

THE MILITANT

INSIDE

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A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

VOL. 68/NO. 16 APRIL 27, 2004

Palestinian militant wins release from U.S. prison

BY SAM MANUEL

WASHINGTON, D.C.—Farouk Abdel-Muhti walked out of prison April 12, two days after a U.S. judge ordered his release. The Palestinian militant has faced deportation since he was arrested by immigration cops in New York in April 2002.

For the past two years Abdel-Muhti, 57, has been locked up in immigration jails in New Jersey and Pennsylvania. During this time, the cops repeatedly harassed and threatened him, including by putting him in the “hole.” But their efforts to isolate and break him failed, as the Palestinian revolutionary continued to speak out from behind bars and to win international support for his fight to be released.

On April 10 U.S. district judge Yvette Kane ordered the Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (BICE) to free him within 10 days. The conditions of his release include reporting regularly to im-

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Parliament in Japan backs ‘missile shield’

BY PATRICK O’NEILL

The Japanese Diet, the country’s national parliament, voted in late March to spend \$10 billion over the next decade on building a “missile shield” around Japan. Tokyo plans to add U.S. Patriot and other missiles to its four Aegis naval destroyers. Guidance information will be provided by U.S. satellites as well as a Japanese-built land-based radar network and command-and-control center.

A few days before the vote in the Diet, the U.S. naval command announced that in September it will send a destroyer to the Sea of Japan equipped with the Aegis radar and missile system, a key component

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British gov’t extends use of political police

BY JONATHAN SILBERMAN

LONDON—In the wake of a massive “antiterrorist” police sweep here and the arrest of nine men of Pakistani origin, the British government is stepping up its efforts to expand spying by the political police, establish a national identity card for all residents, allow detentions without trial, and undermine the rights of the accused—all in the name of “national security.” The foreign-born are a particular target of these attacks.

The nine men, arrested in raids conducted March 30 and April 1 in various towns in southeast England, were held for two weeks without charges under “antiterror laws.” According to the BBC, all nine are of Pakistani origin aged between 17 and

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U.S. forces kill hundreds in assault on Iraqi cities

BY SAM MANUEL

WASHINGTON, D.C.—More than 600 Iraqis have been killed and hundreds more wounded in a week-long assault by 2,500 U.S. troops on the city of Fallujah, according to the director of the city’s

U.S. troops out now!

—see editorial, page 10

hospital. The occupation forces are seeking to defeat insurgents in the city, whose population is largely Sunni Muslim.

U.S. troop sealed off all roads in and out of Fallujah. With AC-130 gunships firing rockets and jets dropping 500-pound bombs on the city, they called on civilians to leave. About a third of the city’s population of 200,000 has reportedly fled.

On April 10 the U.S. military declared a ceasefire to allow negotiations for surrender between the U.S.-appointed Iraqi Governing Council and the insurgents. As we go to press, the ceasefire reportedly held.



Reuters/Laszlo Balogh

U.S. Army Bradley Fighting Vehicle during April 6 firefight in Sadr City, Baghdad.

Fallujah, a base of the ruling Baath party under the Saddam Hussein regime, has been a focal point of opposition to the U.S.-led occupation from the beginning.

During the second week of April, U.S. forces also attacked militias loyal to Muqtada al-Sadr in Sadr City, a majority

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Responding to demands by working people, Venezuela oil company launches public works

BY ARGIRIS MALAPANIS

CAMPO MATA, Venezuela—“We are very happy the water well has been drilled,” said Adolfo Pérez, a peasant in the Calle Larga section of this arid rural community of 160 people. “It’s the first time in 30 years that PDVSA is helping us,” he added, referring to Petróleos de Venezuela, the state-owned oil company. Pérez, who spoke to *Militant* reporters March 24 under the blazing afternoon sun, said residents had protested year after year demanding water, to no avail, until

PDVSA started drilling last fall.

Sinking wells for potable water and irrigation is one of a number of public works and other social programs organized by PDVSA since the failure last year of the U.S.-backed employers’ lockout aimed at forcing out the government. The bosses’ “strike” crippled petroleum and natural gas production in December 2002 and January 2003, but was defeated by mass mobilizations of working people, including defiance by workers in the industry. One of the fruits

of the workers’ victory in that class confrontation was a completely new management for PDVSA.

Leading up to the lockout, the administration of President Hugo Chávez had angered most of Venezuela’s wealthy ruling families and their allies in Washington by doubling the royalties investors have to pay for oil exploration contracts and taking other measures to strengthen state control of the country’s natural resources.

New PDVSA projects include piping natural gas to working-class neighborhoods that have had no access so far, supplying training and material help for the formation of peasant cooperatives, building affordable housing in workers’ districts, and providing support for government programs in areas around oil installations, including literacy classes and free neighborhood clinics operated by volunteer Cuban doctors.

In Anaco, a city near Campo Mata in Anzoátegui state, where the company’s

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Japan ‘missile ‘shield’

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of the missile shield.

The governments of China and north Korea have condemned these moves, rejecting claims by U.S. and Japanese officials that the missile system is “purely defensive.”

By 2005 the U.S. Navy plans to deploy 10 sea-based missile interceptors on Aegis-equipped destroyers in East Asian seas, including the waters around Japan.

Washington has also gained agreement from the governments of Australia and Taiwan to be part of the radar and missile ring. Meanwhile, talks are under way with the government of India, which has already committed scientists to the research effort.

Comprised of the radar and satellite network, sea-based missiles, and the land-based Patriots, such a shield would advance the goal of U.S. and allied forces to be able to launch strikes without fear of retaliatory attacks from north Korea, China, or Russia.

The Asian-based shield, projected to be fully operational by 2007, is part of the more ambitious drive by the U.S. rulers to develop a first-strike nuclear capacity using a detection and interception system based on land, at sea, and in space. It is also part of the accelerating moves by the rulers of Japan to rebuild their military and increasingly deploy their forces abroad.

Using the \$1 billion budgeted annually, the Japanese government of Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi projects purchasing 16 of the Patriot missiles over the next decade and outfitting its four Aegis destroyers with a Standard Missile-3.

The sea- and land-stationed batteries of weapons would give the Japanese armed forces two cracks at incoming missiles. To track and target them, the *New York Times* reported, “Japan would rely on intelligence from United States satellites, but it also plans to construct a land-based radar network and a command and control system.” According to United Press International, U.S. officials have demanded full access to the radar data. If they are denied that, they say, they want a green light to construct their own radar station on Japanese soil.

Howard Baker, the U.S. ambassador to Japan, claimed the missile system “is inherently incapable of offensive operation. It is purely defensive.” Beijing and Pyongyang, which know they are the targets of such military moves, rebutted such claims. The government of Indonesia also expressed concern, saying the decision of the Australian government to enter the system posed the threat of an arms race.

On March 31 the Pentagon announced its decision to sell Taiwan \$1.78 billion in radar equipment to detect ballistic missiles. Beijing protested, saying it sent the “wrong message,” and warned against U.S. sales of “advanced weapons” to Taiwan. Washington has backed the Taiwanese government against Beijing since the victory of the Chinese Revolution in 1949.

For its part, Moscow stated in February that it was developing a missile capable of evading the radar and other detection and interception devices.

Officials of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (north Korea) called Washington’s planned September deployment near its coasts of a destroyer equipped with the Aegis air defense system “the most outright hostile act against the DPRK [and] a part of its unchallenged attempt to dominate the Asia-Pacific region.”

In recent weeks the U.S. and south Korean forces have conducted large-scale military exercises targeting the DPRK. In mid-March, the newspaper of the governing Workers Party of Korea, *Rodong Sinmum*, condemned Washington and Seoul for its Foal Eagle military maneuvers. “The United States often talks about dialogue and peaceful settlement of the nuclear issue, but it seeks to stage a test war reminiscent of a full-scale war aimed to invade north Korea by force,” it stated. The annual exercises, which began March 22, involved south Korean forces alongside 42,000 U.S. troops, including the 37,000 soldiers permanently stationed in south Korea.

A couple of weeks later U.S. military officials announced that 160 U.S. military police in south Korea had taken part in a special one-day “antiterrorist” exercise targeting the DPRK. Accord-

ing to an April 6 report by Agence France-Presse, the drill envisaged fighting with special operations forces from the north. The exercises “included house-to-house combat against a fictitious North Korean platoon leader dubbed ‘Kim Murderman,’” AFP reported.

Rodong Sinmum said Washington’s hostile stance made it impossible to reach any agreement coming out of the talks held in China February 25–28 between Pyongyang and Washington, and also involving Tokyo, Seoul, Beijing, and Moscow. “If the six-way talks are to be continued, an atmosphere favorable for them should be created before anything else,” the north Korean paper said.

At the talks, reported a spokesperson for the DPRK’s foreign ministry, U.S. officials insisted that north Korea abandon its nuclear program in a “verifiable and irreversible manner” before other measures could be discussed. DPRK representatives called on Washington and its south Korean ally to “denuclearize the Korean peninsula.” The negotiations ended in stalemate.

Tokyo threatens to bar DPRK ferry

Maintaining the pressure on north Korea to renounce its nuclear programs and make other concessions to imperialist powers, the coalition government in Japan submitted legislation April 6 that would allow it to bar north Korean boats from Japanese ports. Officials in Tokyo admitted the measure targets the sole north Korean passenger ferry traveling between the two countries.

The officials claim the ferry—which carries goods and money to the DPRK, and north Korean seafood and mushrooms back the other way—is used to smuggle missile parts into the north. AP reported that north Korean residents in Japan protested, “denouncing the legislation as ‘inhuman’ because it severs a vital link between the residents and their families in the North.”

The bill follows legislation in February that empowers Tokyo to slap wide-ranging economic sanctions on the north Korean workers state, including a ban on remittances by family members in Japan.

In addition to its involvement in the U.S.-sponsored “missile shield,” Tokyo is taking other steps to break constitutional restrictions, dating from its defeat by U.S. imperialism in World War II, on the use of its military forces. The most significant move to

Package handlers at Omaha airport on strike for Teamster representation



Militant/Lisa Rottach

Strikers at Air One Transport in Omaha, Nebraska, picket April 3 at Eppley Airfield after welcoming supporters to solidarity picnic. The 55 package handlers have been on strike since March 29, when bosses fired them by terminating contract with DHL in attempt to block organizing drive by Teamsters Local 554.

date is its commitment of 500 troops to the U.S.-commanded occupation forces in Iraq, where they have so far undertaken tasks of “renovating local schools and repairing roads,” according to the *Japan Times*.

On April 8, after two Japanese aid workers and a journalist were captured and held hostage, Chief Cabinet Secretary Yasuo Fukuda said the government saw “no reason” to withdraw its troops from Iraq.

Like other imperialist powers, the Japanese rulers have used the “global war on terrorism” as a cover for steps to restructure its military in order to more effectively defend their interests around the world. Under a new National Defense Program Outline to be unveiled this year, wrote Reuters correspondent Teruaki Ueno March 19, “Japan will realign its troops and overhaul its armaments to respond more quickly to terrorist, guerrilla and missile attacks involving nuclear and biochemical arms.

The program calls for a small increase in the 145,000-strong full-time ground force, a 30 percent reduction in tanks and artillery pieces, and cutbacks in the air force.

Lance Gatling, a Tokyo-based “defense

expert,” told Ueno that “the watchword of late has been ‘get prepared to do without more fighters, warships and tanks’ because the focus of the Defense Agency is going toward long-range surveillance, intelligence and reconnaissance assets”—a reference to the Aegis destroyers and other components of the missile shield.

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Utah miners fight attempt to revoke picket trailer permit

BY GUILLERMO ESQUIVEL
AND TAMAR ROSENFELD

HUNTINGTON, Utah—Striking workers at the Co-Op coal mine here are fighting a move by state authorities to remove their picket trailer at the mine entrance.

United Mine Workers of America District 22 received a “notice of violation,” dated March 30, from the Utah Department of Transportation revoking the permit for the strikers’ picket trailer. It says, “Vehicles and signs are being placed within 30 ft. of edge of pavement in violation of Special Limitations.... Permit is hereby revoked.” Strikers say this is a serious move aimed at their right to effectively picket.

The transportation authorities gave strikers a 10-day notice to remove the trailer. If not, the state agency said, it would levy a fine of \$10 per day after receipt of notice, and “with the assistance of the Attorney General’s Office, to pursue all available legal remedies, to include agency action or judicial relief.”

The miners, on strike since September against CW Mining, known as Co-Op, are demanding the company recognize the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA). They are fighting for better safety conditions, wage improvements, health and retirement benefits, and the reinstatement of all 74 miners who were fired after they protested the arbitrary suspension of a co-worker.

Miners report that during the six months they have been on strike they have observed all the rules and regulations and have not had problems with the local police regarding the trailer.

“The Kingstons are the ones violating the law,” said striker Gonzalo Salazar, referring to the mine owners. “They come out with camcorders and park their trucks in the middle of the road. We see them speed

and not stop at the stop sign. We have proof on video.”

The strikers received their first permit for the trailer on October 29 of last year; it was later extended to May 1. The UDOT notice did not order a halt to picketing, but it would be a symbolic victory for the company to get rid of the trailer, said Salazar. “We get visitors and reporters who come here and we tell them to park away from the state highway,” he said.

Other miners say this is a serious attack instigated by the Co-Op bosses on their right to be at the mine’s entrance. They say some of the strikebreakers had spread rumors from the company that it was going to tow away the trailer before the strikers knew about it.

Supporters of the strikers in Salt Lake City and in Emery and Carbon counties have called the local UDOT office in Price to support the miners. A solidarity committee for the miners set up by Utah Jobs with Justice has mobilized to spread the word in Salt Lake.

The strikers have also contacted active and retired UMWA miners, church members, and other workers in the area to protest the revocation. UMWA lawyers have also contacted the UDOT permits officer, Dale Stapley, who signed the “notice of violation.” He issued a temporary extension of the permit until May 14 but no final decision has yet been made. The attorney general has also been contacted by the supporters of the strikers to intervene in their favor.

Students bring solidarity

As part of the growing solidarity that the striking miners here have been receiving, a group of students at the University of Utah in Salt Lake City visited the picket line at the Co-Op mine April 7.

Aanika Smith, a student enrolled in a



Militant/Anne Carroll

University of Utah students at Co-Op coal miners’ picket line April 7 in Huntington, Utah. Aanika Smith (left) and others students have organized solidarity with the strike.

class on social work that has taken on solidarity with the Co-Op miners as its focus, described how she and her classmates became active in supporting this labor struggle. “Ours is a practice class for community and social work. When we heard about the strike at Co-Op, everyone was excited about getting involved,” she said.

The class of 25 set up committees to help mobilize support and disseminate facts about the strike. Smith said the students have a media group, a food and clothing committee, a letter-writing committee, and an executive summary group. They have conducted food drives, worked with local radio station KRCL to publicize the fight, and participated in a meeting with the state attorney general to air protests over the company’s abusive treatment of workers at the mine.

Jack Fleming, a student who attends weekly meetings in Salt Lake City with other activists and strikers, explained that they changed the original syllabus after the class began, and now focus entirely on solidarity work with the miners.

For two weeks the students placed boxes

around campus soliciting food and clothing donations. In addition to collecting clothing and canned goods, they raised \$200 to buy fresh chicken and necessities such as diapers and toilet paper, which they delivered to the picket line April 7.

For many of the students, this was the first time they had visited the picket line and met striking miners.

As trucks rolled down the state road transporting coal from nearby mines, drivers honked or waved. Striker Juan Salazar explained that this is common among most passersby, whether in trucks or cars. “Very few people go by and don’t show support in some way,” he said.

Salazar pointed to a truck full of scab coal exiting the Co-Op mine—it barely slowed down to make the turn onto the main highway. “You see how dangerously they drive. The trucks leave here very fast with no regard for safety,” he said. “They don’t want to see or hear us out here.”

One of the students photographed the coal trucks leaving with coal to document the tarps loosely draped over the top. “This is illegal,” she said. It can cause problems for motorists whose cars are hit by chunks of coal falling from the trucks, or kicked up later on the road.

When the students visited the picket line they learned of UDOT’s intention to revoke the trailer permit. On the spot, they began planning an emergency campaign to call and write to the attorney general and UDOT to demand the permit be reinstated.

Smith said she is constantly looking for avenues to broaden support for the miners. “I’m writing to Oprah Winfrey to see if she will cover the story of the Co-Op miners,” she said, referring to the television talk show host.

Students were among those at a March 26 picket at the East Side Market in Salt Lake City, owned by the Kingston family. The students will also join a May 1 picket line outside A-1 Garbage Disposal, another Kingston business in Salt Lake City.

The Kingston family owns businesses worth \$150 million in Utah and surrounding states. The Co-Op mine had been among the most profitable leading up to the walkout and strike that began in September.

14 U.S. miners killed on job this year

BY TAMAR ROSENFELD

PRICE, Utah—Seven coal miners and seven metal or hard rock miners have died on the job in the United States so far this year. Two coal miners were killed in Utah, four in West Virginia, and one in Kentucky.

The deaths occurred as coal bosses press their drive to increase productivity and profits at the expense of miners’ lives and limbs. The struggle by 74 coal miners at the Co-Op mine in nearby Huntington has highlighted unsafe working conditions at that nonunion mine, one of the factors leading to their fight to be organized into the United Mine Workers union.

The two mine workers who died in Utah, Russell Crane and Jacob Jorgensen, worked in this coal-rich area. Both worked in nonunion mines, with no union safety committee to enforce safety standards.

Crane, 44, was a longwall shearer operator at Canyon Fuel’s Southern Utah Fuel Co. (Sufco) mine near Salina. He was killed January 3 trying to recover a piece of machinery trapped under a roof collapse. Underground mines in the western states are bored into a mountainside. The operators follow the coal seam into the mountain until it runs out or the cost of removing it outweighs the profit to be reaped from it. As the mine goes deeper, pressure mounts from the mountain bearing down from above.

In a longwall operation, whole “panels” of coal are sliced off the coal face by a rotating shearer, while behind it overhead shields advance one by one to protect the moving head and the operating crew. As the coal is removed, the shields move forward and the underground roof falls in behind them.

In the Sufco incident, Crane and the other workers were assigned to remove a final panel of coal from an area that had already been mined. After adjacent cement supports failed, many of the shields collapsed and were trapped under fallen coal. To salvage the multimillion dollar equipment, the workers—none of whom was injured in the col-

lapse—chained a downed shield to another part of the longwall machine, aiming to pull it free. “During this process, the chain hook broke,” noted MSHA officials in their fatality report. “The remaining part of the hook and the chain assembly recoiled, striking the miner operating the collapsed shield in the head,” killing him.

Three weeks later at Andalex’s Pinnacle mine outside of Price, Jorgensen was driving a diesel tractor in the outside supply yard when his vehicle collided with an idle longwall shield. It was late at night and no one was working with him in the yard. The shield struck the 29-year-old worker directly, dealing a fatal blow, because the tractor had no protective cab or canopy.

In their list of “Best Practices” suggestions posted with each fatality report on their web site, MSHA officials suggest that mine bosses “consider providing protective cabs, canopies, or vertical intrusion shield-

ing pipes on mobile equipment whenever mining height permits.” They also point out that surface work areas should be “sufficiently illuminated at night so that obstacles can be clearly seen.”

In the case of the accident that took Crane’s life, MSHA proposes to ensure people are out of harm’s way before hauling on chains, and to check that hooks are properly attached. Their final suggestion is to “evaluate pillar strength and design before second mining areas containing unusual circumstances, such as setup rooms.” MSHA does not say whether this was done at Sufco.

Since 1999, U.S. coal mining fatalities have averaged just over 34 a year. More than 40 miners a year have died in other mining sectors.

Tamar Rosenfeld is an underground coal miner in Utah.

New Jersey day laborers regain ‘muster zone’

BY NANCY ROSENSTOCK

FREEHOLD, New Jersey—“The mayor and the town had to retract what they’ve been saying and acknowledge our right to be here,” said Francisco Pacheco of the National Day Laborers Organizing Network. He was referring to the victory won by working people in this central New Jersey town when on April 1 the “muster zone” was reopened, having been shut down by town officials for three months.

The zone, an area on the outskirts of town, had been set up by city officials as an assembly point for immigrant day laborers seeking employment from local contractors. A quarter of Freehold’s population of 11,000 is Latino, mostly from Mexico—a 12 percent increase from 1990.

Last fall, city officials reversed themselves and announced that the workers would no longer be allowed to gather

at the site each morning to seek work. Mayor Michael Wilson claimed that too many workers were coming to the site from areas outside of Freehold.

The workers responded with rallies and demonstrations that drew solidarity from others in the region. Support came from the National Day Laborers Organizing Network. From January to the end of April, the Second Baptist Church allowed the workers to assemble each day in its hall.

A class action lawsuit filed in December by the Puerto Rican Legal Defense and Education Fund argued that the workers have a constitutional right to gather on public property to seek employment. The lawsuit also claimed that the town had “embarked on a deliberate and coordinated campaign to harass Latino day laborers.”

In early February the workers won a ruling from the Borough of Freehold that

repealed a loitering ordinance and another law allowing people to be ticketed and fined at an “officer’s discretion,” both of which were used to target day laborers.

These victories are important steps in beating back the reactionary, anti-immigrant campaign waged not only by the city administration but also by PEOPLE (Pressing our Elected Officials to Protect our Living Environment), an organization set up by Michael LeVine, a former Freehold borough councilman.

Fifty workers and their supporters gathered at the “muster zone” April 3 for a rally to celebrate the victory. “In the name of the day laborers, thanks to all the organizations who supported us,” said José Rodolfo Peralta, a worker from Freehold.

“We won because we were not just individual voices but the union of the workers.”

Target week called to boost ‘Militant’ sub campaign

BY PAUL PEDERSON

“We had a great Friday on the job, selling four subscriptions to *Perspectiva Mundial* and one to the *Militant*,” said Gerardo Sánchez after work April 9. Sánchez works at a meatpacking plant in Chicago. Miguel Chagoya, 19, a co-worker, renewed his subscription to *Perspectiva Mundial* and commented:

“The most important thing I like about the magazine is that it covers news about the world, not just the United States. I’ve been reading about Venezuela and the coal strike in Utah. When you read about the miners it helps us to understand how other workers are fighting for their rights. I think *Perspectiva Mundial* should be read by other workers at the plant. We need to keep ourselves informed.”

As the eight-week subscription drive enters its fourth week, *Militant* supporters around the world report interest in the two periodicals in workplaces and at factory gates and mine portals. On the *Militant*, with 795 subscriptions, the drive is just ahead of pace at 40 percent of the goal. Sales of *Perspectiva Mundial* stand at 197 subscriptions, 28 behind schedule to make the goal of 600.

Campaigners are planning a nine-day target week starting Saturday, April 17. The week of intensified sales—including teams to campuses, towns, and factories in regions outside sellers’ home cities—will culminate in the April 25 march on Washington as well as days of action in Canada to defend a woman’s right to choose.

Militant/Perspectiva Mundial Spring Subscription Drive March 20–May 17: Week 3 of 8					
Country	Militant Goal	Sold	%	PM Goal	Sold
UNITED KINGDOM					
Edinburgh	20	12	60%		
London*	50	24	48%	10	3
UK total	70	36	51%	10	3
NEW ZEALAND					
Christchurch	20	11	55%	1	0
Auckland	25	9	36%	1	0
N.Z. total	45	20	44%	2	0
UNITED STATES					
Omaha	50	33	66%	40	24
Des Moines	50	32	64%	25	14
Houston	55	30	55%	15	6
Atlanta	55	28	51%	20	3
New York	200	99	50%	60	20
Newark	110	51	46%	35	8
Philadelphia	60	27	45%	10	1
Boston	85	37	44%	50	17
Birmingham	30	14	47%	8	2
Twin Cities	75	32	43%	35	14
NE Pennsylvania	45	19	42%	10	3
Washington*	65	27	42%	20	3
San Francisco	120	50	42%	40	10
Utah	30	12	40%	15	7
Chicago*	100	39	39%	35	13
Miami	70	26	37%	18	9
Los Angeles	135	50	37%	50	10
Pittsburgh	50	15	30%	3	1
Detroit	50	14	28%	8	1
Cleveland	30	8	27%	8	3
Western Col.	30	8	27%	15	0
Seattle	60	14	23%	10	2
Tampa	30	7	23%	10	2
U.S. total	1585	672	42%	540	173
ICELAND	18	7	39%	1	0
AUSTRALIA	45	17	38%	7	3
SWEDEN					
Gothenburg	14	7	50%	4	2
Stockholm	15	4	27%	8	1
SWEDEN Total	29	11	38%	12	2
CANADA					
Montreal	25	7	28%	10	2
Vancouver	60	16	27%	9	5
Toronto	50	9	18%	7	9
CANADA total	135	32	24%	26	16
Int’l totals	1927	795	40%	598	197
Goal/Should be	2000	750	38%	600	225
IN THE UNIONS					
Country	Militant Goal	Sold	%	PM Goal	Sold
UNITED STATES					
UMWA	50	18	36%	12	3
UFCW	110	34	31%	123	61
UNITE	50	11	22%	40	9
Total	210	63	30%	175	73
CANADA					
UFCW	13	4	31%	5	1
UNITE	9	0	0%	5	1
Total	22	4	18%	10	2
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.

After a strong start to the campaign, Chicago partisans of the *Militant* upped their goal from 80 to 100. Here are a few highlights from the third week of their campaign.

At an April 7 University of Illinois protest against anti-abortion rightist Joseph Scheidler, the *Militant* drew interest from a number of protesters, reports Maurice Williams. “Two workers at a nearby historical museum stopped to talk to us and look over the literature we brought. One of them, Don, said to me, ‘I’ve always liked Malcolm X,’ as he selected two books of Malcolm’s speeches.”

He told Williams, “I would like to go to the march to defend abortion rights, but I can’t.”

“I am going to the march,” said his co-worker, Donna. “It’ll be my first big demonstration.” She bought a subscription and *The Long View of History* by George Novack.

“The *Militant*! I haven’t seen it in years. That paper helped me to keep my sanity all the time I was locked away!” a former prisoner told Williams at a street table.

Pointing to a book of speeches by Maurice Bishop, the leader of the Grenadian Revolution, he said that Pathfinder books had helped him to maintain his perspective during the 28 years he spent behind bars. “Let me know what I can do to help,” he said, signing up for a *Militant* subscription.

In London, the socialist weekly got a warm response at an April 4 protest outside the Belmarsh high-security prison against the detention there without trial or charges of 13 foreign-born men branded by police as “terrorists.” At the action, immigrants from the Spanish regions of Catalonia and the Basque country picked up copies of the paper and one subscribed, expressing

Donations needed now to fund socialist press

BY PATRICK O’NEILL

Send in your donation to the \$85,000 *Militant/Perspectiva Mundial* fund now! Funds are needed urgently to get the campaign on track and ensure that the socialist press stays current with printers’ bills and other expenses.

As of press time, the total collection stood at \$9,400, less than one-third of where it should be. In the third week of the fund drive we took in \$2,585, one-fifth of what we now need in each of the last five weeks of the drive to make the international goal of \$85,000 by May 17.

Fund supporters everywhere need to approach this with the same campaigning spirit that has marked the subscription drive. The 990 subs sold to date to the *Militant* and *Perspectiva Mundial* should encourage readers to donate and simultaneously reach out to every potential contributor, whether it be at literature tables on the streets, on the phone, over a coffee or a beer, on a picket line or at work.

Each success in the sales campaign boosts the need for timely donations, since every introductory subscription depends on a subsidy that can be a drain on finances.

The appeal is part of both the annual budget and the working weekly income of the socialist press. Without it, printers, mailing services, and other vendors can’t be paid on time. Added to these weekly costs are the special expenses of reporting trips, which have been organized so far this year to Cuba, Palestine, and Venezuela.

Fund-raising meetings, scheduled in many cities, will reap more benefits if they are part of a steady, daily effort.

“Twenty-three people jammed the Pathfinder bookstore here for a meeting featuring Róger Calero, associate editor of *Perspectiva Mundial*,” said Bob Stanton from Phila-

—MILITANT LABOR FORUMS—

FLORIDA

Militant Fund meetings, Miami and Tampa: **Venezuela and the Crisis in Latin America—U.S. Imperialism Escalates Its Intervention.** Speaker: Martín Koppel, *Perspectiva Mundial* editor.

Miami

Also speaking: Alex Alvarado, Young Socialists. Sat., April 17. 6:00 p.m. dinner, 7:30 p.m. program. 8365 NE 2nd Ave., 2nd Floor. Te l: (305) 751-7076.

Tampa

Sun., April 18. 2:00 p.m. reception, 2:30 p.m. program. 1441 E. Fletcher Ave. 2nd Floor in rear. Tel: (813)910-8507.

NEW JERSEY

Newark

Why Washington Has Venezuela in Its Gun Sights. *Militant* Fund meeting. Speaker: Argiris Malapanis, *Militant* editor, back from reporting trip to Venezuela. Fri., April 23. 6:30 p.m. dinner, 7:30 p.m. program. 168 Bloomfield Ave. Tel: (973) 481-0077.

TEXAS

Houston

Oppose the Imperialist Offensive against Working People—Fight for a ‘New Europe’ and a ‘New America.’” *Militant* fund meeting. Speaker: Sam Manuel, *Militant* Washington Bureau Chief. 3:00 p.m. reception, 4:00 p.m. program. Sun., May 2. 619 W. 8th St. Tel: (713) 869-6550.

NEW ZEALAND

Christchurch

Oppose Police Brutality! Defend Women’s Rights! Fri., April 23. 7:00 p.m. *Pathfinder Press Bookshop*, 129 Gloucester St., Christchurch. Tel: (03) 365-6055.



Militant supporters from Edinburgh, Scotland, get out the socialist press in Glasgow April 11.

appreciation for its coverage of struggles for national self-determination in Spain. Several Moroccans at the protest passed the paper around after seeing an article with photos and information about the heroic struggles in northern Morocco against Spanish and French colonial rule in the 1920s.

Sales like these have prompted *Militant* supporters in London to raise their goal from 40 to 50. Campaigners in Washington, D.C., have also increased their goal, bringing the total of local goals to 1927. We still need raises in local goals to reach the international target of 2,000.

delphia on April 12. Held two days earlier, the event was entitled, “Oppose the Imperialist Offensive against Working People: Fight for a ‘New Europe’ and a ‘New America.’”

“We collected \$1,000 at the event, and raised \$1,200 in new contributions,” Stanton said. Four college students who had bumped into sales campaigners over recent weeks attended the meeting and stayed afterwards for discussion.

Fund supporter David Rosenfeld reported from Omaha April 10 that people who stop to check out newspapers and books at sales tables there have made several contributions to the fund. “We put a donation can on every table,” he said.

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

\$85,000 Militant/PM Fund March 20—May 17: Week 3 of 8			
	Goal	Paid	%
Utah	1,500	400	27%
Los Angeles	8,000	2,010	25%
Miami	1,700	395	23%
New York	11,000	2,265	21%
Boston	3,000	555	19%
Birmingham	2,000	325	16%
Omaha	440	65	15%
Des Moines	1,100	150	14%
Newark	3,500	475	14%
Twin Cities	4,000	400	10%
Houston	3,500	300	9%
Washington DC	2,800	205	7%
Northeast	1,600	100	6%
Seattle	6,000	355	6%
Detroit	3,000	100	3%
Cleveland	1,200	35	3%
Pittsburgh	3,800	100	3%
Chicago	5,000	100	2%
San Francisco	8,500	100	1%
Atlanta	5,000	0	0%
Philadelphia	3,300	0	0%
Tampa	1,300	0	0%
Western Col.	2,000	0	0%
U.S. Total	83,240	8,435	10%
New Zealand	1,600	77	5%
United Kingdom	1,000	20	2%
Canada	5,000	10	0%
Australia	1,500	0	0%
France	300	0	0%
Iceland	200	0	0%
Sweden	500	0	0%
Other		810	
Int’l Total	93,340	9,352	11%
Goal/Should be	85,000	31,875	38%

‘Centuries of ignorance came crashing down’

Armando Hart tells of 1961 mass campaign that ended illiteracy in Cuba

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

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

The *Militant* has been publishing a series of excerpts from the book. This week’s selection is taken from the final chapter, “1958: From Prison—The Isle of Pines to Victory.” In it Hart describes the last months of 1958, when the Rebel Army launched its final offensive against the Batista regime. On Jan. 1, 1959, the dictator fled as the revolutionary forces entered Havana. Hart, along with other leaders of the July 26 Movement locked up on the Isle of Pines, organized the prisoners to take over the prison compound and joined the insurrection.

Hart, then 28 years old, became the minister of education in the revolutionary government. Hart oversaw the mass literacy campaign launched by the new government in 1960, through which tens of thousands of young volunteers from the cities went into the countryside, helping to wipe out illiteracy in Cuba within a year and transforming themselves in the process. The following account describes the literacy campaign.

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BY ARMANDO HART

The Cuban Revolution triumphed on the threshold of the 1960s, in a country then subjugated to U.S. neocolonialism, in a world divided into spheres of influence by the victors of World War II. It emerged victorious in the peculiar framework of the ideological, cultural, and political conflict between the socialist ideal and the world capitalist system, and in the midst of the accentuated anticommunist campaign of the first fifteen years of the Cold War. In contrast to that international panorama, a popular expression was heard all over the country: “*Si Fidel es comunista, que me pongan en la lista.*” [If Fidel is a communist, then put me on the list.] That saying summed up the evolution that was taking place naturally in the patriotic consciousness of the vast majority of the people. This marked for all time the originality of our process, going back to the Cuban revolutionary tradition of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

From then on, education and culture were placed at the center of political and social activity and of the challenges facing a nation located “at the crossroads” of the world, which had adopted as its own the highest values of Western culture placing itself irrevocably on the side of the poor.

In those days of January 1959 I arrived at a building in Old Havana that had been the seat of the House of Representatives during the initial years of the Republic and later the Ministry of Education. I was twenty-eight years old. Inspired by [José] Martí’s¹ idea,



Granma

Volunteer teaches family to read and write in Cuban fishing village of Puerto Esperanza in 1961. That year 300,000 volunteers mobilized and wiped out illiteracy in Cuba.

“To be educated is the only way to be free,” I assumed the responsibility for guiding the radical transformation of education in Cuba on the basis of these objectives:

- Extending instruction to the entire school-age population, and eradicating illiteracy in the adult population.
- Promoting a general reform of instruction based on offering a scientific and rounded education combined with training in ethical and patriotic values inspired by Cuban culture rooted in Martí’s ideas.
- Facilitating communication and strengthening ties between the family, the school, and the community as a central element of the educational process.
- Promoting and fostering the people’s participation in the tasks of the ministry. Developing close relations with social and mass organizations.
- Having administrative and technical decentralization in order to achieve these purposes.

In Cuba more than a million people were illiterate; 50 percent of the school-age children had no access to education; high school and university education were far more limited. That is why one of the first measures taken by the Ministry of Education of the revolutionary government was the creation of classrooms all over the country. Five thousand classrooms for nine thousand unemployed teachers could be created just with the financial resources available in the long list of “*botellas*”² formerly handed out by the Ministry of Education of the old regime. When I told Fidel I was going to devote myself to creating five thousand classrooms, he pointed out that we should talk to the teachers and ask them to cut their salaries in half and thus create twice as many classrooms—ten thousand—with agreement that their salaries would then be raised gradually in a short number of years. That’s what was done.

Broadening educational services was a priority from the very first moments, clearly exemplified by the creation of the ten thou-

sand new classrooms, the conversion of garages into schools, and the nationalization of private schools.

I called on the specialists and educators of the country to cooperate in all these endeavors. The patriotic tradition of Cuban education inspired our policy. In fact, from my post as minister, I had the privilege of becoming a pupil of the best teachers in Cuba.

In 1960, at the United Nations General Assembly, Fidel announced that a national campaign against illiteracy was being organized, and that in 1961 Cuba would be free of that scourge that humanity suffered and still suffers today.

An entire generation of young people, students, and teachers, of cadres of mass organizations, began their revolutionary lives, and their historic contributions to the country, in that literacy drive, which had its most immediate antecedents in the literacy efforts conducted by the Rebel Army during the insurrectional struggle.

During the 1961 campaign 300,000 Cubans were organized, among them more than 100,000 student brigadistas in the Conrado Benítez brigades, 121,000 popular literacy teachers, 35,000 teachers integrated as cadres and specialists, and 15,000 workers in the “*Patria o muerte*” brigades. To this we must add an untold number of workers in all areas, as well as administrative and service personnel, whose efforts were indispensable to assuring the material and organizational success of the campaign.

The high proportion of young people among that impressive mobilization of literacy teachers was an extremely important fact. That campaign became the first great mass undertaking by a new generation. Youth who were too young to participate in the struggle against the tyranny were given a no-less-heroic task at the triumph of the revolution: that of defending the country and the revolutionary program, one of whose

points was the elimination of illiteracy. A legion of these youth went to every corner of the country—workbook, textbook, and lantern in hand—to teach reading and writing. They learned the first political lesson of their lives as literacy teachers. Our young students and teachers taught more than 700,000 Cubans, as they simultaneously learned from them that being rooted in the people as a whole is the fundamental thing in order to create and advance in a revolution.

The literacy campaign, in short, was an educational and cultural act that created revolutionary consciousness in new generations. It was part of the intense popular movement, with deep aspirations for the radical renovation the country was living through in the revolution’s early years. In those beautiful days, centuries of ignorance and exploitation came crashing down.

With the noblest of passions, the people brought tumbling down the old economic and social structures, the old customs, and the decrepit ideas that had accumulated over centuries of history but had no roots or strength in the consciousness of our nation. They were thus unable to withstand the growing momentum of the socialist revolution.

On December 22 of that same historic year—historic because in 1961 we also triumphed over imperialism at Girón³—Fidel proclaimed in the Plaza of the Revolution that we had won the battle against illiteracy. The Cuban educational and cultural process took on exemplary national and international significance. That’s why he was able to say: “There is no moment more solemn and thrilling, no instant of greater joy, no minute of more legitimate pride and glory than this one, in which four and a half centuries of ignorance have been toppled.”

The tens of thousands of literacy brigadistas gathered in the Plaza of the Revolution chanted in unison: “Fidel, Fidel, tell us what else we need to do!” His answer was: “Now you must become teachers, artists, professors, technicians, engineers, and specialists in the most diverse disciplines of science and culture.”

For the first time in our history, bringing education and culture to the masses became a problem that demanded a practical solution.

Thus, alongside the image of José Martí was born the educational, cultural, and scientific movement generated by the Cuban Revolution that for more than four decades has been its backbone. It is decisive to the country’s independence, and is Cuba’s calling card to the world.

¹José Martí, main leader of Cuba’s wars for independence against Spain and outstanding anti-imperialist, regarded as Cuba’s national hero. Died in combat on May 19, 1895.

²Literally “bottles.” A term used popularly to describe the corrupt payments to persons who were on the payroll but never did any work. [AH]

³The U.S.-organized mercenary invasion at Playa Girón (the Bay of Pigs) on Cuba’s southern coast, took place April 17, 1961. It was defeated within 72 hours by Cuba’s militia and Revolutionary Armed Forces.

Madrid’s war on Basques

Continued from page 9

prisoners remain in Spanish and French jails. Many of them, accused of supporting ETA, go before special tribunals. “Detention doesn’t follow an investigation—it’s the other way round. Electrodes, beatings, drowning, putting a bag over the person’s head, sexual assault, and death threats” are among the interrogation techniques, said Iñigo Elkoro, a lawyer representing Basque political prisoners, in a 1997 interview in the *Militant*.

“Spain’s antiterror laws permit the use of incommunicado detention, secret legal proceedings, and pre-trial detention for up to four years,” said a March 2003 report by Human Rights Watch. “The investigating magistrate of the Audiencia Nacional, a special court that oversees terrorist cases,

can request *causa secreta* [secret cause] for thirty days, consecutively renewable for the duration of the four-year pre-trial detention period. Secret proceedings bar the defense access to the prosecutor’s evidence, except for information contained in the initial detention order.”

In May 2003 tens of thousands protested in Bilbao against the outlawing of Herri Batasuna by the outgoing administration of Jose María Aznar. The previous year the National Court had suspended the party, accusing it of being linked to ETA, a charge denied by Batasuna leaders.

On March 22 Zapatero, having reaffirmed his support for this repressive course, dismissed an offer by ETA representatives of negotiations and a possible ceasefire.

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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Venezuela oil company

Continued from front page

eastern division is based, PDVSA has given particular prominence to the organization of unemployed workers into cooperatives of painters, electricians, truck drivers, seamstresses, and other occupations.

These measures are beginning to address some social needs. At the same time, some Venezuelans say, working people organized in the new cooperatives are already being mired in debt to banks and large businesses.

PDVSA has budgeted \$1.7 billion for such projects in 2004, up from about \$40 million in previous years.

These new policies have come under attack by the pro-imperialist opposition trying to oust the elected government. They have also generated debate among government supporters, some of whom argue that the company should stick to investing exclusively in oil exploration and production.

Vast privileges for former managers

Venezuela nationalized its oil industry in 1975. When the operations of Royal Dutch/Shell and other foreign companies were made state property, however, the new company left the formerly imperialist-owned operations in the hands of the same bosses. Steps to bring the company under complete state control were not taken until the past two years.

With the largest known oil reserves in the Western Hemisphere, Venezuela is the fifth-largest oil producer in the world. Generating \$46 billion in yearly sales, PDVSA provides 80 percent of Venezuela's export revenue. More than 50 percent of exports go to the United States and Canada.

Most Venezuelans, more than 70 percent of whom live below the official poverty line, do not share in these riches. The privileges and wealth that oil executives and top administrative personnel enjoyed, on the other hand, explain why the company's former management fiercely resisted the government's policies in the industry prior to the lockout.

PDVSA's president, for example, had a salary 10 times that of the minister of energy who was supposed to be his superior. According to the Ministry of Energy and Mines, the salary and benefit packages of the company's top 20 executives ranged from \$16,000 to \$51,000 per month in 2002. In addition, many managers had access to PDVSA-provided chalets in the Andes. Top administrators enjoyed luxurious company-owned residences near their offices.

These bosses made sure that PDVSA—which owns Citgo's U.S. refineries and 13,000 gas stations, and is the third-largest supplier of oil to the United States—was organized from the wellhead to the gas pump to serve the local bourgeoisie and their U.S. allies rather than the interests of working people in Venezuela.

When the Chávez administration began adopting measures impinging on these prerogatives, PDVSA's management joined others in the capitalist class in efforts to topple the government—including the failed 2002 military coup and last year's lockout. The measures in dispute included a hydrocarbons law enacted in the fall of 2001 that

increased most production royalties payable by both PDVSA and international oil companies from 16 percent to 30 percent. The law also required PDVSA to own a majority stake in all joint ventures with foreign companies.

PDVSA had 32,000 employees nationwide before the "strike." About one-third were administrators and managers, who overwhelmingly joined the boss action. In total, some 18,000 employees took part in the lockout and were subsequently fired—including the entire management.

How workers defeated boss 'strike'

During a March 22 visit to Cabimas, on the eastern shore of Lake Maracaibo, the heart of oil extraction, workers gave graphic descriptions to *Militant* reporters of the guerrilla warfare that took place as the outgoing management sabotaged computerized controls and other facilities and shut down operations in early December 2002, keeping them down for about two weeks. Cabimas is an hour east of Maracaibo, the capital of the state of Zulia, where more than half of the country's oil is produced.

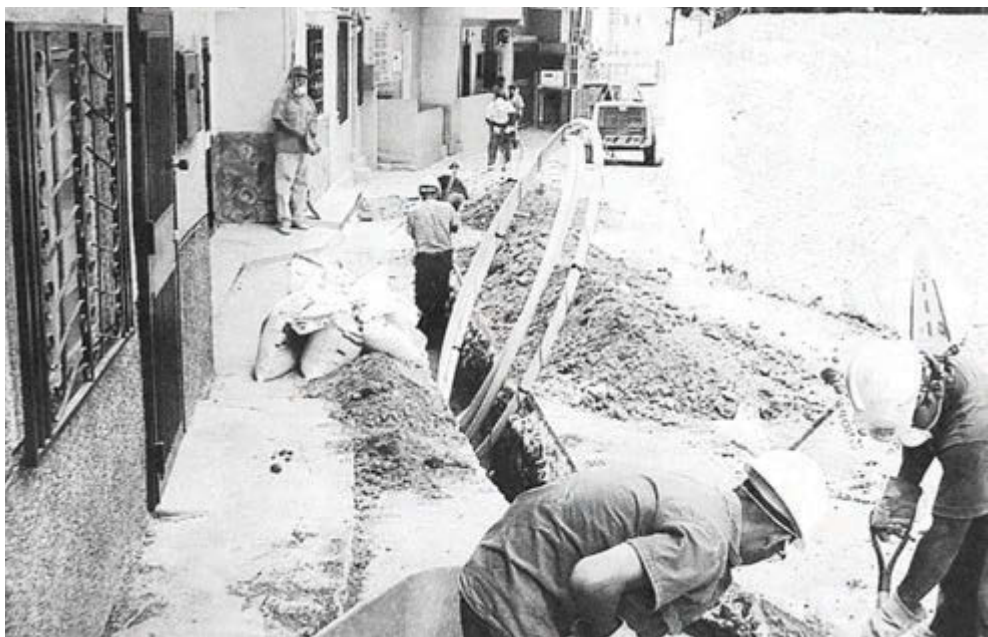
Denny Chirinos has worked for PDVSA for nine years. He told us that he was one of only eight workers from the 1,200 in the main shop repairing all drilling equipment and vessels used in the lake who stayed on the job during the lockout. "I led the eight," he said. "We recruited another 22 skilled workers from the area within a day, and began the fight to restart production, including night patrols on the lake to protect the oil platforms. Throughout December, we had nighttime skirmishes with employees carrying out sabotage. By the end of the month we had won."

So it wasn't just administrative and managerial personnel who joined the "strike," Chirinos explained. The bosses pressured or convinced most technicians and many maintenance and other production workers into joining them, he said, adding, "These are the best jobs in the country. Not only are the wages relatively high—starting at about \$800 per month for full-time positions—but people had complete family medical coverage and subsidized food. Many aspired to become bosses and had that mentality."

We heard similar accounts in Anzoátegui, second to Zulia in oil production and number one in the extraction of natural gas, according to PDVSA managers.

Carmen Bastarro is the receptionist at PDVSA's new social development department in the city of Anaco. "A little more than a year ago, I worked for Petrolera," she said in a March 24 interview, referring to a private company that lays pipe for PDVSA. "I was fired because I opposed the 'strike.' I also helped the Unemployed Committee in Anaco that had 400 members. When they shut down PDVSA in December 2002, most of us joined National Guard troops to defend oil tanks and help restart operations."

Bastarro said a number of the oil workers in Anaco joined 1,200 steelworkers who came from Bolívar state to the south in January 2003 to repair a gas pipeline that had been sabotaged by supporters of the pro-



PDVSA al día

Workers for state-owned oil company Petróleos de Venezuela (PDVSA) lay pipe to supply natural gas to working-class neighborhood in Caracas.

imperialist opposition, stopping production at the country's main steelworks in Ciudad Guyana. With the help of the National Guard, the steelworkers and their supporters succeeded in pushing back an armed demonstration of some 3,000 opponents and repaired the pipeline.

Bastarro said that before the defeat of the lockout she had "never dreamt" she would work for PDVSA. "These jobs were not open to us," she said. "You had to know people high up to get in here."

Today, most of PDVSA's workers are newly hired. The workforce is younger and includes more Blacks, while company reports state that the percentage of administrative personnel has been reduced from one in three to one in five. The biggest cut took place with the closure of PDVSA's main headquarters in Caracas, where thousands of administrative personnel were employed. The government has converted the building into the Bolivarian University.

Visit to Anaco

Carlos Pereira, an agronomist, and attorney Lisbeth Romero work at the oil company's department of social development in Anaco. Formed less than a year ago, the department is in charge of the social projects PDVSA is organizing in the eastern part of the country. These include programs to drill wells and pipe the water into rural communities. The department also provides six-month courses and legal and material help for the formation of cooperatives by peasants and others. New cooperatives in the area founded as a result of this initiative include about 100 service co-ops of painters, welders, and others, Romero said in a March 24 interview in her office. Some have already signed up for maintenance contracts with PDVSA, which provides them with as much as 40 percent of the contract fee up front to help them get started.

"PDVSA has donated tractors and other equipment to a number of peasant cooperatives," Pereira said.

In a visit later that day to several rural communities near Anaco, it was clear that bringing water to these areas has helped undermine support for the pro-imperialist opposition, which dominates the state government and many town halls here.

"We organized protests for years and years demanding water we could drink," said Gerardo Ramírez, a retired worker in Campo Mata. "All we got from the mayors was water tanked in a few times a week for drinking, washing, and everything else. And we had to pay for it at rising costs." The latest price is 8,000 bolívars (\$4) to fill a tank that lasts less than a week. "Now, when the water is piped in next month we'll be able to start planting some of the fields around here for the first time," Ramírez said. "Omar had a lot to do with this," he added, referring to Omar Palma, an

agronomist at PDVSA's social development department in Anaco, in charge of the water project in these areas.

Palma showed *Militant* reporters three wells already drilled, and said another 15 will be sunk in the first half of this year.

Most of the 20 workers and peasants in the Calle Larga section of Campo Mata who spoke to *Militant* reporters said that with this accomplishment they feel they have a better chance of winning some of the other demands they have made. These include bringing school buses for their children, who now have to walk nearly two miles to their classes, repairing and upgrading the electricity grid that goes down several times a week, and bringing Cuban doctors to the area.

Just across the border from Anzoátegui, in Monagas state, is Crucero del Caro, home to about 700 people. Gregoria Castro, 23, one of the few high school graduates there, teaches a literacy class in the afternoons. "PDVSA has donated some tractors here and has helped clear land for cultivation," she said. "But until the water is piped in, we have no chance." Residents there expect that to happen within two months.

Most of the two dozen people *Militant* reporters interviewed in Crucero del Caro said they have been out of work for a long time. Widespread joblessness hits such rural communities particularly hard, since the dry climate and lack of irrigation mean that agriculture has taken up little of the slack as jobs outside PDVSA have been cut back.

Official unemployment in Venezuela reached 18 to 20 percent last year, when many jobs were lost in the aftermath of the lockout, and has stayed around that level.

The Coindustria research organization reported mid-March that the number of industrial firms fell to 4,900 in the fourth quarter of 2003, down from nearly 6,800 a year earlier. According to this study, Venezuela's industrial sector had peaked at 11,600 firms at the end of 1997, the year before Chávez was elected president. Employment at Venezuela's industrial enterprises stood at 260,000 in the fourth quarter of last year, a steep drop from 320,000 in the same period of 2002, Coindustria said.

'Cooperatives perspective'

The PDVSA agronomists in Anaco said the effort to form cooperatives is aimed at addressing this crisis.

Such efforts have spread to many areas of the country, including some where the oil company does not have major operations. During a March 17 visit to Valencia, the capital of Carabobo state and the country's third-largest city, *Militant* reporters met Eduardo Tapia, who is organizing a community radio station in the patio of his apartment in the Monumental section of the city's south side. We noticed an announcement pinned on the wall about a new cooperative by local residents called SURGAS-1.

"Twenty-five neighbors formed this co-op on the initiative of PDVSA a few months ago," Tapia said. Its goal is to build the infrastructure needed to pipe natural gas into the area. PDVSA is providing the training, the pipe and other materials, as well as the labor, where needed. PDVSA Gas, a newly formed division of the oil company, will sell gas directly to the neighborhood co-op.

Tapia said that such programs were initiated in response to demands by working

Continued on Page 10



Militant photos by Argiris Malapanis

Left: Oil workers at PDVSA repair shop in Cabimas, Zulia state. Right: Residents of Calle Larga section of Campo Mata, a rural town in the state of Anzoátegui, discuss possibilities opened up by new water well drilled by oil company's engineers. On right is retired worker Gerardo Ramírez; next to him is Adolfo Pérez, a farmer; PDVSA agronomist Omar Palma is fourth from left.

Fidel Castro on lessons of Chile 1973

Below are excerpts from a speech given by Fidel Castro on Sept. 28, 1973, to a mass rally in Havana. It is part of a collection of speeches in the Education for Socialists Bulletin entitled *Fidel Castro on Chile*, one of Pathfinder's Books of the Month for April. The title contains more than a dozen speeches and interviews given by the Cuban revolutionary leader during a visit to Chile between November 10 and December 4, 1971. The speech excerpted here was given shortly after the U.S.-sponsored right-wing military coup that overthrew the elected government of Salvador Allende.

In the fall of 1970, Salvador Allende Gossens, a left-wing Socialist Party leader, was elected president of Chile. He was the candidate of Popular Unity, an electoral coalition of the Socialist Party, Communist Party, the bourgeois Radical Party, and several smaller parties. The CP and SP were

BOOKS OF THE MONTH

the dominant forces in this front but made concessions to bourgeois forces inside and outside the coalition.

Allende's electoral victory reflected a broad radicalization of the Chilean workers and farmers. The government carried out a number of far-reaching reforms in its first year, including the nationalization of foreign holdings in mining, as well as many banks and textile mills. In response to the working-class upsurge, growing sections of the Chilean bourgeoisie sought to undermine and overthrow the Allende government and U.S. imperialism opened up an economic



Fidel Castro visits Kennecott Copper mine in southern Chile with President Salvador Allende in November 1971 after it had been nationalized by the Allende government.

war and propaganda campaign against it. On Sept. 11, 1973, Allende was overthrown in a bloody U.S.-orchestrated coup and the Pinochet military dictatorship was imposed. Copyright © 1982 by Pathfinder Press, reprinted by permission.



BY FIDEL CASTRO

President Allende and the Chilean revolutionary process awakened great interest and solidarity throughout the world.

For the first time in history, a new experience was developed in Chile: the attempt to bring about the revolution by peaceful means, by legal means. And he was given the understanding and support of all the world in his effort—not only of the international Communist movement, but of very different political inclinations as well. We may say that that effort was appreciated even by those who weren't Marxist-Leninists.

And our party and people—in spite of the fact that we had made the revolution by other means—and all the other revolutionary peoples in the world supported him. We didn't hesitate a minute, because we understood that there was a possibility in Chile of winning an electoral victory, in spite of all the resources of imperialism and the ruling classes, in spite of all the adverse

circumstances. We didn't hesitate in 1970 to publicly state our understanding and our support of the efforts which the Chilean left was making to win the elections that year.

And, sure enough, there was an electoral victory. The left, People's Unity, with its social and political program, won at the polls.

Of course, that didn't mean the triumph of a revolution; it meant access to very important positions of power by peaceful, legal means.

However, it wasn't an easy task that President Allende was faced with. There were conspiracies right from the beginning. An attempt was made to keep him from being inaugurated after the elections....

But, in spite of all the conspiracies, in spite of all the efforts of imperialism, Salvador Allende, in the name of People's Unity, took office as president of the republic.

But what problems confronted him? In the first place there was an intact bourgeois state apparatus. There were armed forces that called themselves apolitical, institutional—that is, apparently neutral in the revolutionary process. There was that bourgeois parliament, where a majority of members jumped to the tune of the ruling classes. There was a judicial system that was completely subservient to the reactionaries.

And it was in those circumstances that he had to carry out his governmental duties. There was also the fact that the country's economy was completely bankrupt, that the Chilean state was four billion dollars in debt.

That huge debt was the product of the imperialist policy, the product of the engineering of the United States, which was trying to create a showcase of the Christian Democratic government so as to confront and stop the advance of the social movement.

The United States granted Chile huge loans when Frei was president. But they weren't loans to develop the country; they were loans for lavish consumption—for cars, television sets, refrigerators, and all kinds of other consumer goods which gave an image of progress and well-being to the Christian Democratic government.

President Allende found himself with a country burdened down by debt; a country in which imperialism had introduced its customs, its consumer habits; a country in which the mass media—the press, television, and radio—was in the hands of the oligarchy and reaction. And at a time when the price of copper plummeted from 75 cents to 48 cents a pound.

Moreover, the people had crying needs that simply had to be met. There was large-scale unemployment, and a solution had to be found for this problem. The most crying needs of the people, the demands most felt by the population, had to be attended to, and the government of People's Unity found enormous economic obstacles in its path.

When the agrarian reform began to be put into effect, the large landowners and agrarian bourgeoisie started sabotaging agricultural production. The bourgeoisie, owners of the distribution centers, warehouses, and stores, started cornering the market and sabotaging the People's Unity government.

As soon as the nationalization of the copper enterprises that had extracted thousands upon thousands of millions from the labor and sweat of the Chilean people—as soon as the nationalization of those enterprises was approved, imperialism froze all the loans granted by all the international organizations to the Chilean government and went about stifling the economy of Chile.

Those were the enormous difficulties which President Allende faced on taking office.

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And they still are, Lucy—Chicago cops are resisting a proposal to name a neighborhood park in honor of the late Lucy Ella Gon-



Harry Ring

zales Parsons, a heroic fighter for workers' rights and widow of Albert Parsons, a 19th century anarchist and fighter for the eight-hour work day. Along with seven

comrades, he was the victim of the 1886 Haymarket Square bomb frame-up. He and three others were hanged. Fighting on their behalf, Lucy Parsons aptly branded the cops "organized bandits." A fighter to the end, she died in 1942.

Praise the Lord and pass the beaker—Three years ago, the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta authorized employee Angie Tracey to solicit the faithful. She says 200 coworkers responded "yes" to her e-mail pitch to the center's 8,000-member work force. Recently she offered the *New York Times* an appraisal of her work for the

Lord: "It's a tremendous benefit to management," she said. "We teach biblical principles like rendering yourself as a servant. That's very pro-management.... We solve many disputes using prayers or applying passages from the Bible."

You paid yours?—A government audit showed that between 1990 and 2000, 61 percent of U.S. corporations brushed aside paying income taxes. "Foreign" companies also stiffed the tax collectors. But, surprise, surprise, the biggest U.S. corporations paid the least.

Pinch for rigor mortis—In England, the Consumers' Associa-

tion got a warning from whistleblowers that supermarket chickens sold as "fresh" can be as much as three weeks old and prone to disease. Food processors repackaged them and append fresh "sell by" stickers. It's being looked into.

Waistline special—And at MacDonald's in England, you can have a Caesar salad with your hamburger. The salad has more fat than the burger. One London media cartoon depicted a couple at the counter, with the guy saying, "Let's pig out and have the salad."

And how are you doing?—"America's top executives pock-

eted about \$2 million each last year."—Economic report.

Keeps them fit—In the fraudulent of Aldelphia Communications, it was disclosed that a key manager and his two sons used company money to build a \$13 million golf course.

How green is our ballroom—What with continuing vacancies, hotel operators are taking a calculated look at same-sex marriages—honeymoon suites, catered parties, etc. Like the Cape Cod resort in Provincetown, Massachusetts, which promotes itself as the "Gay Niagara Falls."

Madrid's 70-year war on the Basque struggle

BY PATRICK O'NEILL

Vowing that his "priority is to fight every type of terrorism," the new Spanish prime minister José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero has made it plain that his Socialist Party government will make full use of the March 11 train bombings in Madrid to reinforce the Spanish capitalist rulers' decades-long assault on the struggle by the Basque people for national self-determination.

The incoming administration supports the ban that the outgoing Popular Party government imposed last year on the main Basque pro-independence party, Herri Batasuna, which had won 10 percent of the votes in the 2001 elections in the Basque country, in the north of Spain. Zapatero has even said his government will "fiercely oppose the Ibarretxe Plan"—a proposal for increased limited autonomy made by Basque National Party leader and regional president Juan José Ibarretxe.

The Spanish rulers' anti-Basque offensive has been waged in the name of fighting "ETA terrorism," referring to a small underground Basque pro-independence group that has assassinated a number of government officials over the years.

Living in an area that straddles the modern-day border of France and Spain, the Basque people, who today number 3 million, are a distinct national group, with their own language, culture, and geographical area, known as Euskadi. Spain, one of the most economically backward nations of Western Europe, was late in forging a single bourgeois republic, a historic task of the bourgeois revolutions of the 19th century. As a result, Spain became a imperialist power in the 20th century but maintained significant economic and cultural differences between different regions—the Basque region, Catalonia, Galicia, Andalusia, and other areas.

While Euskadi and Catalonia are the two main industrial centers, they have historically been subjected to national oppression.

The Basque national movement arose in the 19th century with protests against compulsory taxation, military service, and other indignities imposed by Madrid on a region that had previously enjoyed a degree of economic autonomy. During the Spanish revolution of the 1930s, workers and peasants throughout the Spanish state overthrew the monarchy and established a republican government. The Basque National Party (PNV)—a bourgeois nationalist formation—and allied forces rose to power throughout the Basque provinces, advocating increased autonomy.

By the time the republican government, comprised of Socialist, Communist, and bourgeois parties, granted formal autonomy to Euskadi, it was already split in two by Franco's fascist rebellion. But the refusal of the leaders of the Socialist (PSOE), CP, and the anarchist movement to champion the Basque struggle for self-determination had effectively handed the initiative in the region to the PNV and other bourgeois forces.

The labor misleaders rationalized their stance by pointing to the reactionary character of the leading Basque parties, which were closely tied to the Catholic Church hierarchy. As Felix Morrow writes in *Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Spain*, this policy "gave the Basque clericals"—who were themselves threatened by the growth of the working-class movement in weight and political confidence—"a new hold on the masses."

The social-democratic and Stalinist par-



At Basque Day rally in San Sebastian, April 26, 2003, supporters of Basque struggle hold pictures of political prisoners accused of membership in ETA.

ties, compromising with their bourgeois allies, blocked the working-class upsurge from heading toward the overthrow of capitalist rule and the establishment of a workers and farmers government. This course mortally weakened the republic in the face of the fascist rebellion led by Gen. Francisco Franco, which was employed by the majority of the capitalist rulers to crush the worker-farmer revolution.

While Basque country president José Antonio Aguirre opposed the rebellion, the Basque provincial governments split in their alliances, half siding with Franco and half backing the republic.

Like their brothers and sisters across Spain, many Basque workers and peasants fought heroically against the fascist forces in the ensuing three years. In April 1937 the Nazi government in Germany used its air force in support of Franco against the ancient Basque city of Guernica, leaving it in ruins and killing more than 1,600 people. This was a decisive blow to the Basque resistance and to the republic, which was overthrown in 1939.

Repression under Franco

The Basque people were a special target of the Franco dictatorship. In the period immediately following the seizure of power it jailed and executed thousands of Basques. One historian says that in 1937 alone up to 150,000 were forced into exile in France, the United Kingdom, and elsewhere. In the ensuing four decades Franco's police killed and imprisoned thousands more. All displays of Basque culture, including spoken and written use of the language, were banned.

The late 1950s and 1960s saw a resurgence of national resistance among Basques, sparked by the ferocious repression and inspired by the wave of anti-colonial and anti-imperialist struggles in Asia, Africa, and Latin America, including revolutions in Cuba, Algeria, and Vietnam. This was the context for the formation in 1959 of the armed group ETA (Euskadi ta Askatasuna—Basque Homeland and Freedom).

ETA's leaders demanded the right to establish an independent Basque state, incorporating Basque regions on both the Spanish and French sides of the border. By the late 1960s ETA had embarked upon a strategy of kidnapping and killing government officials and prominent figures.

As the Franco regime came to an end

in the mid-1970s, Basques mobilized in a series of massive demonstrations to assert their national rights. Since then the Basque people have won a degree of autonomy—including a regional government with limited powers—but not full self-determination.

But the capitalist rulers of Spain are afraid that a successful Basque independence movement would give workers and farmers and other oppressed nationalities renewed confidence in their ability to struggle. As a result, successive Spanish governments have cracked down on the Basque movement—all under the pretext of combating ETA and "terrorism." The government has enacted a raft of legislation giving authorities greater powers to spy, harass, and imprison Basque nationalists by accusing them of supporting ETA.

The PSOE and Communist Party, along with the union federations they lead, have played a key part in helping the wealthy minority mobilize bourgeois public opinion in Spain against the Basque struggle. On several occasions massive demonstrations have been organized to condemn ETA's armed actions and to support the government's crackdowns in the Basque country.

The 1982–96 PSOE government was notorious for its repressive policy toward the Basques. The administration of Prime Minister Felipe González oversaw a "dirty war" against the pro-sovereignty movement, using death squads made up of cops, known as the Antiterrorist Liberation Group (GAL). Revelations about police murders of 27 people accused of being ETA members helped to end González's reign in disgrace.

Today hundreds of Basque political

Continued on page 6

—25 AND 50 YEARS AGO—



April 27, 1979

DEARBORN, Michigan—The Dearborn Stamping Plant Women's Committee recently got a firsthand lesson in the "last hired, first fired" policy that is applied to women in industry. Of the thirty women active in the committee, twenty-five were laid off by the Ford Motor Company.

These women and many others had been hired only last spring after Ford was forced to comply with the federal government's equal employment opportunity standards. Having the least seniority, they were among the first to go when Ford laid off 400 stamping plant workers.

All this took its toll on the Women's Committee. Discussions of resolutions for the 1979 contract negotiations were disrupted.

While the impact of the layoffs has been disorienting, the women see the reestablishment of the committee as necessary to combat Ford's discrimination and to educate all workers, men and women alike, about the gains they can make by upholding and fighting for women's equality.

"The conditions we're facing now—the last to be hired and the first to be laid off, sexual harassment, discrimination in promotions, company refusal to pay pregnancy disability—all this won't go away if we don't fight it," one committee member said. "It will only get worse."



April 26, 1954

DETROIT—"The 30-hour work week at 40 hours pay now!" was one of the chief slogans raised in the spirited demonstration held here last Tuesday by 500 unemployed members of Dodge Local 3, United Auto Workers, CIO.

Other demands chanted and printed on placards carried by the jobless workers were "We Demand jobs—Not Soup Lines!" "A Public Works Program Now!" "We Demand Our Bonus!" (Local 3 is fighting for the bonus which its unemployed members would be eligible for if they were on the payroll. The company is saving 74 million dollars by having laid off workers, many with 10-20-30 years seniority, a few weeks or days before the eligibility date for the bonus.)

The demonstration was preceded by a meeting of Local 3 unemployed members at their hall at 6 a.m. They have been holding such meetings regularly each week.

From the hall the workers marched to the Dodge plant at 7:30 a.m. where they paraded for an hour, carrying banners, singing union songs, and chanting their demands.

After marching back to their hall, they boarded buses provided by the local and proceeded to City Hall for a demonstration and the presentation of their demands to the Common Council.

U.S. troops out of Iraq now!

U.S. and all other foreign troops out of Iraq now! This is what working people everywhere should call for. An important opportunity to raise this demand will be the April 25 marches in Washington and several Canadian cities, where demonstrators will be turning out massively to defend women’s access to safe, legal abortion.

U.S. troops have carried out calculated assaults on Iraqi cities in order to destroy the militia led by Muqtada al-Sadr and other forces opposed to the imperialist occupation, including the insurgents in Fallujah, a longtime base of the former ruling Baath party. The U.S. military, which launched rocket attacks and dropped 500-pound bombs on Fallujah, killed some 700 Iraqis and maimed many others. The Pentagon, which has vowed to press ahead with this offensive, provoked al-Sadr’s Mahdi Army into this confrontation with the goal of getting its combatants into the open, isolating the organization politically, and destroying it militarily.

Washington seeks to consolidate its occupation and impose stability in Iraq on its terms, in order to strengthen U.S. domination of the strategic oil platform that Iraq sits on and deal further blows to its imperialist competitors, especially Paris and Bonn.

Liberal critics of the Bush administration, far from opposing the imperialist occupation, have reinforced Washington’s course—from the complaint by Democratic Party presidential candidate John Kerry that it is “premature” to meet a June 30 deadline for dressing up the occupation with some form of “Iraqi sovereignty,” to calls by other politicians in his party to send more troops to Iraq.

On the domestic front, leaders of the Democratic Party have criticized the White House by using the 9-11 intelligence hearings to push for more effective “homeland defense” measures—that is, to extend the use of the FBI, CIA, and other political police to use against working people and others who oppose U.S. government policy.

The main problem Washington faces now is not the “quagmire” in Iraq that liberal imperialist politicians continuously bleat about. Rather, its biggest problem is one it can do nothing to stop: the threat of an accelerated slide in the worldwide capitalist economic crisis. Today, the most important obstacle to the U.S. rulers’ offensive is the working-class resistance to the bosses’ assaults—resistance that is continuously generated by the normal operations of capitalism.

Al-Sadr’s militia is an Iraqi equivalent of Hezbollah or Hamas, bourgeois nationalist organizations that do not defend the interests of working people in the Middle East. As recent events have shown, support for al-Sadr among other Shiite groups has been greatly limited.

Similarly, the tactic of taking foreigners hostage to press the occupiers to withdraw their troops has backfired on the groups that have carried out those actions. To date, the Japanese and other imperialist governments involved have firmed up their resolve to stay in Iraq alongside the U.S. Army.

Working people in Iraq, and throughout the Middle East, will over time go through experiences allowing them to forge the kind of leadership that can lead them in their millions to get rid of all their occupiers: the Yankee armed forces, the entire “coalition of the willing,” and all other imperialist troops—those with UN blue helmets and those without.

Regardless of the character of those currently leading the opposition to the imperialist occupation, however, working people in the United States and elsewhere must focus our fire on the wealthy rulers in Washington, London, Tokyo, Madrid, and elsewhere—the same ones who are attacking the wages and conditions of workers and farmers at home.

Our demand is: unconditional withdrawal of all foreign troops from Iraq now!

April 25 marches in Canada will defend woman’s right to choose

BY PATRICIA O’BEIRNE

TORONTO—The Pro-Choice Action Network and the Planned Parenthood Federation of Canada are sponsoring a Canada-wide day of action to defend a woman’s right to choose abortion on April 25. It will coincide with the March for Women’s Lives in Washington, D.C. Events planned so far include a march and ceremony in Ottawa in front of the parliament buildings.

Marilyn Wilson, director of the Canadian Abortion Rights Action League (CARAL), said in the organization’s newsletter that the Canadian government “is denying the right to abortion services. This happens every day by publicly funded hospitals refusing to provide abortions that are medically prescribed under Medicare... It’s happening when governments allow provinces to refuse abortion services to all or arbitrarily elect to perform only emergency abortions.” Wilson also noted that “four provinces still refuse to cover the cost of a clinic abortion.”

Canada’s antiabortion law was struck down on Jan. 28, 1988, when the Supreme Court ruled that the law was unconstitutional and violated the Charter of Rights and Freedoms because it infringed on a woman’s right to life, liberty, and the security of her person.

CARAL’s newsletter points out that 16 years later, “we should be celebrating the freedom women have enjoyed over the last decade and a half to choose their own destiny. However,” it adds, “we have lost a lot of ground when it comes to abortion.”

The organization did a study of abortion access in Canada, and found that “the shrinking pool of hospitals that are willing or able to provide abortions is a great

obstacle for women, especially in rural or northern communities. This causes longer waits in the hospitals that do provide services. The longer the delay the higher the potential is for complications from abortion. It also causes added expenses and anxiety when a woman has to travel long distances to have the procedure done outside her community.” Fewer than one in five hospitals in Canada provide abortions today.

CARAL reported that the Canadian government does not collect and publish thorough statistics on abortion services, including a breakdown by hospital. The group stated in its newsletter that “bodies such as the Society of Obstetricians and Gynecologists will not disclose the names and locations of abortion providers...because of the threat of violence from the anti-choice movement. This makes it very difficult for a woman to find a doctor when the need arises.”

Planned Parenthood has produced a “tool kit” of promotional resources, t-shirts, and buttons. A Day of Action for Choice in Canada events listing will soon be available at www.ppfc.ca.

A rally is planned in Toronto on Saturday, April 24, at 6:30 p.m., to send off a bus to the Washington demonstration. For more information call 416-969-8463.

In Vancouver, the Day of Action for Choice march begins at 11:30 a.m. on Sunday, April 25. Contact Lesia Hnatiw (lhntiw@canada.com) for more information.

Events are also planned in Saskatchewan, Alberta, New Brunswick, and other parts of British Columbia. For more information, contact Planned Parenthood at (613) 241-4474 x 227.

Farouk Abdel-Muhti is freed

Continued from front page

migration officers, defense committee spokesman David Wilson told the *Militant*. Back in New York, Abdel-Muhti appeared on WBAI radio the day after his release.

After the judge’s ruling, U.S. marshals flew the Palestinian to the federal prison in Atlanta without the knowledge of his attorneys. For four days he was kept incommunicado, until he was able to make a five-minute phone call and reach members of his defense committee.

Abdel-Muhti, a longtime defender of Palestinian self-determination, was arrested on April 26, 2002, by immigration and FBI cops who claimed they were acting on the basis of a 1995 order to deport him either to Jordan or to Israel. For 250 days he was held in solitary confinement. The Committee for the Release of Farouk Abdel-Muhti organized protests and a petitioning campaign for his release.

The judge’s decision to order his release centered on whether he was deportable in the “foreseeable future.” In an earlier case the Supreme Court set six months as a “reasonable” time for the government to carry out a de-

portation order after appeals are exhausted. If that is not possible, the government is required to provide a reason to continue to keep them in jail. Failing that, they must be released subject to conditions.

The judge rejected the government’s argument that Abdel-Muhti should remain in an jail because he had supposedly refused to cooperate with the government to establish his identity or obtain travel documents from Israel, Jordan, or the Palestinian National Authority. He had “made a good faith effort” with the government’s requests, she said.

Abdel-Muhti was born in 1947 in the West Bank town of Ramallah, which at the time was ruled by the United Kingdom under a United Nations mandate. Because he left the West Bank before the Israeli occupation began in 1967, he cannot obtain travel documents from the Palestinian National Authority, Jordan, or Israel.

The defense committee is planning to celebrate the release on April 26, the second anniversary of Abdel-Muhti’s arrest. The committee can be contacted at (212) 674-9499; e-mail freefarouk@yahoo.com.

Venezuela

Continued from Page 7

people to counter the power of capitalists allied with the Coordinadora Democrática opposition coalition, which effectively shut down gas supplies during the lockout. Most working people use propane for cooking, and are forced to buy it from companies aligned with the opposition.

PDVSA al día, the company’s newsletter, states that about 165,000 people will benefit from the gas-piping program.

PDVSA and government officials present the creation-of-cooperatives part of this initiative as the “democratization of the country’s economic resources.”

Some people, however, are questioning this perspective as a way to reverse the widespread poverty and joblessness. Joel Pantoja, a young doctor who accompanied *Militant* reporters in Valencia, for example, said that this course reinforces the mistaken notion that organizing workers into co-ops is the answer to confronting the economic power of the wealthy, that this can succeed without expropriating the capitalists and nationalizing the means of production.

Rotating employment program

The company started a jobs program last December in Cabimas, where PDVSA’s western division is based and which has a certain autonomy from the eastern division. It’s called Plan Operativo Rotativo (POR), or the Rotating Operations Plan. Manuel Troconis, PDVSA’s maintenance manager there, told us March 22 that the government launched the initiative in response to demands for jobs.

PDVSA has taken on about 18,000 contract workers to replace those fired after the lockout. These workers are hired to permanent positions as they are qualified.

Under the POR plan, PDVSA has employed another 12,000 temporary workers nationwide, most of them in Zulia, working on rotation in three-month stints. They do painting and other routine maintenance jobs, as well as janitorial and transportation work. These workers are paid about \$125 per week, more than double the minimum wage, and have individual medical coverage while on the job. When the contract is finished, they get severance pay of about \$1,000—two months wages—and have to wait for three months for another three-month rotation. Most of these workers are in their early twenties, we were told.

Ricardo Aú, 20, worked such a janitorial job at PDVSA over the last two months. “These are temporary jobs, and we are not sure how long they will last,” he said in a March 22 interview in Maracaibo, in a typical comment among these workers. “But it’s better than anything thousands like me have had. Now we can feed our families.”

Workers said that in addition to providing jobs, the POR program is being used to improve routine maintenance neglected for years by the former management. This was part of a plan to begin selling off parts of the operations to foreign and local investors, workers said. They showed us four oil extraction platforms floating in the port by the main repair shop. These were rendered inoperable because of lack of maintenance, we were told. The bosses would then sign contracts with companies like Haliburton, Santa Fe Drilling, or local capitalists to provide drilling platforms and other equipment that would then be operated by private companies that would contract out repairs. At the same time, the main repair workshop in Cabimas was operated at 25 percent capacity in 2002, said Troconis. It now runs at 50 percent.

The maintenance manager said the company has now started a plan to utilize workers from the POR program. After a period of training, they will work on a night shift between 4:00 p.m. and 6:00 a.m.—the period during which the shop is now idle. They will take advantage of the unused capacity to produce equipment needed to improve living and working conditions in the surrounding area.

One of the repair shops nearby has just begun producing drills on the night shift to sink wells for irrigation. This was decided after the National Institute for Land stated that there is an acute need for water on thousands of acres around Lake Maracaibo where peasants recently got land titles and credits. PDVSA workers are now manufacturing new drills as well as refitting some old oil well drills to meet the need. The company will also assign engineers to work with peasants in making their land arable.

PDVSA has also assumed financial responsibility for the state’s largest public hospital, the University Hospital in Maracaibo, and taken over logistics for the Barrio Adentro program bringing Cuban doctors to Zulia, Troconis said.

Workers said, however, that some in the new management behave like the former executives. In more than one case, said Robinson Carteras, incompetence by administrators resulted in materials not being ordered on time, after which managers turned around and took it out on the workforce, firing temporary workers en masse before their contracts expired. Workers said that about 300 were fired March 21 in the main repair shop that employs 2,500. A union meeting had been scheduled for the next day to confront the problem, said Elbano Sánchez, the coordinator of the Cabimas local of Fedepetrol, the largest union of oil workers.

Many spoke with pride about one of the projects the maritime repair shop completed recently. PDVSA workers had built and donated a new motorboat—*La lancha bolivariana*—to a cooperative of fishermen nearby.

This initiative sparked a big debate, we were told, because the vessel was built by workers during regular work shifts, not by those on the POR program. Workers said they did not have enough work to do and it was better to use their time for something socially useful. Many in the new management argued vehemently against this, said Colina Gerwen, a welder. After getting Troconis’s support, he added, “We won this one. But it is a battle.”

Olivia Nelson and Natalie Doucet contributed to this article.

Assault on Iraqi cities

Continued from front page

Shiite neighborhood of Baghdad, and several other urban centers in central-southern Iraq, killing dozens of Iraqis. On April 9, about 1,000 Marines retook the southern town of Kut. Units of the Mahdi Army, led by al-Sadr, had taken control of Kut days earlier and had forced a Ukrainian battalion occupying the town to flee. Al-Sadr's forces maintained control of the nearby cities of Kufa, Karbala, and Najaf, where the U.S. military was poised to launch attacks after the April 11 end of an Islamic religious holiday. The group's militias, however, vacated police stations and other buildings they occupied April 12 in an apparent retreat to avoid a slaughter by U.S. troops.

Having provoked al-Sadr's forces into a fight by closing a newspaper published by the group, the occupation regime has set its sights on militarily destroying the organization, which describes itself as the Iraqi equivalent of the Lebanese Hezbollah or the Palestinian Hamas. Brig. Gen. Mark Kimmit, deputy director for U.S. military operations in Iraq, said the Pentagon has issued an order "to destroy the Sadr militia—deliberately, precisely, and powerfully."

The siege of Fallujah

Resistance to the U.S.-led occupation has flared up several times over the past year in Fallujah. The city was a Baath party stronghold under the Saddam Hussein regime, which hand-picked clerics and offered Sunnis jobs and other forms of patronage. Since the overthrow of the Hussein regime and the "de-Baathification" purges of government jobs, the city has been a center of opposition to the U.S.-led occupation.

U.S. Marines and troops from the U.S.-trained Iraqi security forces have sealed off Fallujah. The city is under a night-time curfew. City residents told news agencies that U.S. helicopters and snipers had fired on ambulances and civilian vehicles that tried to take the wounded to clinics or hospitals.

U.S. commanders also refused to allow trucks carrying aid, including medicine, food, and water to enter the city for several days, Al-Jazeera TV said. Thousands of Sunnis and Shiites responded to a call by mosques in the surrounding region to hold a peaceful march to deliver the supplies to the encircled city. The marchers carried Iraqi flags as well as portraits of Palestinian sheikh Ahmed Yassin, founder of Hamas, one of the Palestinian groups opposing the Israeli occupation of Palestine. Yassin was assassinated March 22 as he and several members of his entourage were struck by an Israeli missile as they left a mosque following morning prayers. "We are Sunni and Shia brothers and we will never sell our country," the marchers chanted.

U.S. military officials have said that the operation in Fallujah is aimed at capturing those responsible for the deaths of the four paramilitary guards who worked for a private security company under contract with the Pentagon. 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 aimed at generating public support for the impending U.S. offensive in Iraq.

"The city is isolated," U.S. secretary of defense Donald Rumsfeld said April 6. "A number of people have resisted and been killed. And it will be a methodical effort to find the individuals who were involved."

On April 10, U.S. forces surrounding Fallujah called for a cease-fire to let representatives of the U.S.-appointed Iraqi Governing Council enter the city to negotiate some form of surrender with the insurgents. Fighting subsided over the next day, as a result. U.S. officers indicated, however, that this is not any kind of weakness and questioned whether anything will come of the negotiations.

"Given the virulent nature of the enemy, the prospect of some city father walking in and getting Joe Jihadi to give himself up is pretty slim," said Lt. Col. Brennan Byrne, who commands the Fifth Marine battalion in Fallujah, according to the April 11 *Washington Post*. He was using a derisive term for the insurgents inside the city—jihadi means "Islamic warrior" in Arabic. "Their only choices are to submit or die," Byrne said about the insurgents.

U.S. authorities announced the cease-fire after officials of the Iraqi Governing Council criticized the manner with which the U.S. military was conducting the assault on Fallujah, one calling the Marine assault "collective punishment" directed at the entire city. The French daily *Le Monde* reported that many Sunni shops, banks, and schools in Baghdad have shut down in solidarity with their embattled brothers in Fallujah.

Al-Sadr's forces provoked into fight

U.S. troops have also sealed off Sadr City, a working-class district south of Baghdad, where they have been engaged in fierce fighting with supporters of Muqtada al-Sadr. This chain of events was set in motion March 28 when the U.S. overseer of Iraq, Paul Bremer, ordered the closure of *Al-Hawza*, a newspaper published by al-Sadr's group. Bremer charged the paper with inciting violence against the occupation. The next day thousands of Iraqis rallied outside the offices of *Al-Hawza* in support of the newspaper. Upping the ante, Bremer sent occupation troops to al-Sadr's home and arrested a key aide, Mustafa Yaqubi. That action predictably sparked further protests.

On April 2 Spanish troops from the occupation forces fired on demonstrators in Najaf demanding Yaqubi's release, killing at least 20, according to Al-Jazeera. The same day al-Sadr issued a statement calling on his supporters to stop staging demonstrations "because your enemy prefers terrorism," reported the Toronto *Globe and Mail*.

"America has unsheathed its fangs and its despicable intentions, and the conscientious Iraqi people cannot remain silent at all. They must defend their rights in the ways they see fit," the statement said, according to the *Washington Post*.

Following a firefight in Ramadi, a city near Fallujah, in which 12 Marines were killed, the U.S. military issued a statement saying that its goal of "establishing a persistent presence in areas where U.S. forces have not consistently operated has been costly." It said the increased attacks by insurgents was due to the Marine strategy of "heightening their profile" and aggressively challenging insurgents "in places where they've gained influence," according to the *Post*.

Sadr City is named in honor of Muqtada al-Sadr's father, who was killed along with two of his brothers allegedly by members of the Iraqi secret service on the orders of Saddam Hussein. Initially supported by Hussein, Muhammad Sadiq al-Sadr fell into disfavor as an outspoken opponent of the regime's repression of the Shia religion.

The younger al-Sadr has emerged as a forceful opponent of the U.S.-led occupation of Iraq. He has refused to recognize the U.S.-appointed Iraqi Governing Council and declared a shadow cabinet. He compares Bremer to Saddam Hussein and has said his group represents the Iraqi branch of Hamas and Hezbollah, the latter formed in the 1980s to fight the Israeli occupation in Lebanon. Sadr also founded a military organization known as the Mahdi Army, which took over many security and administrative functions in Shia areas.

U.S. officers have vowed to destroy the Mahdi Army, which has engaged the occupation forces throughout the country.

On April 12, as 2,500 U.S. troops surrounded Najaf, al-Sadr's stronghold, the Mahdi Army withdrew its forces from police stations and other public buildings it had occupied and its fighters, dressed in black, began disappearing from public view. This turn of events clarified the limitations of the support among Shiites that Sadr's forces enjoy. Most of the prominent Shiite clerics in the country have made it clear that, while opposing a U.S. assault on Najaf, they don't back the Sadr militia takeovers of Iraqi public buildings.

The tactic of taking dozens of hostages from various countries with occupying troops or other personnel in Iraq also seems to have backfired. The aim of the kidnappers was to force those governments to withdraw their forces from Iraq. As we go to press, however, none of the imperialist powers involved—from Rome to Tokyo—had taken such action, stating instead their ongoing commitment to keep their troops there. By April 12, the kidnappers had reportedly released seven South Korean missionaries and seven Chinese men who had been abducted earlier. Three Japanese civilians, a U.S. man, and other hostages continued to be held.



A mosque in Fallujah, Iraq, became a temporary morgue as bodies of those killed during the assault by U.S. Marines were brought there to await burial.

Bremer had announced April 5 that an arrest warrant for Muqtada al-Sadr has been issued by an Iraqi judge charging him with involvement in the killing of Sayid Abd al-Majid al-Khoei, a Shia cleric who returned to Iraq with the aid of U.S. forces following the overthrow of the Hussein regime.

In response to questions from the media about when and how the arrest order for al-Sadr would be implemented, Brigadier General Kimmit simply said, "You'll know."

"There will be no advance warning," added Dan Senor, a spokesman for Bremer.

Lt. Gen. Ricardo Sanchez, the top U.S. commander in Iraq, said April 12 that "the mission of U.S. forces is to kill or capture Muqtada Sadr."

Calls to deploy more U.S. troops

Some Democratic and Republican politicians, along with the liberal media, have been calling on the White House to send more U.S. troops to Iraq. "It could end up as another Vietnam if we don't get a hold of this situation now," argued Joseph Biden, the ranking Democrat on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Biden called on the White House to press the U.S.-dominated NATO alliance to send troops to Iraq.

Republican senator John McCain called on the Pentagon to deploy thousands of additional troops with specific skills, "particularly special forces, counterintelligence, and linguists," reported the *Washington Post*.

A few politicians and pundits argued that Washington might soon face a setback in Iraq and even face withdrawal, a conclusion rejected by Bush administration officials. The U.S. troop death toll has reached 647 since the March 2003 invasion of Iraq, with 70 killed the second week of April. The Iraqi death toll was about 700 the same week, according to the U.S. military.

Referring to Iraqi police and soldiers, a commentator on the conservative Fox News television network said, "If these people won't help us, we need to get out in an orderly matter."

On April 5, the 620 troops of the Second Battalion of the so-called Iraqi Armed

Forces being trained and organized by U.S. troops refused to go to Fallujah to support the U.S. Marines attacking the city. An article in the April 11 *Washington Post* said the unit was on its way to Fallujah when it was fired on while being driven in U.S. Army trucks through a largely Shiite neighborhood of northern Baghdad. It decided then to return to its barracks. The *Post* said that "large parts of the Iraqi security forces have stopped carrying out their duties."

Meanwhile, John Kerry, the virtually assured presidential candidate of the Democratic Party, urged the White House to abandon its pledge to transfer power to the Iraqi Governing Council at the end of June and to consider boosting the occupation forces. "I think the June 30 deadline is a fiction and they should never have set an arbitrary deadline, which almost clearly has been affected by the election schedule," Kerry said on National Public Radio (NPR). "I think they wanted to get the troops out and get the transfer out of the way as fast as possible without regard to the stability of Iraq," he told reporters later.

Kerry said he may advocate sending more troops to Iraq, according to the *Miami Herald*. "No matter what disagreements over how to approach the policy in Iraq," he stated later that day in a speech at Georgetown University to honor U.S. troops who have died in Iraq, "we're all united as a nation in supporting our troops and ultimately in our goal of a stable Iraq."

At an April 6 press conference with the secretary-general of NATO held in Norfolk, Virginia, Rumsfeld said that if his commanders in Iraq request more troops "they will get what they need." He said the number of U.S. troops in Iraq was already unusually high at 135,000 and that NATO, with about 6,500 troops already in Afghanistan, could deploy forces to Iraq. Rumsfeld added that he would be "delighted to see" NATO play a larger role in Iraq's occupation.

A week later, Gen. John Abizaid, commander of all U.S. forces in the Middle East, announced that U.S. troop strength in Iraq would be increased by about 10,000.

Jack Rees, longtime socialist

BY GARY COHEN

BROOKLINE, Massachusetts—Jack Rees, a longtime supporter of the Socialist Workers Party, died March 6 at the age of 87. A memorial gathering to celebrate his life was organized by his family here March 21.

Rees, growing up during the Great Depression years, became a socialist in his early 20s. He was a machinist and was working in a factory in New Jersey when he joined the communist movement. Mary Rees, his life-long companion, was also an early recruit to socialism. She joined as a teenager, first working in a laundry and then in the major steel plant in Youngstown, Ohio, where the Socialist Workers Party was concentrating its efforts. Both were active members of the party for some time. Under the pressure from the employers' anticommunist witch-hunt, Jack and Mary Rees left the Socialist Workers Party in the early 1950s.

After being away from organized political activity for more than a decade, they became active participants in the anti-Vietnam war movement in the early 1960s. Jack Rees used his basement as a silk-screening factory, designing and producing posters opposing the war.

Rees, an avid reader of the *Militant*

who valued its coverage of working-class struggles and analysis, would often send clippings from his local newspaper to *Militant* staff writer Harry Ring for use in his weekly column, "The Great Society."

An exceptionally talented carpenter and all-around handyman, Rees used his skills to help construct many Socialist Workers Party halls, often building finely crafted bookshelves, at different locations in Boston.

Until health reasons prevented it, Jack and Mary Rees regularly staffed the party's book center in Boston, making sure that workers and youth were able to obtain Pathfinder books, containing the vital lessons necessary to fight effectively the oppression and exploitation perpetuated by capitalism.

During the 1990s they also took regular assignments caring for the Socialist Workers Party leadership school when members of the party were attending conventions and conferences. Jack put his skills to use during those times to maintain and upgrade the school, always leaving the facilities in better condition than when he arrived.

Rees established his belief in the struggle for a socialist society at an early age, and his support for the Socialist Workers Party continued throughout his life.

Peasants in Brazil step up land struggle

BY MICHAEL ITALIE

Thousands of peasants and landless workers in Brazil, organized by the Movement of Landless Rural Workers (MST), carried out dozens of land occupations at the end of March and early April.

Working people in Brazil's countryside are resisting the consequences of a contracting economy and rising unemployment. While millions remain landless, a tiny number of capitalist families control the bulk of the country's arable land. The MST has called on the government to carry out a thoroughgoing land reform to meet the needs of peasants and workers.

In face of the land occupations, government officials have pledged funding for settling landless peasants. On the other hand, the big landowners, some of whom own tracts of territory as large as some European countries, are calling on the government to crack down on the MST and the more than 10,000 families who have joined the recent occupations.

Over the course of last year, Brazilian peasants carried out twice as many land takeovers as the previous year. The large landowners in Brazil responded by expanding their use of private militias to try to terrorize working people. They killed 63 of those who organized and joined the land takeovers last year, according to Catholic Church investigations.

"We want agrarian reform to create jobs and dignity," said MST leader Gilmar Mauro.

In the state of Bahia the MST organized 2,500 families on April 3-4 to take over the Veracel eucalyptus tree plantation, which is half-owned by Stora-Enso, a Swedish-Finnish paper company. The peasants converted 25 hectares of tree saplings into vegetable gardens. Veracel president Vitor Costa called the action "a very bad sign for investors. The government can't lose control like this."

While the land directly involved is tiny compared to the 140,000 hectares under company control, the Veracel owners demanded the government drive off the landless workers because of the example they are setting. The courts had ruled in the company's favor in response to an earlier occupation.

Costa told the Reuters news agency that even a small land takeover "could and certainly is making foreign investors in Brazil apprehensive. What they can expect after investing their money here is seeing someone occupy their land."

Aracruz, a Brazilian company that in partnership with Veracel has built a giant pulp mill on the property, saw its stock dive 23 percent in the days after the land occupation. Representing one of the largest private investments in the country, the \$1.2 billion mill—designed to process 900,000 tons of pulp a year—is due to begin production in July 2005.

Another focal point of struggle has been the bordering state of Pernambuco, the



Laura Muradi

Members of the Movement of Landless Rural Workers in Brazil take part in national action for land reform, late 2003. Thousands of peasants have joined recent land occupations.

terrain of at least half the land takeovers organized over recent weeks. On April 6, more than 1,000 rural workers blockaded roads in the northeastern state to dramatize their fight, while others occupied offices of the government's land ministry.

Brazilian agricultural minister Roberto Rodrigues called the actions by thousands of landless rural workers "worrisome and embarrassing," while speaking at a business seminar on investment prospects in agribusiness.

Brazil is the world's top producer of sugar, oranges, and coffee, and the second-largest grower of soybeans after the United States.

Rodrigues told reporters, "We can't stand by and just accept our farmers' lives are being made hell." The "farmers" he was referring to, however, were not working farmers but rather the superwealthy 1 percent of the population of 175 million who own more

than 40 percent of the land.

The MST is demanding land for 1 million families by 2006 as a first step toward a genuine agrarian reform.

In addition to facing one of the most unequal land distributions in the world, working people in Brazil have felt the consequences of a 0.2 percent contraction last year, the economy's worst performance in 11 years. Official unemployment figures rose to almost 12 percent, while household consumption dropped by a record 3 percent, fueled by a 6 percent decline in the buying power of the average wage.

In late March the Workers Party government of President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, which took office in January of last year, announced a doubling in spending on the "resettlement" of landless peasants. Government ministers have promised funds to settle 115,000 families in 2004. Officials say that since the beginning of the year some 11,000

families—about 50,000 people—have been settled.

The October 2002 landslide victory for Da Silva registered the rising expectations among working people that they will finally obtain some relief from the devastating effects of the depression conditions and the attacks by the capitalists and the outgoing government and its predecessors.

Da Silva has spoken in favor of land reform, while distancing himself from the MST-led land occupations. "Agrarian reform in this country will be carried out because of social justice and better distribution of productive land so our people have the opportunity to work," he said. "But it won't be carried out by force—neither of the workers nor of those that are against it."

Meanwhile, the government has been hit by a corruption scandal involving Waldomiro Diniz, a senior Workers Party official who acted as Lula's liaison with Congress. In February, Diniz was shown on videotape soliciting hundreds of thousands of dollars in campaign contributions from the boss of a numbers game.

The administration has fired Diniz while promoting more traditional capitalist political figures. One of them is José Sarney of the Liberal Front Party, who was president of Brazil from 1985 to 1990. "Today, Sarney is the center of gravity and 'the strongman of the presidential palace,'" wrote a columnist in the daily *Jornal do Brasil*.

The government's efforts to maintain payments on Brazil's \$400 billion debt, much of it owed to imperialist investors, have brought it into conflict with 900,000 public workers. In the first week of April the Confederation of Federal Employees rejected the government's wage offer as insufficient to keep up with inflation, and called for it to be doubled.

Luiz Marinho, the president of Brazil's largest union, the United Federation of Workers, indicated he would endorse a public workers' strike if the government failed to raise their pay and hire more workers.

Australia: Communist League candidate for mayor of Sydney joins Aboriginal rights protest

BY LINDA HARRIS

SYDNEY, Australia—"Stop cop brutality—from Redfern to Lakemba!" was a chant taken up on a March 24 demonstration demanding justice for TJ Hickey, a 17-year-old Aboriginal youth killed by Sydney cops February 14.

The march wound from a working-class Aboriginal area of Redfern known as "the Block" to the New South Wales state parliament. Aboriginal elders there presented a 17-point statement demanding an independent inquiry into the youth's death, which the Labor Party state government has rejected.

One of the marchers, Ron Poulsen,

Communist League candidate for mayor of Canterbury, called for the prosecution of the cops responsible for TJ Hickey's death. He also demanded the dropping of all charges against 29 Aboriginal protesters arrested since a subsequent street battle with cops.

Poulsen, a meat packer and member of the Australasian Meat Industry Employees' Union, has used his campaign to speak out against police violence. "We have found a polarized reaction on the streets to our stance of opposing these cases of police brutality," Poulsen said. "While some are inclined to support the cops, other young people and workers we've met have told of their own experiences of cop harassment."

At a speakout against the police killing of Hickey sponsored by the Militant Labor Forum, Poulsen was joined on the platform by Virginia Hickey, TJ's aunt, who spoke from firsthand experience about the constant cop harassment and brutality against indigenous Blacks, from Redfern to Wagg, the slain youth's hometown.

"The labor movement should also oppose the calls for increased police powers that are part of the government's 'antiterrorist' campaign, which has targeted Muslims in paramilitary raids in Lakemba and across southwest Sydney," Poulsen said. He encouraged "young people and workers to join with the Communist League and Young Socialists in campaigning against the brutality of the capitalist rulers, their cop violence, and their drive to imperialist war."

A local newspaper, *The Torch*, listed the candidates' platforms in the local elections, beginning with Poulsen's. It briefly summarized the Communist League campaign statement and quoting Poulsen as saying, "These attacks are part of a wider assault on the working class as the capitalist rulers drive to war in the face of a deepening world economic depression."

Poulsen has also used his campaign to speak out against ruling-class moves to slash the social gains of working people. "We see the resulting crisis in public services—from preventable deaths in hospitals to the chaos on the railways," he said.

"This assault on the living standards and rights of working people goes hand in hand with the Australian rulers' war drive abroad," Poulsen said. "We call for the immediate withdrawal of Australian troops and police from Iraq, Papua New Guinea (PNG), East Timor and elsewhere."

Responding to the recent deployment of Australian police to PNG, the Communist League election campaign organized a forum opposing Australia's imperialist domination of Papua New Guinea. Campaigning in working-class neighborhoods with placards opposing Australian imperialism's war drive and calling for "Australia out of Iraq, PNG, and the Solomon Islands!" also drew a polarized response.

One young man took angry exception to Australia being described as "imperialist," saying it was "a democracy." Another passerby, who agreed with the campaigners, described Australia as a "mini-USA in the Pacific."

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