the plant, and sent us a ‘Union No’ package in the mail. But we campaigned harder.”

The election at MBA was part of a larger organizing campaign launched by the UFCW in June of 2000. Through this effort, the union looks to organize the roughly 4,000 meat packers who work in the meatpacking industry in the Omaha area. In addition to MBA and Casa de Oro, workers at a smaller dry sausage plant and the Swift & Co. beef slaughterhouse have also won union recognition during this drive. Workers at Nebraska Beef lost a union representation election in 2001.

Workers at Swift & Co. in Omaha, who won union recognition in May 2002 after a hard fight, extended their solidarity and experience to the workers.

“It is important to support these workers because they face the same things we faced when we began our fight for the union,” said a Swift worker with 22 years on the kill floor. “Our union president Donna told us about their workers committee meetings, and between three and five of us would go. We offered our support, and some of our experience. We collected solidarity signatures from our co-workers, and sent messages of support. We traveled down several times to help handbill outside the plant. The president also wrote a leaflet encouraging our co-workers to support the MBA workers by traveling to Tecumseh, and we distributed it inside the Swift plant.”

“On Friday morning, their election day, three of us left Omaha at 2:30 a.m. and headed to Tecumseh,” said Juan Rodriguez, 61, who has worked at Swift for five years. “We were outside the gate with the organizers, yelling ‘Yes! Yes! Sí se puede! Ra-ra-ra!’ We had a sign that said ‘At Swift we voted Union Yes and won.’ At 6:00 a.m. we left for Omaha, and worked our shift on the kill floor. I’m so happy they won, because now there are more of us. We’re growing.”

“Everyone really liked the message of support from the Swift workers,” said Kelley. “I myself handed out a whole bunch, and you could see them floating around the plant.”

Kelley is working on a message of solidarity for the striking coal miners in Utah, which he wants to get some co-workers to sign. “I wanted to hold off on the message until after our election, because I knew our victory would inspire them.”

According to the *World-Herald*, Local 271 President McDonald told the Omaha daily that “the UFCW plans to bring its organizing efforts back to Omaha meatpacking plants.” After distributing literature and getting workers to sign petition cards at a number of Omaha plants, the article explains, “The union will then target whichever company’s employees are most receptive to its message.”

Lisa Rottach, a member of UFCW Local 271, works on the kill floor at Swift & Co.

After 11-month strike, Tyson workers go back to work

BY MAURICE WILLIAMS

JEFFERSON, Wisconsin—After 11 months on strike against Tyson Foods, 470 meat packers voted to end their walkout here January 29. The strikers, who are members of United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) Local 538, ratified a contract containing many of the concessions that forced them to strike the company last February. The vote was 293-70 in favor.

During their fight the workers helped lead a number of solidarity rallies in Jefferson and sent out several on-the-road teams to build support, including among workers at other Tyson plants.

The contract includes a four-year wage freeze, the halving of sick time allowances, and a health-care scheme that will shrink coverage and increase workers’ costs up to \$4,600 a year. Starting pay for new hires will drop to \$9 per hour from the former level of \$11.10. Local 538 president Mike Rice told reporters that new hires will also earn no more than \$12 an hour, compared with a top rate of \$12.90 for existing workers—part of a two-tier structure the company had insisted on. The agreement also phases out the company’s profit-sharing program, a step that will further reduce workers’ annual wages by 5 percent.

15,000 rally in L.A. to back striking grocery workers

BY JAMES VINCENT

INGLEWOOD, California—Chanting “Don’t Shop at Albertsons, Vons or Ralphs,” thousands of grocery workers kicked off a march here January 31 in support of their strike, now in its fourth month. They were followed by dozens of union contingents demonstrating their solidarity.

Altogether 70,000 members of the United Food and Commercial Workers Union are on strike or locked out at 850 stores in Southern California. The fight began with the union’s rejection of grocery chains’ takeback demands, which include health-care cuts, a wage freeze, and lower wages and benefits for new hires. Talks on these issues remain deadlocked.

“Lately we’ve been dumped on so it’s great to see all this support,” said Judy Starr, a locked-out Ralphs worker. An estimated 15,000 strikers and supporters took part in the action, called by the Los Angeles County Federation of Labor. They assembled in the Great Western Forum before marching to a nearby Vons outlet. Many of the union contingents carried banners. “Your Fight is Our Fight” rang out from hundreds of members of the Laborers International Union. The drill team of International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) Local 10 from San Francisco led 500 union members from the ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach.

Other union contingents came from the Service Employees International Union, United Farm Workers, and Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees. Unions of machinists, teachers, Teamsters, nurses, iron and oil workers, construction workers, and



Militant/James Vincent

About 15,000 UFCW strikers and their supporters march January 31 in Inglewood, California.

actors and entertainers were among those represented. A labor solidarity organization of students marched from UCLA.

The bosses are attacking “not just grocery workers—all of us are targets. We are here to bring solidarity,” said Ricardo Laparra, a member of the Laborers union.

The big-business press has ratcheted up their propaganda against the strikers, with the *Los Angeles Times* leading the way. One article attacked the UFCW leadership for being “scandalously overpaid.” A January 13 editorial stated that the union’s defense of health care “wasn’t a smart tactic in an age when every company is grappling with escalating costs.”

Meanwhile, UFCW members in Northern California are preparing for a similar confrontation when their contracts, covering 50,000 grocery workers, expire in July and September. Members of UFCW Local 839, which covers Monterey, Santa Cruz, and San Benito counties, voted by an 81 percent margin at the end of January to increase their dues to build up a strike fund.

Minnesota union officer visits Utah miners

Continued from front page
Co-Op coal miners.

In an interview with the *Militant*, Miller said that several trade unionists met in St. Paul, Minnesota, in early January to discuss organizing solidarity with the Utah strikers. “The group decided to send someone to Huntington, Utah,” he said. “Because I have worked in the coal mines I was asked to go.” Miller is from the coalfields in southwest Virginia. His father was a charter member of the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) for 55 years and worked 33 years in an underground coal mine. In the late 1960s Miller worked for three years at the Moss #3 D underground mine in Virginia owned by the Pittston Coal Company.

“We moved pretty quickly and gathered a token \$500 in funds from UFCW Local 789 and others,” Miller said. “We also got 100 signatures from three different Carpenters locals on petitions supporting the coal strikers. I took these to Utah to give to the miners.”

Miller arrived in Salt Lake City, Utah, and was picked up at the airport by Dallas Wolf, one of the four UMWA organizers assigned to work on the strike against CW Mining, also known as Co-Op.

During the two days he spent in Utah, Miller attended a leadership committee meeting and a general membership gathering of the Co-Op strikers. Commenting on these meetings, Miller said, “I was impressed with the effectiveness of the UMWA organizers, the leadership committee and the general membership meeting. Before I went to Utah, I read everything I could get on the strike. I found a very determined leadership. There is a committee in place that is on a mission with clearly defined goals. They have a good number of events scheduled that they will be speaking at to get support.”

Miller videotaped interviews with Co-Op miners that he took back to Minnesota to show at the February 6 benefit. He will also use them to gain broader support for the strike in the Midwest. The miners reported that they are sending Miller a CD with the speech that Jesus Salazar gave at the Immigrant Workers Freedom Ride kickoff rally held in Salt Lake City September 25. Miller plans to play the CD at the St. Paul benefit, he said.

“You could look at this as a glaring example of abuse of a few isolated workers,” Miller said about the Utah miners’ fight. “I found a membership that is not a victimized group. They all want the same thing, they are committed to the cause to make life better for the miners and their families.”

All 75 workers at the Co-Op mine, most of them Mexican immigrants, were fired September 22 for protesting unsafe practices by the bosses on the job, defending co-workers the company victimized for such conduct, and for trying to organize themselves into the UMWA. With the union’s help, they have since organized an unfair labor practices strike and have been picketing the mine every day.

The miners told Miller as he was leaving that they want a report on the February 6 benefit, which they will present to participants at the February 7 Solidarity Day activities in Huntington.

In response to a letter signed by Robert Butero, UMWA Region IV director, sev-

eral UMWA locals are planning on sending delegations. “We are asking each UMWA District 22 local union to send members to the rally, if at all possible,” the letter states. “Please ask your members to participate and become active and to show support by attending this rally. We think it is important to show UMWA solidarity with the Co-Op Miners.”

Miners report that UMWA members from Trinidad and Craig, Colorado; Kayenta, Arizona; Gallup, New Mexico; and Utah will be attending.

These actions are part of a growing solidarity movement nationwide with this UMWA-organizing fight. Strikers report that two Co-Op miners will be traveling to Boston, Massachusetts, March 8 for a weeklong tour. The tour is being organized by Massachusetts Jobs With Justice. The Utah miners will speak at union meetings in Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Rhode Island. Garment workers who are members of UNITE Local 102G at North Star Glove in Tacoma, Washington, sent \$49 and a solidarity message written in three languages—Vietnamese, Spanish,

and English—and signed by 90 percent of the workforce. Donations and messages of support were collected by workers in three meatpacking plants in the Washington, D.C., area. They included a message of solidarity signed by 40 members of UFCW Local 27 at the Smithfield plant there, sent along with a \$100 check and cover note signed by local president Buddy Mays.

On February 3, strikers Bill Estrada and Ana María Sánchez will speak at a meeting organized by students at the University of Utah in Salt Lake City.

The UMWA and the Salt Lake Co-Op Miners Solidarity Committee are jointly organizing an information picket in front of a Kingston family business in Salt Lake February 21.

The Co-Op mine is owned by the wealthy polygamous Kingston family. The Kingston clan, also known as the Latter Day Church of Christ, includes an estimated 1,200 members. The secretive group has amassed a \$150 million business empire in six western states, running Utah companies that include pawnshops, restaurant supply stores, and dairies. In addition to the family’s notoriety

for superexploitation of employees in their businesses, several prominent members of this clan have been recently convicted for incest and other abuse of young female members of the family.

On January 26, Jeremy Ortell Kingston, a member of the Kingston family, was sentenced to a year in prison for committing incest with his 15-year-old cousin. “Before sentencing,” reported the January 27 *Salt Lake Tribune*, “Kingston apologized profusely, said he accepted responsibility for committing incest and begged 3rd District Judge Michael Burton to allow him to remain free to work and support his family. The victim, Lu Ann Kingston, now 24, said only jail time would send a message to the defendant and other members of the powerful and secretive Kingston clan. ‘Otherwise, Jeremy and the clan will continue to break the law,’ Lu Ann Kingston said. ‘They will continue to marry off child brides.’”

David Ferguson from Seattle and Janice Lynn from Washington, D.C., contributed to this article.

HQ Appeal extended through February

Continued from front page

prefabricated the entire kitchen cabinetry and bookshelves for the bookstore delivered 600 pieces of cut wood to the construction site. He is now working along with others to install the cabinets, kitchen counter, and bookshelves.

Across the country supporters have been gearing up to collect the pledges from their areas and send them in right away. Receiving the funds already pledged is crucial to being able to pay for the materials needed over the next several weeks and organize for a smooth move and transition from the current temporary offices to the new headquarters.

Construction crew organizers, for example, are closing in on placing the order for double-pane windows for the entire floor. The goal is to have the new windows installed by the February 28-29 weekend. This step will result in substantial savings on heat and air conditioning bills. The new windows will also improve working conditions by shutting out the noise from “siren alley”—the building is located just off 8th Avenue, a main thoroughfare through midtown Manhattan.

While donations have been coming in at a rapid clip, several supporters of the communist movement have indicated they want to contribute additional money but couldn’t make the original January 31 deadline.

The article I wrote on the Headquarters Appeal that appeared in last week’s *Militant* gave the wrong impression that January 31 was the cutoff date for donations.

This is not true. Readers of the *Militant* who have yet to make a pledge to the fund, or who may be in a position to increase their contribution in February, are more than welcome to do so. Please send your checks as soon as possible, although contributions can even be brought to New York for the Grand Opening weekend and hand-delivered to one of the Headquarters Appeal chairpeople.

The additional contributions will make it possible to set up the headquarters with the necessary funds devoted to quality construction materials, appliances, and furniture, which will make a 10-year stay in these premises possible.

The latest budget projection shows that \$225,000 is needed to complete the project—\$45,000 more than anticipated in mid-January.

“Over the coming weeks we will obtain a commercial-grade stove that will serve our needs for many years,” said Paul Mailhot, one of the organizers of the volunteer construction project. “Combined with purchases of other appliances and outfitting the kitchen, this raises the budget by \$4,500. We will also improve the venting system in the stove area, which adds to the cost too,” Mailhot explained.

“After finishing the walls for the Pathfinder bookstore and forum hall and the *Militant*/PM newsroom, we realized that the space could be better configured to make a bigger and more comfortable forum hall, and at the same time have adequate space for the staff to work to the tight deadlines of producing a weekly newspaper and monthly magazine. So we moved one of the walls.



Militant/Carlos Sánchez

Construction crew at work February 2: left, Willie Cotton and John Brink install lighting; right, Chris Hoeppner and George Bryant assemble bookshelves.

That change added some expense to all of our construction categories. For example, the furniture line in the budget has been raised from \$5,000 to \$10,000 so we can buy or build the cabinets and desks we need to work in the redesigned office space.”

Out of that furniture budget 80 padded cloth chairs will be bought for the forum hall.

Mailhot pointed to some other expenses that have gone up based on the experience of construction work. For example, paint costs have doubled from \$2,000 to \$4,000 because the newly constructed walls absorb more paint. The cost of the phone system has been put at \$6,500—about \$1,500 more than originally anticipated, so that the SWP National Office can take advantage of the better quality and conferencing capabilities of a digital phone system.

“In addition, the \$2,000 in costs of the physical move itself, from temporary offices and from storage, must be covered by the Headquarters Appeal,” Mailhot said.

The Appeal will also now include repaying the individual who put up \$30,000 for the deposits necessary to secure the lease on the premises.

These adjustments add up to the need to raise an additional \$45,000.

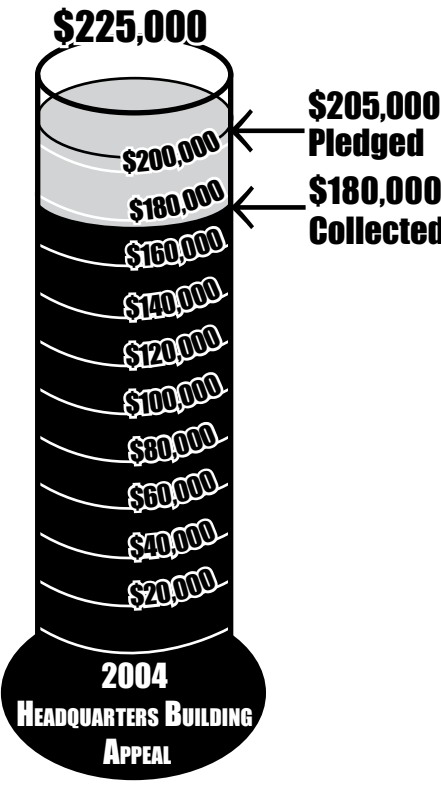
From the beginning, Mailhot noted, the budget covered by the appeal has included a \$30,000 sinking fund to cover unforeseen expenses that will inevitably come up over the next five years through normal wear and tear.

The extension of the appeal will provide local organizers and others who are working on this project nationally the time necessary to meet with the many individuals who have not yet been spoken to about the new international headquarters. The goal is to visit every area where there is an SWP branch or organizing committee by the end of February. An important side benefit to these meetings, in addition to raising funds and reknitting ties, is that several individuals have already indicated that they are going to become volunteers in the Pathfinder Printing Project.

These volunteers, located in many countries, take a Pathfinder title that has been editorially prepared and then proofread, coordinate the indexes, and format the text of the book or pamphlet digitally. The volunteers also carry out a variety of tasks to ensure that the attractive cover designs and internal graphics are maintained in the printing of the books. Printing Project volunteers put the books on CD-ROMs, prepare the ads that go into them, and also organize to have the books printed and shipped to customers.

Recruiting new volunteers to this project is a very welcome development that jibes with the political success of the fundraising effort.

Contributions should be made out to the 2004 Headquarters Building Appeal and sent c/o SWP National Office, 306 W. 37th St., 10th floor, New York, NY 10018.



BENEFIT FOR STRIKING COAL MINERS

Hear Ben Miller talk about his recent trip to the strike in Huntington, Utah.

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 6, 7:00 P.M.
UFCW Local 789 Hall

266 Hardman Ave, South St. Paul, MN
For more information call: (651) 451- 6240

DAY OF SOLIDARITY FOR THE MINERS

ON STRIKE AGAINST CO-OP MINE

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 7
JOIN THE MINERS’
PICKET LINE 12:00 NOON

RALLY 2:00 P.M.

In the Gymnasium of Canyon View
Junior High School in Huntington
550 North 400 West (Highway 31)

For more information call (435)637-2037
Spanish speakers call (435) 687-5107

Cutback, restructuring of sugar industry: Cuban workers explain how it affects them

Study-as-work program widens access to education

(Second of two articles)

BY JONATHAN SILBERMAN,
MARTÍN KOPPEL,
AND MARY-ALICE WATERS

SANTA CRUZ DEL NORTE, Cuba—“Before the revolution we had to pay to go to school,” said Misael Fonseca. And few workers could afford the time or fees. “Now we’re being paid to study.”

Fonseca had been one of the 1,750 workers at the Camilo Cienfuegos sugar production complex, 30 miles east of Havana, before the mill was closed in 2002. In the background you could hear the sounds of metal on metal as a crew of mill workers dismantled the old factory, salvaging everything that could be reused. Fonseca and more than 600 other workers formerly employed in the sugar complex were seated in classrooms of the school they had established on the grounds. Some were studying for their ninth-grade equivalency degrees, others taking pre-university or technical retraining courses.

“For us, the study-as-work program is an opportunity to improve ourselves,” said Lourdes Beltrán, another worker who was completing a one-year pre-university course at what they call the Camilo Cienfuegos School for Further Education.

Since April 2002 a radical cutback and reorganization of the sugar industry have been under way in Cuba. How these far-reaching changes are being implemented provides a vivid illustration of a socialist revolution tackling challenges before it. It demonstrates what becomes possible as workers and farmers take political and economic power out of the hands of the capitalist rulers, reorganize social priorities to meet their needs, open new avenues of culture, and defend their conquests arms in hand.

Education and training

“Today will surely go down in history,” Cuban president Fidel Castro told more than 10,000 sugar workers and their families gathered in Artemisa on Oct. 21, 2002. “The concept of creating employment—and certainly one of the most important kinds of employment—out of studying is being put into practice for the first time.”

Some 100,000 sugar workers whose jobs have been eliminated continue to receive their wages as they become full- or part-time students to further their education and train for new jobs.

Cuba has a population of 11 million, and sugar is produced in every province but one. Prior to April 2002 “the industry employed



Militant/Jonathan Silberman

“For us, the study-as-work program is an opportunity to improve ourselves,” said Lourdes Beltrán (center, seated). She worked at the Camilo Cienfuegos sugar production complex in Santa Cruz del Norte. The mill was closed in 2002 as part of the restructuring of Cuba’s sugar industry. Beltrán is one of the 100,000 former sugar workers who are paid at their previous wage rate as they study and receive training or begin new jobs. She is completing a one-year pre-university course at a school for further education in the complex.

some 420,000 workers and indirectly involved another 1.5 million,” Miguel Toledo, a member of the national secretariat of the National Union of Sugar Workers (SNTA), told the *Militant*. “So the restructuring has affected the entire country.”

In February 2003 a team of *Militant* reporters spent several days talking about these developments with Pedro Ross, general secretary of the Central Organization of Cuban Workers (CTC), SNTA general secretary Manuel Cordero, and other leaders of Cuba’s trade unions and sugar industry. The CTC also responded positively to our request to visit a mill complex to talk with workers and hear firsthand what those most affected by the reorganization think about the changes they are carrying out.

An article in last week’s *Militant* described the historical roots of sugarcane cultivation; the scope and initial repercussions of the reorganization of Cuba’s largest agro-industry; and the revolutionary implications of the radical restructuring being explained and organized by Cuba’s communist leadership. (See “Radical reorganization and cutback of Cuba’s sugar industry” in the Feb. 9, 2004, issue of the *Militant*.)

Sugar has long been the backbone of the Cuban economy, Ross explained. But most of Cuba’s mills are obsolete, and production costs are high compared to other sugar-exporting countries. At the opening of the 1990s, when the Soviet Union and countries in Eastern Europe defaulted on long-term contracts to buy sugar, Cuba was suddenly

the world market. The target is to produce an average of 4 million tons of raw sugar a year to meet domestic consumption needs and delivery on international contracts.

“In carrying out this reorganization, which involves substantial cutbacks in the number of workers employed in the sugar industry, we proceeded from two principles,” CTC leader Ross told the *Militant*. “First, that no worker would be abandoned, left to fend for themselves.

“And second, that the workers and communities affected by the reorganization would come out of the process better off, discovering they had benefited from it.”

In his October 2002 speech in the town of Artemisa, in Havana province, inaugurating the Sugar Workers Further Education Courses, Castro reported that 84,000 sugar workers had already taken up the opportunity to go back to school. The courses are open both to workers whose jobs have been eliminated and those still working. Within a matter of months, some 122,000 had signed up to broaden their education.

No age limit for classes

Depending on age and level of schooling completed, each worker-student is assigned to one of six different courses: classes up to sixth grade; seventh to ninth grades; tenth to twelfth grades; pre-university classes; technical courses; and post-graduate technical programs.

“Anyone can take these courses. There is no age limit,” Misael Fonseca said.

At the Camilo Cienfuegos school there were about 100 workers between the ages of 16 and 19 who had completed the ninth grade, and another 120 who had completed twelfth grade. The bulk of the students were 30–45 years old.

“At first some of us were a little scared about going back to school. We thought it would be difficult to learn to concentrate, to become students again. But it hasn’t turned out that way.”—Alberto Alfonso,

Santa Cruz del Norte, Cuba

faced with selling its sugar at world market prices. Those prices, moreover, then fell by one-half over the course of the decade. At the same time, Washington continued stepping up its economic warfare against the country. These factors and others led to the decision by the revolutionary government to begin a major economic restructuring and address the need to further diversify the country’s agriculture and industry.

Working closely with trade unions and other mass organizations, the Cuban government has been implementing a plan to close 70 of the island’s 155 sugar mills, cut the number of workers involved in sugar production by more than 25 percent, reclaim for other agricultural uses nearly two-thirds of the land previously allotted to cane cultivation, and expand the country’s educational system to incorporate tens of thousands of sugar workers now continuing their studies on all levels.

The goal of this transformation is to concentrate resources in the most efficient mills and on the best land for the cultivation of sugarcane in order to cut the average cost of producing sugar from some 20 cents a pound to 4 cents a pound—that is, below the long-term average price the crop brings on

Those who now complete pre-university courses and want to continue are guaranteed admission to one of the new universities being established in every municipality in the country. Or they can go to a university further afield.

Castro told the gathering in Artemisa that “each sugar mill will become a university center.... Any town that has a junior high school or a vocational school, I repeat, can become a university center. Now that is really something unusual in this world, is it not?”

Our goal, Castro said, “which might seem to be a dream, is to be the best educated country in the world, in the broadest sense of the word; a country with a general, all-around education, which includes not only professional skills but also knowledge about



Militant/Jonathan Silberman

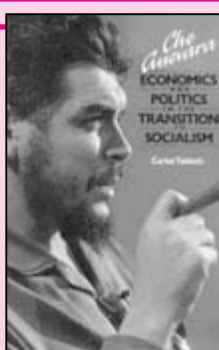
Library at the Camilo Cienfuegos complex, used by workers in their efforts to upgrade skills and broaden their education.

FOR FURTHER READING

CHE GUEVARA: ECONOMICS AND POLITICS IN THE TRANSITION TO SOCIALISM

by Carlos Tablada

Quoting extensively from Guevara’s writings and speeches on building socialism, this book presents the interrelationships of the market, economic planning, material incentives, and voluntary work; and why profit and other capitalist categories cannot be yardsticks for measuring progress in the transition to socialism. Also available in Spanish and French. \$18.95



THE POLITICS OF ECONOMICS: CHE GUEVARA AND MARXIST CONTINUITY

by Jack Barnes and Steve Clark

• in *New Internationalist* no. 8

Also includes: • Che’s Contribution to the Cuban Economy by Carlos Rafael Rodríguez • On the Concept of Value and The Meaning of Socialist Planning—articles by Ernesto Che Guevara. \$10

‘CUBA WILL NEVER ADOPT CAPITALIST METHODS’

by Fidel Castro

Cuba’s rectification process, its contributions to building socialism worldwide, and the victory of Cuban-Angloan-SWAPO forces against the South African army in southern Angola in early 1988. \$3



Available from www.pathfinderpress.com or from bookstores, including those listed on page 8.

science, arts, and the humanities.” Retirees can join one of the newly created Universities for the Older Adult, an initiative taken by the CTC-led Movement of Pensioners and Retired Workers.

“Our school offers courses to acquire skills that will prepare students for any new job they might want to pursue as well as studies in other subjects that the students may be interested in, such as English, geography, and mathematics,” said Mario Víctor Rodríguez, one of the school directors.

The school has 52 teachers, he told the *Militant*. Some, like Rodríguez, had been teachers in the local school system. Others were former employees of the sugar complex who had trained to become teachers. “I worked for four years at the mill packaging sugar and as a guard,” said Marlene Cordero. “Now I teach computer courses here.”

Before the courses began, the students themselves fixed up what became the classrooms. They took over the newly vacated quarters of the Youth Army of Labor (Ejército Juvenil de Trabajo, or EJT), the special production units of the Revolutionary Armed Forces that had previously cultivated the state farm lands belonging to the Camilo Cienfuegos complex. The sugar workers painted walls and upgraded the library. They made desks out of bagasse, a fiberwood-like by-product of sugarcane produced in one of the factories that is part of the sugar complex. Several commented



Militant/Jonathan Silberman
“We study guided by the words of our national hero, José Martí: ‘to be educated is to be free,’” said Jesús Abreu (center). In the background is the school for further education at the Camilo Cienfuegos sugar production complex.

with pride on the work they had done to make the school their own.

Going back to school

“At first some of us were a little scared about going back to school. We thought it would be difficult to learn to concentrate, to become students again,” said Alberto Alfonso. “But it hasn’t turned out that way.”

Students spend four hours in class, either in the morning or in the afternoon, a schedule that allows some to work part-time. “As students, we continue to receive the same salary we got as sugar workers—even if we are also working and getting paid for another job,” Alfonso said. “And our teachers are very good.”

Joaquín Almaguer said he went to school in the mornings and worked as an electrician for six or seven hours afterwards. He was studying to become a technician.

“We’re already seeing results from the classes,” said Diosdado Fonseca, head of adult education for Santa Cruz del Norte. “We’re different from what we were four months ago. It’s difficult to measure it, but you can feel the cultural broadening. It spreads to every home. You can even hear people talking about science, geography, and mathematics in family living rooms.”

The geography teacher at the school, Luis Brizuela, said he was nine years old at the time of the revolutionary victory over the Batista dictatorship in January 1959. “I come from a peasant family in Manzanillo, in eastern Cuba,” he explained. “Before the revolution, the school I went to cost 25

centavos a week, and you also had to buy your books! After the victory I received a scholarship to study and became an engineer. Now I’m teaching workers who are actually getting paid to study,” he said, with evident appreciation of the contrast.

The sugar complex in Santa Cruz del Norte was originally owned by the Hershey family—the owners of the Hershey chocolate empire—and was subsequently sold to Cuban sugar multimillionaire Julio Lobo, who at one time owned 14 mills in Cuba.

During the revolutionary struggle against the Batista tyranny, “the July 26 Movement had a strong base among workers at this mill,” said Guillermo Santiago González, as the workers showed us around the house and gardens of the former owners, now used by the workers for social events. He was a 17-year-old “office boy” at the mill when the revolutionary government took power. In 1960, as the revolution deepened, the complex was “intervened”—taken over—by the sugar workers and then soon expropriated by the state along with the rest of the industry.

For years, the Camilo Cienfuegos mill was at the cutting edge of high-quality sugar refining in Cuba. But its increasingly costly technology—using carbon filters produced from animal bone imported from the United Kingdom, the only mill in Cuba to do so—made it a prime candidate for closure following the April 2002 decision to sharply cut back sugar production. The mill had been deteriorating over the last decade as shortages of spare parts, fuel, fertilizer, pesticides, and other inputs became more and more acute in the wake of the abrupt cutoff of favorable long-term trade agreements with the former Soviet bloc. The mill lost more than 10 million pesos each harvest.

“We really fought to convince the national commission charged with making the final decision that we could turn this situation around, and that the Camilo Cienfuegos complex should remain in production,” said Eduardo González, director of human resources at the plant. “But in the end, we agreed that shutting the mill was the right thing to do,” he said.

Now, much of the land previously allotted to growing sugarcane is being used to expand the cultivation of vegetables and raise cattle.

Once the decision was made, the government, the union, and other mass organizations began working together in early 2002 to carry out eight months of meetings involving every single sugar worker to discuss the reorganization and its implications.

Workers discuss restructuring

A “Programmatic Document” prepared by the union and Sugar Ministry served to initiate the discussion. It carefully explained the reasons why the cutback in sugar production was necessary.

“From the first assembly meeting in the complex, workers accepted that, given the economic reality, not only here but in the national economy, the shutdown was necessary,” said González. “What concerned everyone most was their futures—their wages, their jobs, their homes. There are many families whose members have worked at the sugar complex for generations.”

Five rounds of workers’ assemblies were organized to discuss the closure of the mill as part of the broader restructuring of the sugar industry, Toledo said. The SNTA organized three of these meetings to address the immediate concerns of the workers directly employed in the industry and of their families.

The fourth round was convened in collaboration with the Committees in Defense of the Revolution (CDR) to discuss how the restructuring would affect the *bateyes*, the communities adjacent to the sugar production complexes where many of the workers live. The CDRs are a nationwide mass organization that involves residents of each municipality, organized block by block to help families deal with major social changes like this, as well as other community needs.

Thirteen provisional commissions and 155 commissions were established in agro-industrial complexes across the country. At the Camilo Cienfuegos mill, as at each of the 70 mills that closed, a commission



Militant
Students from the revolutionary social workers school in Holguín, February 2002. They were in Havana as part of mass effort to organize working people in a health campaign that prevented a dengue fever epidemic. The social workers’ schools and the sugar workers’ study-as-work program are both part of a broader effort called the Battle of Ideas. Organized and led by the Union of Young Communists, the Battle of Ideas began five years ago as a political counteroffensive to the imperialist ideological drive and the pro-capitalist values it promotes.

was established to help each worker decide what they would do next. The commissions, whose composition was approved by the workers, were made up of a representative of the management and three representatives of the union.

“After the first assemblies were held, members of the commission met individually with every single one of the 1,750 workers to discuss proposals for their new work and/or study. If a worker was sick or injured, we went to their home to talk with them. We listened and talked with each worker two, three, even six times—as many times as necessary until each worker’s questions and worries had been addressed, and a decision reached,” González said.

“The workers assemblies weren’t convened just to win acceptance of an already determined set of proposals,” Toledo said. There was a back-and-forth between the assemblies, the union, and the government-established commissions in each complex, province, and on the national level. They all worked to reach conclusions that would be in the interests of the workers directly concerned and of the country, he said.

The fruitfulness of devoting the time and attention necessary to working with each individual to come to a satisfactory decision was registered by one single fact, sugar

workers union president Manuel Cordero told the *Militant*. Every worker had the right to appeal to the union leadership nationally if not satisfied with the decision finally reached concerning his or her future course of study and work. Out of more than 100,000 workers whose jobs were eliminated, only five appealed to the national union asking

“Some proclaimed that the end had come for the ideas of socialism. Yet in Cuba we are doing things that countries living under the capitalist system never even dream of doing.”
— Fidel Castro, Oct. 21, 2002

that their cases be reviewed.

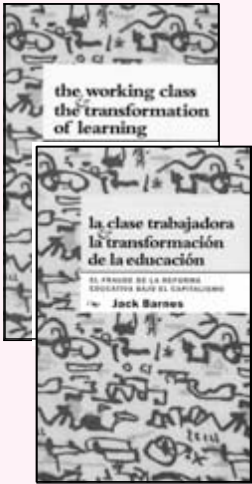
Guaranteed full wages

All former sugar workers have been given a lifetime guarantee by the government that they will continue to receive no less than the wage they were earning as a sugar worker, whether they go to school, take a new job, or do both. Each also remains a member of the National Sugar Workers Union, regardless of their current job.

How to set these continuing wage rates was one decision that came out of the workplace assembly discussions, Toledo explained to the *Militant*. In addition to a

Continued on page 9

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Washington's first defeat in the Americas

Below are excerpts from *Playa Girón/ Bay of Pigs: Washington's First Military Defeat in the Americas* by Fidel Castro and José Ramón Fernández, one of Pathfinder's Books of the Month in February. The book tells the story of how in April 1961, in less than 72 hours of combat, Cuba's revolutionary armed forces defeated an invasion by 1,500 mercenaries organized by Washington.

Castro is the president of Cuba and was the central leader of the revolutionary movement that overthrew the U.S.-backed dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista. Fernández commanded the main column of the Cuban forces that repelled and defeated the CIA-organized mercenaries at Playa Girón.

The excerpts below are taken from Fernández's testimony, on July 12, 1999, in a Cuban court as a witness on behalf of eight Cuban organizations suing the U.S.

BOOKS OF THE MONTH

government for damages resulting from Washington's ongoing effort to overthrow the Cuban Revolution.

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FERNÁNDEZ: Compañero president, compañeros of the Court:

We cannot discuss Playa Girón and its meaning without going back to its roots and viewing it as the culmination of a stage of the U.S. effort to destroy the Cuban Revolution, a stage whose final outcome was the defeat of



Granma

Cuban militia members celebrate victory following their defeat of CIA-organized mercenary invasion at Playa Girón in April 1961.

Brigade 2506 on the sands of Playa Girón.

Most striking and surprising is the magnitude of the CIA plan, with not a single detail overlooked, whether military, economic, or political. These include: efforts to prepare and trigger an insurgency in mountainous regions; efforts to destabilize and subvert the entire country including the use of terrorism; attempts to create a psychological climate conducive to the objective of destroying the Revolution; recruitment and training centers to ensure the optimal preparation of the mercenary brigade for conventional limited-range battles, including supplying it with technical resources, i.e., weapons and equipment of all types, including fighter planes and heavily armed ships; the assembling and structuring of these forces; the manipulative and deceptive—and, at the same time, domineering—role of U.S. military and political leaders in working with the members of these forces; and many other aspects.

The magnitude of these plans has been covered up by the enemies of the Revolution, who are more concerned with attributing the defeat to the mistakes and deficiencies of the U.S. administrations involved rather than finding the true causes of the debacle.

It is also necessary to mention here the measures taken by the Revolution, under Fidel's leadership, to foil the enemy's plans. To be noted are the actions against banditry and against infiltration by the CIA and by counterrevolutionary organizations operat-

ing both in Cuba and the United States; the fight against sabotage, which reduced to ashes some of the country's most important retail and industrial establishments; the crushing of all the truly record number of attempts to assassinate the Commander in Chief in the period prior to Girón; Fidel's success in clarifying the situation in face of the plans to intimidate the people through psychological means....

From a strategic and tactical point of view, the concept of the operation was not flawed. They chose an area where they could disembark, where there was an airstrip and buildings, and that was separated from solid ground by a swamp, across which there were only three roads, on which they were to drop paratroopers....

What we have said about the adequacy of their choice for the zone of operations is valid. It is confirmed in many declassified U.S. documents; we knew it previously and the documents have reconfirmed it. This is corroborated by José Pérez San Román, leader of the mercenary brigade, in his book *Respuesta: La verdad sobre Girón*: "The goal of the Cuban mission was to assure this beachhead and establish itself on a portion of free Cuban territory on which to immediately bring in the broadly representative Cuban Exile Government, to convert it into a Cuban Government in Arms that would be granted international recognition...along with the accompanying political economic, and military support al-

ready arranged by the U.S. government and a number of Latin American countries."

The mercenaries came well organized, well armed, and well supported. What they lacked was a just cause to defend. That is why they did not fight with the same passion, courage, conviction, valor, firmness, bravery, and spirit of victory as did the revolutionary forces.

Hence the surprise at the scope of the Cuban people's victory. This must have surprised the U.S. government, which expected a different result. The outcome can be explained only by the courage of a people who saw the January 1 triumph as the genuine opportunity to determine their own future. This is why they proudly wore the militia uniforms and were on alert, and willing to fight, with the firm conviction they would win.

The men and women, the people who in early January 1959 cheered Fidel Castro in his triumphant tour of nearly the entire island, were the same ones who on April 17, 1961—convinced of their cause, rifles in hand, conscious of the declaration of the socialist character of our revolution—were determined to resist and repel the U.S. attack.

Over that brief period, the Revolution's work, and Fidel's words in particular, reached deeply into the hearts of the Cuban people, who identified with the ideas of national sovereignty, social justice, equality, and dignity. The Revolution had resolved the land question. It was taking sure, tangible steps to put an end to racial discrimination and the discrimination against women. It was assuring access by the masses to employment, education, health care, sports, and culture. The goal of eradicating all forms of corruption took hold in the collective consciousness, a concrete manifestation of the economic and social gains made in such a short period of time.

Fidel personally led the fight against the imperialist attack at Girón. This aggression was waged by the mercenary brigade and saboteurs, by bandits in the countryside and CIA agents, by reactionaries and traitors of all stripes who had sold themselves to the empire. In this fight, the Cuban people knew what they were defending, and they did so with a sense of patriotism and revolutionary fervor. Their firm support of the Revolution and Fidel was a decisive factor in the lightning-quick victory over the mercenary invasion.

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February

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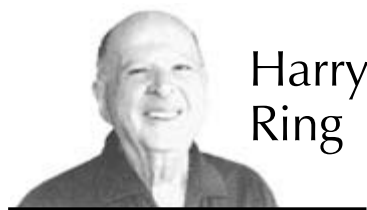
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8

The Militant February 16, 2004

They love to clarify—A number of veteran city employees in Gil-



Harry Ring

lette, Wyoming, are taking early retirement to get a step ahead of the folks who run the town. Officials are planning to trim the current 100 percent medical coverage plan, but aren't sure how deep the cut will be. They say the present plan is murky and, besides, they have other problems.

Like budget droppings?—Over

a couple of weeks, 10 Chicago public school cafeterias were shut down because of mouse infestations. Inspectors found "signs" of rodents in kitchens, food storage areas, and the offices of cafeteria managers.

Then there are private schools—"West Palm Beach, Florida—About 77 percent of private schools taking vouchers to educate disabled students don't offer special classes for disabled children. The vouchers...are worth \$5,000 to \$21,300 based on the severity of a student's disability. No law requires schools to offer special attention or therapy to students with disabilities."—News item.

Social Security—The Milwaukee *Journal Sentinel* spotlighted the fact that hundreds of disabled

people in the Illinois region had essential medical documents trashed—medical verification they needed to get Social Security assistance. A Chicago contractor to SS routinely filled the waste baskets with the key paper work required—perhaps to reduce envelope stuffing and postage. SS ignored the absence of the documents, which saved it work and money.

Union time!—Wal-Mart court records confirmed massive violation of federal labor regulations for minors and older employees. Minors were clocked in on school days, worked late at night, and were denied required break time. Older workers lost lunch and break time. A Wal-Mart spokesperson speculated that perhaps they wanted to

leave early to take a child to the doctor zone.

Flat head society—Visitors to the Grand Canyon are generally offered the scientific explanation that the giant gorge in northern Arizona was carved out by the Colorado River some five or six million years ago. But the National Park's bookstores include a book called: "Grand Canyon, A Different View." The "view" is that the canyon was created no more than a few thousand years ago by the Old Testament flood survived by Noah's Ark. Pressed by employee indignation, the book was removed from the natural science section of the bookstores to an "inspirational" section.

A slip of the keyboard?—A

clipping from the New Orleans *Times Picayune* has an item based on a wire service report. It reaffirms that Blacks and low-income whites have a higher than average cancer rate. It reads: "Washington—The Health and Human Services Department has found a higher death rate for cancer among black people and low-income Americans..."

And you think they're lunatics?—"Vermont—State health officials are encouraging neighbors of the tanked Nuclear Power plant to ask for a pill that prevents radiation injury in the event of an accident at the...nuclear power plant. The department is offering one dose of potassium iodide to each person who works or lives within Yankee's 10-mile radius 'emergency planning.'"—*USA Today*.

Cutback, restructuring of Cuba's sugar industry

Continued from Page 7

basic monthly wage, sugar workers receive production bonuses, which are generally higher during the harvest months, Toledo said. "The proposal adopted is that—during every month of the year—workers will continue to receive not only their basic wage but also the average bonus they got during the months of the last harvest. Thus, they are in fact receiving a little more than 100 percent of their previous income."

At the Camilo Cienfuegos complex, out of the 1,756 workers affected by the closure, just under 600 chose study-as-work. "Another 414 chose jobs rearing cattle or expanding the cultivation of vegetables on the reorganized state farm at the former sugar complex," González reported, "while 368 chose work in other sugar enterprises; 326 decided to take service jobs in the new agricultural enterprise; 26 chose early retirement; and 31 took other jobs in the local area."

A similar process took place in every complex across the island. A total of 7,850 assemblies involving more than 900,000 workers were organized nationally. And discussion on this question has taken place widely among working people in Cuba. Workers at the Antonio Maceo suit factory in Havana, for example, which *Militant* reporters also visited, said that the union at the plant had organized an assembly to discuss the sugar industry reorganization.

Similar discussions were organized by the National Association of Small Farmers (ANAP) in the cooperatives and with individual farmers.

Part of Battle of Ideas

The study-as-work program for sugar workers has become part of a broader effort by the revolutionary government to strengthen the proletarian course of the revolution and the class composition of the universities through widening access to education and culture for the entire population. This is an aspect of what is known in Cuba as the Battle of Ideas.

The Battle of Ideas was initiated several years ago, organized and led by the Union of Young Communists (UJC), as a political counteroffensive to the imperialist ideological drive and the pro-capitalist values it promotes, values reinforced by the increased circulation of the dollar and other retreats the revolutionary government has had to organize over the past decade in response to the deep economic crisis faced at the opening of the 1990s. The Battle of Ideas includes dozens of educational and jobs programs, the heart of which is the offer of an opportunity for university study and a productive future to tens of thousands of youth who had dropped out of school and had no jobs perspective.

"A source of employment has been created, employment of all kinds...for many young people who had had no future," Castro explained to the sugar workers gathering in Artemisa. "All these plans that are being made for tens of thousands of young people mean employment at a relatively early age, knowledge, dignity, self-esteem and the chance to widen their future prospects."

Accelerated courses for training elementary school teachers and art instructors have been launched along with four schools for training thousands of young, revolutionary social workers. University access has been opened to them.

The number of students in each classroom, from elementary school on up, has been almost cut in half—from an average of 37 per classroom in Havana's elementary schools a couple of years ago to one of less than 20 today.

The University for All, a nationally televised daily program, offers courses for people of all ages and occupations, responding to a wide variety of interests, from languages to history to music.

TV sets and VCRs have been introduced into virtually every classroom across the island, including the most remote rural areas, some with only one or two students, which have been equipped with solar panels to provide electricity. Computer centers have

been established in every municipality, and computers are being introduced into more and more schools.

A publishing effort is under way to make available inexpensive editions of the best of world and Cuban literature. Under the banner of the oft-cited slogan, "The revolution doesn't tell people to believe. It tells them—read!" the annual international book fair, formerly limited to Havana, has been extended to cities throughout the island.

"The Battle of Ideas has made possible the advance we call 'study as work,' which is at the heart of the possibilities open to workers whose jobs are eliminated as a result of the sugar industry's reorganization," Tirso Sáenz, president of the National Association of Sugar Technicians, told the *Militant* in an interview at the Sugar Ministry in Havana. Without the Battle of Ideas, he noted, "we couldn't have begun the cutbacks and restructuring so badly needed."

In a speech given in February 2003 to an international conference of teachers in Havana, Castro said, "Since education is the instrument par excellence in the search for equality, well-being, and social justice,

you can better understand why I describe what is taking place today in the search for higher objectives in Cuban education as a profound revolution.

"The very material future of our people is to be based on knowledge and culture," Castro said.

"In the midst of a colossal world economic crisis, our country is advancing on a number of fronts.... Possibly the boldest decision recently adopted has been that of turning study into a form of employment, a principle that made it possible to close down 70 sugar mills—the least efficient ones—whose hard-currency costs were higher than the income they generated."

"Some proclaimed that the end had come for the ideas of socialism," Castro noted to the workers in Artemisa. Yet here they will find a country that is "doing things that countries living under the capitalist system could never even dream of doing."

At the Camilo Cienfuegos school, sugar worker Jesús Abreu, who is now taking computer classes, concluded: "We study guided by the words of our national hero, José Martí: 'to be educated is to be free.'"

— 25 AND 50 YEARS AGO —



February 9, 1979

Nelson Rockefeller's grandfather wanted his official biographer to identify him simply as "John D. Rockefeller Sr., capitalist."

His grandson would probably have preferred to be described as "Nelson Rockefeller, public servant." Only because he was less forthright.

Rockefeller's grandfather taught him a few things about using his government to deal with trouble makers. In 1914 John D. sent troops to gun down striking miners and their wives and children in Ludlow, Colorado. Almost sixty years later, it was Attica Prison and Nelson Rockefeller's troops, but the massacre was just as bloody.

Rockefeller was particularly proud of the draconian drug law he shepherded through the New York state legislature. The harshest in the nation, it mandates life imprisonment for possession or sale of one ounce of any narcotic.

When it came to art Rockefeller knew what he liked—or at least what he didn't like. He had a mural by the great Mexican artist Diego Rivera chopped off the walls of Rockefeller Center and destroyed, for example. He didn't want a picture of Lenin staring him in the face every time he checked in there.

His art was also a good investment. In fact, a January 28 *New York Times* article on Rockefeller's personal fortune points out that "while stocks and bonds proved difficult areas for many money managers, particularly in the last decade, art and real estate have been notably lucrative for many investors."

Old John D. may not have known—or cared—very much about art. But he probably would have understood his grandson's collection perfectly well.



February 8, 1954

Student demonstrations for the return of British-held Gibraltar inspired by the Franco regime of fascist Spain boomeranged against the dictatorship last week when 16,000 Madrid students began stoning British cars and the British compound, Jan. 26 in an outburst of frenzy that far exceeded what the fascists had expected. Police fired revolvers and charged with night sticks trying to break up the mushrooming demonstration. The students turned on the police, utilizing fists and rocks. Next day some 10,000 marched on a radio station and a contingent of 100 seized it. They tried to broadcast their protests against Franco's police but technicians cut off the power. On Jan. 27 demonstrating students roamed through the city's central market. A free-for-all with the police resulted when they turned over a vegetable stand. At the university, students blockaded themselves when the police tried to enter.

The swiftness with which the students turned against the government, although they were thought to be under the tight control of the fascist youth organization, is an indication of the depth of popular unrest in Spain....

The Spanish Roman Catholic magazine, *Ecclesia*, in its current issue deplores the fact that "an overwhelming majority" of Spanish workers are not practicing Catholics. It blames the drift away from the influence of the Franco-loving Catholic hierarchy on the "virus of Marxism." It admits that the "whole working class agrees that the present wages are insufficient and estimates that they should be increased 40 to 75 percent."

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Defending Cuba, defending Cuba's socialist revolution

Cancel Third World debt!

One of the main demands put forward by the organizers of the explosive two-day strike in the Dominican Republic at the end of January was the call for a moratorium on payments of the country’s crushing \$7.6 billion foreign debt, which is growing rapidly there as it is elsewhere in Latin America and the Caribbean. The labor movement in the United States and other imperialist countries has an obligation to solidarize with its Dominican brothers and sisters by pressing the demand, “Cancel the foreign debt of the Dominican Republic and the entire semicolonial world!”

No Third World country can or will develop today into an economically advanced industrial power with the class structure of the United States, Canada, the countries of Western Europe, Japan, Australia or New Zealand. No new centers of world finance capital are going to emerge. That has been settled by history. It is one of the great lessons of the last century. It has nothing to do with the policies—“neoliberal” or “progressive”—of any capitalist government, even those “independent of imperialism.” This hasn’t changed since Bolshevik leader V.I. Lenin summed up this scientific conclusion of the communist workers movement some 85 years ago. The imperialist world, Lenin said, has been “divided into a large number of oppressed nations and an insignificant number of oppressor nations, the latter possessing colossal wealth and powerful armed forces.”

As Lenin further explained in his pamphlet *Imperialism*, written in 1916, at that stage of development of world capitalism, “The income of the bondholders is *five times greater* than the income obtained from the foreign trade of the greatest ‘trading’ country in the world [Britain].

“This,” Lenin said, “is the essence of imperialism and imperialist parasitism.”

For that reason, Lenin added, Marxists should not object to those at the time who had begun referring to the major capitalist industrial powers of the day as “rentier states” or “usurer states.” The rival imperialist powers remain industrial giants and fight over markets for their exports, Lenin said. But at the same time, “The world has become divided into a handful of usurer states on the one side, and a vast majority of debtor states on the other.”

Since the consolidation of imperialism at the opening of the 20th century, every action by finance capital in relation

to the colonial and semicolonial countries ends up further warping their economies. That is the effect of every bank loan to their ruling classes; every investment in landed, industrial, and commercial capital; every purchase of bonds issued by a semicolonial administration; every trade pact—the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) or any other such treaty; every scheme to peg the value of weaker currencies to stronger ones, or get rid of local currencies altogether and “dollarize” the economy. Every one of these moves makes the oppressed nations of Africa, Asia and the Pacific, and Latin America and the Caribbean more, not less, dependent on capital, technology, and imports from the imperialist nations. Their currencies are ever more reliant on, and vulnerable to, the U.S. dollar, the British pound, the “Franco-German” euro, or the Japanese yen.

Capitalist classes in the semicolonial countries do arise and do come into conflict with the imperialist overlords over division of the surplus value produced by the peasants and workers. The recent conflicts between Washington, on the one hand, and Buenos Aires and Brasilia, on the other, shown at the Monterrey summit are one such indication. But the national bourgeoisies in these semicolonial countries are ultimately too weak to come out on top in these conflicts, without the kind of working-class and peasant mobilizations that would threaten the privileged classes’ own wealth and power in the process. (The dynamic of the class struggle in Venezuela is developing in such a direction, much more so than any other capitalist country on the continent, which is why Washington is doing its utmost to topple the nationalist government of Hugo Chávez.) As long as the bourgeoisie remains in power in a semicolonial country, national sovereignty cannot be achieved.

This is actually one of the graphic lessons of the two-day general strike in the Dominican Republic. Working people there and throughout the Americas must increasingly aim their fire at the domestic capitalist class and the profit system in its entirety—not just international finance capital and the policies of the Mejía government or other bourgeois regimes in office or those to come. The only road to liberation from imperialist oppression and exploitation is that charted by the Bolsheviks and the Cuban communists: that of socialist revolution.

N.Y. protesters: ‘Jail killer cop!’

Continued from front page

his grandmother in the apartment complex where he was shot.

The killing took place just after midnight January 24. Stansbury and two friends left a birthday party for another teenager and crossed the rooftop to an adjoining building, which they entered to pick up some more CDs. As they came back up the stairs they ran into Neri and his partner patrolling the rooftops. The cops reportedly claim that Neri was startled when the door swung out toward them as they opened it, the second cop stumbled, and Stansbury stood in the doorway. Neri already had his gun out of his holster and opened fire, shooting Stansbury in the chest.

“The door came open and they shot him,” said Mark Heller, an attorney for the Stansbury family who had talked to the two youth accompanying Stansbury. “Nobody said ‘Halt.’ Nobody said ‘Freeze.’ The door opened up and a bullet was fired. He never got out the door.”

“There is no way he is going to get away with what he is saying,” Timothy Stansbury, Sr., the youth’s father, told demonstrators, referring to the cop. “I know he knew there were people coming up those stairs. There is plenty of light in there. You can see everything.” The city has moved quickly to head off the kind of mass protests that have taken place in response to earlier brutality by cops. Top police officials have called the shooting “unjustified.” New York City mayor Michael Bloomberg and other city officials have visited the family. Bloomberg spoke at Stansbury’s January 30 funeral, which was attended by hundreds of residents of Bedford-Stuyvesant, where the youth was killed.

Earlier in the week activists with Parents Against Police Brutality joined family members and others at a press conference in front of the apartment building where the shooting took place to demand Neri’s indictment.

At the same time, the city’s big-business media have begun to play up the theme that police working in the Bedford-Stuyvesant section of Brooklyn confront dangerous conditions. “Parts of Bedford-Stuyvesant can be...among the most dangerous places in the city, state and nation,” stated the January 29 *New York Post*. “If it wasn’t for a minority of hard-bitten, drug-selling, gun-toting mutts who hold the honest hardworking majority of people in Bed-Stuy hostage, 19-year-old Timothy Stansbury would be alive today.... Stansbury was as much a victim of the mutts who roam Brooklyn’s Baghdad as anything else.”

At the January 31 action, residents responded to this criminalization of the neighborhood with signs reading “Being Black does not mean criminal.” One sign worn by Angel Yulfo said, “Low income does not mean low-life.”

“They claim there is drug dealing and pit bull fighting going on on the rooftops,” said Yulfo. “I say ‘show me that on paper.’ We use these rooftops all the time to go from one building to another.”

Margarita Rosario, whose son Anthony was shot and killed by police in 1995, marched and spoke at the January 31 rally. Cynthia Howell, niece of 57-year-old Alberta Spruill, who was killed in her Harlem apartment by NYPD cops last year, also spoke. Spruill was a longtime municipal worker and member of American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees District Council 37, and the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists. Howell said it’s important to keep up the public pressure on the city to prosecute the guilty cop, pointing out that none of the police involved in the killing of Spruill have ever faced charges.

City authorities have convened a grand jury that is supposed to hear testimony to determine if any charges will be brought against Neri.

Dominican strike

Continued from front page

dozens more, and arrested about 500 others. Disregarding the impact of the walkout, Mejía said hypocritically that he “lamented the situation, because those injured most by strikes are those most in need.”

According to reports by union leaders interviewed by the *Militant* and others quoted by Associated Press and *Hoy*, 97 percent of businesses were shut down by the strike. Factories halted production, most business districts were empty, schools closed, and public transportation did not operate in this Caribbean nation of nearly 9 million people.

In a January 30 telephone interview with *Militant* reporters, Juan Manuel Salas, Secretary General of the National Union of Health Workers, said that in addition to trade unions, one employers association issued a statement telling workers to stay home. Another business group also backed the walkout unofficially, Salas said. He also stated that during the 48 hours of the strike, no major labor mobilizations were organized.

This de-facto front of businesses and trade unions indicated that the top union officialdom and many leftist groups that function in the Dominican workers movement left the country’s capitalist class effectively off the hook by focusing their fire on Mejía and his backers in Washington.

The general strike started a day early when nurses, doctors, and other health workers walked off the job to demand pay increases and improvements in medical care.

Salas reported that over the last two years real wages of hospital workers have dropped from \$400 per month to \$150. “During the same two years the government has cut the health-care budget by 20 percent,” he said. “Patients can no longer be guaranteed the most minimal care, nor the most basic food. Funding from the government is now delayed as much as six months. It is not just health workers who are facing this chaos that Hipólito Mejía has sunk the country in, but every single sector of the population.”

Over the last year working people in the Dominican Republic have faced a sharpening economic crisis. Joblessness has almost doubled to 17 percent in 12 months. The buying power of workers’ wages and pensions has plummeted under rising inflation that has exceeded 40 percent. In just one week in January, for example, gas prices rose by 18 percent, and the government is considering the institution of rationing of gasoline and diesel. Rice, which was sold at 13 cents per pound, now stands at 48 cents per pound. The breakdown of the electricity industry has resulted in regular blackouts across the country of as much as 20 hours per day.

Last year one of the country’s largest banks, Baninter, went belly-up, and two others followed suit. The government responded by pumping \$2.2 billion to bail out the banks’ creditors. Protests against the social consequences of this government action have included rallies by Dominican immigrants in the United States.

Since the year 2000 the Caribbean nation’s foreign debt has more than doubled to \$7.6 billion.

Faced with the stepped-up strikes and protests against its policies over the last year, the government has turned to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for financial succor, and the use of brute force against working people who fight to reverse the attacks on their conditions. Mejía is seeking an additional \$600 million in loans from the IMF, which is demanding as a condition further cuts in social programs. Mejía is also preparing to sign on to Washington’s Central American Free Trade Agreement, which will further strengthen imperialist domination of the country.

During the January 28–29 walkout, unionists leading the strike demanded a moratorium on payments for the foreign debt, according to the French Press Agency (AFP).

Among the thousands of police and soldiers who patrolled working-class neighborhoods of Santo Domingo, the capital, were many troops who had recently returned from the U.S.-led occupation of Iraq. They were still wearing their “peacekeeping” patches on their uniforms. The Dominican government joined Washington’s “coalition of the willing” after the Anglo-American invasion of Iraq.

The majority of those killed during the 48-hour strike died of gunshot wounds. Among the dead was José Vásquez Castro, a union leader shot in the head by police in the capital.

Salas said that at one point “the military seized offices of the Coordinating Committee of Popular and Labor Organizations and tried to kidnap some of the leaders. When they resisted, five were wounded and are now hospitalized.”

UK judge whitewashes Blair gov’t on David Kelly suicide

Continued from Page 3

suited for the task of defending an imperialist government on the course toward war. Born in Belfast, in British-occupied Northern Ireland, he served there as a high court judge and as Lord Chief Justice of Northern Ireland until 1997, when he moved to England to become a “Law Lord.” Prior to this, from 1969—during an upsurge of the nationalist struggle against anti-Catholic discrimination and the partition of Northern Ireland—Hutton served as a junior counsel to the attorney general of Northern Ireland.

Hutton then represented the Ministry of Defence at the Widery inquiry into the killing of unarmed civilians by British troops in Derry on Bloody Sunday in 1972. The Widery report cleared the British army of blame for the killings. In 1978 Hutton represented the British government at the European Court of Human Rights against

allegations of torture of Irish political prisoners.

The conclusions of the Hutton Report have been greeted with criticism, with voices on the right and left of bourgeois politics calling it a “whitewash.” Austin Mitchell, a Labour MP (member of parliament) and chair of the National Union of Journalists group in parliament, said the report “shows all the characteristics of judicial deference to the establishment.”

The right-wing *Daily Mail* reacted in fury to the exonerated of the Blair government, with columnist Max Hastings calling the report “a great disservice to the British people.” The editors of the *Mail* condemned Blair for failing to express “contrition for leading Britain to war on a false prospectus.”

In a statement after his resignation, Gilligan said, “I repeatedly said that I did not accuse the government of

fabrication, but of exaggeration. I stand by that charge, and it will not go away.”

None of these critics of the Hutton Report, however, have called for the immediate withdrawal of the British troops occupying Iraq.

The editors of the London *Times*, who supported the Anglo-American invasion of Iraq, said the day after the report’s publication that “Lord Hutton has executed his unenviable task commendably.”

On February 3 Blair announced an inquiry into the so-called faulty intelligence that had led to his claim of Baghdad’s stockpiles of “weapons of mass destruction” as a justification for the invasion.

The “independent” body will be chaired by a former cabinet secretary and will include Labour and Conservative MPs and a retired head of the armed forces.

‘Harper’s’ runs excerpts from Cuban texts

Lessons from 1961 literacy campaign, or why U.S. rulers fear invading Cuba

The following is taken from Cuban textbooks used to teach reading and writing during the 1961 mass literacy campaign in Cuba, following the 1959 popular revolution when working people toppled the U.S.-backed Batista dictatorship and brought a workers and farmers government to power. These excerpts were published in the February 2004 *Harper’s Magazine* under the headline “The Little Engine that Dialectically Must.” In the introduction, the *Harper’s* editors noted: “The following lessons are from textbooks written for Fidel Castro’s literacy campaign, begun in 1961; the books are still in use in many Cuban schools. Today, 97 percent of the Cuban population is literate, and Castro is helping Venezuelan president Hugo Chávez design a literacy program for his country.” The lessons below are an example of why Washington fears invading Cuba.

THEME 1: IMPERIALISM

Imperialism is a common phenomenon of our age. Imperialists are those countries that, having well-developed economies, concentrate a large percentage of capital in the hands of few. They then use that capital to exploit other countries’ economies, forcing them to export natural resources and import value-added goods. They thus deform these economies, robbing them of their independence. An imperialist country doesn’t necessarily have colonies. Any country that exploits another is imperialistic.

Exercise 1:

Once, the Yankees attacked us. They sent many bad people. They wanted to do away with Free Cuba. The populace defeated them. Fidel led the fight.

Question: What does this say about Fidel?

THEME 2: REVOLUTION

The people need revolution in order to move forward. When one nation is dominated by a more powerful nation,

only revolution can wrest control from the foreign power. When the humble citizens of a country live without work, without land to cultivate, without education, they must rise up in revolution.

Exercise 1:

Let’s first read and then write: “The fishing cooperative helps the fishermen. They sell fish in the cooperative. Daniel helps to sell. The money is for everyone. The fishermen are no longer exploited. Now the fishermen live better lives. New lives for the fishermen.”

Copy in your best handwriting: “Daniel helps to sell.”

Exercise 2:

Let’s first read and then write: “Today’s Cuban is free. The workers build the houses. There will be houses for everyone. New factories will open.”

Copy in your best handwriting: “New factories will open.”

Exercise 3:

Let’s first read and then write: “The lamp was expensive. Mario cleans his weapon. Pura looks at the sea.”

Copy in your best handwriting: “Mario cleans his weapon.”

THEME 3: A UNITED AND ALERT POPULACE

As the Cuban Revolution is anti-imperialistic, she has powerful enemies waiting to attack her. As the Cuban Revolution is a revolution of the people, the whole populace must be ready to defend her. For this purpose, we organize into militias: workers, peasants, professionals, youth, women, gather at training centers to learn military skills and renounce their leisure time of days past.

Exercise 1:

One day, Fidel met with a group of Pioneers [Young Communists] and told them: We want our children to be the most studious, the best behaved. The child who doesn’t study is a bad revolutionary. We want our children to be the happiest. We



Liborio Noval

At December 1961 “Rally of the Pencils” in Havana (above), thousands of literacy brigade volunteers celebrated successful completion of year-long campaign to teach almost one million peasants and workers to read and write. Cuban literacy instructors are now helping Venezuelans eliminate illiteracy in their country. Milena Rengel (right), one of hundreds of Venezuelan youth teaching reading and writing in Venezuela, leads literacy class at Las Trincheras, Carabobo State, Oct. 7, 2003.



Militant/Argiris Malapanis

want to always be proud of our children. The children heard this with great emotion and decided to be better.

Question: How does Fidel want the Pioneers to be?

Exercise 2:

Let’s first read and then write: “The main square looks very pretty. The people’s mi-

litia marches by. Thousands of bandannas saluting. Long live Fidel! The militiaman has a rifle. He loves peace. In good hands, a rifle is good.

“Young and old united, we swear alongside Fidel. Together we will defend Cuba. They’ll never defeat us again!”

Copy in your best handwriting “They’ll never defeat us again!”

LETTERS

Mad cow disease

Thanks for publishing Sam Manuel’s timely article on mad cow disease. It is clear that the beef industry and U.S. government regulatory agencies are more concerned with the profits of agribusiness and the beef industry than with public health.

Despite assurances to the contrary, mad cow disease and its human counterpart, variant Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease (CJD), may be more widespread than government authorities claim.

An article by Andrew Niforuk in the January 8 *Toronto Globe and Mail* indicates that the first North American case of mad cow probably appeared in 1985, when mink that were fed downer cattle on a Wisconsin farm went crazy and died. Richard Marsh, a veterinary pathologist at the University of Wisconsin, took samples of their brains and fed them to bull calves. The calves developed a bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE)—albeit with different symptoms than the classic British

BSE. These infected cows behaved sleepily, like downer cows. Marsh concluded that there must be an unrecognized BSE-like disease in U.S. cattle.

Marsh’s work was ignored for years, and his grant proposals to test more cattle were routinely denied by the government. Until his death in 1997, he continued to call for a ban on feeding cattle parts to cattle.

Niforuk’s article also cites a 1989 study by Prof. Laura Manuelidis and colleagues at Yale University. They performed autopsies on the brains of Alzheimer’s patients, and found that 13 per cent of those patients actually suffered from Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease. This would mean a much higher incidence of CJD than the commonly accepted figure of one in a million people.

Is this higher incidence of CJD related to mad cow disease? How safe is the meat we eat—with even USDA inspectors complaining about inadequate numbers of cattle inspected? (Typically only the downer cows, not healthy-ap-

pearing cattle, are tested.)

What about the effects of the horrendous speedup in the slaughterhouses, coupled with routine health and safety violations by the meatpacking bosses? The prions that cause mad cow disease and CJD are infectious proteins, which cannot be destroyed by ordinary methods of cleaning or disinfection.

Working people should be demanding answers to these questions before swallowing the U.S. government “bull” about the safety of U.S. beef.

Marla Puziss
Atlanta, Georgia

Darryl Hunt released

On Christmas morning Darryl Hunt was freed after spending 18 years in prison here in North Carolina. Hunt, who is Black, was framed up for the 1984 rape and murder of Deborah Sykes, a young white woman.

Under pressure to find the attacker, the local police picked up Hunt, who always maintained his innocence. Witnesses who thought they might have seen the attack described a Black man who looked nothing like Hunt, and witness stories changed as police pressure increased. There was never any physical evidence linking Hunt to the attack.

Hunt was tried and convicted in June 1985. A second trial was held in October 1990 after a city manager’s report blasted the police department for shoddy work in the investigation. He was convicted again at the second trial. The county where Hunt was arrested was 25 percent Black, but the first trial had only one Black juror, the second none.

In 1994, DNA testing positively excluded Hunt as the man who had raped Sykes. Nevertheless, a motion for a third trial was denied. Then in April 2003, Hunt and his lawyers were able to get a new round of DNA testing, which compared the DNA semen found in Sykes’s body against state and federal databases. In December the DNA was matched to another man, who confessed to the rape and murder and insisted he had acted alone.

The Darryl Hunt Defense Committee had carried out support for his case for years. His supporters never gave up and were there when Hunt finally walked out of the prison, saying “It feels great...to finally be free and vindicated.”

Jane Roland
Greensboro, NC

Donate to the Prisoners Fund

The *Militant* receives many requests from readers behind bars. The Prisoners Fund makes it possible to send them subscriptions at a reduced rate. A prisoner can buy a six-month subscription for \$6 and a one-year subscription for \$12.

The Spanish-language monthly magazine *Perspectiva Mundial* offers prisoners a six-month subscription for \$3 and a one-year subscription for \$6.

To help cover the cost of these special offers, please send a check or money order, earmarked “Prisoners Fund,” to the *Militant*, 306 W. 37 St., 10th Fl., New York, NY 10018.

CORRECTIONS

Two errors appeared in an article published in the February 9 issue titled “New Jersey day laborers demand right to work,” reporting a demonstration in defense of the rights of immigrant workers in Freehold, New Jersey. The protest occurred on January 18, not January 19, as stated. The day laborer who spoke at the rally was Alejandro Abarca, not Alejandro Abarco.

In the same issue, the map of Colorado featuring coal mines in western Colorado erroneously placed the Empire mine, which was referred to in the article “Colorado miners’ locals mobilize for Utah strikers,” near Denver. The actual location of the mine is just south of Craig, near the Trapper mine.

Pakistan gov't jails nuclear scientists

Washington presses Musharraf to halt alleged sales of atomic technology

BY PATRICK O'NEILL

In December and January, the government of Gen. Pervez Musharraf in Pakistan detained a number of leading scientists and former generals for interrogation about their alleged sale of nuclear weapons technology to the governments of Iran, north Korea, and Libya. The action came amid charges by U.S. and United Nations officials that Pakistan is at the center of an international black market in "weapons of mass destruction."

Musharraf made the move, which has sparked opposition in Pakistan, under intense pressure from Washington. The U.S. armed forces have stationed 10,600 troops in neighboring Afghanistan as part of their expanding presence in south Asia and the Middle East. U.S. Special Forces carry their hunt for "terrorists" into Pakistan itself with Musharraf's blessing, targeting supporters of al Qaeda and the former Taliban regime in Afghanistan.

Tightening the vice on Musharraf, Washington has also moved to strengthen military and economic ties with India, Islamabad's longtime adversary.

Despite repeated denials that his government had any knowledge of the alleged weapons trade, Musharraf and other officials face accusations within Pakistan of scapegoating the scientists to deflect probes into the role of the administration and top officers in the trade.

One of the detained men is Gen. Mirza Aslam Beg, the commander of the Pakistani army from 1988 to 1991. He told the *New York Times* that in 1991 he had considered a proposal to share nuclear secrets with Iran but had not gone ahead with it. He added that at the time he had advocated the adoption of a doctrine of "strategic defiance." This was an alliance between Islamabad, Tehran, and the Taliban regime in Afghanistan. All three governments styled themselves as "Islamic" at the time.

In an attempt to distance his government from the alleged weapons trade, Musharraf stated January 25 that Pakistan's nuclear arsenal is "in extremely safe hands. We have ensured rings of security measures around that, especially since I took over in 1999." That was the year of the military coup that brought Musharraf to power.

"We are carrying out an in-depth investigation and... will sort out everyone who is involved," said the military ruler.

On January 31 the military brass stated that the "investigation was nearly concluded and appropriate action will be taken against those found guilty."

So far the probe has led to the jailing of eight scientists and three retired military officers, according to the *Los Angeles Times*, which reported a January 25 court hearing on the detentions. One of the scientists, Mohammed Farouk, had been held without charges for two months.

Lawyers acting for the prisoners' families pointed out that authorities are legally barred from holding someone for more than 24 hours without a magistrate's approval.

The government representative told the judge that those responsible for leaking military secrets "have scandalized the country... they have sold the country." The previous day Musharraf told a television interviewer, "We will be very harsh with them because they are enemies of the state and they have done something for personal and financial gain."

One of the scientists under the spotlight is Abdul Qadeer Khan, known as the father of Pakistan's nuclear weapons program. On February 1 a senior government official announced that Khan had signed a confession stating that he and "four others have accepted that they were involved in leaking nuclear know-how outside Pakistan to groups working for Iran, Libya, and north Korea."

According to the *New York Times*, an unnamed official of the U.S. government

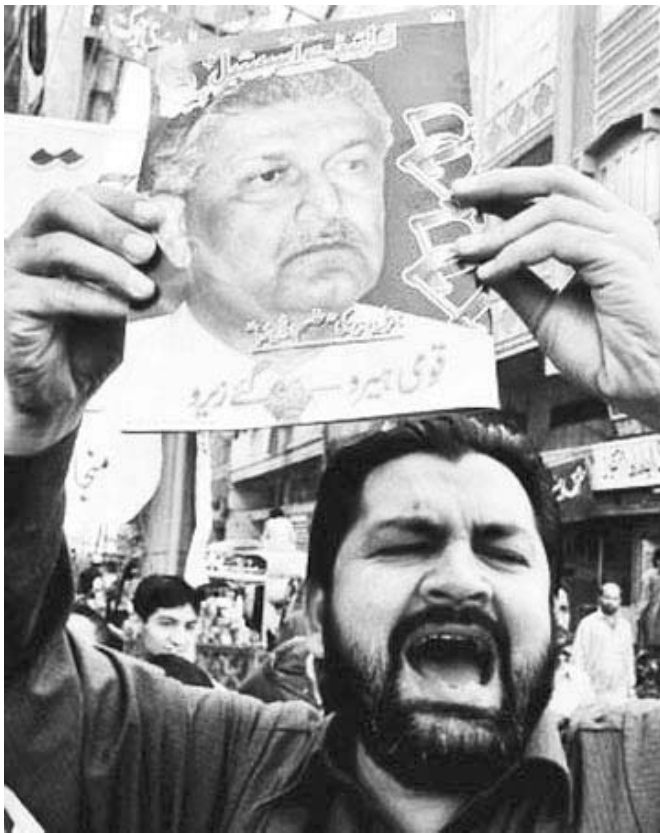
responded, "This is the break we have been waiting for."

A day before the announcement Khan had been sacked from his position as the prime minister's scientific adviser.

Citing U.S. officials, the *Times* claimed January 4 that Pakistan "has emerged as the intellectual and trading hub of a loose network of hidden nuclear proliferators."

It said that Khan had copied German and Dutch designs for centrifuges that are used in the manufacture of weapons-grade uranium. Having used the technology to manufacture a successful nuclear bomb, the Pakistani scientists provided versions of it to willing customers, the *Times* stated. Among the latter were allegedly China—which had assisted the Pakistani program—Iran, Libya, and north Korea. Pyongyang supposedly offered missile parts and designs in exchange.

The world is watching a "terrifying race," claimed the *Times* in alarmist tones—one that "pits scientists, middlemen and extremists against Western powers trying to intercept, shipload by shipload, the technology as it spreads through the



Protester displays photo of nuclear scientist Abdul Qadeer Khan during January 24 demonstration against the arrest of scientists accused of selling nuclear secrets.

clandestine network."

The article noted approvingly that since early 2003 the naval forces of "Germany, Italy, Taiwan and Japan have executed seizures" of ships accused of engaging in the trade under a program initiated by the Bush administration—the Proliferation Security Initiative.

U.S. officials have continued to depict Musharraf as an ally. "He's been a stand-up guy when it comes to dealing with the terrorists," said U.S. president George Bush January 1, referring to Islamabad's cooperation with the assault on Afghanistan and with the U.S. military offensive more broadly in the region.

Musharraf's decision to side with the U.S.-led "war on terrorism" has cost him political support inside the country, sparking protests and two recent assassination attempts that he blames on al Qaeda.

His stand is unpopular among high-up military and political leaders who built alliances with the Taliban and al Qaeda forces that operate camps and schools within Pakistan, near its border with Afghanistan.

Musharraf has denied a report in the *Chicago Tribune* that he has given the green light to a coming U.S. military offensive inside Pakistan and in the border region that would involve thousands of troops.

Tribune reporter Christine Spolar said that the projected operation has been dubbed the "spring offensive" inside the Pentagon. "As now envisioned," she wrote, "the offensive would involve Special Operations forces, Army Rangers, and Army ground troops.... A Navy aircraft carrier would be deployed in the Arabian Sea."

"Such an operation almost certainly would demand the cooperation of Musharraf, who previously has allowed only a small number of U.S. Special Operations forces to work alongside Pakistani troops in the semi-autonomous tribal areas," Spolar said.

A Pakistan armed forces spokesman told Reuters January 28, "No foreign forces will operate from Pakistan's territory."

UK auto workers hold one-day strike

BY JULIE CRAWFORD
AND JIM SPAUL

SOLIHULL, England—Workers at the Ford-owned Land Rover car plant here came out on a one-day strike January 26 over pay and conditions. The Solihull factory is one of the biggest car plants in the United Kingdom with a workforce of 8,200.

Workers displayed high spirits in the cold weather conditions, including the pickets at one gate who were caged in by an intimidating high metal fence.

The union is demanding wage "parity with Jaguar and other car plants," said Tim Parker, a regional officer of the union, AMICUS, in an interview with the *Militant*. The current dispute began when the company refused to discuss this demand during annual pay negotiations.

Striking workers and union officials from the three unions who organize the plant—AMICUS, Transport and General Workers' Union (TGWU), and GMB—explained that support for the strike is 100 percent. In addition to their wage demands, there are other issues facing workers in the plant. This was reflected in a sign held up at one of the factory gates that read "Not Just Pay."

Parker described the company's assault on working conditions. "They keep giving us a blank check in working practices," he said. The bosses have been pressing for increased "flexibility" over the last two years, he explained. "They keep coming back for more and workers have had enough of the bullying and intimidation."

For the past two years workers have been working under a system the company dubs "operating time flexibility." Parker explained the meaning of this set-up, "They could ask for 10 extra hours on the working week," he said, meaning that in a 37-hour workweek the company can force workers to put in 47 hours. Since the latter part



Militant/Jim Spaul

Workers at Ford-owned plant in Solihull, England, held one-day strike January 26.

of December there has been an overtime ban in place and workers have withdrawn from the company's flexible working time arrangement.

The company took a decision in late January to end the production of the Rover model, Freelander, at the Solihull plant and shift production to its plant in Halewood, Merseyside near Liverpool instead. The decision to shift the work would create job losses in Solihull of around 1,000 workers. "They like playing off workers in the different regions against each other," explained Parker.

Many of the workers on the picket line explained that they could not be quoted. The company has been carrying out a campaign of bullying and intimidation, and one of the targets of this campaign has been the union.

"Twelve to 18 months ago a new set of management was brought in," explained

Parker. "These new production managers try to rule the plant by dictate. The company is talking about changes to the existing union structures. They want to limit the amount of shop stewards in the plant."

One shop steward on the picket line who did not want to be named said he thought there was roughly one shop steward for every 50 workers.

Another worker, who asked that his name not be used, explained what he thought the stakes were in the fight. "If the company get what they want at this plant then they will do the same at all their other plants."

Workers are set to carry out a second 24-hour strike action on February 9. Workers at another Ford plant in Aveley Essex will be balloted for strike action on February 2 by their unions, the TGWU and AMICUS, following the company's decision to close the plant.