

THE MILITANT

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on Washington picks up steam
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Europe-wide dragnets target the foreign-born

From London to Rome, ‘antiterror’ raids trample on workers’ rights

BY SAM MANUEL

WASHINGTON, D.C.—Under the mantra of “fighting terrorism” used by imperialist governments worldwide, authorities from London to Rome have carried out highly publicized police raids and dozens of arrests throughout Europe. Citing the March 11 Madrid train bombings, they have sought to rationalize detentions without charges, massive wiretapping, increased domestic use of military forces for police work, and other attacks on the rights of working people, especially the foreign-born.

In London, 700 cops conducted 24 early-morning raids on March 30, arresting eight men; two days later they detained a ninth. All nine are British citizens of Pakistani origin. “Antiterrorist” cops, MI5 secret police, and Pakistani secret service agents were involved in the operation, according to the British *Guardian*.

Government spokespeople said they arrested the nine on suspicion of preparing acts of “terrorism.” Police announced the discovery of a large amount of ammonium nitrate fertilizer they said could be used for explosives. Opponents of the dragnet noted that, in a country of gardeners, that allegation should lead to the arrest of a significant percentage of the adult population.

Under British “antiterrorist” legislation, police can jail individuals without

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Militant/Jonathan Silberman

Protesters at April 4 action at Belmarsh prison in London denounce raids by 700 cops who arrested nine Pakistani-born British citizens and claimed “discovery” of large quantity of fertilizer was proof of “terrorist” plot. The protest was called to oppose the jailing without trial of 13 people in a previous “antiterror” sweep in December 2001.

75,000 Venezuelan peasants win land titles

Big farmers try to block implementation of agrarian reform law

BY ARGIRIS MALAPANIS

SAN CARLOS, Venezuela—“On December 23 we took possession of this land,” said Jubir Yauca at a new agricultural camp here. “By the next day, about 250 peasants and their families had moved in. We are now undisputed owners of 39,000 hectares

[1 hectare = 2.47 acres] of arable land. We have fenced it in. And we are on our way toward reclaiming the rest of the land that the big landowners stole from us by force.”

Jubir Yauca, who spoke to *Militant* reporters March 16, is one of six brothers from the indigenous Yauca family—the last

remaining members of the Yauca nation. With the help of many other peasants, the family recently succeeded, after two and a half decades of struggle, in gaining official recognition of the Yauca nation’s ownership of 150,000 hectares of fertile land outside San Carlos, the capital of Cojedes state in northwestern Venezuela.

The Yaucas had announced they didn’t want the land for themselves. They said they would distribute it to landless peasants who have formed cooperatives and are ready to till it. And that’s what they are doing.

Tens of thousands of peasants across Venezuela have made similar gains over the last year, overwhelmingly through hard-fought battles, taking advantage of provisions of the Law on Land and Agricultural Development passed in November 2001.

This law has been one of the most controversial measures enacted by the government headed by President Hugo Chávez. Battles by peasants to implement it have stoked the fury of most big capitalists and landlords and of their allies in Washington.

Between the fall of 2001 and the end of 2003, nearly 75,000 landless peasant families had obtained titles to 5 million acres of land, according to figures issued by Venezuela’s National Land Institute (INTI). More than 15,000 peasants got titles in the last quarter of 2003, which indicates an acceleration of land distribution. Many have also received credit from government agencies at low interest rates.

These peasants, however, are confronting major obstacles in their efforts to solidify their gains by expanding and diversifying

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U.S. forces step up assaults in occupied Iraqi cities

BY PATRICK O’NEILL

U.S. occupation troops initiated a crackdown in early April in the city of Fallujah and in two Baghdad neighborhoods where attacks on U.S.-led forces had taken place.

Fallujah, a largely Sunni Muslim town north of the Iraqi capital, was sealed off by U.S. forces in preparation for stepped-up military assaults. In Baghdad, U.S. troops with tanks and other combat vehicles were sent into Sadr City and other working-class neighborhoods where a Shiite Muslim group has led protests against occupation forces. In both cities the U.S. forces launched air strikes.

In Fallujah, local residents told reporters that several people had been killed when a U.S. warplane dropped bombs on a working-class district after U.S. officers said their troops had come under mortar fire

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Meatpackers’ union protests firing of 350 immigrants in Nebraska plant

BY DAVID ROSENFELD

DAKOTA CITY, Nebraska—United Food and Commercial Workers Local 222 has condemned Tyson for firing 350 immigrant workers from its giant beef slaughterhouse and processing plant here. The firings took place over the month of March.

Workers interviewed March 27 scoffed at the company’s claim that a routine internal audit had “discovered” that workers lacked proper documentation entitling them to work in the United States. Several pointed to a recent decline in production and the upcoming union contract expiration as real reasons for the mass firing.

“The company hired them with these documents, so why are they challenging

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Democrats use 9-11 hearings to boost ‘homeland defense’

BY SAM MANUEL

WASHINGTON, D.C.—The hearings by the Congressional commission on “terrorism” have been used by Democratic and Republican politicians to campaign for stepping up the use of the FBI, CIA, immigration cops, and other police agencies as part of the U.S. government’s “homeland security” offensive.

The focus of the hearings has been the argument, promoted especially by Democrats, that because of “intelligence failures” the Bush administration was unable to prevent the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon.

The most recent attack on political rights carried out in the name of fighting “terrorism” was the extension on April 2 of the requirement that visitors from other countries be photographed and fingerprinted before entering the United States. Since January, visitors from most countries in the world have been subjected to this requirement; citizens of another 27 countries—mostly imperialist nations—have now been added to the list. The move represents one more probe to impose such requirements on U.S. residents.

The National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States, as it is called, was set up by Congress in late 2002. The 10-member bipartisan commission is chaired by Thomas Kean, a former Republican governor of New Jersey, with former congressman Lee Hamilton, an Indiana Democrat, as vice chair. It was set up to “prepare a full and complete account of the circumstances surrounding the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks” and make recommendations for strengthening the government’s “war on terrorism.” Several current and former top officials in the Clinton and Bush administrations have testified before it.

One of the aspects of the hearings that has drawn the most attention is the testimony of Richard Clarke, former counterintelligence chief for the Bush administration. Clarke served in a similar capacity in the administrations of presidents Ronald Reagan,

George Bush senior, and William Clinton.

In his testimony and in his new book *Against All Enemies*, published just days before the commission hearings opened, Clarke asserted that the Bush administration did not do enough in Washington’s “war on terrorism” because of its focus on attacking Iraq.

In his book Clarke says that the day after the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, Bush pulled Clarke and a small group of aides into a room and instructed them to “go back over everything. See if Saddam did this.”

“The rapid shift of focus to Saddam Hussein,” Clarke wrote, “launched an unnecessary and costly war in Iraq that strengthened the fundamentalist, radical Islamic terrorist movement worldwide.”

That argument echoes the main criticism of the administration’s conduct of the war on Iraq made by Democratic Party politicians, all of whom support the current U.S.-led occupation of Iraq but who have offered tactical criticisms about how the war should have been conducted most effectively from the standpoint of U.S. imperialist interests.

The debate around the hearings has often taken a sharply partisan tone, with Democrats trying to score points against the Bush administration. The big-business media devoted many pages, for example, to the controversy over whether National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice was going to appear publicly before the commission. Bush finally announced that Rice would answer questions before the commission under oath. Until then he had refused to do so claiming that it would be a violation of the separation of powers between the executive and legislative branches of government.

Above all, however, what the commission hearings have underscored is the bipartisan character of the U.S. government’s “war on terror,” under the banner of which it has carried out military assaults abroad and attacks on constitutional rights at home.

Support for Patriot Act

Members of the commission have been



Robyn Beck/AFP/Getty Images

U.S. Customs agent photographs woman at Los Angeles airport January 5. As part of new “homeland security” program, visiting citizens from all countries except Canada and Mexico will have photos and fingerprints taken as they enter United States.

unanimous in supporting “homeland security” measures that give more leeway to the FBI, CIA, and other political police agencies to conduct spying and disruption operations, as well as other actions that violate constitutional guarantees.

The commission heads, for example, expressed their support for the USA Patriot Act, which Congress over the coming year will be discussing whether to renew. The Bush administration and politicians in both parties are pressing Congress to reauthorize the law over the coming year. The Patriot Act allows police to carry out arbitrary searches and seizures in private homes and businesses, expands police powers to wiretap phones and personal e-mail, allows domestic CIA spying, and authorizes police to jail immigrants without charges as “terrorist suspects,” among other provisions. This law builds on the 1996 Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act and other laws signed by William Clinton that have expanded police powers, beefed up the immigration police, and undermined constitutional rights.

When asked by a reporter whether Congress should reauthorize the Patriot Act, Hamilton said the provisions in the act that allow a freer use and exchange of information between cop agencies like the FBI and CIA would be “beneficial.”

Kean added, “we had witness after witness tell us that the Patriot Act has been very, very helpful, and if the Patriot Act, or portions of it, had been in place before 9/11, that would have been very helpful.”

At the hearings, Clarke advocated creating a “domestic intelligence” agency within the FBI.

In response to Clarke’s testimony, Senate majority leader William Frist called his criticisms of the Bush administration “outrageous.” Frist read into the *Congressional Record* excerpts of an interview the counterintelligence chief gave in August 2002 in which Clarke said the Bush administration had built on and augmented the “antiterrorism” plans of the Clinton administration and substantially increased resources and funding for the CIA and other

covert activities.

‘Clinton initiated homeland security’

Much of the commission’s deliberations have concentrated on U.S. military assaults abroad carried out in the name of combating al Qaeda, under both the Clinton and Bush administrations.

According to a transcript of the hearings, Clarke told the commission that fighting “terrorism” in general and al Qaeda in particular was an “extraordinarily high priority of the Clinton administration.” He said that, as counterterrorism chief, almost everything he asked for by way of support from the Clinton administration he received. “We did enormously increase the counterterrorism budget of the federal government,” Clarke said, and that the administration initiated many programs, including one that is now called homeland security.”

Clarke noted that many of the provisions implemented by the Bush administration had been carried over from measures developed under the Clinton administration. “All of the things recommended back in January [2002] were those things on the table in September” 2001, Clarke said.

Clarke rejected the notion that the Clinton administration was reluctant to use military force to fight “terrorism.” He said that Clinton began to use military force in the first months of his administration.

In its first days in office, in fact, the Clinton administration launched missile attacks on Iraq. In 1998, using as a pretext the bombing of the U.S. embassies in Tanzania and Kenya, the U.S. government launched missile strikes on Khartoum, the capital of Sudan, and on what it called “terrorist facilities” in Afghanistan, near the border with Pakistan. The Clinton administration also carried out an occupation of Somalia in 1993–94, invaded Haiti in 1994, and waged a devastating bombing campaign against Yugoslavia in 1999. Throughout those years, Washington carried out repeated air attacks on Iraq while maintaining a brutal economic embargo against the country.

In August 1998, Clarke said, “I recom-

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Building of April 25 march on Washington picks up momentum

BY LEA SHERMAN

WASHINGTON, D.C.—Efforts to build a mass turnout for the April 25 march on Washington in defense of a woman's right to choose abortion have picked up steam nationwide. On campuses across the country, students are rapidly filling up buses for the trip to the U.S. capital. In many cities, volunteers have been leafleting at bus and subway stations, in working-class neighborhoods, and other areas to involve broad new forces in the demonstration.

The march and rally is sponsored by the National Organization for Women (NOW), NARAL Pro-Choice America, National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health, Black Women's Health Imperative, Feminist Majority, and Planned Parenthood Federation of America.

In Birmingham, Alabama, youth as well as veteran defenders of the right to choose are involved in an action coalition that has been meeting since November to build the demonstration. So far, they report, one bus is full and they are working to fill a second.

Students from the University of Alabama in Birmingham and in Tuscaloosa have reserved many of the seats.

At the Birmingham campus a new student group, the Feminist Alliance, besides taking part in the biweekly meetings of the city coalition, has been holding numerous fund-raising events to provide scholarships for those who can't afford the full price of a bus ticket.

Representatives of Planned Parenthood in Houston report that the first 100 plane tickets they reserved to take women's rights supporters to Washington have already been sold. Members of Planned Parenthood, the NOW chapter at the University of Houston, other groups, and numerous individuals have been taking part in "meet-up sessions" every second Tuesday. At each meeting volunteers have taken stacks of leaflets to distribute.

In response to the leafleting, students at the Prairie View campus of Texas A & M, a historically Black agricultural college, are meeting to plan a delegation to the march.

Here in Washington more than 40 stu-

Thousands march in Argentina for a woman's right to choose abortion



March 8 rally in Buenos Aires for the decriminalization of abortion in Argentina. Thousands of women joined actions across Argentina on International Women's Day to demand women's right to abortion; free abortion services at public hospitals and clinics; free, unrestricted distribution of condoms and other contraceptives; and mandatory sex education in public schools.

dents and others gathered March 29 at George Washington University (GWU) for a forum to build the march. One of the speakers, Megan Tackney, a sophomore at GWU who is active in the coalition on campus, said 13 pro-choice organizations on campus are building the national action. So far 250 students have signed up to be part

of the GWU delegation.

Tackney said the anti-abortion rights group on campus, Colonials for Life, had also stepped up its activities. "They're small, only 10-15 of them, and they have little credibility even among the college Republicans because they are also against birth control," she added.

Janine Dukes in Birmingham and Jacquie Henderson in Houston contributed to this article.

Abortion curbs hit working women harder

BY PAUL PEDERSON

One of the most recent attacks on a woman's right to choose is the law, signed by the White House last fall, that bans an abortion procedure for the first time since the landmark 1973 Supreme Court ruling that decriminalized abortion. The demagogically named Partial-Birth Abortion Ban Act, approved in Congress with wide bipartisan support, makes it a crime for doctors to use a late-term abortion method called intact dilation and extraction.

This is among the latest in a long string of government measures aimed at chipping away at the right to abortion. This piecemeal approach has been dictated by the fact that opponents of women's rights have failed to push back the widespread support among the U.S. population for a woman's right to choose.

Since the 1973 *Roe v. Wade* Supreme Court decision there has been a steady, bipartisan effort by capitalist politicians and the wealthy employers they represent to impose curbs on this right. The impact of these restrictions has fallen overwhelmingly on working people.

One of the opening salvos in this reactionary campaign was the 1976 Hyde Amendment, a law banning most federal funding for abortions under Medicaid, a program for the most impoverished layers of working-class women. Today only 21 states provide government financing for abortion through state programs.

Access to abortion has been restricted in different ways over the past two decades.

In the years following *Roe* there was a steady increase in the number of abortion providers, with the total peaking in the early 1980s at close to 3,000. In 1980 nearly half of that total were hospitals.

Today, however, under pressure from capitalist politicians on the state and local levels, the total number has dropped to just over 1,800. The number of hospitals providing abortions has dropped to almost a third its former level—just above 500.

Twenty-seven states have laws that require women seeking an abortion to undergo special "counseling"—21 of those states require a mandatory waiting period, usually 24 hours. According to the Alan Guttmacher Institute, an organization that conducts research on sexual and reproductive health, "Counseling provisions vary from state to state, but they often include information designed to discourage women from obtaining abortion, such as telling them that the father of the fetus is liable for child support, providing a list of abortion-alternative and adoption agencies, or offering to show photographs of fetuses at various stages of development."

The impact of these waiting periods comes down disproportionately on working-class women—especially workers and farmers living in rural areas.

Some 87 percent of U.S. counties have no health facilities or doctors that provide abortions.

Nearly one-fourth of all women who obtain abortions must travel more than 50 miles to the nearest provider. Having to wait 24 hours and undergo "counseling" often means two long trips, lost time at work, and increased expenses.

Like the cost of health care in general, the medical costs of abortion itself have risen steadily, and the overwhelming majority—close to three-fourths—are paid for out-of-pocket. Thirteen percent are covered by insurance policies. Four states have laws prohibiting private insurance from covering abortion except as an optional rider to the policy at additional cost. The average cost is \$364, but the range of charges is very

wide—from \$150 to \$4,000.

Young women, particularly young working-class women, face added obstacles. Thirty-two states require parental notification for women under age 18 seeking abortion. Only one-third of all public schools include discussion on abortion in their curricula. A 1999 survey of middle school and high school teachers reported that 23 percent taught abstinence as the only means of reducing risk of sexually transmitted diseases and pregnancy.

Despite these barriers, an estimated one in every three women will have an abortion before reaching the age of 45. A firm majority of women defend access to abortion and view it as their right, regardless of the continuing effort by opponents of women's rights to whittle away at it.

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Striking miners in Utah press fight for safety on the job

BY ANNE CARROLL
AND GUILLERMO ESQUIVEL

HUNTINGTON, Utah—A special investigator from the federal Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) office in the nearby town of Castle Dale, Utah, came to talk to striking coal miners on the picket line here March 29 as part of an investigation of safety conditions at the Co-Op mine. The miners, on strike to demand recognition of the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA), are fighting for safe working conditions, benefits, improved wages, and an end to company abuse.

The MSHA investigator showed the miners a list of those he wanted to interview. The strikers on the list had been named in citations that the federal safety agency issued to the owners of Co-Op mine and the company's trainer, José Ortega, regarding the lack of training received by the miners.

The investigation started in October 2003 after many Co-Op miners approached the MSHA office in the nearby city of Price to report unsafe conditions, improper training, and injuries on the job. Three miners gave testimony on March 31 to the local MSHA office in Castle Dale.

Under federal law, inexperienced underground miners are required to take a 32-hour classroom course and an eight-hour orientation at the mine site. Each following year, all miners are required to take an eight-hour refresher course provided by the company.

At the Co-Op mine, for many years the company employee giving these classes has

been Ortega. Miners report, however, that he has given only about six hours of training on the 32-hour class and as little as two hours on the refresher course at his house, and that for new miner training he charges as much as \$350, in cash only.

Ricardo Chávez, a miner at Co-Op for one year, reported, "Ortega gave me the annual refresher at his house and charged me \$100. He showed me videos, mostly in English, that I didn't understand. He told me not to worry and, if a MSHA inspector ever asked me, to tell him I received all the required training."

Chávez added, "For nearly an hour I told the MSHA investigator everything. Almost every miner at Co-Op has been trained by Ortega and everyone has a similar story." According to Chávez, the investigator said the investigation could result in criminal charges against the company and Ortega.

More workers are scheduled to meet with MSHA on what the strikers say are training violations by Co-Op and its trainer.

The next day, Thomas Elmo Williams, an artist and former underground coal miner, visited the picket line. Williams was a member of UMWA Local 6363 at the Hiawatha Mine in Utah for 14 years, where he was a roof bolter. The mine closed in 1995.

"I challenge all residents of Carbon and Emery counties to reach out, be compassionate, and help support these striking miners," said Williams. "I spent many years at the picket lines myself. It moves my heart to see such unity the miners really



Militant/Anne Carroll

Pickets at the Co-Op mine were visited March 29 by a mine safety inspector (center, with white hat). A boss (right) tried to intimidate strikers by videotaping the scene.

believe in."

Following the closing of the Hiawatha mine in 1995 Williams became a professional artist. He presented a letter to the strikers that explained that he came "to take pictures of you on the picket line. I will then do a painting representing you and your endeavors."

Williams told the strikers, "Don't give up. I come from a long heritage of union miners in West Virginia. My family stood on picket lines in Matewan. If you believe in what you are doing the union will be the best thing for you. Your working conditions will drastically change. I will do everything to represent you well and acquire the largest amount for the painting, and 100 percent will come back to you."

The artist, who has painted more than 400

oil paintings of scenes from the coalfields and of miners, has a gallery in Helper, Utah, where he lives. Williams contacted the *Sun Advocate* in Price, Utah, to ask that a reporter accompany him that day to the picket line to cover the story. "I'll make sure they do a good story on your strike," he said.

Juan Salazar, one of the leaders of the Co-Op strike, told *Sun Advocate* reporter Rick Shaw, "I firmly believe in what we're doing. We will win dignity and respect. We are not going to give up. We are going to win this. We are not taking steps backward, but are going forward. This can be an example to other workers who may have to stand up to their bosses. It has been hard, but together we're moving forward."

Mark Reynolds, a Co-Op boss, drove down to the picket line, got out of his truck, and began demonstratively videotaping Williams and reporter Shaw talking to the strikers. The strikers said this was a common boss practice. They reported that Reynolds taped them the day before, when the MSHA investigator was talking to the miners, .

On March 27, some 50 supporters of the Co-Op strike picketed the East Side Market, a small grocery store in Salt Lake City, Utah, owned by the Kingston family, the notorious labor-hating businessmen who also own the mine. The spirited picket line was joined by members of the energy workers union PACE, the United Steelworkers of America, and Jobs with Justice, as well as students from the University of Utah, Co-Op strikers, and many others. Strikers were interviewed by the Channel 2, a local Salt Lake television station.

Send financial donations and letters of support to: Co-Op Miners, c/o UMWA District 22, 525 East 100 South, Price, UT 84501. Earmark Checks to the Co-Op Miners' Fund.

Court rules Chicago packers can sue AMPAC

BY ROLLANDE GIRARD

CHICAGO—Meat packers fighting an anti-union plant closing here won a court ruling that aids their demands for back pay and benefits. The March 25 decision of the Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals in Chicago allows workers to pursue their class action suit against the American Meat Packing Corporation (AMPAC)—a reversal of a decision this court had made a year earlier.

The workers are charging the company with shutting its factory without giving them the legally mandated 60-day advance notice. AMPAC claims it couldn't have "reasonably" foreseen the plant shutdown, in order to get around the Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification Act (WARN Act), which requires companies to give 60 days advance notice to its employees of a plant closing or pay them back wages and benefits for these 60 days.

The company abruptly closed its facilities without notice to its 350 employees on Nov. 16, 2001. Leading up to the shutdown, AMPAC bosses began farming work out from the Chicago plant, which was organized by the United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW), to its nonunion plants. Following the shutdown the company told the union workers they could start as "new hires" at their non-union plant in Des Moines. The workers filed suit against the meatpacking company five months later, arguing that it had violated the WARN Act. They are demanding two months' severance pay, an extension of medical benefits, unpaid vacation pay, and two half-days pay still owed them by the company.

At the January 23 hearing on case, the company lawyer said the 60-day notice should be waived because the expense of establishing sanitary production facilities was "unforeseeable." The AMPAC bosses claim they couldn't comply with United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) regulations because they didn't expect the government agency would call for the building of a new cooler, which would cost \$3 million. And we "still wouldn't know if they will be satisfied," said AMPAC's attorney. "It was not foreseeable that the plant would close."

The WARN Act states that the notice period can be reduced or eliminated if "business circumstances that were not reasonably foreseeable as of the time that

notice would have been required."

Jorge Sanchez, the lawyer defending those plaintiffs who were members of the UFCW, explained that the USDA had issued many orders to the company over a period of two years and finally ordered it to fix the problems. "The USDA said that you wouldn't be able to operate until you fix them. The company had plenty of time to prevent the unsanitary conditions, and to go by the USDA regulations," he said. Not following the regulations meant that the plant would have to be shut down.

AMPAC slaughtered, butchered, and packed between 3,000 and 3,400 hogs per day. In the months preceding the shutdown, the USDA had issued several noncompliance notices to the company. It cited the company for water dripping onto

the product, the presence of grease and oil on hams, rust, hog carcasses on the floor, flaking paint, rodent droppings, and the presence of meat with open abscesses on cutting tables.

Rufino Peña, one of the plaintiffs in the case, worked at the company for 27 years as a butcher. Whether the workers win or not in court, he said, "it would have been worth it because so many companies abuse people. It is worth it if other people learn from this."

Another 15 to 20 sanitation workers who were not included under the UFCW contract with AMPAC are planning to file a similar suit against the company as well.

Rollande Girard is a garment worker in Chicago.

Washington-area grocery bosses gain pact adding multi-tier wage and benefit package

BY JOHN HAWKINS

WASHINGTON, D.C.—Thousands of grocery workers at Giant and Safeway grocery stores throughout the Maryland, northern Virginia, and Washington, D.C., area voted March 30 to approve a new four-year contract with the two food distribution giants. The pact between the two companies and the United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) Locals 400 and 27, which was set to expire that night, introduces an additional tier in wages and benefits.

Safeway and Giant broadly publicized plans to hire strikebreakers if the workers walked out, and the contract negotiations and vote here took place against the backdrop of the five-month strike by 60,000 grocery workers in California that ended in March. The supermarket bosses there won the bulk of their demands, imposing a steep two-tier wage and benefit setup.

Several reports in the big business media here characterized the new agreement as a victory for both the companies and the union.

On health care, which many workers considered the central issue in negotiations, significant changes were made in the new agreement. The annual deductible current employees covered by the existing plans will increase to \$200 from \$100.

The maximum amount workers will pay each year from their own pockets will increase from \$2,500 to \$4,000. Prescription drug co-payments will also increase.

Workers hired after March 30, 2004, will work under a new plan. While maintaining the \$4,000 maximum out-of-pocket expense ceiling, the new plan raises the deductible to \$300, increases prescription drug co-payments by a greater percentage, and mandates a 25 percent employee co-payment for health insurance premiums.

Wage increases for the majority of full-time workers will be \$1.25 over four years. Many employees, however, work part time in lower-paid classifications and will receive a wage increase of 65 cents to \$1.05 over four years.

Another significant change is the premium wage workers hired after March 30 will receive for Sunday work—\$1.00 for the first year of the contract, \$1.50 for the second year, and \$2.00 for the third and fourth years.

Darryl Johnson, a food clerk and cashier at a Safeway in Washington, D.C., told the *Militant*, "I thought the contract was pretty good. But I disagree with what the new workers will get. That's the bad stuff. They should have gotten the same things we did when we started." Johnson,

who has worked for Safeway for five years, is still classified as part-time, even though he works 40 plus hours per week.

Local 400 President James Lowthers told the *Washington Post* that while he opposes creating new pay and benefit tiers, arguing that they pit new workers against older ones, the presence of such a tier in the new contract would encourage workers to remain at the companies for a longer period of time. "We would prefer not to do it," he said, "but contracts are compromises."

Buddy Mays, president of UFCW Local 27 in Baltimore, said, "this contract will probably be the model contract for the entire nation," the *Baltimore Sun* reported.

A cashier clerk at a Safeway store in Washington, D.C., who declined to give his name, told the *Militant*, "This is my last contract, so that influenced my thinking. People here were ready to fight, and the Teamsters and others we talked to were ready to honor our picket lines. But in the end this was about the best we were going to get considering what happened in California."

John Hawkins is a meat cutter and member of United Food and Commercial Workers Local 400. Janice Lynn and Nancy Boyasko also contributed to this article.

‘Militant’ campaign at 613 subs in 2 weeks!

BY PAUL PEDERSON

“At a literature table we set up near the city center in Edinburgh April 3, we got a lively response to the Socialist Workers Party statement in the *Militant* responding to the ‘antiterror’ campaign in Europe,” writes Pamela Holmes from Scotland. “The statement provoked discussion because, over the previous week, the British government had conducted sweeping arrests and doubled the number of days that people can be held in custody without charges from seven to 14.” Four people subscribed to the *Militant* and another 20 purchased a copy of the paper, she reports.

The response described by Holmes to what the *Militant* and *Perspectiva Mundial* offer working people is typical of reports received over the past week. The international subscription drive has steamed into its third week at 31 percent of the international goal in only the first 16 days. Campaigners have sold 613 subscriptions to the *Militant* and 146 to *Perspectiva Mundial*. They are also reaching out broadly with a special Pathfinder Supersaver Sale offering dozens of books and pamphlets at big discounts.

In Toronto, the drive got a boost when “Reinaldo, a driver originally from El Salvador, subscribed to the *Militant* with his wife and then decided to join the sales campaign,” writes Patricia O’Beirne. “In a week’s time he sold seven subs to *Perspectiva Mundial* and a copy of *Cuba and the Coming American Revolution* in Spanish at two meetings discussing politics in El Salvador.”

Among the new subscribers are 20 coal miners, whose subscriptions were collected at mine portals, on door-to-door sales teams, and on the picket line at the Co-Op mine in Utah over the past two weeks.

Janine Dukes in Birmingham, Alabama, sends this de-

scription of the success she’s had at the textile mill where she works.

“I’ve been showing the ‘Build April 25 march on Washington’ supplement advertising the Pathfinder Supersaver Sale to co-workers at the mill,” Dukes writes. “The weaver on the job next to mine purchased *Malcolm X Talks to Young People* and *Marianas in Combat* after looking over the ads. He was intrigued by the picture on the cover of *Marianas* of the all-women platoon in Cuba’s revolutionary army. Another co-worker took the supplement and filled in the form for a subscription to the *Militant*. Four co-workers now subscribe to the *Militant* or *Perspectiva Mundial*.”

In many cities, campaigners are getting an especially warm response from those planning to attend the April 25 march on Washington for a woman’s right to choose abortion.

From Detroit, Ellen Berman writes, “I sold three subscriptions volunteering as a clinic escort at an abortion clinic in the area. Every Saturday a small group of ‘right-to-lifers’ gather at this clinic holding huge blow-ups of aborted fetuses and yelling at the women going into the clinic. There were only two of us acting as escorts, myself and another woman, a retired typesetter. She said she has been volunteering once a month for the last two years.

“We had lots of time to talk. When I told her I was a socialist, she said she votes Socialist, or Communist, or anything that’s not Democratic or Republican because, she said, they are both the same. When I showed her the *Militant*, she liked it so much she bought a six-month subscription



Militant/Lea Sherman

Students at the University of Virginia stop by table with Pathfinder books and the *Militant* at Virginia Festival of the Book March 27 in Charlottesville, Virginia.

for herself, an introductory subscription for her neighbor, and one for her daughter, who lives in Hawaii.”

Maggie Trowe reports from Boston, “We set up a table with the *Militant* and Pathfinder books at a conference called ‘From Abortion Rights to Social Justice: Building the Movement for Reproductive Freedom’ at Hampshire College in Amherst, Massachusetts. The conference drew more than 300 students. We sold every single Supersaver book we had on the table—31—plus eight other titles. Eight students signed up for subscriptions—seven to the *Militant* and one to *Perspectiva Mundial*.”

Campaigners in Los Angeles and Hazelton, Pennsylvania, have raised their goals. The total of local goals still falls 110 subscriptions shy of the 2,000 needed in the drive.

Fund meetings feature ‘Militant’ reporting trips

BY PATRICK O’NEILL

Supporters of the *Militant* and *Perspectiva Mundial* and the fund drive to help cover the costs of the two publications have begun calling and visiting potential contributors, buttonholing co-workers and fellow unionists, sending out mailings, shaking donation cans on street campaign tables, and organizing public meetings with attractive political programs.

A number of these meetings will feature *Militant* correspondents back from recent reporting teams—to Palestine, Venezuela, and Cuba (see calendar on this page). In addition to helping cover basic publishing costs, the eight-week international fund—which aims to raise \$85,000—will help make further such reporting trips possible.

The accompanying chart shows we need to give daily attention to collecting pledges and winning new contributions. Fund supporters can take their cue from the flying start and campaign momentum of the *Militant* and *Perspectiva Mundial* subscription drive.

Ellen Brickley in Boston told the *Militant* April 6 that she and other supporters of the socialist press have made a point of talking about the fund when they call *Militant* subscribers about renewing their subscriptions. “One long-time reader sent in \$70—\$35 for a 12-month renewal, and \$35 for the fund,” she said.

From Sydney, Australia, Linda Harris reported that supporters there raised around \$100 toward their \$1,500 goal at a March 28 barbecue to celebrate the completion of the Communist League campaign for mayor of Canterbury.

Candidate Ron Poulsen said that communist workers and youth had used the campaign to build solidarity with working-class resistance to the bosses’ attacks—including large-

scale protests by Aboriginal people against cop violence in Sydney—and to oppose the military-police interventions abroad of the imperialist Australian government.

“One of Poulsen’s meatpacking co-workers sent his apologies for being unable to come, and gave a \$10 donation to the fund,” said Harris. In addition, she said, “Three young people from south Korea came to the barbecue after meeting supporters of the *Militant* on a campaign table that featured a placard saying, ‘U.S. troops out of the Korean peninsula!’”

To make a contribution, send your check or money order, payable to the *Militant*, to 306 W. 37th Street, 10th floor, New York NY 10018.

Militant/Perspectiva Mundial Spring Subscription Drive March 20–May 17: Week 2 of 8					
Country	Militant Goal	Sold	%	PM Goal	Sold
UNITED KINGDOM					
Edinburgh	20	11	55%		
London	40	20	50%	10	1
UK total	60	31	52%	10	1
NEW ZEALAND					
Christchurch	20	9	45%	1	0
Auckland	25	9	36%	1	0
N.Z. total	45	18	40%	2	0
SWEDEN					
Gothenburg	14	6	43%	4	1
Stockholm	15	4	27%	8	1
SWEDEN Total	29	10	34%	12	2
AUSTRALIA	45	15	33%	7	3
UNITED STATES					
Omaha	50	23	46%	40	15
Des Moines	50	22	44%	25	7
Washington	55	24	44%	20	3
NE Pennsylvania*	45	19	42%	10	3
Utah	30	12	40%	15	7
Chicago	80	32	40%	35	9
Houston	55	21	38%	15	2
Newark	110	42	38%	35	5
New York	200	73	37%	60	18
San Francisco	120	42	35%	40	10
Atlanta	58	20	34%	20	2
Birmingham	30	10	33%	8	2
Philadelphia	60	20	33%	10	0
Twin Cities	75	23	31%	35	8
Boston	85	26	31%	50	14
Pittsburgh	50	15	30%	3	1
Miami	70	17	24%	18	6
Seattle	60	14	23%	10	2
Los Angeles*	135	31	23%	50	8
Cleveland	30	6	20%	8	2
Detroit	50	9	18%	8	1
Tampa	30	5	17%	10	2
Western Col.	30	4	13%	15	0
U.S. total	1558	510	33%	540	127
ICELAND	18	5	28%	1	0
CANADA					
Montreal	25	5	20%	10	1
Vancouver	60	12	20%	9	5
Toronto	50	7	14%	7	8
CANADA total	135	24	18%	26	14
Int'l totals	1890	613	31%	598	146
Goal/Should be	2000	500	25%	600	150
IN THE UNIONS					
	Militant Goal	Sold	%	PM Goal	Sold
UNITED STATES					
UMWA	50	17	34%	12	3
UFCW	110	24	22%	123	44
UNITE	50	7	14%	40	7
Total	210	48	23%	175	54
CANADA					
UFCW	13	3	23%	5	1
UNITE	9		0%	5	0
Total	22	3	14%	10	1
AUSTRALIA					
AMIEU	10	1	10%		
NEW ZEALAND					
NDU	2	0	0%	1	0
MWU	2	0	0%		
Total	4	0	0%	1	0
SWEDEN					
Livs	4	0	0%	1	0
*raised goal					

AMIEU—Australasian Meat Industry Employees’ Union; LIVS—Food Workers Union; MWU—Meat Workers Union; NDU—National Distribution Union; UFCW—United Food and Commercial Workers; UMWA—United Mine Workers of America.

—MILITANT LABOR FORUMS—

PENNSYLVANIA

Philadelphia

How Women’s Right to Abortion Was Won and the Fight to Defend It Today. Speaker: Betsey Farley, Socialist Workers Party. 7:00 p.m. Sat., April 17. 5237 N. 5th Street. Tel: (215) 324-7020.

OHIO

Cleveland

Resisting Israeli Regime’s Military Boot: the Palestinian Struggle for National Liberation. *Militant* Fund meeting. Speaker: Paul Pederson, Young Socialists, back from March 5–11 solidarity visit to Palestine. Sat., April 17. 6:30 p.m. dinner, 7:30 p.m. program. 11018 Lorain Ave. Tel: (216) 688-1190.

UTAH

Price

Venezuela: Eyewitness Account. *Militant* Fund meeting. Speaker: Olivia Nelson, Young Socialists, back from *Militant* reporting trip to Venezuela. Sat., April 17. 6:00 p.m. dinner, 7:30 p.m. program. 11 W. Main Street. Tel: (435) 613-1091.

NEW ZEALAND

Christchurch

Oppose Spanish Government’s Exploitation of Rail Bombings in Deepening the Assault on Working People in the Region. Fri., April 16. 7:00 p.m. Pathfinder Press Bookshop, 129 Gloucester St., Christchurch. Tel: (03) 365-6055.

\$85,000 Militant/PM Fund March 20—May 17: Week 2 of 8			
	Goal	Paid	%
Los Angeles	8,000	1,765	22%
New York	11,000	2,265	21%
Boston	3,000	335	11%
Twin Cities	4,000	400	10%
Houston	3,500	300	9%
Newark	3,500	290	8%
Omaha	440	35	8%
NE Pennsylvania	1,600	100	6%
Washington	2,800	165	6%
Detroit	3,000	100	3%
Cleveland	1,200	35	3%
Pittsburgh	3,800	100	3%
San Francisco	8,500	100	1%
Chicago	5,000	50	1%
Seattle	6,000	60	1%
Atlanta	5,000	0	0%
Birmingham	2,000	0	0%
Des Moines	1,100	0	0%
Miami	1,700	0	0%
Philadelphia	3,300	0	0%
Tampa	1,300	0	0%
Utah	1,500	0	0%
Western Col.	2,000	0	0%
U.S. Total	83,240	6,100	7%
United Kingdom	1,000	20	2%
New Zealand	1,600	5	0%
Canada	5,000	10	0%
Australia	1,500	0	0%
Iceland	200	0	0%
Sweden	500	0	0%
France	300	0	0%
Int'l Total	93,340	6,135	7%
Goal/ Should be	85,000	22,560	25%

‘Colonel, they didn’t know it was impossible’

Account of 1958 revolutionary offensive that toppled Batista dictatorship in Cuba

Reprinted below is a selection from *Aldabonazo: Inside the Cuban Revolutionary Underground, 1952–58*, by Armando Hart, recently published by Pathfinder in English and Spanish editions. Hart was a central organizer of the urban underground during the Cuban revolutionary struggle, and is one of the historic leaders of the Cuban Revolution.

This account of the struggle to overthrow the U.S.-backed Batista dictatorship, spearheaded by the July 26 Movement and the Rebel Army under the leadership of Fidel Castro, describes the events from the perspective of revolutionary cadres organized in the cities.

The *Militant* is publishing a series of excerpts from the book. This week’s selection is taken from Chapter 9, “1958: From Prison: The Isle of Pines to Victory.” In it Hart describes the final revolutionary offensive, as the Rebel Army columns under the command of Fidel Castro, Ernesto Che Guevara, Camilo Cienfuegos, Juan Almeida, and Raúl Castro advanced toward victory. During this time he was imprisoned on the Isle of Pines along with hundreds of other political prisoners. When Batista fled Cuba on Jan. 1, 1959, Hart and other leaders of the July 26 Movement organized the prisoners to seize the prison compound and then take control of the entire Isle of Pines.

Hart refers to Ramón Barquín, an army officer who had been jailed for his role in an anti-Batista military conspiracy in 1956. He was released the day Batista fled the country as part of a U.S.-backed attempt to replace the dictator with a military junta to forestall a Rebel Army victory, a maneuver that failed as the revolutionary forces prevailed.

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BY ARMANDO HART

Inside the prison we had a clandestine radio that was operated by compañero Casto Amador. It was the final weeks of December 1958. We spent the night of the 24th listening to the news about the advance of the rebel troops. We learned that the forces under Almeida’s command were approaching Santiago, that Camilo and Che were marching toward the center of the island, and that various towns in that region had been captured.

Regarding the westward invasion by the columns led by Camilo and Che, Barquín said, “That’s not possible; it’s not feasible militarily.” And a compañero answered him, “Colonel, they did it because they didn’t know it was impossible.” The general atmosphere in the cellblock was one of an ascending revolution.

It has been said that Ramón Barquín was promoting a coup d’état from inside the prison, based on his contacts in the army and his connections with the U.S. embassy, and that his goal was to neutralize the victory of the revolution. Given his political background, it would have been absurd for him not to try to accomplish that, since it reflected his way of thinking.

Barquín was not a member of the July 26 Movement, and although we regarded him as a military man with democratic and



Granma archives

Members of the Rebel Army column led by Ernesto Che Guevara celebrate the liberation of a town in Las Villas province, Cuba, in December 1958.

constitutionalist ideas, we knew he was not a man of the revolution....

On January 8, 1959, the commander in chief and his victorious guerrilla combatants triumphantly entered Havana. Fidel was coming back four and a half years after his departure from Cuba, just as he had promised, with “the tyranny beheaded at our feet.”

The guerrilla force, and around it the development of an armed popular movement, was transformed into an effective form of struggle to achieve the revolutionary victory. Fidel’s tactics and strategy of the guerrilla struggle were conceived, brought to life, and reached epic levels during that brief but historic time.

During the second year of the war,

How Rebel Army took the town of Guisa

The following is an excerpt from a Dec. 1, 1958, speech by Fidel Castro, broadcast on the Rebel Army’s radio station, which reported on the victory of the revolutionary forces in the battle of Guisa in the Sierra Maestra mountains, one of the turning points in the revolutionary war that spelled the doom of the Batista dictatorship. A month later the dictatorship collapsed and Rebel Army forces entered Havana.

BY FIDEL CASTRO

“Yesterday at 9 p.m., after ten days of intense combat, our forces entered Guisa; the battle took place within sight of Bayamo, where the dictatorship has its command center and the bulk of its forces.

“The action at Guisa began at exactly 8:30 a.m. on November 20 when our forces intercepted an enemy patrol that made the trip from Guisa to Bayamo on a daily basis. The patrol was turned back, and that same day the first enemy reinforcements arrived. At 4:00 p.m. a T-17 thirty-ton tank was destroyed by a powerful land mine: the impact of the explosion was such that the tank was thrown several meters through the air, falling forward with its wheels up and its cab smashed in on the pavement of the road. Hours before that, a truck full of soldiers had been blown up by another mine. At 6:00 p.m. the reinforcements withdrew.

“On the following day, the enemy advanced, supported by Sherman tanks,

and was able to reach Guisa, leaving a reinforcement in the local garrison.

“On the 22nd, our troops, exhausted from two days of fighting, took up positions on the road from Bayamo to Guisa.

“On the 23rd, an enemy troop tried to advance along the road from Corojo and was repulsed. On the 25th, an infantry battalion, led by two T-17 tanks, advanced along the Bayamo-Guisa road, guarding a convoy of fourteen trucks.

“At two kilometers from this point, the rebel troops fired on the convoy, cutting off its retreat, while a mine paralyzed the lead tank.

“Then began one of the most violent combats that has taken place in the Sierra Maestra. Inside the Guisa garrison, the complete battalion that came in reinforcement, along with two T-17 tanks, was now within the rebel lines. At 6:00 p.m., the enemy had to abandon all its trucks, using them as a barricade tightly encircling the two tanks. At 10:00 p.m., while a battery of mortars attacked them, rebel recruits, armed with picks and shovels, opened a ditch in the road next to the tank that had been destroyed on the 20th, so that between the tank and the ditch, the other two T-17 tanks within the lines were prevented from escaping.

“They remained isolated, without food or water, until the morning of the 27th when, in another attempt to break the line, two battalions of reinforcements brought from Bayamo advanced with Sherman tanks to the site of the action. Throughout the day of the 27th the reinforcements were fought. At 6:00 p.m., the enemy artillery began a retreat under cover of the Sherman tanks, which succeeded in freeing one of the T-17 tanks that were inside the lines; on the field, full of dead soldiers, an enormous quantity of arms was left behind, including 35,000 bullets, 14 trucks, 200 knapsacks, and a T-17 tank in perfect condition, along with abundant 37-millimeter cannon shot. The action wasn’t over—a rebel column intercepted the enemy in retreat along the Central Highway and caused it new casualties, obtaining more ammunition and arms.

“On the 28th, two rebel squads, led by the captured tank, advanced toward Guisa. At 2:30 a.m. on the 29th, the rebels took up positions, and the tank managed to place itself facing the Guisa army quarters. The enemy, entrenched in numerous buildings, gave intense fire. The tank’s cannon had

Raúl left the Sierra Maestra to organize the Second Front; Almeida advanced to the outskirts of Santiago and organized the Third Front. In the final months, Che and Camilo marched westward across the immense plain that begins in Bayamo and Manzanillo and extends through Las Tunas, Camagüey, and Ciego de Avila up to the Escambray mountains, and then settled in the center of the island—a march with which they were commemorating the heroic feat of Gómez and Maceo sixty years earlier.

Fidel remained in the Sierra fighting decisive battles, directing from there the strategy of the war, and becoming the most extraordinary popular leader of Our America.

The victory of the Rebel Army crowned the feat, and the liberators entered Santiago de Cuba, conquered Moncada, “avenged” the dead, and won the right to “break the hard crust of colonial rule.”

Popular insurrection plus general strike was the revolution’s final formula for eradicating the ignominious regime born on March 10, 1952.

The revolution of the peasants, workers, and students—under the leadership of the one-time university student Fidel Castro—had triumphed.

A decisive stage of Cuban history was drawing to a close. In twenty-five months four and a half centuries of colonial domination were swept away forever, a synthesis of almost a hundred years of struggle for independence and freedom.

already fired fifty shots when two bazooka shots from the enemy killed its engine, but the tank’s cannon continued firing until its ammunition was exhausted and the men inside lowered the cannon tube. Then occurred an act of unparalleled heroism: rebel Lieutenant Leopoldo Cintras Frías, who was operating the tank’s machine gun, removed it from the tank, and despite being wounded, crawled under intense crossfire and managed to carry away the heavy weapon.

“Meanwhile, that same day, four enemy battalions advanced from separate points: along the road from Bayamo to Guisa, along the road from Bayamo to Corojo, and along the one from Santa Rita to Guisa.

“All of the enemy forces from Bayamo, Manzanillo, Yara, Estrada Palma, and Baire were mobilized to smash us. The column that advanced along the road from Corojo was repulsed after two hours of combat. The advance of the battalions that came along the road from Bayamo to Guisa was halted, and they encamped two kilometers from Guisa; those that advanced along the road from Corralillo were also turned back.

“The battalions that encamped two kilometers from Guisa tried to advance during the entire day of the 30th; at 4:00 p.m., while our forces were fighting them, the Guisa garrison abandoned the town in hasty flight, leaving behind abundant arms and armaments. At 9:00 p.m., our vanguard entered the town of Guisa. Enemy supplies seized included a T-17 tank—captured, lost, and recaptured; 94 weapons (guns and machine guns, Springfield and Garand); 12 60-millimeter mortars; one 91-millimeter mortar; a bazooka; seven 30-caliber tripod machine guns; 50,000 bullets; 130 Garand grenades; 70 howitzers of 60- and 81-millimeter mortar; 20 bazooka rockets; 200 knapsacks, 160 uniforms, 14 transport trucks; food; and medicine.

“The army took two hundred losses counting casualties and wounded. We took eight compañeros who died heroically in action, and seven wounded.

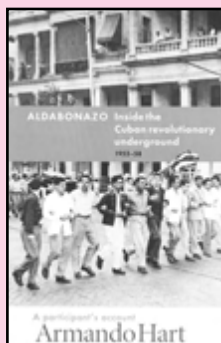
“A squadron of women, the ‘Mariana Grajales,’ fought valiantly during the ten days of action, resisting the aerial bombardment and the attack by the enemy artillery.

“Guisa, twelve kilometers from the military port of Bayamo, is now free Cuban territory.”

New from
Pathfinder

Aldabonazo: Inside the Cuban Revolutionary Underground, 1952–58

by Armando Hart



In this firsthand account by one of the historic leaders of the Cuban Revolution, we meet many of the men and women who in the 1950s led the urban underground in the fight against the brutal U.S.-backed Batista dictatorship. Together with their comrades-in-arms of the Rebel Army, they not only brought down the tyranny, their revolutionary actions and example worldwide changed the history of the 20th century—and the century to come. \$25.00

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Venezuelan peasants

Continued from front page

production. Low prices for their produce on the market as well as the campaign by large cattle ranchers, other capitalist farmers, and agribusiness to slow down or prevent implementation of the 2001 law are in many cases frustrating the peasants' efforts and resulting in setbacks.

How Yaucas won their claim

About 400 farm families have been fighting for land in the San Carlos area, after being promised titles and credits by the government two years ago. *Militant* reporters first found out about this struggle during a farm conference here in July 2002. Many of the peasants who have now moved onto the Yaucas' land took part in that meeting.

In a follow-up visit there last October it became evident that the struggle had stalled. The land claims of these peasants were linked to settling the claim of the indigenous Yauca family, which said it had proof that 150,000 hectares of land, including several large cattle ranches, belonged to the Yauca nation and had been stolen from them through violence by capitalist landlords backed by the national government. The Yaucas' petitions to INTi had fallen on deaf ears, we were told then.

This time, Angel Sarmiento, one of the peasant leaders who gave *Militant* reporters their first tour of the area in the summer of 2002, took us directly to the new Juan Yauca Agricultural Camp, established on land the peasants have occupied since December. More than 200 peasant families moved onto the land at the end of the year and fenced in the portion that is not currently cultivated or used for grazing by the capitalist cattle ranchers. About 50 of these families were there on the night of March 16. They eagerly talked about their initial victory.

Eduardo Marciano, president of the Asociación Cooperativa Ayudantes de Zamora (Helpers of Zamora Cooperative Association), said that he had been involved in the Yaucas' land fight for nearly 25 years. His group is named after Ezequiel Zamora, a leader of the Venezuelan independence struggle against Spain who fought to expropriate land and give it to the peasants. Zamora was killed in battle in San Carlos.

"Thanks to the change we had in Venezuela with the new president, Hugo Rafael Chávez Frías," Marciano said, "we were able to bring to light the documents the big landlords had hidden." Last year the peasants convinced some friendly lawyers to represent them. The lawyers argued that since no state-owned lands were involved, the Yaucas' petition was a private claim that could be settled by the courts outside INTi's structure. The peasants' direct action won widespread support in the area.

A court recognized the Yaucas' claim to the 150,000 hectares and has already given them ownership papers for the 39,000 hectares they took possession of three months ago.

There are 17 capitalist farmers who use the rest of the land, mostly for cattle grazing, Marciano said. "Only two of them are very large *terraceros*," he said, using a derisive term he coined meaning "land grab-

bers." One comes from the family of former Gen. José Rafael Luque, who was governor of Cojedes under the Juan Vicente Gómez dictatorship in the early 1900s, and who forcibly expropriated nearly half the land of the Yauca nation, Marciano said.

"We are preparing to go to court and get an order for them to either buy a portion of the land at going market prices from the Yaucas or pack up and leave," he added.

The peasants also won the support of some officials in the National Guard. Roseana Yani Lugo, a sergeant in the National Guard who comes from a farm family, volunteered to be their chief of security. This step, along with around-the-clock vigilance by the peasants, has so far kept the police and hired thugs of the capitalist landlords away, Marciano said.

Tulio Delgado, president of the Juan Yauca Agricultural Land Committee, said the peasants have received donations of food, water, and medicine from many people in the area. "This is critical," he added, "because we don't have electricity and water yet on the farm land."

'Land or death'

Ester Agudo organizes an all-women committee in charge of dividing up the land among the peasants, and other projects. Most of the peasants have been taking part in literacy classes and will soon start courses at the nearby National Institute for Cooperative Education to improve their skills in planting and harvesting a variety of crops, she said. Two years ago, about 75 percent of the peasants among the 200 families involved in the new land acquisition were illiterate, Agudo said. "Now everyone is in classes, and our goal is for all of us to get at least the equivalent of a high school diploma," she added. They plan to grow corn, rice, yucca, vegetables, and other crops, as well as raise cattle and other animals.

"We are very happy with what we've accomplished so far," Agudo said. "We'll continue the fight. Our motto is land or death. But we have bigger plans."

The plans include building an air-conditioned warehouse on the land the peasants won so they can store their produce and be able to sell to the new network of government supermarkets called Mercal. Reynaldo Arvelo, a local engineer the peasants recruited to their side, said he was close to securing financing to start the project this spring. "We also plan to build a processing plant to make animal feed," he said.

Militant reporters visited a number of Mercal stores that have now sprung up across the country. Prices of all basic food items in these stores—from rice to cooking oil and powdered milk—are 20 to 50 percent lower than in the regular market. Chicken, for example, which is available two or three times per week at most Mercals, costs 2,000 bolivars per kilo (\$0.47 per pound) compared to 3,600 (\$0.85 per pound) at privately owned supermarkets. The Mercal stores have in many workers districts replaced food distribution at subsidized prices run by the National Guard until recently. The only problem, a number of workers said, is that the government has imposed ration-

ing, so everyone has a limit on the quantities of each item they can purchase per month at these stores. The Mercal network, however, is a big help to millions of working people, we were told, as inflation has continued to climb, partly due to the devaluation of the bolivar, the local currency. The bolivar is now exchanged at 2,700 to the U.S. dollar on the black market as opposed to 1,920, the official exchange rate.

About 65 percent of all food consumed in the country is imported from Canada, the United States, Brazil, and other countries. So every devaluation of the bolivar has had devastating conse-



Militant/Argiris Malapanis

Peasants at Juan Yauca Agricultural Camp outside San Carlos, Cojedes state, Venezuela, March 16. From left: Aledia Lucina, Dilia López, Tulio Delgado, Jubir Yauca, Ester Agudo, Eduardo Marciano, and Angel Sarmiento.

quences for working people.

Peasant leaders in San Carlos, as well as elsewhere, said they have demanded the government make large-scale investments to develop a domestic food processing industry, which would accompany a more radical land reform and diversification of agricultural production, to minimize dependency on food imports. Marciano said that as a result of these demands the government asked the Central Bank last fall to release \$1 billion from its foreign currency reserves to initiate such investments. It doesn't seem that anything substantial has yet begun on this front.

Challenges at Los Cañizos

The contradictory character of the gains peasants have made through stiff battles for land became a little clearer during a visit to Los Cañizos farm cooperative in the Veroes municipality of Yaracuy, a largely agricultural state north of Cojedes.

Some 400 farm families live in Los Cañizos. In a visit there last October, *Militant* reporters learned that most of these families obtained titles to their land after a 16-year-long struggle, which included pitched battles with the National Guard before Chávez's election to the presidency in 1998. Thirty-five of these farm families were also organized into the Los Cañizos co-op, which received credit last year and was able to buy their first tractor from FONDAFA, the government institution providing such loans.

Napoléon Tortolero, the co-op's president and a central leader of the struggle there, said March 16 that membership in the co-operative has dropped by nearly half, to 18 farm families.

Victor Torrelles, another of the peasant leaders at Los Cañizos, said that this is largely due to the slow progress in getting promised government aid. The initial credit of 77 million bolivars (\$40,000), half of which was used to buy the tractor, was not enough to complete the well drilling and buy pumps for irrigation, even though peasants have found plenty of water underneath their land, Torrelles said. This has meant smaller crops and mounting frustration at the ongoing inability to make a living income. Another factor in the squeeze they face from the workings of the capitalist market is that they have to buy all their seeds and fertilizers from companies in San Felipe, Yaracuy's capital, "controlled by the *escuálidos*," as Torrelles put it, which charge them exorbitant prices. *Escuálidos*, "the squalid ones," is a term commonly used here to refer to supporters of the pro-imperialist opposition. It will take time to get funding to start their own greenhouses where they can grow their own seeds, Torrelles and Tortolero said.

"Construction for new housing units has also slowed down," Tortolero said, "because local contractors siphon off government funds allocated for such projects to enrich themselves." Forty new houses were completed as of last year in Los Cañizos, only 10 percent of what's needed, and no new ones are on the horizon now. To confront the problem, the cooperative has undertaken an initiative to demand that the national government provide peasants with the necessary materials and leave it up to them to build the houses with local labor, "or brigades like those in Cuba," Tortolero said. Torrelles said he worked in construction for 15 years and

there are many more like him in the area with the necessary skills to do the job.

Despite the problems, these militant peasants did not seem discouraged and continued to point to some gains. Gregorio Gómez is one of the newest members of Los Cañizos co-op, growing sugarcane on his 10 acres of land. He proudly showed his tractor, which he received this year with credit from FONDAFA, the second tractor in the cooperative. "I never would have had the resources to do this myself," he said. At the same time, he pointed out, electricity has yet to reach his farm shack, about two miles from the rest of Los Cañizos community, which was electrified last year. "It's a struggle," Gómez said.

Tortolero said the goal of the Ezequiel Zamora National Agrarian Coordinating Committee—the national farm group the militants at Los Cañizos belong to—is to distribute land to 300,000 landless peasant families across the country. Until the year 2000, about 1,000 big landowners controlled 85 percent of land under cultivation—a total of 75 million acres. Some 350,000 hard-pressed peasant families, who owned between 3 and 50 acres each, produced some 70 percent of vegetables and other major crops. In 2001 the national government announced the nationalization of another 75 million acres of idle but arable land and promised to distribute it to peasants.

The struggle for land is only part of the class confrontation in the countryside, however.

Need to organize farm workers

During a lunch break in a nearby town, Tortolero showed *Militant* reporters a truck passing by full of sugarcane cutters, all covered with soot from cutting cane in the fields where the weeds had been burned. These workers work mostly for capitalist farmers—overwhelmingly "*batistianos*" in this area, Tortolero said. These are Cuban capitalists who fled the Caribbean island and came to Venezuela after workers and peasants in Cuba overthrew the U.S.-backed dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista in 1959 through a popular revolution.

The cane cutters are paid less than the minimum wage of 200,000 bolivars a month (\$100), and face some of the worst working conditions, Tortolero said. "We are trying to figure out how we can help them get organized and work with them," he stated. "That's one of the ways we can confront the power of the capitalists."

The need to organize farm workers and treat them as principal allies in the struggle to end class exploitation was also evident during a March 15 visit to the Bovares municipality of Lara state, west of Yaracuy.

Damacio Arrieche, who farms a small plot of land in Bovares, told *Militant* reporters that some 200 peasants like him had gained land titles in that area in the last two years, as a result of struggles to implement provisions of the new agrarian reform law. "But none of us have been able to get credits yet," he said. "Our conditions are similar to those of farm workers. We are trying to figure out ways to organize and work together."

The principal product of Bovares is pineapple, grown largely on hill slopes. Many of the pineapple producers are middle farmers, like Edixon Izarra, whose father owns

Continued on Page 10



Militant/Argiris Malapanis

Gregorio Gómez, member of Los Cañizos farm cooperative in Veroes municipality, Yaracuy state, Venezuela, at his farm March 16. He got tractor through credit from state agency, FONDAFA. Peasants at Los Cañizos won title to their land a year earlier after 16-year-long struggle.

The fight for a democratic, secular Palestine

Reprinted below are excerpts from the *Education for Socialists* bulletin "Israel and the Arab Revolution," one of Pathfinder's Books of the Month for April. The document was originally drafted as a resolution, adopted by the 1971 Socialist Workers Party convention, in response to the upsurge in the Mideast and growing solidarity with the struggle of workers and peasants in the region at that time. This booklet includes reports and articles that were part of a debate within the Socialist Workers Party. They answered a minority within the party who disagreed with the resolution's declaration of unconditional support for the Palestinian people's struggle for national self-determination, and instead called for the right of self-determination for the Israeli Jewish nationality. Copyright ©

BOOKS OF THE MONTH

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BY GUS HOROWITZ

1. The Socialist Workers Party gives unconditional support to the national liberation struggles of the Arab peoples against imperialism, that is, we support all these struggles regardless of their current leaderships. Our foremost task in implementing such support is to educate and mobilize the American people against U.S. imperialist actions in the Mideast.



Militant/Paul Boutelle

Palestinians in Lebanon, 1968. Armed Zionist thugs, backed by imperialist powers, expelled Palestinians from their land, paving the way for the creation of the Israeli state.

2. Israel, created in accordance with the Zionist goal of establishing a Jewish state, could be set up in the Arab East only at the expense of the indigenous peoples of the area. Such a state could come into existence and maintain itself only by relying upon imperialism. Israel is a settler-colonialist and expansionist capitalist state maintained principally by American imperialism, hostile to the surrounding Arab peoples. It is an imperialist beachhead in the Arab world that serves as the spearhead of imperialism's fight against the Arab revolution. We unconditionally support the struggles of the Arab peoples against the state of Israel.

3. The principal victims of the creation of Israel were the Palestinians—i.e., the Arabs who inhabited the region where Israel was established, who have been driven from their homes or placed in subjugation within Israel and the newly occupied territories. The Palestinians are a part of the Arab peoples, but they also form a distinct national grouping, with its own history of struggle against imperialism. There were Palestinian uprisings in 1921, 1929, and

during the 1930s, reaching a high point in 1936–1939. At the height of the 1936 rebellion, the Palestinians conducted a six-month general strike. Expulsion from their homeland through the creation of Israel greatly intensified national consciousness among the Palestinians. The upsurge of Palestinian nationalism in the recent period, especially after the 1967 war, was particularly marked in the refugee camps and newly occupied territories as a result of the direct oppression these people have suffered at the hands of Israel. The September 1970 civil war in Jordan further intensified Palestinian national consciousness.

The struggle of the Palestinian people against their oppression and for self-determination has taken the form of a struggle to destroy the state of Israel. The currently expressed goal of this struggle is the establishment of a democratic, secular Palestine. We give unconditional support to this struggle of the Palestinians for self-determination.

An integral part of our program for the Palestinian revolution and the Arab

revolution as a whole is support of full civil, cultural, and religious rights for all nationalities in the Mideast, including the Israeli Jews. The major Palestinian liberation organizations also advance this concept and view it as essential to their attempt to win the Israeli Jewish masses away from support to Israel.

Anti-Zionism not anti-Semitism

4. Our revolutionary socialist opposition to Zionism and the Israeli state has nothing in common with anti-Semitism, as the pro-Zionist propagandists maliciously and falsely assert. Anti-Semitism is anti-Jewish racism used to justify and reinforce oppression of the Jewish people. Marxists have been and remain the most militant and uncompromising fighters against anti-Semitism and the oppression of Jews.

The source of the oppression of the Jewish people in this era is the capitalist system, which in its period of decay carries all forms of racist oppression to the most barbarous extremes. This was horribly illustrated in the holocaust directed against the Jews of Europe by German imperialism under the Nazi regime. Today, anti-Semitism remains widespread in all of Western imperialist countries. Until the capitalist system is abolished in the these countries there is the ever-present danger that a new variety of virulent anti-Semitism can arise...

Zionism is not, as it claims, a national liberation movement. Zionism is a political movement that developed for the purpose of establishing a settler-colonialist state in Palestine and that rules the bourgeois society headed by the Israeli state today in alliance with world imperialism...

The imperialists and Zionists to the contrary, the basic interests of the Jewish masses of Israel reside in alliance with the Palestinian liberation struggle and support of the goal of a democratic Palestine. We have incessantly warned Jews throughout the world: Zionism leads you into conflict with your potential allies—the oppressed of the world—and has led you to ally with your worst enemy, imperialism. Imperialism in its death agony has already led to one holocaust against European Jewry; it can inflict similar catastrophes again unless it is overthrown in time by the mass force of the socialist revolution.

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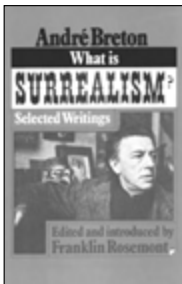
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The class roots of women's oppression

The following are excerpts from *Problems of Women's Liberation*, by Evelyn Reed. Now available for \$5 through May 1 (regular price \$12.95), it is one of the titles featured in the Pathfinder Super-saver Sale (see page 3). These books and pamphlets, which give a scientific, historical explanation of society and offer a working-class perspective to change it, are invaluable tools in building the April 25 march on Washington to defend a woman's right to choose abortion. These excerpts are taken from articles originally published in 1954 and 1970. Copyright © 1970 by Pathfinder Press, reprinted by permission. Subheading by the *Militant*.

BY EVELYN REED

One of the conspicuous features of capitalism, and of class society in general, is the inequality of the sexes. Men are the masters in economic, cultural, political, and intellectual life, while women play a subordinate and even submissive role. Only in recent years have women come out of the kitchens and nurseries to challenge men's monopoly. But the essential inequality still remains.

This inequality of the sexes has marked class society from its very inception several thousand years ago, and has persisted throughout its three main stages: chattel slavery, feudalism, and capitalism. For this reason class society is aptly characterized as male dominated. This domination has been upheld and perpetuated by the system of private property, the state, the church and the form of family that served men's interests.

On the basis of this historical situation, certain false claims regarding the social superiority of the male sex have been propagated. It is often set forth as an immutable axiom that men are *socially* superior because they are *naturally* superior. Male supremacy, according to this myth, is not a social phenomenon at a particular stage of history, but a natural law. Men, it is claimed, are endowed by nature with superior physical and mental attributes.

An equivalent myth about women has been propagated to support this claim. It is set forth as an equally immutable axiom that women are *socially* inferior because they are *naturally* inferior to men. And what is the proof? They are the mothers! Nature, it is claimed, has condemned the female sex to an inferior status.

This is a falsification of natural and social history. It is not nature but class society which lowered women and elevated men. Men won their social supremacy in struggle against and conquest over the women. But this sexual struggle was part and parcel of a great social struggle—the overturn of primitive society and the institution of class society. Women's inferiority is the product of a social system which has produced and fostered innumerable other inequalities, inferiorities, discriminations, and degradations. But this social history has been concealed behind the myth that women are naturally inferior to men.

It is not nature but class society which robbed women of their right to participate in the higher functions of society and placed the primary emphasis upon their animal functions of maternity. And this robbery was perpetrated through a twofold myth. On the one side, motherhood is represented as a biological affliction arising out of the maternal organs of women. Alongside this vulgar materialism, motherhood is represented as being something almost mysti-

cal. To console women for their status as second-class citizens, mothers are sanctified, endowed with halos and blessed with special "instincts," feelings and knowledge forever beyond the comprehension of men. Sanctity and degradation are simply two sides of the same coin of the social robbery of women under class society.

Women's role in early society

But class society did not always exist; it is only a few thousand years old. Men were not always the superior sex, for they were not always the industrial, intellectual, and cultural leaders. Quite the contrary. In primitive society, where women were neither sanctified nor degraded, it was the women who were the social and cultural leaders.

Primitive society was organized as a matriarchy which, as indicated by its very name, was a system where women, not men, were the leaders and organizers. But the distinction between the two social systems goes beyond this reversal of the leadership role of the two sexes. The leadership of women in primitive society was not founded upon the dispossession of the men. On the contrary, primitive society knew no social inequalities, inferiorities, or discriminations of any kind. Primitive society was completely equalitarian. In fact, it was through the leadership of the women that the men were brought forward out of a more backward condition into a higher social and cultural role.

In this early society maternity, far from being an affliction or a badge of inferiority, was regarded as a great natural endowment. Motherhood invested women with power and prestige—and there were very good reasons for this.

Humanity arose out of the animal kingdom. Nature had endowed only one of the sexes—the female sex—with the organs and functions of maternity. This biological endowment provided the natural bridge to humanity, as Robert Briffault has amply demonstrated in his work *The Mothers*. It was the female of the species who had the care and responsibility of feeding, tending, and protecting the young.

However, as Marx and Engels have demonstrated, all societies both past and present are founded upon labor. Thus, it was not simply the capacity of women to give birth that played the decisive role, for all female animals also give birth. What was decisive for the human species was the fact that maternity led to labor—and it was in the fusion of maternity and labor that the first human social system was founded.

It was the mothers who first took the road of labor, and by the same token blazed the trail toward humanity. It was the mothers who became the chief producers; the workers and farmers; the leaders in scientific, intellectual and cultural life. And they became all this precisely because they were the mothers, and in the beginning maternity was fused with labor....

The findings of the Marxist method, which have laid the groundwork for explaining the genesis of woman's degradation, can be summed up in the following propositions:

First, women were not always the oppressed or "second" sex. Anthropology, or the study of prehistory, tells us the contrary. Throughout primitive society, which was the epoch of tribal collectivism, women were the equals of men and recognized as such.

Second, the downfall of women coincided with the breakup of the matriarchal clan



Women workers demonstrate during 1917 Russian Revolution. Because capitalism is founded on women's oppression, it will take a revolution by working people, overturning capitalist rule, to uproot causes of inequality and achieve full emancipation of women.

commune and its replacement by class-divided society with its institutions of the patriarchal family, private property, and state power.

The key factors which brought about this reversal in woman's social status came out of the transition from a hunting and food-gathering economy to a far higher mode of production based upon agriculture, stock raising, and urban crafts. The primitive division of labor between the sexes was replaced by a more complex social division of labor. The greater efficiency of labor gave rise to a sizable surplus product, which led first to differentiations and then to deep-going divisions among the various segments of society.

By virtue of the directing roles played by men in large-scale agriculture, irrigation, and construction projects, as well as in stock raising, this surplus wealth was gradually appropriated by a hierarchy of men as their private property. This, in turn, required the institution of marriage and the family to fix the legal ownership and inheritance of a man's property. Through monogamous marriage the wife was brought under the complete control of her husband who was thereby assured of legitimate sons to inherit his wealth.

As men took over most of the activities of social production, and with the rise of the family institution, women became relegated to the home to serve their husbands and families. The state apparatus came into existence to fortify and legalize the institutions of private property, male dominion, and the father-family, which later were sanctified by religion.

This, briefly, is the Marxist approach to the origins of woman's oppression. Her subordination did not come about through any biological deficiency as a sex. It was the result of the revolutionary social changes which destroyed the equalitarian society of the matriarchal gens or clan and replaced it with a patriarchal class society which, from its birth, was stamped with discrimination and inequalities of many kinds, including the inequality of the sexes. The growth of this inherently oppressive type of socioeconomic organization was responsible for the historic downfall of women.

But the downfall of women cannot be fully understood, nor can a correct social and political solution be worked out for their liberation, without seeing what happened at the same time to men. It is too often overlooked that the patriarchal class system which crushed the matriarchy and its communal social relations also shattered its male counterpart, the fratriarchy—or tribal brotherhood of men. Woman's overthrow went hand in hand with the subjugation of the mass of toiling men to the master class of men....

Far from being eternal, woman's subjugation and the bitter hostility between the sexes are no more than a few thousand years old. They were produced by the drastic social changes which brought the family, private property, and the state into existence.

This view of history points up the necessity for a no less thoroughgoing revolution in socioeconomic relations to uproot the causes of inequality and achieve full emancipation for our sex. This is the purpose and promise of the socialist program, and this is what we are fighting for.

—25 AND 50 YEARS AGO



April 20, 1979

After 10 days of a strike by the International Brotherhood of Teamsters against seventy-three trucking firms, and an employer lockout of truck drivers at hundreds of other companies, agreement was announced April 10 on a three-year Master Freight Agreement covering 300,000 drivers and warehouse workers.

The April 11 *Wall Street Journal* touted the agreement as providing a 30 percent pay increase over three years, a significant stretching of Carter's 7 percent ceiling on wage increases.

But the *Journal's* own figures tell a different story.

Initial reports gave no inkling of how other union demands—which weighted heavier for many Teamsters than the dispute over basic wage rates—fared in the settlement. These included:

- equitable pay rates for owner operators
- restrictions on compulsory overtime, which now forces many truckers to work a seventy-hour week at straight-time pay,
- limits on company "productivity" measures that endanger health and safety. The union asked for guaranteed forty-eight-hour stretches of time off and restrictions on company efforts to increase the size of vans relative to cabs (a significant cause of injuries and deaths in accidents).



April 19, 1954

By the time you read this, American troops may be killing and dying once more in Asia. Wall Street's government is whipping up sentiment for direct U.S. military intervention against the Indo-Chinese people, who have fought heroically for eight years for independence from French imperialism.

"The showdown may come within a week," warned the Scripps-Howard Washington staff on April 10. It reports the Eisenhower regime is committed to "saving" Indo-China "at all costs." Similarly the March 31 *Wall Street Journal* states ominously that "Indo-China will not be allowed to fall into Communists hands—whatever the cost." It adds: "If the cost is no longer a factor, there is no stopping place."

No stopping place! That can mean only one thing—another Korea. It means more hundreds of thousands of casualties, broken homes, grief for American families. It means millions of Indo-Chinese men, women, and children burned to death with napalm bombs and blasted to bits by U.S. "strategic bombing" and another country wrecked from end to end as Korea was.

This country has actually been warring against Indo-Chinese independence from the start—since the end of World War II in 1945.

From Pathfinder



Problems of Women's Liberation

By Evelyn Reed

The author of *Sexism and Science* and *Woman's Evolution* explores the economic and social roots of women's oppression from prehistoric society to modern capitalism. She traces the original forms and institutions of private property, how they arose, and their consequences for women. She explains why the oppression of women is a manifestation of specific property relations, not sex relations. In refuting the myth of women's inferiority, Reed points the road forward to emancipation. \$12.95 **Special price: \$5**

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All out for April 25 march!

Every indication points to a mass turnout for the April 25 national march on Washington to defend a woman’s right to choose abortion. In many cities, women’s rights supporters report that on nearly every college campus in town students are organizing buses to build maximum participation in the march. Volunteers leafleting in working-class communities are finding real interest in the demonstration. Black and Latina women’s organizations are playing an important role in building the action.

An outpouring of hundreds of thousands in the streets of Washington will be an important boost to the defense of the right to abortion. It will increase the confidence of women and working people to rely on their own strength in fighting for their rights. And it will send a message to the U.S. rulers underscoring the deep-rooted support among tens of millions—workers and farmers above all—for a woman’s right to control her own body and reproductive functions.

We urge you to join with others in making the April 25 march a resounding success. Bring co-workers, students, family and friends to local “meet-ups” and other events to build the action. Join with others to leaflet on street corners, in working-class areas, on high school and college campuses. Team up with fellow workers to sell bus tickets.

The front-page ad in this week’s *Militant* refers readers to the page eight directory of distributors of this paper, its sister publication in Spanish, *Perspectiva Mundial*, and Pathfinder books for more information. The halls listed there are now serving as centers for information on building the march and travel to Washington.

A woman’s right to decide whether or not to have children is a question of crucial importance to working people. It is a precondition for women’s ability to have control over their lives and for their equality in employment and other areas of social life. The victory won in 1973 with the Supreme Court decision decriminalizing abortion has been a victory for the

entire working class. The labor movement has a big stake in defending the right to choose.

Who benefits from women’s second-class status? The ruling billionaire families. They are the ones who rake in enormous profits by paying women workers less than men, putting the responsibility for child-rearing on the shoulders of individual women, scapegoating women for social problems caused by capitalism, and trying to keep women from getting involved in union and political activity. That is why the U.S. rulers have carried out a bipartisan offensive that has resulted in restrictions on women’s access to abortion.

These attacks fall most heavily on working-class women. The 1976 Hyde Amendment denies Medicaid funding for abortion in most cases. Fewer than 15 percent of counties in the United States have an abortion provider—a brutal reality for women in rural areas. Parental consent and waiting period laws add further curbs, with a disproportionate effect on working-class women. One of the most recent attacks is the enactment of the misnamed Partial-Birth Abortion Ban Act. This law not only bars a certain type of late-term abortion procedure, but is worded in a way that would criminalize a range of commonly used medical procedures after the first trimester of pregnancy.

Thousands of defenders of the right to abortion are not only planning to go to Washington, but are seeking to be politically armed—to understand where the attacks on women’s rights come from, the social forces needed to defend these rights, and an effective strategy to do so. The *Militant* and Pathfinder books are invaluable tools in this regard. We urge you to take advantage of the Pathfinder Supersaver discounts listed on page three to get books that give clear, working-class answers to these questions. And make sure to order large stacks of the “Build the April 25 March on Washington/Pathfinder Supersaver Sale” handout as part of building the demonstration.

All out to Washington for the March for Women’s Lives on April 25!

U.S. forces assault Iraqi cities

Continued from front page

from that area. U.S. troops sealed off the town as a prelude to a military push called “Operation Vigilant Resolve” involving 1,200 U.S. Marines and two battalions of U.S.-trained Iraqi paramilitary forces. U.S. officers vowed to “pacify” the town, where celebratory crowds had greeted the deaths on March 31 of four armed guards under contract to the Pentagon.

In the Iraqi capital, up to 1,000 U.S. troops accompanied by a column of tanks moved into and around Sadr City, a largely Shiite Muslim working-class district that is home to 2 million people. U.S. soldiers opened fire on people attending a funeral for compatriots killed the previous day by occupation forces. Angry funeral-goers threw stones at the troops.

After a U.S. troop convoy entering the nearby Shuala district came under attack, helicopter gunships strafed the area—the first reported air attack on an area in Baghdad since the overthrow of Saddam Hussein’s government by U.S. and British-led troops last year.

Over the previous two days, Sadr City had been a center of several protests and armed actions directed against the occupation forces in a number of cities and towns, from Basra in the south to Fallujah. Eight U.S. soldiers and 22 Iraqis were killed in clashes in the Baghdad suburb between the U.S. troops and members and supporters of a militia associated with Moktada al-Sadr, a Shiite Muslim cleric who opposes the occupation. Twenty-four U.S. troops and 85 Iraqis were wounded.

The fighting erupted after the U.S. proconsul of Iraq, Paul Bremer, “declared Sadr an outlaw and said the

occupying force ‘will not tolerate’ attempts to supplant its authority,” Reuters reported.

By the morning of April 5, U.S. forces had built earthen barricades across all the entrances to Fallujah in preparation for a crackdown.

U.S. officers said they were targeting those responsible for the deaths of the four guards, a privately hired component of the occupation forces. The four were ambushed and killed as they drove through the city. An angry crowd then gathered, some of whom set fire to the bodies, hanging two of them from a bridge over the Euphrates River. The incident was played up by the U.S. big-business media in a propaganda campaign to whip up patriotic sentiment in U.S. bourgeois public opinion.

Referred to by U.S. officials as “contract workers,” the four guards were highly paid employees of Blackwater U.S.A., a business founded in 1998 by former Navy SEALs that provides hired guns for big-business and political leaders. They are mostly former policemen and Special Forces.

Such mercenary outfits have been integrated into the U.S.-led occupation forces. The *New York Times* reported that up to two dozen such companies are fielding up to 15,000 hired soldiers in Iraq.

On April 4, during a street protest by 5,000 people in the Shiite city of Najaf, south of Baghdad, supporters of Sadr reportedly opened fire on a Spanish-run garrison. Spanish and Salvadoran troops fired back, sparking a several-hour-long battle. Twenty-two Iraqis were killed and 200 wounded. Among the occupation forces, a Salvadoran soldier was killed and several other troops were wounded.

75,000 Venezuelan peasants get land

Continued from Page 7

nearly 200 acres of prime pineapple-growing land and employs about 20 workers. This is a very labor intensive crop, where workers have to bend a good part of the day to tend to the low pineapple bushels or harvest the fruit. “We try to treat our workers well,” Izarra said, who explained that his family members are strong supporters of the Chávez government. “Those who want can get a plot of the land and be responsible for the production and harvest, so they can get the income from the sale at the end, in addition to their wages.” Izarra said his father pays these workers about 6,000 bolivars (\$3) per day, about half the minimum wage.

“This is part of what we are fighting against,” Arrieche said.

Despite these challenges, most peasants interviewed said they would take up arms, if needed, to prevent the opposition from toppling the Chávez administration.

“These people were in the government for 40 years before Chávez,” Tortolero said. “If they return, all the

land titles, tractors, and every other little thing we’ve gained the last few years will be gone. These people sent the army and the police against us, and even poisoned the streams around here when we took over land and refused to leave. We won’t let them come back.”

Part of this struggle, Tortolero, Arrieche, and Marcano said, is organizing to counter the economic power of big farmers and agribusinessmen, a number of whom are part of the governing party or support the Chávez government and have their interests protected in return.

At the new Juan Yauca Agricultural Camp outside San Carlos, the peasants there were upbeat about their initial victory, and ready for the next stage of the battle—taking on the big cattle ranchers by forcing them either to buy the land and pay the Yaucas for it, which would enable the peasant cooperatives to quickly develop their land, or pack up and leave the area. This will be a higher mountain to climb.

Olivia Nelson and Natalie Doucet contributed to this article.

Palestinian militant petitions for freedom at U.S. court hearing

BY RÓGER CALERO

HARRISBURG, Pennsylvania—Farouk Abdel-Muhti petitioned the federal court here March 30 to be freed from prison, where he has been held for two years under threat of deportation. This reporter joined 18 supporters of his struggle who traveled from Pennsylvania, New York, and New Jersey, to express solidarity with the Palestinian revolutionary.

U.S. District Judge Yvette Kane of the Middle District of Pennsylvania had ordered the hearing in response to Abdel-Muhti’s habeas corpus petition, first filed in New Jersey 16 months ago. Stating that it is holding Abdel-Muhti under a 1995 deportation order, the government has refused to release him in spite of the fact that they have nowhere to deport him, given that he was born as a citizen of Palestine before the founding of Israel.

Abdel-Muhti, 57, was brought into the courtroom in handcuffs, escorted by two plainclothes cops. At the beginning and end of the two-hour hearing he exchanged words and victory signs with his supporters.

Born in 1947 in the West Bank when it was still under British control, he left Palestine in the 1960s, living at various times in the United States and several countries in Latin America. He has lived here since the 1970s.

“The government has failed to specify what they want Mr. Abdel-Muhti to do to clarify his situation. They have failed to tell him what to do to get out of his detention,” said his attorney, Shayana Kadidal, of the New York-based Center for Constitutional Rights. Kadidal pointed out that because the Palestinian is effectively stateless, he “cannot be deported and therefore he must be released.”

Abdel-Muhti was arrested in New York on April 26, 2002 by immigration agents and cops who claimed they wanted to question him about the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001. The cops said they believed there were weapons and explosives inside and threatened to break down the apartment door, in spite of the fact that they had no warrant.

After six months Abdel-Muhti filed a habeas corpus petition from his New Jersey prison cell. His petition cited the Supreme Court’s ruling in favor of a similar appeal by Kestutis Zadvydas. Writing in June 2001, the judges said that a deportation order “does not permit indefinite detention.” Kadidal noted that the court had set a six-month limit on the time that most such prisoners could be held.

The authorities insist that they will eventually be able to deport Abdel-Muhti to his birthplace on the West Bank. At the same time, they say they will hold him indefinitely on the grounds that he has allegedly not cooperated with them in turning up documents to prove that he is Palestinian.

The immigration police have also sought, with no more success, to deport Abdel-Muhti to Honduras. They say that he had Honduran documents when he first entered the United States as a minor in the 1960s. Abdel-Muhti’s statement that the Honduran papers were not his has been confirmed by Honduran authorities.

Kadidah answered the government’s charges that Abdel-Muhti has misrepresented his identity. The Palestinian’s personal information filed with the INS has been consistent since he was detained in 1975, he said. Abdel-Muhti provided a birth certificate issued in 1960 by Jordan, which held the West Bank from the end of the British mandate until the area’s occupation by Israeli troops in 1967.

Continuing to accuse Abdel-Muhti of misrepresentation, Assistant U.S. Attorney Daryl Bloom gave a list of names and birth dates that Abdel-Muhti has supposedly used in the past “to evade” the law.

Kadidal said that misspellings, the chauvinist practice of anglicizing names, and typographical errors are endemic within the immigration bureaucracy, and can explain the discrepancies. He pointed to misspellings of Abdel-Muhti’s name in custody over the last two years.

“The argument made by the government about the alleged name changes is one that can be made for any immigrant living here for more than 40 years,” Kadidal told reporters after the hearing.

Claims of agreement with Tel Aviv

Less than an hour before the hearing, Bloom handed the judge a declaration by immigration officials claiming that a new agreement had been reached with the Israeli government that would allow Washington to deport Palestinians to the occupied territories through Israel. According to Bloom the new agreement would allow for the removal of Palestinians like Abdel-Muhti who do not have original Israeli or Palestinian travel documents.

Last year the immigration cops cited similar agreements with the governments of Egypt and Jordan in deporting Palestinian nationals to the Gaza Strip and the West Bank.

The new agreement did not apply to Abdel-Muhti any more than its predecessors did, said Kadidal, because the declaration applies only to Palestinians listed on Israel’s population registry. Abdel-Muhti’s departure from the West Bank came before Israel’s occupation of the area.

Judge Kane asked Bloom how long it would take for the government to secure Abdel-Muhti’s deportation under the alleged new agreement. Pleading that the U.S. government is held at “the whim” of the Israeli regime, Bloom said that it could take years.

“One year ago the claim of deportation in the reasonably foreseeable future might have been acceptable to this court,” said Judge Kane to the government lawyer. She asked him if he agreed that 23 months is a long time to hold somebody without charges.

The judge noted that in her reading of the Supreme Court’s *Zadvydas* ruling, the longer the period of detention, the greater the obligation of the government to show that deportation is imminent. “The government has to present how many days, how many months,” said Kane, who has not yet issued a ruling in the case.

The Committee for the Release of Farouk Abdel-Muhti is organizing an action April 26 to mark the second anniversary of his arrest. “Hopefully it will be a celebration and not another protest,” said David Wilson, a leader of the committee.

Dragnets in Europe

Continued from front page

charges for two weeks. Since Sept. 11, 2001, more than 500 Muslims in the United Kingdom have been arrested and 94 charged under these laws; the dragnets have led only to six convictions.

Working in collaboration with British police, Royal Canadian Mounted Police in Ottawa arrested Momin Khawaja on April 2. The Associated Press reported that he is “the first Canadian charged under the Anti-Terrorism Act. He faces two counts for unspecified offenses,” supposedly committed between November 10 and March 29. Family members report that Khawaja has been held in solitary confinement, facing continuous interrogations and restricted access to his attorney.

The London raids were the start of a week of concerted police sweeps throughout Europe. Cops in Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany, as well as Turkey, launched similar “antiterror” raids, arresting a total of 63 people, most of them Turks. The pretext was “minimizing a terror threat ahead of June’s NATO summit in Istanbul, Turkey” and “increased international security co-operation before the Summer Olympics in Athens, Greece,” according to an April 2 Associated Press dispatch. Police claimed those arrested had “ties” to a banned Turkish organization, the Revolutionary People’s Liberation Army/Front (DHKP-C).

In Italy 100 police and carabinieri paramilitary forces conducted raids in the city of Perugia and arrested two Turkish immigrants and three Italians. Police said they had tapped 56,000 hours of private phone calls over a period of 18 months before making the arrests.

In a related operation, police in Greece arrested a German citizen of Kurdish origin, accusing him of having “links” to the banned Turkish group.

Separately, officials of the Olympic Games said that NATO plans to provide military aircraft and warships as “antiterrorist” protection during the games. They said 400 U.S. Special Operations troops were used in large-scale training exercises in Greece at the end of March.

Continued crackdown in Spain

In Spain the government has continued to expand its offensive against the Basque independence struggle and the rights of North African immigrants, seizing on the March 11 bombings, which killed more than 190 people. The incoming Spanish prime minister, Socialist Party leader José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, has pledged to step up this offensive in the name of “fighting terrorism” at home and abroad.

On April 2 a court in northern Spain sentenced Arnaldo Otegi, the main leader of the Basque independence party Herri Batasuna, to 15 months in prison for “extolling terrorism.” The basis of the charge against him is that he spoke at the 2001 funeral of

a member of the armed Basque nationalist group ETA. In his remarks at the funeral, Otegi is alleged to have described the ETA member as a “colleague” and a “patriot,” the British news agency BBC reported.

The court also barred Otegi from holding public office for eight years. He has served as an independent member of the Basque regional parliament since the banning of Herri Batasuna in August 2002 by “antiterrorist judge” Baltasar Garzón.

The Basque people are an oppressed nationality living in both northern Spain and southwestern France. Supporters of Basque independence have been subjected to intensified repression over the past decade.

Batasuna, which denies Madrid’s charge that it is the political wing of ETA, won 10 percent of the vote in the 2001 Basque parliamentary elections. ETA (Euskadi ta Askatasuna, or Basque Homeland and Freedom) has been waging a 35-year armed campaign against the Spanish government and has claimed responsibility for killing numerous government officials and others, although it appears to have been seriously weakened by government repression in recent years.

On the same day that Otegi was sentenced, French and Spanish police, in a joint operation, arrested Felix Ignacio Esparza Luri, who they claim is a central leader of ETA. Two other alleged ETA leaders were also arrested.

The crackdown on Basque nationalists has been stepped up since the March 11 bombings, even though Spanish authorities now admit they have no evidence linking any Basque group to the attacks.

Another target of government attack has been the large North African immigrant community in Spain. Initially the police claimed that Moroccan-born Jamal Zougam was responsible for the March 11 attacks. Then it asserted that that Sarhane Ben Abdelmajid Fakhel, a Tunisian immigrant, was the “mastermind.” A Spanish High Court judge charged him with having “raised awareness of jihad” and having “indicated specifically since 2003 that he was preparing a violent act in Spain as an expression of the aforementioned jihad.”

On April 3, a large police commando force



AFP/Rava Rivas

Arnaldo Otegi, left, leader of banned pro-independence Basque party Batasuna, at head of April 3 Bilbao, Spain, demonstration for “Self-determination now!” A Spanish court has sentenced him to 15 months in prison for “supporting terrorism.”

accompanied by special forces troops and helicopters stormed an apartment building in the working-class Madrid neighborhood of Leganés. An explosion in the building killed a special forces agent and four men that the police had labeled “suspected terrorists,” including Abdelmajid.

Over the past three weeks 24 people, mostly Moroccan-born residents of Spain, have been arrested. Fourteen of them remain in prison. All but one of those arrested have denied participation in the bombing. A Spanish-born man has reportedly said he sold explosives to be used in the bombing.

Otman el Gnaut and Fouad el Morabit, of Moroccan origin, were among those released. They have been ordered to report to police daily. According to a CNN report, police say Morabit was arrested on the basis that he studied aeronautical engineering and radio electronics in Madrid and Germany and shared an apartment with another person charged with the March 11 bombing.

The Spanish government called out the army April 2 to patrol the country’s rail sys-

tem after government officials announced that a partially completed bomb had been found underneath the tracks of a high-speed rail line linking the capital to Seville. Officials said the operation would involve 45 helicopters, armored vehicles, and bomb-sniffing dog teams.

Under the cover of its “antiterror” campaign, Madrid has also reinforced its border patrol, intensifying the harassment of immigrant workers from North Africa. At the maritime immigration headquarters in the port of Algeciras, Salvador Gómez showed reporters footage of patrol boats arresting immigrants at sea who were attempting to get to Europe.

Hundreds of thousands of workers from Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, and sub-Saharan Africa have immigrated to Spain. These immigrant workers send family remittances estimated at \$3.6 billion a year. As they have become integrated into the workforce in Spain, immigrants have been involved in struggles to defend their rights against employers and racist attacks.

Union opposes Tyson firing of 350

Continued from front page

them now?” said Marvin Harrington, president of UFCW Local 222, which organizes the 4,000 workers at the plant.

Tyson, based in Arkansas, is the world’s largest processor and marketer of chicken, beef, and pork. The Dakota City plant was IBP’s flagship beef slaughterhouse before it was taken over by Tyson in 2001. The majority of workers in the plant are originally from Mexico, Central America, or Asia.

“Our contract expires in a few months. The company is anticipating a strike and wants to weaken us and our union. Tyson is planning to lower our wages,” said a worker with five years in the plant, who asked not to be quoted by name.

“They continue to fire people every week. Many people are afraid. Many have left for their countries because there is nowhere else to get a job and they can’t make their house payments.”

She added, “My husband and I know they’ll probably call us into the office on our papers. But I tell my co-workers not to be afraid. They can’t kill us.”

Both this worker and her husband were hoping that a meeting for those who were fired or might face dismissal would be called to discuss how to respond to the company action.

“It’s an injustice. It’s not fair. The company knows who they are hiring,” said a Mexican-born worker who has worked at the plant for more than 10 years. “I think they are trying to get rid of a lot of people and hire new ones and pay them less. We had been working only 32 hours a week in recent months. Only in the last three or four weeks have we been getting 40 hours.”

Tyson, Excel, Swift, and other large meatpacking companies have all laid off workers in the wake of the discovery of a cow in Washington state with mad cow disease in December. The governments of Japan, Mexico, and other countries banned U.S. beef imports at that time. Beef slaughterhouses have been hit especially hard because, in addition to an overall decline in beef exports, items such as tongues, intestines and livers have been rendered virtually worthless because they are primarily purchased by overseas buyers. Tyson claims to have lost \$61 million in three months due to the fallout from mad cow disease.

UFCW Local 222 president Harrington said he has filed several grievances because the company did not tell the union officials

or the workers how it determined they did not have proper documentation.

Immigrant rights advocates organized a press conference to question Tyson’s explanation for the mass firings and highlight the human toll of the company’s callousness. Alma Luna, vice-president of the Siouxland Unidad Latina, told the *Sioux City Journal*, “We believe this action is due to a time when profits were down due to the mad cow scare.”

Tyson brought company spokesman Gary Mickelson to town in order to answer the critics. Cynically referring to the fired workers at “team members,” the Tyson mouthpiece said they misrepresented themselves to the company at the time they were hired. “In other words, they lied to us.”

Tyson reaps gigantic profits from its beef, pork, and poultry operations. Tyson exceeded \$24 billion in sales revenues in 2003. The company employs tens of thousands of immigrant workers knowing they can pay them substandard wages. Mickelson claims that the company will eventually replace the fired workers.

After wrecking the livelihood of hundreds of working-class families in the area, Tyson announced in a statement that it would be donating a truckload of food items to a local food bank and making a financial contribution to an agency that works in the Latino community.

Workers throughout the region have been following this development. In Storm Lake, Iowa, 80 miles to the east, a worker at a large nonunion slaughterhouse owned by Tyson told the *Militant*, “We have heard about what is happening in Dakota City and that is why we want a union here.”

In 1969 workers at the Dakota City plant gained their first contract after a bitter nine-month strike. Workers struck the plant in 1972, 1977, and 1982.

David Rosenfeld is a meat packer and member of UFCW Local 271 in Omaha, Nebraska.

Democrats use 9-11 hearings

Continued from Page 2

mended a series of rolling attacks against the infrastructure in Afghanistan. Every time they would rebuild it, I would propose that we blow it up again, much like, in fact, we were doing in Iraq, where we had a rolling series of attacks on their air defense system.”

The former secretary of state in the Clinton administration, Madeleine Albright, confirmed Clarke’s testimony on these points. “I fully embraced an aggressive policy before and especially after August 7, 1998,” she said, referring to the embassy bombings, for which Washington held al Qaeda responsible. Albright said that after those bombings, “the president specifically authorized the use of force, and there should have been no confusion that our personnel were authorized to kill bin Laden.”

Albright added that “to use force effectively, we placed warships equipped with cruise missiles on call in the Arabian Sea.” Plans were also drawn up to deploy Special Forces into Afghanistan.

In testimony before the commission, officials from both the Bush and the former Clinton administrations discussed the tactical advantages of backing opponents of the regimes of the Taliban in Afghanistan and Saddam Hussein in Iraq in order to overthrow them, on one hand, versus the

use of U.S. Special Forces, on the other. In response to a question on that subject from a reporter, Hamilton said, “I think you always want to have the capability of special forces available.... And I think we’ve been moving in that direction now for some time, and I think it’s been accelerated under Secretary Rumsfeld.”

As the debate unfolded in Washington, Homeland Security officials instituted an extension of the requirement that millions of visitors from other countries be photographed and fingerprinted digitally. The restriction was first applied to residents of most Third World and Eastern European countries who come with a visa, except for diplomats. It now extends to those from European countries, Japan, Australia, New Zealand, Singapore, and Brunei—that is, all nations except Canada and Mexico.

The measure “will add security by allowing us to check [visitors] against our terrorist criminal watchlist,” said Homeland Security Department Undersecretary Asa Hutchinson.

Testifying before the Congressional commission, Albright argued for using such lists to establish “a common data base that is comprehensive” and accessible to all cop agencies “including visa and customs officers, border guards, and law enforcement personnel at all levels.”

Australia intervenes in former colony

In attack on sovereignty, cops, gov't officials to go to Papua New Guinea

BY BOB AIKEN

SYDNEY, Australia—Over the last several months the Australian government has moved to deepen its direct intervention in the affairs of its former colony, Papua New Guinea. Last December, Foreign Minister Alexander Downer announced that up to 230 Australian cops would be sent to the capital, Port Moresby, and other areas. In addition, more than 60 Australian officials will take positions as judges and top government administrators. The first nine of these officials arrived in Port Moresby in late February.

According to the *Sydney Morning Herald*, Downer “met resistance” and encountered claims of “neo-colonialism” when he presented the proposal in Port Moresby last September. The report added that a senior Australian official said that “some aid programs may be cut if PNG did not agree to the initiative.” The Australian government earmarks A\$350 million every year for the Papua New Guinea government, or one-fifth of the latter’s revenue (A\$1=US76 cents).

Representatives of the Liberal-National coalition government claim that the assignments are necessary to prevent Papua New Guinea “from descending into anarchy and corruption,” in the words of the *Australian* daily. Downer said the intervention, with \$800 million allocated over the next five years, would “make a decisive difference to the law and justice, and the law-and-order situation in Papua New Guinea, and be crucially important for investment in the country and business confidence.” The Australian government is demanding immunity for its forces from prosecution under Papua New Guinea’s laws. Some 5,200,000 people live in Papua New Guinea, most of whom continue to live in the countryside as subsistence farmers on clan lands.

On March 1, some 2,000 people rallied to oppose these plans in Lae, Papua New Guinea’s second city and main port, in the most significant public protest to date. The rally was called by Luther Wenge, the governor of Morobe province, where Lae is located. According to a report in the *Australian Financial Review*, Wenge declared that Australia was trying to “invade PNG” through the deployments. He called on the crowd “to visit all government offices” in the city and “chase away any Australian officers employed there.”

Wenge said that Morobe should declare its independence “if the white men interfere in the running of our country and province’s affairs.” Under the agreement Australian police will be posted to Port Moresby and the island of Bougainville, along with Lae and the Highlands town of Mount Hagen. They will also be stationed along the Highlands highway linking this resource-rich region to Lae.

Australian officials in government

According to a December 12 report in the *Australian*, “almost 20 Australians will be posted to Papua New Guinea’s law and justice agencies, including the position of solicitor-general, and five prosecutors.” Thirty-six Australian fed-



Reuters/David Gray

Australian soldier in Solomon Islands, July 2003. The Australian government led a 2,000-strong intervention force there last year. It is now sending 300 cops, officials, and others to nearby Papua New Guinea as part of advancing its imperial interests in the Pacific.

eral officials are also to be placed in “key economic, finance and spending agencies” to exert control over Papua New Guinea’s budget, the big-business paper reported, with a further 10 officials assigned to “streamline PNG’s immigration and improve border and transport security.” Canberra’s plans include the elimination of two-thirds of government jobs.

Writing in the January 14 *Herald*, Hugh White described the intervention as “a major national undertaking which will stretch over decades and cost billions.” White is the director the Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI), a government-funded think tank that has helped formulate the government’s political rationalizations for intervention in the South Pacific.

In an earlier article White declared bluntly that “a team of 200 or more Australian officers injected into a force of 3,000 PNG police is not simply an advisory mission. It is more like a takeover.” He added, “A functioning police force is no use without effective courts and an efficient prison system. It seems like that we will soon be drawn into a central role in these areas as well.”

Such officials must be backed by an Australian government “that is willing to

press hard to persuade reluctant political elites to accept help,” White said. Such intervention, he said, was needed to prevent “outsiders moving in to exploit the situation, and a consequent descent into ... badlands of violence, deprivation and transnational crime.”

By contrast, Julianne Kaman, spokesperson for the Melanesian People’s Forum, said that the cop deployment was “a deliberate move by Australia to take control of critical posts in this country” and represented the “return of [the] Australian colonial masters.” Far from having anything to do with the interests of Papua New Guinea, she said, it was aimed at securing Canberra’s “own political and economic interests.” It is “our forests, our fishes, our land, our gas, oil, copper, gold and our people that Australia wants and depends on to prop up its economy,” she said. Canberra fears “an uprising from the masses” because “the majority are denied their basic rights of survival,” Kaman wrote. Her statement is being circulated in Australia by the PNG Solidarity Association.

In June 2001 thousands of working people joined students in protests against austerity measures being imposed by

Australia and other imperialist powers through the IMF and World Bank. The protests were not quelled until riot police shot four people dead on the University of PNG campus in Port Moresby.

The government in Port Moresby has demanded that Canberra allow citizens of Papua New Guinea to enter Australia legally under short-term visas to work as agricultural laborers in Australia’s tropical north and elsewhere.

During the decades of the official “White Australia” policy that lasted up to the 1970s, and continuing through to today, there has been virtually zero migration from Papua New Guinea to Australia. This is despite its close proximity and its history of colonial domination and exploitation by Australia’s rulers.

The Australian government today maintains an immigration jail in Papua New Guinea at Manus Island. Several hundred asylum seekers, mainly from the Middle East and Asia, were imprisoned there and on the island of Nauru in 2002 after they tried to enter Australia.

Troops in Solomon Islands

The intervention in Papua New Guinea comes within a year of Canberra’s deployment of 1,200 troops and 300 cops to the Solomon Islands, heading up a regional force including soldiers and police from New Zealand—the other imperialist power in the region—and Papua New Guinea, Fiji, Tonga, and Samoa. Their stated goal was to re-establish “law and order,” rebuild the “justice” and prison systems, and reorganize government finances.

The occupying forces built 16 police stations around the country and arrested several hundred people. Hundreds of Australian cops and officials are slated to remain in the country for many years to come.

Australian prime minister John Howard announced in February that his government was prepared to send 100 cops to East Timor on a long-term basis—an alternative to a proposal by United Nations secretary general Kofi Annan to garrison 300 troops there. The Howard government intervened in East Timor in 1999 with 3,600 troops under UN auspices, as the East Timorese fought for independence from Indonesia.

Today there are also some 850 Australian military personnel deployed as part of the imperialist occupation forces in Iraq.

Life expectancy drops for workers in Scotland

BY CAROLINE BELLAMY

EDINBURGH, Scotland—The life expectancy of men in two working-class districts of Glasgow fell in the 10 years to 2001, registering the impact of the drive by the ruling rich to cut wages, increase hours, and erode social benefits. This was the first such decline in the United Kingdom since the Second World War.

The news came in a report released by Scotland’s National Health Service (NHS) March 12. According to the study, the life expectancy of men born in Shettleston,

Glasgow, declined more than four years over the decade to 64—one year less than the retirement age. On average, men in nearby Springburn can expect to live to 67, one year less than in 1991. Both Shettleston and Springburn are overwhelmingly working-class areas.

The drop stands out against the rise by three years in average male life expectancy in Scotland over the same period to more than 73. The gap between Shettleston and the North East Fife area, which at more than 77 has the highest life expectancy in Scotland and above average household income, has grown from eight to nearly 14 years.

Using the terminology of capitalist bureaucrats, the NHS report says that around 40 percent of adults in the two areas are “on state benefit, unemployed or lowest grade workers,” compared with less than 2 percent in North East Fife and 22 percent across Scotland. More than three-quarters of Scotland’s “most deprived” areas are in Glasgow, according to the Scottish Executive, with five of the ten worst in Shettleston and Springburn. Average pretax household income in Shettleston is £17,000, compared to the Scottish average of £26,000. In North East Fife it is £28,000 (£1=US\$1.50).

Another recent report showed that the gap in *healthy* life expectancy in Scot-

land—that is, years with no life-limiting illness or disability—showed a still wider gap between the working class and other layers of society. According to the report by the government-supported Healthy Life Expectancy in Scotland Steering Group, the wealthiest one-fifth of the population can expect to enjoy 17.5 more years of healthy life than the worst-off fifth.

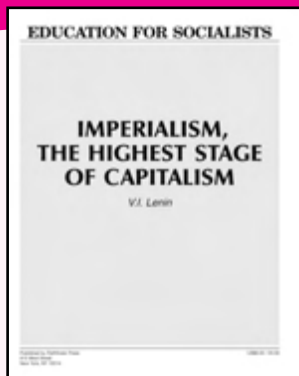
At 73 for men and 79 for women, life expectancy in Scotland is lower than in the United Kingdom as a whole, where the figures are 76 and 81 respectively. Scotland accounts for seven of the 10 areas with the lowest figure for men and six out of 10 for women. Glasgow’s average life expectancy is the lowest among cities across the country. Writing in the March 9 *Scotsman*, Gillian Bowditch denied any connection between living conditions and life expectancy. “If your idea of a balanced meal is not falling over after ten pints of special brew [strong beer] and a bag of chips [french fries], then you are not a victim of poverty or government policy. You are a victim of your own gross stupidity,” she fumed.

The article was typical of commentators in the big-business media who sought to shift blame from the actions of the bosses and their government onto working people for their allegedly unhealthy lifestyles.

Further Reading From Pathfinder

Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism

V.I. Lenin “I trust that this pamphlet will help the reader to understand the fundamental economic question, that of the economic essence of imperialism,” Lenin wrote in 1917. “For unless this is studied, it will be impossible to understand and appraise modern war and modern politics.” \$10.00



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