

Utah safety board cites Co-Op mine; UMWA backer to get back pay

BY GUILLERMO ESQUIVEL

HUNTINGTON, Utah—The Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) in Utah cited C.W. Mining July 27 for discriminating against Ricardo Chávez, a union backer at the Co-Op mine, according to miners who saw the citation posted on the company bulletin board at the bathhouse. MSHA ruled the company was in violation of the Mine Safety and Health Act when mine manager Charles Reynolds prevented Chávez from reporting to work July 13 on the basis of “lack of training.”

Miners said this is a step forward in their struggle to counter the offensive the bosses have been carrying out against United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) supporters since they returned to work July 12, after a nine-and-a-half month strike.

Ironically, the Co-Op mine’s safety trainer, José Ortega, is the person responsible for Chávez’s lack of training, Chávez said. Of the 32 hours of training mandated by MSHA for a new coal miner, Ortega gave Chávez only six hours of instruction and charged him more than twice the average cost for such a class in the state of Utah, the miner explained. A number of strikers gave testimony to MSHA last October about such training practices and other safety violations. Ortega continues to give training courses at Co-Op, and the outcome of the MSHA investigation against Ortega is still pending, the miners said.

Chávez reported back to work August 2 only after he got another certified trainer to give him the course in Spanish. Now Chávez

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NATO force in Baghdad expands world reach of imperialist alliance

BY ARGIRIS MALAPANIS

In a further major expansion of the role of NATO outside Europe, 40 NATO officers are on their way to Baghdad to begin training the Iraqi armed forces set up under the Anglo-American occupation. This will be the first time that a military contingent under NATO’s flag will be in Iraq training forces engaged in combat. It builds on the NATO deployment in Afghanistan, which was the first such operation for the Atlantic alliance outside Europe. It is a major step toward Washington’s goal of transforming NATO into a world imperialist military alliance.

The initial force is scheduled to arrive in Baghdad August 6, and is expected to be enlarged quickly. “It will certainly grow into the hundreds very rapidly in the early autumn,” said U.S. ambassador to NATO Nicholas Burns. “The NATO flag is definitely going to be in Baghdad,” he added.

Agreement to deploy the force was reached at a July 30 meeting of NATO ambassadors in Brussels, one month after the NATO summit in Istanbul, where Washington had won only vague backing for its proposal that NATO train and equip the Iraqi military.

During and after the Istanbul meeting, Paris and Bonn had insisted that any such training should not be based in Iraq and

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Housing crisis in N.Y. adds to grind on workers

Rents eat up wages; number in shelters up 60% in 3 years

BY MARTÍN KOPPEL

NEW YORK—Recent government moves, from Mayor Michael Bloomberg’s plan to tighten requirements for homeless workers seeking shelter to the announcement of new cuts in federal rent subsidies, have drawn attention to the broader housing crisis facing working people in this city.

Bloomberg recently announced that his administration plans to implement a new policy to reduce the number of people who are homeless here by two-thirds within five years. A key part of city hall’s “solution” is to be more stringent in using eligibility requirements for those applying for shelter. One method is to try to disqualify more people on the pretext that they have the “option” of doubling up with relatives.

More than 40,000 people in New York City are living in shelters or on the streets, according to the city’s Department of Homeless Services. This represents a 60 percent rise in the number of people in homeless shelters since 2001. The increase coincides with the five-year cutoff period for workers receiving federal welfare payments.

At the same time, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has announced it will cut funding for rent subsidies nationwide this year. In New York the cutbacks will affect many of the 172,000 working-class households that rely on federal rent subsidies, known as Section 8 vouchers.

These government attacks add to the overall housing squeeze that working people face in New York, as landlords continue to jack up rents, taking advantage of the 2.9 percent apartment vacancy rate.

Nor do high rents get us good living conditions. Millions of us live in cramped apartments with crumbling ceilings, water leaks, broken plumbing, and roach and rat infestation, with landlords who refuse to provide adequate services and maintenance. Many immigrant families live doubled or tripled up in apartments and are ripped off by landlords who take advantage of their vulnerable status.

Working people face an increasingly

acute housing crisis throughout the country. It is not conjunctural or simply the product of government policies, but a permanent feature of capitalism—in the United States and around the world.

The housing crisis adds to and is fueled by the grinding pressures workers face on their wages and jobs. While the official unemployment rate nationwide is 5.6 percent, in New York City it is 8.5 percent—and

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Getty Images/Spencer Platt

Alyza Guzman and her mother in front of their lead-contaminated apartment building in New York, Oct. 22, 2003, during protest against high levels of lead left by landlords. Overcrowded apartments, often with unsanitary conditions, and high rents are widespread.

Nebraska: socialist campaigners meet ballot drive goal, get support from meat packers, other pro-union workers

BY SAMUEL DELANEY AND NELSON GONZALEZ

OMAHA, Nebraska—Campaigners for the Socialist Workers Party ticket—Róger Calero for president and Arrin Hawkins for vice-president of the United States—have collected nearly 4,900 signatures to put the working-class candidates on the ballot in Nebraska. Organizers said August 3 they are

within striking distance of surpassing their goal of getting double the 2,500 signatures required to achieve ballot status.

Julian Santana, a Young Socialist who took part in a full-time campaigning team here for several days, reported that socialists have received an excellent response from many working people. Campaigners are not deterred by the fact that storeowners and

cops have stopped them from leafleting and petitioning dozens of times at shopping malls and other locations. In response, teams of petitioners became increasingly adept at “roving petitioning,” that is, rapidly moving from one location to the next when they were shut down, Santana said.

Many of those who signed petitions have responded to the socialist candidates’ championing of the right of workers to organize unions to defend themselves from the employers’ ongoing attacks. Speaking at a July

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SWP vice-presidential candidate Arrin Hawkins, right, meets farmer David Howard August 1 while campaigning in Mileston, near Tchula, Mississippi (see article on page 7). That weekend 2,500 signed petitions to put socialist ticket on Nebraska ballot.

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MSHA cites Co-Op

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is entitled to receive back wages for the time the company prevented him from working—July 13 to August 1—and to reimburse him for the \$150 he spent for the classes. “I want the government agency to intervene because I have not received a paycheck and my family needs money for food and housing,” said Chávez. “I need those wages and I think the law is on my side.”

The 1977 Federal Mine Safety and Health Act stipulates that “you cannot be fired, discriminated against, or suffer loss of pay if you are withdrawn from a mine for not having the necessary safety and health training.” The law also says, “You are paid for long as it takes for you to receive the training you need and until you return to your regular job.”

Chávez was one of 75 coal miners who were fired by the Co-Op bosses last September because they fought for safety on the job, to end victimization of co-workers, and to win representation by the UMW. After a lengthy strike, which won widespread support from the labor movement, the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) ruled the miners had been fired illegally and stipulated a settlement that was signed by the Co-Op bosses and the UMW. Following the NLRB ruling, the company made an unconditional offer to return to work to all the miners. More than two dozen strikers returned on the job. The settlement entitles the miners who were fired to receive back pay, which the miners are now organizing to obtain.

The NLRB has also set a union representation election at the mine for later this year. The labor board held a hearing in Price, Utah, July 20–21, where the company and the union presented arguments on who should have the right to vote in the union election. The mine owners, the Kingstons, submitted as eligible a list of some 100 Kingston family members and others who are on the payroll as part-time or seasonal workers.

At the end of the hearing, attorneys for both sides were asked to submit their briefs by August 4. After the hearing UMW Region IV organizing director Bob Butero told reporters the NLRB will most likely issue its decision on this matter several weeks after that date. (See coverage in last week’s issue).

UMWA supporters at Co-Op say they are confronting blatant discrimination by

management on the job. Alejandro Ramírez and Juan Carlos López, for example, have recently received warnings for accumulating too many attendance “occurrences” going back to the time before the strike began, the miners said. Another miner who reported to work July 12 was terminated by the company because he didn’t show up the next day. His car had broken down, he said.

The miners say all these actions violate the NLRB settlement in which the company promised in writing it “will not discharge, give oral or written warnings to, suspend, or otherwise discriminate against you because you engage in concerted activity protected by Section 7 of the Act or other activity on behalf of United Mine Workers of America.”

Miners report that a 2001 “agreement” between the bosses and the “union” run by the mine owners states a worker can face a three-day suspension and loss of pay for accumulating up to seven occurrences, and termination at eight. The company is also supposed to eliminate an occurrence every 90 days, according to this agreement between the company and the International Association of United Workers Union—the company outfit.

A boss told one of the UMW supporters, however, that the company is not deducting any occurrences from the miners who participated in the strike, workers said. The miners have asked the UMW to file charges against the company for these violations.

“We’ll do what’s necessary to protect our brothers,” said Celso Panduro, a roof bolter at the mine. “We have to charge them for violating the law.”

On August 1, more than 20 miners met to discuss and take action against these company attacks. At that meeting they also filled out forms provided by the NLRB in Spanish that will be used to determine the back pay damages owed to the miners who took part in the strike, the miners reported.

Protests continue in Miami against new U.S. curbs on visits, remittances to Cuba



Militant

MIAMI—Hundreds rallied July 31 outside the office of Congresswoman Ileana Ros-Lehtinen here to protest tighter U.S. restrictions on travel to Cuba and new limits on cash remittances to family members on the island. Many held signs saying, “Bush: Don’t divide the Cuban family” and chanted “Yo sí voy” (I will go). “I was born here, my parents are Cuban, all my family is in Cuba, and I think I should have the right to travel to Cuba. Not Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, not Bush, not [Congressman] Lincoln Díaz-Balart will stop me from going to Cuba,” said high school student Justín Piñeiro. Similar protests have been organized in Miami’s Little Havana and Hialeah in recent weeks.

A week earlier 500 protested outside the offices of Lincoln Díaz-Balart in Miami. At this rally supporters of the Democratic Party presidential ticket worked the crowd, distributing Kerry-Edwards stickers to the demonstrators.

Ricardo Chang, who left Cuba 10 years ago, said the new government measures “are violating the rights of citizens in this country.” He and other protesters said they had left Cuba to try to improve their economic conditions, intending to both travel regularly to the island and send funds to their families there. Emilio Borrero said he left Cuba three years ago for work, not politics. “Here people have no rights. Why are there restrictions? We should be able to visit Cuba as much as we want,” he said.

— NICOLE SARMIENTO

Workers in Utah protest discriminatory firing

BY RÓGER CALERO

PRICE, Utah—Six workers who were fired last June under allegations that they had failed the company’s English proficiency test are protesting this attack on workers rights, and have filed complaints with the

Utah Labor Commission.

“We just don’t want other people to go through the same,” said Marina Gómez, 58, one of the fired workers in an article featured in the July 17 *Salt Lake Tribune*. Gómez had worked for Weider Nutrition Group in Salt Lake City for seven years before she was fired.

The company claims they had to administer the English proficiency test because it is under increased scrutiny from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. Weider is a manufacturer of “nutritional supplements” such as Tiger’s Milk Bars.

A Weider official told the *Tribune* that the company needs employees who can read English-language job and machine instruction manuals in order to put out its products.

The fired workers said that they had read the manuals, operated the machinery, and done their jobs for many years without any complaints.

María del Valle, who for seven years wrapped plastic around bottles and packed

the products, said that she and the other fired workers performed their jobs well.

“It is something that an English proficiency test can’t measure,” she told the Utah daily.

While the company claims the test was given to all employees in the manufacturing, shipping, and warehouse departments, Elitharp would not confirm that the temporary employees hired to replace the fired workers were also required to take the test. “They have taken a test,” Elitharp told the *Tribune*, refusing to elaborate. He also told the daily paper that none of the salaried employees in purchasing, finance, and planning were asked to undergo such a test.

The workers reported that they were told only those who could not speak English were tested, and that all were Latinos.

Officials from the Labor Commission reviewing the firings said the state office has seen an increase in complaints in the last two months from workers in Utah who were forced by their employers to undergo English proficiency tests.

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Residents of drought-stricken Holguín, Cuba, get water delivery June 25 (see article on page 11).

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NATO in Iraq: new step outside Europe

Continued from front page

proposed it be carried out at NATO bases in Italy and Germany. The French and German rulers seemed convinced that the dispatching of such a NATO force would not proceed without their forces taking part and worked to block it. They failed.

The training will now take place inside Iraq without the participation of either French or German troops.

The Brussels decision was reached after a contentious debate between Paris and Washington, where it was clear the French rulers were on the losing side. Consensus was reached after the French delegation declined to exercise its veto. The envoys did postpone, until September 15, a decision on the command of the NATO force. Paris objected strongly to Washington's proposal that NATO troops be under the command of Gen. George Casey, who is in charge of

the U.S.-led forces occupying Iraq. But it is likely that a U.S. general will end up doing that in any case.

NATO officials also put off until later a dispute over whether the mission should be commonly funded by all member states, as is the case in Afghanistan, or only by those sending troops.

This turn of events further tilts the balance of forces among the main competing imperialist powers toward the Anglo-American bloc and adds to the tensions between Paris and Washington.

"I think France, for the very sake of the alliance, doesn't want NATO to take every curve and change of direction of the U.S.," said Benoit d'Aboville, French ambassador to NATO, according to an article in the August 2 *Wall Street Journal*. "Therefore it's true that on many issues we will be, at least at the start, on the opposite side from

the U.S."

In July, after the NATO envoys returned from a visit to an aircraft carrier where they saw jet fighters catapulted into the air, "d'Aboville joked to colleagues that Washington likewise is trying to catapult NATO into Iraq," the *Journal* said. That did happen.

Thomas Steg, deputy spokesman for the German government, said August 2 that Berlin will not dispatch troops to Iraq as part of the NATO mission. His government has only agreed to provide training for Iraqi officers at military schools in Germany, he said. Unlike Paris, which has the strongest military in Europe along with London, the German armed forces are not a well-oiled fighting machine. The German government, while siding with the French in the disputes inside NATO, has taken a sideline approach to the matter.

The Atlantic imperialist alliance was founded by Washington after World War II, when the U.S. rulers emerged as the main victors from the world inter-imperialist slaughter. From the beginning, its formation registered Washington's immense military and economic superiority in Europe.

In 1966, French president Charles de Gaulle pulled Paris out of NATO's integrated military structures and evicted NATO's headquarters from the French capital. Ever since, the French government has maintained limited participation in the Atlantic alliance and its stance has been consistent with its growing competition with Washington over domination of world markets and resources.

Paris and Berlin objected to the timing of the invasion of Iraq and its domination by Anglo-American forces last year. The U.S.-led war resulted in the French rulers losing all their Iraqi investments and being replaced by their U.S. competitors as the dominant force in that part of the world.

The French and German rulers, who have been leading the imperialist bloc competing with the Anglo-American group of imperialist powers over world domination, see the expansion of NATO's authority beyond Europe—first to Afghanistan and now in Iraq—as a further strengthening of U.S. power.

Shortly before the imperialist invasion of Iraq in March 2003, Paris blocked a NATO consensus to dispatch alliance forces to Turkey allegedly to help defend Ankara from possible attacks by the Iraqi regime of Saddam Hussein. Washington, however, bypassed the French veto by using a NATO body where Paris doesn't have a vote, because of its 1966 pullout, to drive ahead with its proposal. The U.S. government has moved since then to strengthen this body, as part of ensuring that Paris can't stop U.S. initiatives within the imperialist alliance. This precedent may have been a factor in Paris declining to exercise its veto at the July 30 Brussels meeting.

NATO secretary general Jaap de Hoop Scheffer told reporters in Brussels July 30 that the U.S.-led forces in Iraq "will give protection" to the initial NATO force. The first task of the 40 NATO officers in Baghdad will be to train Iraqi officers to run and coordinate their own command and control system, he said.

NATO's supreme commander in Europe, U.S. Marine Gen. James Jones, is now assigned to come up with a recommendation by September 15 on how the Atlantic alliance's force will be commanded. The U.S. proposal for Casey to command the force had the backing of the majority of the 26 NATO member states, 16 of which have troops in Iraq already as part of the U.S.-led "coalition of the willing."

Drivers strike UK's largest bus company

BY JACKIE FORD AND NATAN ALCAZARES

SOUTH YORKSHIRE, United Kingdom—The 1,500 workers on strike against First bus company are confronting company threats to bring in scabs as their walkout for wage increases and a reduction in the number of pay rates enters its third week. Bus workers across South Yorkshire, members of the Transport and General Workers union (TGWU), decided to take strike action July 22 by an 83 percent vote after they had rejected the company offer by a 95 percent margin.

First is the largest surface transportation company in the United Kingdom. It employs 62,000 workers here and in North America and rakes in more than £1.6 billion in profits a year. The company operates one in five local bus services in the United Kingdom, as well as passenger trains, and freight bus and train services.

Two days after the strike began the company announced plans to use strikebreakers, including managers from subsidiaries. Workers on the picket line said TGWU members in other union branches visited the picket line on July 26, and other union branches across the United Kingdom had issued warnings that their members would respond to any moves by the company to introduce strikebreaking. Company officials then announced that while the use of scabs remains "under serious consideration," taking such action "would be a step of last resort."

Pickets said they still take the company's threat of bringing in strikebreakers seriously, depending on the outcome of a pending contract vote. Workers will be voting on the company's latest offer to increase pay across the board from 27 pence to 30 pence, but as part of a two-year deal that cuts sick pay. The union has called for a rejection of the company proposal, and is demanding a 30 pence pay increase across the board in a one-year deal.

On the picket line at the Olive Grove bus depot in Sheffield, which employs up to 800 workers, a 24-hour picket line has been established since the beginning of the strike. Several workers explained that the dispute is part of an ongoing fight to end the different pay levels at the company.

The unionists want to close the gap between drivers who start on the rate of



Workers on strike against First picket at the Olive Grove depot in Sheffield, U.K.

£5.85 per hour to the next rate of £7.13 within three years. Currently there is a gap of three and a half years between new starters and the next pay rate. It then takes a further 15 years to get the senior pay rate of £7.53 per hour.

One of the strikers, who asked that his name not be used, explained that five pay rates existed prior to 2002, and bus workers had fought successfully to reduce this to three rates. A number of workers expressed the view that the gap between newly employed workers and those on the next pay rate should be no more than 6 months.

Workers are also fighting for a reduction in their rostered hours of work from 40

hours per week with a maximum of 41, to 39 hours per week with a maximum of 40. Bus drivers currently work up to 8.5 hours a day with one hour of unpaid. They can be forced to work up to five hours without a break. Strikers are trying to reduce the maximum length of duty to 8.3 hours with a break every four and half hours.

The union has received solidarity from the Teamsters union and the Service Employees International Union in the United States, who also have members employed by First. The company's international operations include 17,400 school buses in the United States, carrying 1 million students daily.

Powell to U.S. allies: 'don't get weak in knees'

BY DOUG NELSON

During a stop-over in Budapest, Hungary, as part of a seven-country tour, U.S. secretary of state Colin Powell urged governments with forces in Iraq to not bow to pressure from armed opposition groups in Iraq, which have pushed for troop withdrawals mainly through kidnappings and executions of hostages.

"This is the time for us to be steadfast, not get weak in the knees," said Powell in a July 27 television interview.

In addition to Hungary, Powell visited Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Kuwait, Bosnia, and Poland to boost support among Washington's allies for the occupation.

Budapest's 354 troops in Iraq are scheduled to stay through the end of the year. The government of Poland has the fourth-largest contingent in Iraq with more than 2,300 troops. The Bosnian government announced July 28 that it intends to send 36 soldiers to Iraq by December 31.

Powell's tour came two and a half weeks after Manila withdrew the last of its small force in Iraq, made up of 43 soldiers and eight police, one month ahead of schedule. The early withdrawal took place amid threats by the "Iraqi Islamic Army" to behead a Filipino truck driver the group had taken hostage, and subsequent protests in the Philippines demanding the government comply.

Various opposition groups inside Iraq

have kidnapped over 70 foreigners in recent months aimed at forcing members of the U.S.-led coalition to pull troops out of Iraq and to scare off foreign companies from doing business there. At least eight hostages have been killed—four by beheading. In most cases, the kidnappers have not succeeded in their goals.

Iraqi police set up by the Anglo-American forces have also been a target of such groups, with 710 Iraqi policemen killed out of a total of 130,000 between April 2003 and May of this year.

After the government of Spain withdrew its 1,300 troops in April and May following the election of the social democratic government of José Enrique Zapatero, the governments of Honduras and the Dominican Republic, whose troops were operating under Spanish command, pulled their forces out, too.

The government of Nicaragua also withdrew its troops earlier in the year, as part of a normal rotation, and has not sent another contingent since then.

These pullouts, however, have not presented a military problem for Washington. To increase political support for its war, the U.S. government is seeking to boost the forces of some of states in the "coalition of the willing"—the large majority of which have stuck with the Anglo-American occupiers—and lure others to dispatch troops there.

There are currently 31 governments with

troops in Iraq. In a July 16 interview with National Public Radio, U.S. secretary of defense Donald Rumsfeld spoke about Washington's efforts to bring other states along. "We have requests out and the Iraqi government has requests out to... five or six countries right now, asking for troops," he said. "I know Pakistan and India and, I believe, Bangladesh and Morocco and several other countries. There are other countries that have been offering recently."

Despite the execution of a south Korean civilian hostage by the Iraqi group Tawhid and Jihad June 22, Seoul has maintained its plans to add 3,000 troops to its contingent of 650 in Iraq. This would make the south Korean force the third largest in Iraq after the U.S. and UK forces.

The government of El Salvador, the one other country whose troops were under Spanish command, has committed to stay. On July 15, the Salvadoran legislature extended the mandate of its 380 troops.

One of the topics discussed during the Mideast leg of Powell's tour was the proposal floated by the Saudi government to involve troops from some Arab countries in the occupation of Iraq. At a conference in Saudi Arabia with Iraqi prime minister Iyad Allawi, Powell described the proposal as "a welcome idea from the Saudi government." Powell stopped short of endorsing the proposal, however. "We're examining it," he said.

For Further Reading

New International no. 11

U.S. Imperialism Has Lost the Cold War

by Jack Barnes

Analyzes the propertied rulers' failed expectations and charts a course for revolutionaries in response to the renewed rise of worker and farmer resistance to the economic and social instability, spreading wars, and rightist currents bred by the world market system. \$14.



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Belfast: thousands honor Irish republican Joe Cahill

BY PETE CLIFFORD

BELFAST, northern Ireland—Several thousand people joined the July 27 funeral procession here, or lined the streets—including store workers and bus drivers who stopped work to pay tribute to Joe Cahill, a pivotal leader for decades of the Irish republican movement. Cahill, 84, died July 23. Cahill had been a leader of the Irish Republican Army (IRA) and was honorary vice president of Sinn Fein at the time of his death.

The funeral procession, flanked by a republican guard of honor and led by a piper, took several hours to make its way down the Falls Road in the nationalist area of West Belfast and back to the Milltown cemetery. Much of the leadership of Sinn Fein joined Cahill's family, friends, and comrades for the procession. Many came from across Ireland. Others came from

Britain and the United States.

"Joe's generation was beaten off the streets of this city for decades," said Sinn Fein president Gerry Adams in a graveside speech. "In his younger days even Easter commemorations were outlawed." He was referring to Cahill's role in a 1942 attempt, when he was 21, to defy the ban on marches to commemorate the 1916 Easter uprising in Dublin against British colonial rule. Cahill's IRA unit had fired shots at a police patrol to divert attention from the planned Easter commemoration march. Cahill and five other republicans were captured, accused of the murder of a policeman, and sentenced to death. A campaign for their reprieve overturned the death sentence for all but Tom Williams, the 19-year-old leader of that IRA unit, whom London executed.

Cahill had been at the center of the mod-

ern republican move-

ment. In 1969, London deployed troops to the British-run north. Within months their guns were turned toward those fighting for civil rights in the Catholic ghettos. Encouraged by London's move, rightist pro-British gangs continued their pogroms in the Catholic areas. Cahill and others led a split in the republican forces to form the Provisional IRA. One of their purposes was to organize armed self-defense of their neighborhoods. As a result of London's repression, Cahill ended up in prison several more



Left, An Phoblacht/Republican News Right, Photopress Belfast/Alan Lewis

Above: Sinn Fein leaders carry coffin of Irish republican leader Joe Cahill at July 27 funeral procession in Belfast attended by thousands. Right: Cahill in 1992.



times.

In 1994

the IRA signed a cease-fire with London. Four years later, republicans, pro-British Unionists, Dublin, and London signed the Good Friday Agreement. The accord included the establishment of an assembly in northern Ireland elected by proportional representation; a north/south ministerial council, to be made up of representatives from the government of the Republic of Ireland and the assembly in the north; and a two-year time frame for the release of political prisoners. It did not set a time frame for the withdrawal of British troops.

"Joe was a physical force republican," Adams said. "He made no apologies for that. But like all sensible people who resort to armed struggle because they feel there is no other alternative, he was prepared to defend, support, and promote other options when these were available. Without doubt there would not be a peace process today without Joe Cahill."

Despite these gains, Adams said, Cahill believed London was failing this process. Cahill was "not surprised at the explosion of nationalist anger in Ardoyne in recent weeks," Adams continued.

This Catholic enclave in north Belfast had seen a pro-British Orange Order parade, protected by armed police, routed through the area. When nationalist youth confronted the rightist march, British paratroopers were deployed against them. The *Daily Telegraph* noted that in Belfast "British troops are still deployed in greater numbers than Iraq." The rightist Orange Order parades have been largely pushed back from going into Catholic areas, through countermobilizations in recent years.

Adams concluded his speech by saying that Cahill's "vision of a new Ireland, a free Ireland, outlives him." He urged those gathered to "continue our struggle and to carry on until that certain day."

New York event pays tribute to Joe Cahill

BY KATHIE FITZGERALD AND LARRY QUINN

NEW YORK CITY—Nearly 100 Irish republicans and other supporters of the Irish freedom struggle gathered here to celebrate the life of Joe Cahill. The event took place July 28, the day after he was buried in Belfast (see article above). The memorial meeting was organized by members of the Irish Northern Aid Committee, Friends of Sinn Fein, Clan na Gael, and the Ancient Order of Hibernians.

Cahill once held the post of chief of staff of the Irish Republican Army (IRA), which organized armed self-defense of the Catholic minority in northern Ireland and fought to end the British occupation and unify the republic.

In 1994, Cahill endorsed the IRA cease-fire. He was instrumental in persuading Irish and other groups in the United States to back the Good Friday Agreement four years later between Sinn Fein, the British

loyalists in the north, London, and Dublin, as well as the political efforts of Sinn Fein to implement it. The agreement registered the continued weakening of British rule over the northern six counties of Ireland, including the decline of pro-British groups such as the Orange Order.

Cahill was seen by the Irish republican leadership as one of their most effective international spokespersons because of his unbroken history in the struggle, which included numerous prison terms. He was able to convince many IRA supporters in the United States and elsewhere that the cease-fire and Sinn Fein's participation in the institution of limited self-rule, established as part of the Good Friday Agreement, did not mean betrayal of the struggle for a free and united Ireland. "Never confuse principles with tactics," Cahill would often say.

Caoimhghin Ó Caoláin, a Sinn Fein member of the Irish parliament, paid tribute to Cahill at the memorial meeting here.

Judge upholds non-disclosure rights of Freedom Socialist Party candidate

BY CECELIA MORIARITY

SEATTLE—U.S. District Judge Robert Lasnik made permanent on July 14 a temporary injunction upholding the privacy rights of donors to the campaign of Linda Averill, a Freedom Socialist Party (FSP) candidate for Seattle city council last year. Lasnik's verdict upholds his August 28, 2003, ruling to overturn an earlier decision by the Seattle Ethics and Election Commission (SEEC) requiring disclosure of the names, addresses, and employers of Averill's campaign contributors.

Averill's attorney, Todd Maybrown, called Lasnik's ruling "an important affirmation of the First Amendment, one that reinforces the rights of dissident parties to participate in the political process."

"The Court finds that the compelled disclosure of the names, addresses, and/or employers of contributors to and vendors for plaintiffs' 2003 campaign would violate plaintiffs' rights to freedom of speech and freedom of association," Lasnik wrote in his decision. "The Court also finds that (Seattle Municipal Code) 2.04.320 is unconstitutional as applied because the Seattle Ethics and Election Commission interpretation improperly required plaintiffs to make showings not required by relevant Supreme Court precedent."

In an attempt to strengthen their case after last year's setback, the Seattle city government had introduced testimony from retired FBI agent James Wright, whom City Hall claimed was a "threat assessment expert."

A statement issued by the Freedom Socialist Party July 20 said, "Lasnik ruled that Averill had met the burden of proof required by the city and that his previous order for her to submit donor information in coded form both protected donors and ensured financial accountability. In rejecting the city's position, Lasnik observed that [FBI agent] Wright's assertions were flawed in light of reality, earlier Supreme Court deci-

sions, and even, threat assessment principles as described in articles the city provided to bolster Wright's testimony."

In the August 2003 ruling, Lasnik quoted from a 1974 decision by the Supreme Court granting the Socialist Workers Party exemption from disclosure. The 1974 decision read, "The constitution protects against the compelled disclosure of political associa-

Continued on Page 5

Cahill: 'A lifelong revolutionary who enjoyed struggle'

The following tribute to Joe Cahill by Larry Quinn was sent to Sinn Fein and An Phoblacht/Republican News on behalf of the Socialist Workers Party. Quinn, former editor of the Irish People, has spent more than 20 years building support in the United States for the Irish freedom struggle. He often worked closely with Joe Cahill. Quinn took part in the July 28 meeting in New York.

I'll miss Joe.

I always considered him a friend. Whether I asked for it or not, Joe always gave me good advice. And I always took it.

I've been reading a lot of the news stories about Joe.

One BBC news headline read, "Cahill's life was like a Hollywood movie."

Well, I hope some day they do make a movie about Joe's life. An honest one.

But, Uncle Joe's life was not a Hollywood movie. Joe's life was reality.

It was the harsh reality of living under British imperialism.

Joe lived through it all. The discrimination, harassment, demonization, the pogroms, internment, juryless courts, and prison. Just as all nationalists did in the north. But we're stronger today because of people like Joe who fought back. However, the fundamental reality has changed little.

Under the guise of fighting "terrorism" the imperialists can implement internment and the Diplock court system again at any time. These laws are still on the books. Joe fought to put an end to these injustices.

Joe fought against them every day of his life. He was a lifelong revolutionary and enjoyed every minute of it. He loved getting one over on the bosses whether they were the heads of factories or countries. When he came over in 1998 he told everybody at the meetings he addressed: "Imagine, a convicted murderer walking the halls of Stormont and getting a visa to enter the country from the president of the United States himself."

But what impressed me most about Joe was that he never lost his class consciousness. Joe knew that the enemy of a united Ireland was not another religious organization but the system that kept the north of Ireland a colonial state for so long.

Joe grew up in a working-class neighborhood in Belfast, worked as a printer and later a joiner. The Outdoor Relief Riots of the '30s where thousands of nationalists and Protestants went on strike together made a big impression on him. He also worked in the Harland and Wolff shipyard in Belfast where it was almost impossible for nationalists and Catholics to find work. Joe's co-workers knew he was a Catholic and didn't

even mind when his picture turned up in the newspaper at an Easter Commemoration. That shows the solidarity he had built and the respect he won from his co-workers.

Although he escaped the noose of the British hangman, it was that job that gave him the asbestosis that finally killed him. And even just a few months ago he fought along with his co-workers in a law suit against the shipyard for exposing them to asbestos and successfully won that fight. Joe fought against the system that was trying to divide the working people of Ireland on religious lines till the day he died.

I recently read that a U.S. reporter had once asked Joe, why he didn't wear neck ties. Joe just winked and said, "Nothing goes around my neck." Which reminded me of a quote from Bobby Sands, who said, "You cannot put a rope around the neck of an idea."

Nowadays anyone who stands up to injustice is called a terrorist, the best thing we can do is to follow Joe's example and never bend our knee to imperialism—be it British or American—anywhere around the globe.

And if we can have a laugh while we do it, well, Joe would like that too.

Larry Quinn
Socialist Workers Party
former editor of 'Irish People'

Garment/textile and hotel unions merge

BY MAGGIE TROWE

CHICAGO—Special conventions took place here July 8, where the garment and textile union UNITE and the Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees International Union (HERE) voted to merge into one union. The UNITE HERE, as it is now called, then held its founding convention July 9-10.

The merger of the 180,000-member UNITE with the 260,000-member HERE, announced in February, was adopted unanimously by the more than 2,500 delegates of both unions. The membership of the new union also includes some 400,000 retirees.

At the UNITE HERE convention, and at the separate gatherings that preceded it, union officers emphasized their organizing efforts over the past year.

Delegates included four workers from Point Blank Body Armor in South Florida, who recently won a union contract. Sadius Isma, standing on stage with three other UNITE members from Point Blank, described their two-year battle to organize the union. In the course of the struggle workers went on strike, fought firings of union supporters, and won favorable National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) rulings that forced the company to bring back the fired workers with back pay and aided the union-organizing drive.

Workers who had won a strike for union recognition at Sterling Laundry

in Washington, D.C. were introduced to the convention, as were unionists who had been involved in organizing drives at Angelica Laundry; Al Phillips dry cleaning service in Las Vegas, Nevada; and H&M warehouses in New York and New Jersey.

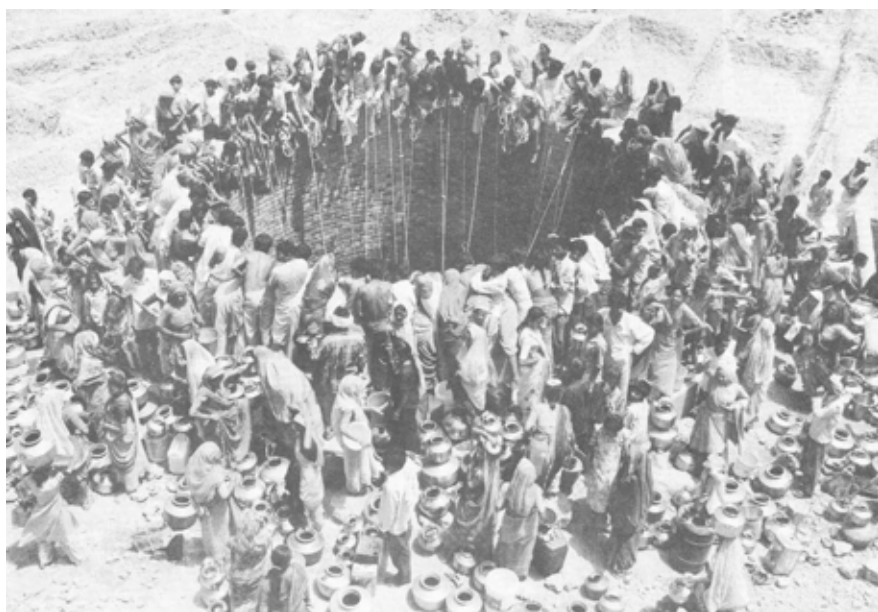
A delegate from Ontario, Canada, recounted how he and others recently succeeded in winning a union drive at the last unorganized Hollander Home Fashions plant.

Bruce Raynor, president of UNITE, was elected the new general president of UNITE HERE. He pledged to commit some 50 percent of the union's budget to organizing, and to renew efforts to organize the CINTAS laundry and uniform giant, H&M retail stores, and California Indian gaming facilities. Raynor said that the 6,000 members of HERE Local 6 in New York recently voted to begin an assessment for their 2006 strike fund.

Officials and delegates reported on the contract negotiations at nine Los Angeles hotels, which have been at an impasse over the union's demand for a 2006 contract expiration date that would line up the California workers' contract deadline with those in 10 other cities.

Raynor and John Wilhelm, HERE president who now serves as president of the hospitality industries division, are both leaders of the "New Unity Partnership" (NUP) within the AFL-CIO. The NUP,

Millions in India have no access to water



Villagers gather June 1, 2003, to draw water from a well in Natwarghad in the western Indian state of Gujarat. According to the 2001 census, some 700 million people live in villages in India out of a total population of more than one billion, and 200 million constitute what is officially referred to as the "urban poor." About three in every four people have no public sanitary facilities, such as toilets, and even fewer have access to safe drinking water.

whose leaders call for merging many of the 60 existing unions into larger organizations, is critical of AFL-CIO president John Sweeney for not delivering on promises to organize more workers. Other NUP leaders—Andrew Stern, president of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), which organizes cleaners, janitors, hospital workers, and others; Doug

McCarron, president of the United Brotherhood of Carpenters; and Terry O'Sullivan, president of the Laborers International Union—addressed the convention. McCarran led the carpenters union out of the AFL-CIO in March 2001.

The merger of UNITE and HERE was promoted by Raynor, Wilhelm, and other union officials as a measure that would strengthen the organization by increasing its numbers, and would codify the recent collaboration over union matters between laundry workers and those at hotels and restaurants. The 2003 UNITE convention had taken steps to drop the union's focus on garment and textile workers, and voted to rename the union into the word UNITE, which previously had stood for the Union of Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Employees.

Such mergers, which dilute the industry-specific character of the unions—a gain of the battles to build the industrial unions in the 1930s—have been an accelerating trend in the labor movement for some time. With a shrinking membership, union officials seek mergers as a way to increase the dues base and combine staffs. At the same time, struggles like those at Point Blank pull in the other direction.

Well-known Democratic Party figures were featured speakers, including Massachusetts senator Edward Kennedy and Illinois candidate for U.S. Senate Barack Obama. They urged delegates to turn out the vote for the Democrats in November. North Carolina senator John Edwards, who has been tapped by Democratic presidential candidate John Kerry as his running mate, addressed the convention by closed-circuit television.

Washington, Paris feud at AIDS event

BY SAM MANUEL

WASHINGTON, D.C.—An international conference on fighting the AIDS pandemic hosted by the United Nations, July 11–16 in Bangkok, Thailand, was marked by the ongoing tensions between Washington and its main imperialist rivals in Europe. In a speech read to conference delegates on his behalf, French president Jacques Chirac criticized Washington for using its trade leverage to force countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America to give up rights to make cheaper anti-AIDS drugs. He also accused the Bush administration of creating "unnecessary competition" by putting the bulk of its contributions to projects outside the UN Global Fund to Fight AIDS.

World Trade Organization rules permit semicolonial countries to ignore foreign patents and produce cheaper generic copies of more expensive brand-name drugs in times of health crises. But these rules don't prohibit countries from signing away these rights in separate trade deals. "Making certain countries drop these measures in the framework of bilateral trade negotiations would be tantamount to blackmail," said Chirac.

U.S. Trade Representative Robert Zoellick shot back that Paris should "quit trying to undermine the rest of the world economy with agricultural exports and to divert attention with issues like this." He also charged the French government with promoting "national champion" policies that favor the pharmaceutical industry in that country, the London *Financial Times* reported.

Randall Tobias, who heads the Bush administration's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, along with chief executives of U.S. drug companies, were the center of several protests during the conference. Tobias is a former chief executive of the pharmaceutical giant Eli Lilly.

In his Jan. 28, 2003, State of the Union speech, U.S. president George Bush announced that Washington would provide \$15 billion over five years to fight AIDS.

Bush's so-called "Emergency Plan" provides funds for a select group of countries, primarily in Africa. But some countries with the highest rates of AIDS infection, such as Zimbabwe, won't receive a dime from the plan. Zimbabwe is on the White House list of failed states and U.S. officials have demanded that the country's president, Robert Mugabe, step down.

According to a UN Development Program report released at the conference, a

quarter of Zimbabwe's population of 12.5 million has the AIDS virus. Life expectancy in the country has plunged from 56.6 years in 1990 to 33.9 years in 2002. In seven sub-Saharan African countries AIDS has driven life expectancy down below 40 years since 1990, the report said. The World Health Organization estimates 38 million people are infected with AIDS worldwide. Of those 25 million live in Africa.

Washington also came under fire at the conference for its emphasis on abstinence and marital fidelity in AIDS prevention. Tobias rejoined that criticism of the administration's policy, also known as ABC—abstinence, be faithful, and use condoms—was based on the "misconception" that it stressed only one approach.

Washington bars governments and health organizations that receive its funding from using that money to purchase cheaper generic brands of drugs for AIDS treatment that have not been approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (USDA). The UN Global Fund purchases generic drugs that go through a pre-qualification process that is run by the World Health

Organization and is similar to USDA approval.

The giant pharmaceutical companies have argued that generic drugs, which usually employ a fixed dosage into one pill taken twice a day, are ineffective in treating specific needs of individual patients. But a two-year study by Doctors Without Borders on the use of such generic drugs showed them to be as effective and safe as brand-name drugs. According to a spokesperson for the doctor's group, brand-name equivalents of the generic drugs cost almost \$600 per person annually. The generic brands cost about \$200.

While the overwhelming majority of AIDS infections occur in Africa, a new study by the UN AIDS agency showed that one out of every four new infections with the virus occurs in Asia. It also showed that the virus is growing at its fastest rate in Eastern Europe, largely driven by the use of contaminated hypodermic needles by intravenous drug users. In Central Asia and Eastern Europe there are now 1.3 million people infected with the AIDS virus, as compared to 160,000 in 1995.

FSP candidate in Seattle wins non-disclosure rights

Continued from page 4

tions and beliefs. Such disclosures can seriously infringe on privacy of association and belief guaranteed by the First Amendment. Inviolability of privacy in group association may in many circumstances be indispensable to preservation of freedom of association, particularly where a group espouses dissident beliefs."

As evidence that the court should protect "privacy of association and belief," Lasnik referred to a number of threatening e-mails and phone calls received by the FSP and its members.

Lasnik noted that if contributors' names were disclosed, they would also be accessible to hostile individuals and groups beyond Seattle and Washington State. If the SEEC order stood, he said, the city authorities would "publish the names and, if the amount contributed exceeds \$100, employers of plaintiffs' supporters on the world wide web."

Connie Allen, the Socialist Workers Party candidate for U.S. Senate in Washington, called the FSP to congratulate the party for the accomplishment and hailed the victory as "an important victory for workers' rights."

In 1997 the SEEC had ruled against the SWP, Allen noted, saying it must disclose

the names of contributors to its campaign for mayor of Seattle. After a public fight to reverse the SEEC decision, an agreement was reached in which the campaign was not

required to disclose the names and addresses of campaign contributors.

The city of Seattle has 30 days to appeal Lasnik's decision.

N.Y. event honors life of Joe Cahill

Continued from page 4

to work with a special IRA unit composed solely of those with Protestant backgrounds, who, working completely undercover, were able to avoid detection by the state forces.

In 1942, Cahill, Tom Williams, and four other IRA volunteers were arrested, convicted, and condemned to hang for the murder of a policeman. All but Williams won a last-minute reprieve. The British troops dumped Williams's body in an unmarked grave. Cahill spearheaded a 58-year-long effort to find the grave and move the remains to the Republican cemetery in Belfast. This was finally accomplished in the year 2000.

During the 1950s, Cahill worked as a Sinn Fein organizer. In 1956, when Westminster introduced internment without trial for opponents of British rule, Cahill was one of the first to be rounded up. He had the honor, he said, of being the last to be released from prison.

The 1970s saw Cahill arrested again,

and convicted on charges of attempting to smuggle weapons from Libya. While in the Mountjoy prison, Cahill and other republican inmates went on hunger strike demanding special status as political prisoners. They won that after 21 days.

Cahill traveled around the world building solidarity with the Irish freedom struggle, with a particular focus on the United States. Denied legal entry there due to the "terrorist" and "convicted murderer" label Washington and London had affixed on him, Cahill, who always considered himself secular when it came to religion, slipped across the border several times dressed as a Catholic priest.

For further reading:
The 1916 Easter Rebellion in Ireland: Two views
by V.I. Lenin and Leon Trotsky
In 'New International' no. 1 \$8
www.pathfinderpress.com

N.Y. housing crisis

Continued from front page

nearly 13 percent for Blacks, 10 percent for Latinos, and 29 percent for teenagers.

Real wages have been declining, while the prices of fuel and milk are being pushed up, as are subway and bus fares. One in four city residents lacks health insurance, as medical costs continue to soar.

New York, with a population of 8 million, has 2 million rental units. Two-thirds of us rent apartments or homes, while one-third are homeowners. In the United States as a whole the proportion is the inverse.

High rents and overcrowding

With land and housing in short supply relative to demand, rents in New York City have reached record levels. The median rent for a rent-stabilized one-bedroom apartment in Manhattan is \$1,343 a month, according to the New York Rent Guidelines Board. Even in other boroughs, where rent is lower, such as the Bronx neighborhood where I live, it's not uncommon to pay \$800 a month.

As a result, nearly half of all renter households in New York pay more than 30 percent of their income for rent and utilities. And one out of four households pay more than half of their income in rent. In other cities, such as Boston and Los Angeles, working people face a comparable rent burden. In Boston and Los Angeles, for example, the median proportion spent on rent is 30 percent of income. With a 2.9 percent vacancy rate in New York, of course, it's not so easy for a working-class family simply to move to another apartment if the rent gets too high. Vacancy is the tightest for the most affordable housing—it's much easier to find apartments renting for \$2,000 or more.

In other words, there is not so much a housing shortage as a shortage of affordable housing.

Given the high rents, overcrowding is on the rise. According to a recent report by the Rent Guidelines Board, more than 11 percent of rental units in the city are considered overcrowded, which is defined as more than one person per room, on average.

Overcrowding is prevalent in heavily immigrant neighborhoods like Corona and Jackson Heights, Queens. Unscrupulous landlords have profited from this situation by building tens of thousands of illegally subdivided apartments in basements, attics, or garages—often deadly firetraps—which they rent out to undocumented workers.

Elizabeth Campos, 30, a Mexican immigrant who lives in El Barrio, told a New York *Daily News* reporter last November that she, her husband, and three children share a one-bedroom apartment with her sister Alba and her four children. "The place is so small that Alba sleeps on a mattress in the kitchen," reporter Fernanda Santos wrote.

"The children, between 9 months old and 13, pile up in bunk beds that double as play and study areas. Although every adult in the house works—Campos and her sister are baby-sitters and Campos's husband is a cook—it is an arrangement they must tolerate to afford the \$800 monthly rent," the *Daily News* article said.

"We work two, three jobs sometimes, but the money is still not enough," Campos said.

The overcrowding and unsanitary hous-

ing conditions aggravate the health crisis in the most impoverished working-class neighborhoods. Hunt's Point, a largely Puerto Rican and Dominican neighborhood in the Bronx, has one of the highest asthma rates in the country. More than 30 percent of schoolchildren in that area suffer from asthma. Cockroaches and dust in apartment buildings are allergens that contribute to the asthma, as are pollutants from a nearby waste disposal plant in this industrial district.

Does the shortage of housing mean there is no housing construction in New York City? To the contrary. More housing permits were issued last year—some 21,000—than in any year since 1973. But the construction of affordable housing does not come close to meeting the needs of working people—it's not profitable.

It's not just working-class tenants who are caught in the housing crunch. Most small homeowners are burdened by mortgage payments and property taxes. They are "owners" in name only, making monthly payments to the bank instead of rent payments to the landlord. Subsidies, lending practices, zoning laws, and tax breaks are all designed to aid the real estate sharks, not workers who own a home.

Today, homeowners in New York City pay 42.5 percent of their income to service their home loans, according to a July 19 article by the Business Wire news service. As a result, the number of home foreclosures is high. In the first half of this year, nearly 3,000 cases were filed in Queens and Brooklyn alone.

Rent regulation

Over the decades, working people in this city have waged struggles for affordable housing—from mass actions to block evictions in the 1930s to the Harlem rent strikes of 1963–64—that led to rent control and other legislation. At every step the real estate magnates and other capitalists have fiercely opposed such measures—however modest and inadequate—and have succeeded in limiting their scope.

Two-thirds of rental units in New York are subject to some form of rent limits. "Rent control," which limits the rate of rent increases according to a certain formula, applies to apartments whose tenants have been living there continuously since before 1971, the year a "vacancy decontrol" law was passed. Over the past three decades, the number of rent-controlled apartments has fallen from more than one million to only 59,000 today.

Under "rent stabilization," which applies to more than one million rental units, landlords can raise rents according to rates fixed yearly by the Rent Guidelines Board. This year, for example, the board set rent increases at 3.5 percent for one-year leases and 6.5 percent for two-year leases.

The guidelines, of course, have plenty of loopholes for landlords to jack the rent up further. The owners of the building where I live, for example, have been trying to get a hefty rent increase approved under the guise of "capital improvements," although neighbors point out that the general upkeep of this old building does not seem to improve.

In addition, the "balanced" board is rigged in favor of the landlords. Its nine members, appointed by the mayor, officially include two "owner representatives," two "tenant representatives," and five representing "the public." But there is not one worker on the board. The so-called public members are an investment banker, a real estate developer, two lawyers, and an architect. The board is headed by Marvin Markus, a vice president of Goldman Sachs, who is so notorious for rubber-stamping rent hikes that he is known as "Marvin Mark-up."

Even with rent stabilization, the cost of housing is far beyond the reach of many, especially those who earn incomes below the official poverty line—22 percent of renter households. They rely on Section 8 rent vouchers, under which the tenant pays the landlord 30 percent of the rent and the subsidy covers the rest. It's worth noting that these federal subsidies were designed to reinforce private, as opposed to public, housing.

More than 172,000 working people currently receive Section 8 vouchers, and the voucher waiting list has another 154,000 households, with an average waiting period



Militant/Paul Pederson

Emergency Assistance Unit in the Bronx, New York, where homeless families must go to apply for shelter. 'They call us clients, but we feel like inmates,' Kevin Woods, who was waiting with his daughter outside, told the Militant.

of eight years. The waiting list was closed in 1994.

HUD to cut rent subsidies

HUD is planning to cut \$49 million from New York's Section 8 funding beginning in August.

U.S. Congress has cut \$1.6 billion from HUD's budget for fiscal year 2005. The housing department has passed these cuts on to Section 8 funding.

In anticipation of this move, the New York Housing Authority has frozen the distribution of new vouchers.

On top of that, city officials have begun enforcing a 1998 federal law that denies public housing to unemployed workers unless they perform "community work," that is, unpaid make-work. This requirement may affect as many as 80,000 out of nearly 420,000 New York residents who live in public housing. The law, cynically named the Quality Housing and Work Responsibility Act, was adopted by the Clinton administration, which modeled that legislation on its 1996 law eliminating "welfare as we know it," as the former president put it. When the real estate lords decide it's no longer advantageous to milk profits out of decaying apartment buildings, they drive workers out, tear down the old buildings, and replace them with luxury apartments or commercial real estate, a process dubbed "gentrification."

In a large apartment complex in downtown Yonkers, north of here, Wigberto Astacio told me, "Gentrification is happening in this city too." Years ago the tenants in his building were mostly white, middle-class residents, he said. As housing gradually deteriorated, those residents moved out and

workers, overwhelmingly Black and Latino, moved in. Many rely on Section 8 to be able to pay the rent, Astacio said.

"Today you can see how the landlords are trying to drive people out," he said. In the building across the street, the owners pulled out of the HUD subsidy program and doubled the rents—a one-bedroom apartment went from \$450 to \$950 a month. "Now some apartments are vacant. Next to my building they managed to get the preschool shut down. The realtors hope to drive people out, demolish the buildings, and replace them with expensive housing."

Increase in homelessness

Public attention has also been focusing on the rapid rise in the number of workers who are homeless. In the early 1980s homelessness became a mass phenomenon in this city for the first time since the Great Depression of the 1930s. It peaked in 1987, and declined sharply in subsequent years, as the city government built new housing and moved in thousands of previously homeless people, reported Shelly Nortz of the Coalition for the Homeless in an August 4 phone interview.

But as a result of the longer-term economic crisis, homelessness again began to rise in the late 1990s. Today there are more than 38,000 people in city shelters—60 percent more than three years ago. The biggest increase in recent years has been in the number of families. There are now 9,000 families with 16,000 children living in the shelters. In addition, there are thousands of people living on the streets.

A more detailed look into this problem, including Bloomberg's plan, will be the subject of an article in next week's issue.

ACLU bows out of gov't fund that requires employee 'terror' watch list

BY RÓGER CALERO

The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) announced July 31 its withdrawal from the Combined Federal Campaign, a federal donation program that requires participating organizations to check the names of their employees against watch lists of "suspected terrorists" as a condition to receive funds federal employees give to non-profit groups.

The Combined Federal Campaign (CFC), a program through which federal employees and military personnel contribute to non-profit organizations through payroll deductions, requires participating groups to certify that they do not "knowingly employ individuals or contribute funds to organizations found" on lists of "suspected terrorists." These lists are compiled by the U.S. government, the United Nations, and the European Union.

Despite the ACLU's stance against infringements of constitutional rights, it signed up in January to extend its participation in the federal program—to which it has been a part of since 1983—abiding to the CFC policy not to employ anyone listed on the watch lists.

ACLU executive director Anthony Romero told the *New York Times* July 31 that he had signed the certification in January, but was seeking clarification about its

enforcement. Romero defended the decision saying that the ACLU was in compliance with the requirements "of not knowingly" employing anyone on the lists, because he had taken care not to know the listed names, reported the *Times*.

Mara Paternoster, the director of the government program, said that participating organizations are expected to make sure they are not supporting "terrorist" activities. "That would specifically include inspecting the lists," said Paternoster, "to just sign a certification without corroboration would be a false certification."

This new requirement, introduced last October, specifically calls for checking against three lists maintained by the Justice, State, and Treasury Departments, including one established by the USA Patriot Act, passed by Congress at the end of 2001. The ACLU has opposed the Patriot Act, which expanded domestic spying and attacks on political rights carried out by the government in the name of "fighting terrorism."

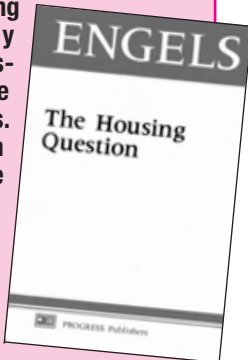
"We have found in ACLU litigation regarding other watch lists that these are notoriously riddled with error," and they violate the employees constitutional rights, said Romero in a statement July 31.

Romero said the organization is looking into what is the best course for challenging the CFC restriction in court.

The Housing Question by Frederick Engels

"As long as the capitalist mode of production continues to exist it is folly to hope for an isolated settlement of the housing question or any other social question affecting the lot of the workers. The solution lies in the abolition of the capitalist mode of production and the appropriation of all the means of subsistence and instruments of labour by the working class itself."

\$5.00



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Nebraska campaign

Continued from front page

31 public campaign meeting here, Santana said many pro-union workers “grabbed the pen right out of my hand and asked where to sign.” Meatpacking workers have been involved in union organizing drives in several plants in the Omaha area over the past few years.

“At a big shopping plaza in South Omaha, 204 people signed the petitions,” said campaigner Bill Schmitt. One of those who signed, a worker who had taken part in the 1987–89 strike at the Cudahy packinghouse, “especially liked our campaign’s staunch defense of workers’ right to organize unions,” he said. After that strike, the unionist recalled, the bosses had fired all those who had walked out.

Another worker they met, a veteran of the 1983 strike against Greyhound, said he appreciated the fact that socialists used to come down to their picket lines to offer support and that the *Militant* was the only paper that told the truth about their struggle. He signed the petition and subscribed to the *Militant*.

Schmitt reported that “one worker told us he had done some jail time and that the state of Nebraska had deprived him of the right to vote for the rest of his life. He gave a \$10 contribution to the socialist campaign.”

The socialists also met some people who viewed the SWP campaign as an obstacle to electing “anybody but Bush” in November. One man said he would vote for Democrat John Kerry even though “there’s a lot that’s negative about him— but Bush is evil!”

At the July 31 public meeting, Ved Dookhun, who is the SWP candidate for U.S. Congress in Newark, New Jersey, contrasted that view with the message captured in the socialist campaign slogan, “It’s not who you are against, it’s what you are for!”

Democratic candidate for vice president John Edwards has sometimes talked about “two Americas,” Dookhun noted. But that is hollow rhetoric by someone who speaks for the interests of capital, not of the vast majority. “Yes, there are two Americas—but they are the America of the bosses and that of working people, with irreconcilable interests, and the socialist campaign advances a platform in the interests of the latter.”

Edwin Fruit, the Socialist Workers Party candidate for U.S. Senate in Iowa, where the SWP has already achieved

ballot status, also spoke. He reported on campaigning at plant gates of nonunion meatpacking plants and among steelworkers fighting for a contract at the Firestone rubber plant in Des Moines.

Fruit said that completing the petition drive rapidly opens up the possibility for broader campaigning among workers, farmers, and young people. For example, he said that in Iowa the socialist campaigners planned to participate in upcoming commemorations of the 59th anniversary of Washington’s atom bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. These events are an opportunity to explain the real history of imperialism and why the only road to peace is for working people to take political power out of the hands of the ruling capitalist families through a revolutionary struggle.

Socialists file for Mississippi ballot

BY SUSAN LAMONT

JACKSON, Mississippi—Arrin Hawkins, Socialist Workers candidate for vice president, and campaign supporters from Birmingham visited Mississippi August 1–2 to campaign and file for ballot status at the state capital.

Hawkins and her supporters went to the Secretary of State’s Elections Division Office in Jackson August 2 to turn in the signatures gathered since late May to put the socialist ticket on the Mississippi ballot. Campaigners from Atlanta, Miami, Houston, Tampa, and Birmingham joined the effort in Jackson, Natchez, Pascagoula, Meridian, and Tchula, signing up more than 2,160 people to put the socialist candidates on the ballot. Out of that number—more than twice the requirement of 1,000—county registrars validated 1,028. If there are no challenges to the petitions, the socialist ticket will be validated for the ballot by the Elections Commission on September 7. A notice about the SWP filing appeared in the August 1 *Clarion Ledger*, the city’s largest-circulation daily paper.

After filing the petitions, Hawkins visited the Hinds County elections office to thank several workers there who had been helpful in gaining revalidation of hundreds of signatures that had earlier been ruled “not registered” by that office. Jackson is the county seat of Hinds County as well as the state capital.

campaign literature in the process in Omaha and Lincoln, where the campaigners were based (see front-page article).

The Nebraska drive comes on the heels of successful efforts to garner substantially more than the required number of signatures to get the SWP on the ballot in New York, Washington, D.C., and Minnesota. In a four-week stretch ending August 1, some 44,000 people signed petitions in those states to put the socialist slate on the ballot. Many thousand pieces of campaign literature were handed out as the signatures were being collected. Campaign supporters in Louisiana are also preparing to file for the SWP ticket after successfully organizing to secure the nine required electors in that state and raise the necessary funds for the filing fee.

The SWP national campaign opened its ballot push in Wisconsin on August 4. Campaigners in that state will collect some 3,500 signatures, substantially more than the 2,000 required by the state, to put Calero and Hawkins on the ballot there. The effort will be concentrated initially in Milwaukee and Madison. Organizers there are planning to hold a rally on Saturday night, August 7, in Milwaukee.

Anyone wishing to find out how you can help the SWP campaign can contact the national center of the Socialist Workers Campaign: P.O. Box 380846, Miami, Florida 33138. Tel: (305) 756-4436. Email: miamiswp@bellsouth.net.



Militant/Alex Alvarado

Young Socialist Jenny Johnson-Blanchard (left) campaigning and collecting signatures for the socialist candidates outside K-Mart in Omaha, Nebraska, August 1.



Militant/Jeanne FitzMaurice

Janine Dukes and Arrin Hawkins file August 2 to put Socialist Workers ticket on the Mississippi ballot.

The previous day, Hawkins spent the afternoon in Tchula, at the offices of the Mileston Co-op. Tchula is a rural town of some 2,300 in the Delta, about an hour north of Jackson. Six farmers and workers in Tchula agreed to be electors for the SWP candidates this year.

Hawkins and campaign supporters from Birmingham met with David Howard, president of the co-op, and Linda Miles and Joann Hogan, who had been active in an important strike at the nearby Freshwater Farms catfish plant in 1998–99.

The Mileston Co-op, the oldest co-operative of Black farmers in the state, was founded in 1944 originally to help these farmers have a way to gin their cotton, Howard explained. Howard is a cotton farmer, and also works at the new Nissan auto plant outside of Jackson. More recently, co-op members have been active in pushing for a just settlement in the class-action lawsuit against United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) discrimination.

“How has discrimination affected farmers in this area?” asked Hawkins.

“It’s been bad,” Howard explained. “Black farmers have lost their land and piled up huge debts. The Farm Agency still will not give the Black farmer a loan on time. Most white farmers get their loans in December and January, the Black farmer, not until April or June. By then you’re already behind. We won the lawsuit [against the USDA] but we still can’t get our money! Just give us what we deserve and what we need to work with, just to be able to farm.”

Joann Hogan commented on the recent state Medicaid cuts in Mississippi. In September, some 65,000 of the neediest Mississippians—the elderly, disabled, blind, and others—will lose their state Medicaid benefits, cuts made by the state government in the name of balancing the budget. “The elderly need their medicine,” said Ho-

gan. “They’re going to kill people.”

A big topic of discussion was jobs, which are hard to come by in the Delta. “How can you stop jobs from leaving this country?” asked Howard.

“We don’t own these jobs,” replied Hawkins. “We just work them. The capitalists will go wherever the labor is cheaper, and the same economic forces push workers from all over the world to come here looking for jobs. Everyone should have a job, no matter where they

live. That’s why the labor movement needs to fight for demands to win jobs for all, like a shorter workweek with no cut in pay to spread the work around, and a massive public works program.”

The day ended with a visit to Howard’s cotton farm. His crop was coming along fine, he said, although the price for cotton, while higher than it has been some years, is still not enough to give the farmers much income.

Before setting out for Mississippi, Hawkins and socialist campaigners from Birmingham and Atlanta had campaigned July 31 at the evening shift change at the big Avondale textile mill in Sylacauga, Alabama. Dozens of workers stopped their cars to get leaflets and shake Hawkins’ hand, many wishing her good luck.

\$43,000 collected for socialist campaign, funds still needed

BY NORTON SANDLER

MIAMI—Supporters of the Socialist Workers 2004 presidential slate are closing in on reaching their goal of raising \$52,500 for the special campaign appeal. As this issue goes to press, \$42,900 has been received.

The deadline for the appeal was August 1. All *Militant* readers who have not yet made a contribution, however, are urged to still send one in. Every donation will be counted in the final total that will be reported in the *Militant* that comes off the press August 12. Please send checks to the Socialist Workers National Campaign Committee and send them to P.O. Box 42651, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19101.

The appeal is helping to cover the expenses to get the presidential slate of Róger Calero and Arrin Hawkins on the ballot in some 15 states. It is also helping fund stepped up campaigning, including a visit to Alabama and Mississippi by SWP vice-presidential candidate Hawkins (see article above). Fund organizers in local areas are making a final push to collect the remaining outstanding pledges and reach out to some campaign supporters who have not yet made a donation yet.

On August 2, campaigners reached a total of 4,900 signatures collected to put the socialist ticket on the Nebraska ballot, passing out thousands of pieces of cam-

Celebrate the Life of Almeda Kirsch

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Almeda Kirsch, long-time member of the Socialist Workers Party, died on July 19, at the age of 83. Come to a meeting to celebrate her nearly six-decades of party-building activity.

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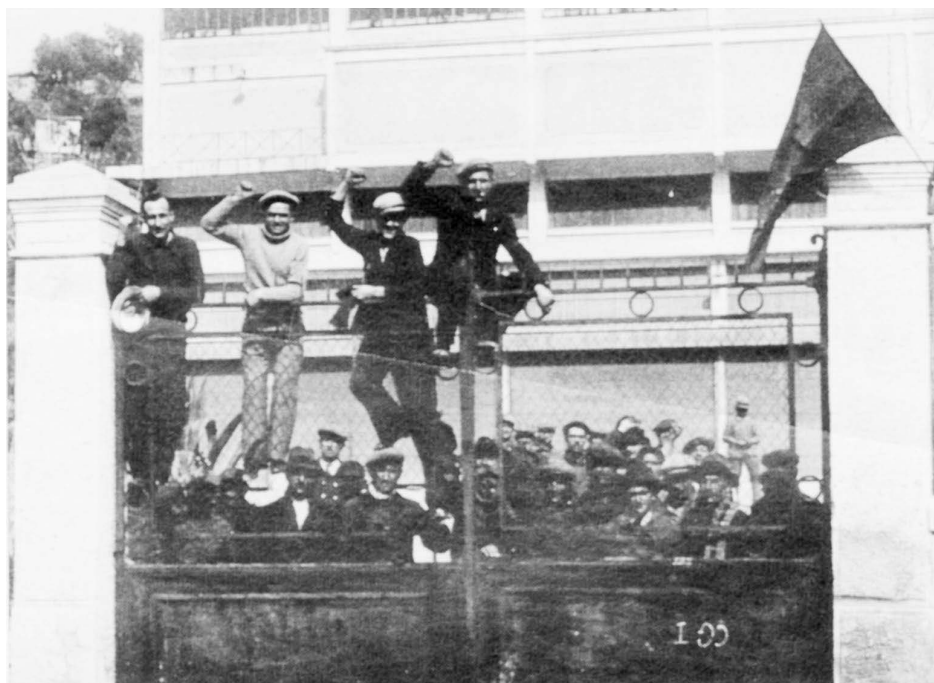
Lessons of party building in France 1935-36

Below is an excerpt from *The Crisis of the French Section (1935-36)* by Leon Trotsky, one of Pathfinder's books of the month for August. Trotsky, a central leader of the Russian Revolution, had been exiled from the Soviet Union by Stalin's regime for fighting to continue the communist course of Bolshevik leader V.I. Lenin. The excerpt is from the letter, "For Committees of Action, Not the People's Front!" Here Trotsky explains the counterrevolutionary character of the People's Front, an alliance of the Socialist Party, Communist Party, and the capitalist Radical party. Copyright © 1977 by Pathfinder Press. Reprinted by permission.

BOOKS OF THE MONTH

BY LEON TROTSKY

The greatest danger in France is that the revolutionary energy of the masses will be dissipated in spurts, in isolated explosions like Toulon, Brest, and Limoges, and give way to apathy. Only conscious traitors or hopeless muddleheads are capable of thinking that in the present situation it is possible to keep the masses immobilized up to the moment when they will be blessed from above by the government of the People's Front. Strikes, protests, street clashes, direct uprisings, are absolutely inevitable in the present situation. The task of the proletarian party consists not in checking and paralyzing these movements but in unifying them and investing them with the greatest possible force.



French workers occupy factory in 1936. Class collaborationist policies of the Socialist and Communist parties blocked the organization of a revolutionary movement.

The reformists and Stalinists fear above all to frighten the Radicals. The apparatus of the united front quite consciously plays the role of disorganizer in relation to sporadic movements of the masses. The "leftists" of the Marceau Pivert type serve to shield this apparatus from the indignation of the masses. The situation can be saved only by aiding the struggling masses to create a new apparatus in the process of the struggle itself, which meets the requirements of the moment. The committees of action are intended for this very purpose. During the struggle in Toulon and Brest the workers would have created without any hesitation a local fighting organization, had they been called upon to do so. On the very next day after the bloody assault in Limoges, the workers and a considerable section of the petty bourgeoisie would have indubitably revealed their readiness to create an elected committee to investigate the bloody events and to prevent them in the future. During the movement in the barracks in the summer of this year against Rabiot [the extension of the term of military service], the soldiers without much ado would have elected battalion, regimental, and garrison committees of action had such a course been suggested to them. Similar situations arise and will

continue to arise at every step—in most cases on a local but often also on a national scale. The task is to avoid missing a single situation of this kind. The first condition for this is a clear understanding of the import of the committee of action as the *only means of breaking the antirevolutionary opposition of the party and trade union apparatuses*.

Does this mean to say that the committees of action are substitutes for party and trade union organizations? It would be stupid to pose the question in this manner. The masses enter into the struggle with all their ideas, traditions, groupings, and organizations. The parties continue to exist and to struggle. During elections to the committees of action each party will naturally seek to elect its own adherents. The committees of action will arrive at decisions through a majority (given complete freedom of party and factional groupings). In relation to parties the committees of action may be called a *revolutionary parliament*: the parties are not excluded—on the contrary they are necessarily presupposed—at the same time they are tested in action, and the masses learn to free themselves from the influence of rotten parties.

Does this mean then that the committees of action are simply—*soviets*? Under certain conditions the committees of action can

transform themselves into soviets. However, it would be incorrect to call the committees of action by this name. Today, in 1935, the popular masses have become accustomed to associate with the word soviets the concept of power already conquered; but France today is still considerably removed from this. The Russian soviets during their initial stages were not at all what they later became, and in those days they were often called by the modest name of workers' or strike committees. Committees of action at their present stage have as their task to unite the toiling masses of France in a defensive struggle and thus imbue these masses with the consciousness of their own power for the coming offensive. Whether matters will reach the point of genuine soviets depends on whether the present critical situation in France will unfold to the ultimate revolutionary conclusions. This of course depends not only upon the will of the revolutionary vanguard but also upon a number of objective conditions; in any case, the mass movement that has today run up against the barrier of the People's Front will be unable to move forward without the committees of action.

Such tasks as the creation of a *workers' militia*, the *arming of the workers*, the preparation of a *general strike*, will remain on paper if the struggling masses themselves through their authoritative organs do not occupy themselves with these tasks. Only committees of action born in the struggle can assure a real militia numbering fighters not by the thousands but by the tens of thousands. Only committees of action embracing the most important centers of the country will be able to choose the moment for the transition to more decisive methods of struggle, the leadership of which will be rightly theirs.

From the propositions sketched above flow a number of conclusions for the political activity of the proletarian revolutionists in France. The cardinal conclusion touches upon the so-called Revolutionary Left. This grouping is characterized by a complete lack of understanding of the laws that govern the movement of the revolutionary masses. No matter how much the centrists babble about the "masses," they always orient themselves to the reformist apparatus. Repeating this or that revolutionary slogan, Marceau Pivert subordinates it to the abstract principle of "organizational unity," which in action turns out to be unity with the patriots against the revolutionists.

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August

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OFFER GOOD UNTIL AUGUST 31

Outrage of the week—Robert Johnson, 55, was found dead on a hospital couch. A nurse at the Middleburg Heights hospital in



Ohio said nobody had checked him out for at least 17 hours because he appeared to be asleep.

Johnson suffered emphysema.

...meanwhile—A *Los Angeles Times* reporter spent a day with Douglas Shafer, a stressed out California wine grower. He was among the growing number having executive physicals. Shafer, the paper said, “Would spend 11 hours being tested, diagnosed analyzed and counseled.”

“He would meet with a nutritionist, a behavior psychologist and the Harvard-trained doctor who runs the program. Shafer’s body would be scanned...and his blood drawn. There would be lots of time with the doctor—and no

waiting.” The fee? \$7,500.

Dig this—“Schools are not spending enough time teaching pupils about the British Empire, according to the education watchdog Ofsted [Sorry, we don’t know who Ofsted is.].... Ofsted’s report on history teaching in 2002-03 found that some schools were still spending too much time on Nazi Germany to the detriment of other topics.”—*The Times*, London.

A good ‘fashion’ tip—An accelerated drum-fire of advertising and media hype produced

more than 8 million cosmetic surgery procedures last year. And the military is hoping to lure recruits with free facial, breast or nose procedures.

Solidarity, a good feeling—“Inmates at Oregon’s state prison raised nearly \$1,000 for the family of a nine-year-old boy killed in an accident. About 150 men made donations to the family of Topaz Luna. Donations ranged from \$2 to \$10.”

The wheels of justice—A California grand jury is considering if it should indict a

narcotics agent who shot a man dead last February. Agents mistakenly thought the victim was a targeted fugitive. A prosecutor told the jury that the narc agents had only an hour to be briefed about the suspect’s alleged violent behavior and to glimpse at a photo of him.

Mark it down—E-mail material for use in this column can be sent directly to our new address: thegreatsociety@sbcglobal.net. Postal clippings should be sent to: Pathfinder Books, 4229 S. Central Avenue, Los Angeles, CA 90011. Many thanks.

U.S. Navy stages war exercises off China’s waters

BY MARTÍN KOPPEL

Washington has been conducting large-scale naval exercises that include the deployment of an aircraft carrier group near the straits separating mainland China and Taiwan. The maneuvers coincide with war games by the Taiwanese government. Beijing has countered by protesting U.S. government promises to sell arms to Taiwan and by conducting its own military exercises around a group of islands 24 miles from Taiwan.

The U.S. maneuvers in the western Pacific are part of an exercise, named “Summer Pulse 2004,” which involve naval forces not only in the Pacific but in the North Atlantic, Mediterranean, Arab-Persian Gulf, eastern Atlantic, and South America. The war games, which began June 3 and conclude in August, include 150,000 troops, seven aircraft carrier groups, 50 warships, and 600 aircraft. Four of the carrier groups have returned or are on their way back to their home ports.

One aircraft carrier, the *USS Kitty Hawk*, which is based in Japan, is conducting exercises in the western Pacific. “I can’t tell you how close that ship will get to the coast of Taiwan,” Capt. Thomas Van Leunen, a spokesman for the U.S. Fleet Forces Command in Norfolk, Virginia, told the press. There are two other carrier groups in other parts of the Pacific, three in the Atlantic, and one in the Arab-Persian Gulf.

In addition, on July 12 the U.S. government held a “crisis-simulation drill” exercise aimed at China, under the not-too-subtle name “Dragon’s Thunder.” It was held at the Pentagon’s National Defense University in Washington, D.C. U.S. officials said it was in response “to an increasing possibility of military action by China against Taiwan.”

The Pentagon has downplayed the timing of the two military exercises, which have received limited coverage in the U.S. media.

“The largest naval exercise the United States has ever held is meant to send a direct signal to the Chinese. It’s gunboat diplomacy and its point is to warn China not to step over the mark when it comes to Taiwan,” Andrew Tan of the Singapore-based Institute of Defense and Strategic Studies told the *Los Angeles Times*.

War exercises in Taiwan

At the same time, the government of Taiwan has been carrying out anti-amphibious maneuvers along that island’s southern coast. The exercises, which are named “Han Kuang No. 20” and run from July to August, have involved 5,000 troops backed by armored vehicles, cannon, and 300 paratroopers. “Taiwan air force jets staged rare landings on closed-off freeways Wednesday [July 21] as part of a major exercise,” the Agence France-Presse news agency reported that day.

Since Chen Shui-bian was reelected president of Taiwan in March, his administration has increased tensions with China by stepping up its pro-independence rhetoric and campaigning for international recognition of Taiwan as a separate country.

The Chinese government regards Taiwan as a breakaway province. The U.S.-backed capitalist regime in Taipei was set up by the fleeing forces of the defeated Nationalist Party of Chiang Kai-shek after the successful popular revolution in 1949 by China’s workers and peasants, which overthrew capitalist rule on the mainland.

In 1972, when Washington recognized the People’s Republic of China, the U.S. government acknowledged in the agreement that “all Chinese on either side of the Taiwan Strait maintain there is but one China and that Taiwan is part of China.”

Editorials in Chinese newspapers have condemned Washington’s Summer Pulse war games as an act of intimidation. Beijing has angrily protested a recent U.S. Congressional resolution reaffirming its promise to supply arms to the Taiwanese government.

On July 9, U.S. national security advisor Condoleezza Rice met with government officials in Beijing as part of a trip that also took her to Japan and south Korea. China’s president, Hu Jintao, expressed “serious concern” to Rice about U.S. arms sales to Taiwan. In response, Rice repeated Washington’s stated opposition to any unilateral change in Taiwan’s status, known as the “one-China policy.”

An editorial in the July 20 *People’s Daily*, published in Beijing, stated, “China has solemnly declared that the Taiwan issue concerns China’s sovereignty and territorial integrity. The Chinese government and people will never equivocate, never compromise, and never give in on the issue. We Chinese will never tolerate, indulge, and sit watching any move aimed at splitting Taiwan from China, whether it comes from inside or outside the island.”

In mid-July, in response to the moves by Washington and Taipei, the Chinese government carried out land, sea, and air operations by 18,000 troops, reportedly simulating a military landing on Taiwan. According to the *Straits Times*, it conducted the one-week exercises off the coast of Fujian province to test its ability to capture the Penghu archipelago, a chain of 64 islands controlled by Taipei that are located barely 24 miles from Taiwan. During these military operations, Chinese military chief Jiang Zemin “vowed to recover Taiwan by 2020, marking the first time China has set a deadline for reunification,” a *Los Angeles Times* article reported July 20.

The last major U.S.-Chinese confrontation over Taiwan was in the spring of 1996. In response to the re-election in Taiwan of President Lee Teng-hui, Beijing carried out 18 days of large-scale military exercises, including missile tests, to warn that any declaration of independence by the new regime would lead to military action. Washington assembled a large naval armada in the region and provocatively sent the aircraft carrier groups *Nimitz* and *Independence* into the Taiwan Strait.

U.S. war games: restructuring Navy

In the current Summer Pulse 2004 exercises, the U.S. Navy is seeking to increase its ability to respond rapidly around the world as part of the broader restructuring of the U.S. armed forces. It is the first exercise of the Navy’s Fleet Response Plan (FRP), which is aimed at shifting from a “carrier-



STR/AFP/Getty Images

Taiwan’s military conducts live-fire exercises along coast July 23, simulating attack on landing from China. Meanwhile, Washington conducted naval exercises off China’s waters, as part of worldwide drill of U.S. Navy.

centric” Navy to a more agile fleet that relies on a broader network of naval firepower.

Under the FRP, the Navy is supposed to provide six carrier strike groups, including their associated ships, submarines, and

aircraft, in less than 30 days to any part of the world.

“The FRP is the way we operate now,” said Lt. Cmdr. Charles Brown, a spokesman for the Fleet Forces Command.

— 25 AND 50 YEARS AGO —



August 24, 1979

The victory of the Nicaraguan revolution brings to an end generations of U.S.-sponsored repression.

The struggle for independence has been long and bitter for the Nicaraguan people. Back in 1821, Nicaragua gained its independence from Spain, only to have British imperialism establish domination. Toward the end of the nineteenth century, Washington helped Nicaragua oust the British—so that U.S. interests could move in.

In 1912, U.S. intervention was direct. The U.S. Marines were sent in to police the country. They remained until 1925.

In 1926, a rebellion began to develop among the Nicaraguan people. The Marines were sent back in to put it down.

Washington sent 4,600 Marines to “pacify” the tiny, impoverished country.

The Somoza dynasty proved totally reliable. In 1954 Nicaragua was the staging ground for the CIA-organized overthrow of a reform government in Guatemala. And in 1961 Nicaraguan camps were used to train counterrevolutionary Cuban exiles for Washington’s ill-fated invasion of Cuba.

In return for their services to Washington, the Somozas were permitted to steal Nicaragua blind. When Somoza split for Miami, he was reputed to be worth more than half a billion dollars.

The suffering of the Nicaraguan people has been in direct proportion. An estimated 60 percent are unable to read and write.

The absence of medical care was a scandal, with the resulting widespread disease and high infant mortality rate.

Today Washington watches, enraged, as the Nicaraguan people take over the big sector of the national economy that had fallen into Somoza’s hands and begin to use those resources for the benefit of the people.

We can only say, it couldn’t have happened to a more deserving gang of butchers—and their sponsors.



August 16, 1954

The government continues to manufacture weird statistics on the economic situation. Official unemployment figures border on sheer fantasy.

For the month ending the second week in July, farm employment fell by 142,000, according to the U.S. Bureau of Census. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that in the same period non-farm payrolls decreased 289,000. Manufacturing payrolls alone dropped by 227,000.

What does all this add up to? Why, a “decline of 1,000 in the total number of unemployed,” according to the Census Bureau, which lists July unemployment at 3,346,000. Out of a rise in farm and factory layoffs of almost 400,000, the government contrives a fall of exactly a “1,000” in the jobless total. That’s as neat a feat of statistical legerdemain as we have ever seen.

Even the Aug. 9 Wall Street Journal approaches these government figures with caution. “In contemplating such statistics, it is well to remember, of course, that they are only estimates, or even guesses, based on pretty small samplings.”

Here are a couple of ways the government improves its “guestimates” to conceal the real extent of unemployment.

Instead of the usual 1,800,000 students who enter the labor market after June graduation, this year the government figures account for only 1,500,000. What happened to the other 300,000? For some reason, they just “aren’t looking” for jobs this summer.

Now, suppose the boss tells you you’re laid off, but come around again in thirty days and he might have something for you. The Census Bureau counts you as “employed, but not working.” The July figures contain an estimated 298,000 such “temporary layoffs” which the Census Bureau uses to swell, not the unemployed, but the employment total.

EDITORIAL

Vote socialist in 2004!

“There’s a lot that’s negative about Kerry,” a man recently told socialist campaigners in Omaha, Nebraska, “but Bush is evil!” That is not an infrequent view expressed by some working people and others. It’s the rallying cry of the “Anyone But Bush” liberals and the middle-class left.

The notion that John Forbes Kerry is either better or a “lesser evil” than George Walker Bush, however, is false from the standpoint of the interests of workers and farmers.

Kerry’s own campaign and record leave little room for this argument. The Democratic candidate trumpets his credentials as a “war hero” for fighting against the Vietnamese people in the last major war that U.S. imperialism lost. He backs Washington’s unceasing economic war against the Cuban Revolution and calls for carrying out more aggressive measures against Venezuela than the Bush administration has taken. He voted for Washington’s invasion of Iraq and backs the occupation, calling for an increase in the number of U.S. troops there. He quickly joined Bush in endorsing the Israeli settlement plan, which Tel Aviv is using to maintain permanently some of the largest settlement blocs in the West Bank and refuse the right of Palestinian refugees to return to their land. And Kerry tries to out-do Bush on how effective he will be in fighting the “war on terrorism”—the code word used by all the imperialist powers to warn anyone standing up to their domination that an Iraq-like treatment may be around the corner. In other words, he “can do better” at defending the profits of America’s Sixty Families in the world.

On the home front, Kerry’s war cry has been “homeland security.” Under this banner, the Democrats have been leading the drive to centralize the functioning of the federal police agencies. (Here it’s appropriate to make a correction. In last week’s editorial and main headline we said the Democrats are leading the drive for “increased police spying.” This is misleading, however. There is no evidence that the Democrats are pushing for *more* spying than the Republicans. Under

both parties, working people have and will face widening dragnets, intensified domestic spying, and attempts to roll back the rights of the accused and convicted.) Kerry is also following the antilabor footsteps of his predecessor, William “end welfare as we know it” Clinton.

With a solid four-year record of carrying out these policies on behalf of the U.S. ruling class, it’s not surprising that Bush’s prospects for re-election do not seem bad. At this point, barring a sharp economic downturn before November, it’s up to the Bush campaign to win or to lose.

Middle-class radicals who are trying to convince working people to stick with the Democrats argue that by helping to elect Kerry they’ll be able to nudge the Democratic Party to the left. What a dismal perspective—like pleading with the slavemaster to soften the crack of his whip.

It’s not who votes for a party that determines its character. The class that a party votes for in its program and policies is what determines the nature of the party. By this criterion the Democratic Party, like the Republicans, is a party whose purpose is to uphold the interests of the U.S. ruling class and of American imperialism.

Furthermore, it’s not individual politicians, such as Kerry or Bush, or even their parties, that are the root of the problem. The problem is that American capitalism—as well as French, German, and Japanese capitalism, for that matter—are not only incapable of solving the ills facing humanity but are the main cause of them: from economic dislocation, to hunger, racism, the oppression of women, and war.

The only working-class alternative in 2004 is the Socialist Workers ticket. We urge you to support the socialist campaign—a campaign you can be *for*. Distribute its literature. Arrange speaking engagements for SWP candidates. Join other socialist campaigners at plant gates and street corners in reaching out with the message of the socialist campaign. And vote Socialist Workers in November.

No bounce for Kerry after Democratic convention

BY ARGIRIS MALAPANIS

The campaigns of U.S. president George Bush and Democratic presidential candidate John Kerry have been evenly matched in the opinion polls since the Democratic National Convention in Boston. This means the Kerry campaign did not get the bounce it desired as a result of the Democratic convention in late July, despite the publicity such shows generate for capitalist politicians.

A CNN/*USA Today* poll of registered voters at the beginning of August showed Kerry leading Bush 50-47. When those who tell the pollsters they intend to register were included in the survey, the same poll showed the inverse result.

Even among the most liberal publications, which often report statistics to boost the campaign of the Democratic half of the twin parties of capitalism, there was not much enthusiasm for Kerry’s prospects following the Boston performance. A poll by the *Washington Post* and ABC News showed Kerry leading Bush by two percentage points among those likely to vote. “By historical standards, Kerry’s post-convention bounce is modest, at best,” the *Post* said. “The Bush team said Kerry’s failure to gain more significant ground from his national convention puts him at a serious disadvantage for the fall, while Kerry advisers said the electorate is already so polarized and partisans so energized that there was far

less chance for a big bounce this year.”

Similar surveys by conservative publications said Bush is now leading Kerry by a few percentage points. A Zogby International/*Wall Street Journal* poll also said the incumbent took the lead in a number of hotly contested states including Arizona, Nevada, and Tennessee.

“It is unusual, to say the least, to build a challenger’s campaign on the incumbent’s main strengths,” said David Broder, a syndicated columnist, in an article that appeared in the August 4 *Seattle Times*. “But that is what the Kerry team has done.”

At the Boston convention, Democratic Party politicians made “homeland security” a central theme in nominating Sen. John Kerry for president (see last week’s *Militant* coverage). Before and after the convention, the Democratic Party has led the drive for more centralization of Washington’s intelligence agencies and has pushed federal police spying.

Kerry himself insisted he can fight a more effective “war on terrorism” than the sitting president. In his acceptance speech, he trumpeted his credentials as a “war hero” for fighting in the imperialist army during Washington’s war on Vietnam. He made it clear he intends to pursue the U.S. occupation of Iraq, promising to take charge of “a nation at war.” He added, “I will never hesitate to use force when it is required.”

U.S. drumhead tribunals begin at Guantánamo

BY DOUG NELSON

The U.S. Department of Defense conducted its first military tribunal July 30 for detainees held at the U.S. military prison camp at Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, where at least 586 inmates continue to be incarcerated indefinitely without charges. According to the Defense Department, the tribunals were set up “to determine if the detainee is properly classified as an enemy combatant.” Washington has used this designation for prisoners to justify denying them legal rights, including those accorded to prisoners of war under the Geneva Convention.

The Pentagon set up the tribunals in response to the June 28 rulings by the U.S. Supreme Court, which decided in three cases that U.S. citizens ordered detained by the president as “enemy combatants” must be given their day in court.

The tribunals are comprised of U.S. military officers. The first included two Air Force colonels and a Navy commander. In the tribunals, prisoners are denied any legal counsel on the grounds that these are administrative proceedings.

The Department of Defense has not released any information on the proceedings of the first tribunal or the name of the inmate involved. The hearings were not open to the press. In a July 30 press briefing, U.S. Navy secretary Gordon England said that the Pentagon intends to allow a “small media pool” to observe the “unclassified part of the tribunals” in the future.

It is not clear whether the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), which has been critical of the treatment of the prisoners at Guantánamo, will be allowed to observe the proceedings. When asked if the military was going to allow any international observers, England replied, “We are in consultation with ICRC for their potential participation.”

“Over the next few weeks,” England stated, “we will then set up two more tribunal teams.... We are hoping that each team can conduct 24 tribunals a week.” England said some

of the inmates may be released. “If they’re not enemy combatants, they will be free,” he said.

Those still labeled “enemy combatants” by the tribunals will go through an annual review process “to determine if the detainee continues to be a threat to the United States or to our allies,” England said.

The military official did not answer reporters’ questions on the status of habeas petitions filed, or the right of inmates to habeas corpus—that is, requests by prisoners to have their cases heard before a judicial court—saying that was the jurisdiction of the U.S. Justice Department.

Meanwhile, four French citizens—Mourad Benchellali, 24; Imad Kanouni, 27; Nizar Sassi, 22; and Brahim Yadel, 33—were released from Guantánamo into French custody July 27 after more than two years of imprisonment. Five days later, a French judge decided that the four will remain in jail without charges while they are investigated for “criminal association with a terrorist enterprise.” This ruling is being challenged by defense attorneys for the four. Paris is reportedly still negotiating with Washington for the release of three other French nationals detained at the prison camp.

The Moroccan state news agency MAP said that five Moroccans—Mohamed Ouzar, 24; Mohamed Mozouz, 30; Radouane Chekkouri, 32; Abdellah Tabarak, 49; and Brahim Benchakroun, 24—were sent home August 1, but gave no details on their whereabouts or whether they face any charges.

Najib al-Nuaimi, head of the International Committee for Defending Guantánamo Prisoners, said he expects more detainees to be released. “More than 56 prisoners, including Arabs from Gulf countries, will be liberated soon for lack of evidence to back accusations against them,” he said.

Since the Guantánamo camp opened over two and a half years ago, 156 prisoners have been released, 27 of whom were transferred to the control of other governments.

Immigrant deaths at U.S.-Mexico border on the rise

BY RÓGER CALERO

At the rate of one a day, the number of deaths of immigrant workers trying to cross the U.S.-Mexico border in Arizona is reaching a record high this year, reported the *Arizona Daily Star*.

According to the July 17 edition of the paper, Mexico’s secretary of foreign relations, local police agencies, and county medical examiners in Arizona have recorded up to 121 bodies of people trying to cross into the United States found near the border. The Border Patrol has counted 78 deaths since October 2003. Last year the count was 139 fatalities—not including bodies recovered by agencies other than the Border Patrol.

ABC initiative results in more deaths

Since March, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), has been carrying out the “Arizona Border Control Initiative” along with local, state, and federal police agencies. The operation involves hundreds of cops and increased air surveillance through unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV), or drones, and other aircraft to patrol that section of the border with Mexico.

Contrary to the government’s claim that the operation is aimed at reducing the number of deaths at the border, it has resulted in an increase in the number of deaths. The reason is that the growing militarization of the border is forcing immigrants to cross through more remote desert points.

“We believe the use of UAV and increased aviation operations will greatly enhance the capabilities of the more than 200 additionally deployed Border Patrol agents bringing the Tucson sector to more than 2,000 strong,” said DHS undersecretary Asa Hutchinson at the operation’s official launching in March.

In July, Michael Nicley, head of the Tucson sector of the Border Patrol, praised the “success” of the operation, saying that the agency is apprehending 80 percent of those attempting to cross through that area.

“That is absurd for him to say that they are capturing 80 percent,” Rev. Robin Hoover, of the Tucson-based Human Borders, told the *Daily Star* July 3. Hoover’s group sets up water and aid stations in the desert for immigrant workers making the trek. Water supplies are vital for the desert crossing. Most people who die after crossing the border are found in isolated areas of the mountains or in the desert.

“We keep finding people out that way,” Hoover said. “And they keep drinking the same levels of water.”

In response to the changes in the migration patterns as a result of the beefed-up measures, the Border Patrol is now shifting agents to those areas.

To reduce the pressure at the border, the *migra* has also begun a new “repatriation program” of Mexican-born workers detained in the Arizona-Sonora desert area. These immigrants are deported directly to various cities in Mexico, instead of the previous practice of being dropped off on the Mexican side of the border. They are taken deep into Mexico’s interior to make more difficult a quick turnaround and fresh attempts to cross the border.

This “pilot program,” which is scheduled to run through September, is expected to result in the deportations of 300 Mexicans per day. Some 2,566 people are already on the list to be flown out of the country under its auspices.

Deaths on the job higher for Mexicans

These and other immigration measures implemented by the White House and the previous Democratic administration of William Clinton are not aimed at stopping the flow of immigration but keeping these workers terrorized so they can be super-exploited by employers across the United States. As a result, many of these immigrant workers get the lowest paid and most hazardous jobs.

An Associated Press study published in March concluded that Mexican-born workers in the United States die on the job at a significantly higher rate than their U.S.-born counterparts. The information used for the study came from interviews with workers, employers, government officials, as well as statistics from federal safety and population agencies, AP said.

The study said that Mexican-born workers are 80 percent more likely to be killed on the job today than U.S.-born workers, up from 30 percent in the mid-1990s. Over the last year, this on-the-job death rate increased at a faster pace than the overall increase in the Mexican population in the United States, AP reported. As the number of Mexican-born workers grew by about 50 percent, from 4 million to 6 million, the number of deaths on the job went up by about two-thirds, from 241 to 387, says the report. The latter figure peaked at 420 in 2001.

According to the study, while Mexican-born workers represent about 1 in 24 workers in the United States, 1 out of 14 deaths in the workplace are workers from Mexico.

The construction industry had the highest rate of fatalities on the job. About 1 in 3,100 Mexican-born construction laborers died at work, much higher than the rate among U.S.-born construction workers.

Cuba confronts drought afflicting eastern provinces

BY DOUG NELSON

Cuba’s revolutionary government is mobilizing people and resources to ease the impact of an intense drought in the country’s eastern and central regions, which is affecting water supplies for agricultural production and domestic use. The provinces of Camagüey, Las Tunas, and Holguín have been especially hard hit this year, following six years of unusually dry spring seasons.

To confront the situation today, as well as to plan for a future in which rainfall is expected to remain low due to climatic changes, the government, backed by the mass organizations of working people, has been trucking in water, digging hundreds of wells, and building water pipelines. It is working to create more efficient irrigation techniques, develop drought-resistant crops, and reorganize crops according to climatic changes in different regions.

Between April 2003 and May of this year, rainfall in part of central and eastern Cuba was 16 inches below the norm. Water reservoir levels are at 39 percent of capacity nationwide, down from 61 percent a year ago. Most dammed water is used to irrigate farms.

Half of the 10,000 wells have dried up in Holguín province, which is going through its worst drought in 43 years. The capital city of Holguín province, also called Holguín, has seen two of the three reservoirs that provide water to the urban population dry up as well.

More than 3,300 water sources for cattle have dried up in the eastern provinces, the Cuban weekly *Granma Internacional*

reported. As a result, about 90 cattle have been dying a day due to lack of food and water.

In response to the shortage, the government has mobilized all available tanker trucks to deliver water, both for the hard-hit cities in eastern Cuba as well as for the livestock.

In the city of Holguín, with a population of 200,000, the government has added 60 new water delivery trucks to the 40 that were already in service, built 10 new water pumping stations, and dug 100 new wells. Water has been distributed on the basis of six gallons per person a day.

Aqueducts are being built to pipe in water to the capital cities of the provinces of Holguín, Camagüey, and Las Tunas from distant rivers and reservoirs.

Workers have been engaged in a round-the-clock project constructing a 34-mile high-density polyethylene pipeline from Cuba’s largest river to Holguín. “We are racing against time before the water runs out,” said Leandro Bermúdez, deputy provincial director of the National Institute of Hydraulic Resources. Holguín’s remaining reservoir, the Gibara basin, is expected to run dry by mid-September.

Over the past several years, Cuba has been improving its irrigation techniques in order to conserve water and fuel. One method used increasingly on banana plantations is drip irrigation. As of May, new irrigation techniques were being used on more than 190,000 acres, half of irrigated crops. According to deputy minister of agriculture Juan Pérez Lamas, the plan for this year is to reach nearly

231,500 acres with the new equipment.

The use of electricity has been extended to operate water pumps that don’t use fuel, in order to pump water to almost a quarter million acres. So far this year, 800 windmills have been installed to generate electricity, with plans to construct another 150 in the eastern region most affected by the drought.

Cuba’s ministry of agriculture has also been working with farmers to produce strains of crops that are more resistant to drought, as well as to reorganize agricultural production according to the different and changing climatic regions.

Dr. Sergio Rodríguez, director of the National Institute of Tropical Tubers, told *Granma Internacional* that the eastern provinces will increase the cultivation of yucca and a variety of plantain that is particularly resistant to both drought and disease. The response by the Cuban people and their revolutionary government contrasts with the situation in semicolonial countries in other parts of Latin America that have been hit by drought conditions. In Haiti, for example, erratic or nonexistent rainfall has jeopardized the season’s harvests in the northwest, one of the most



Reuters/Claudia Daut

Workers build aqueduct June 26 outside Holguín, Cuba, to pipe water into city affected by drought.

impoverished regions of the country. The threat of drought follows devastating floods earlier this year.

The Haitian government and its mentors in Washington have done little to ease these conditions, however. Farmers have lost livestock due to the drying up of pasture land. As a result of the crisis, farm families have been forced to sell animals and tools—their livelihood.

—MILITANT LABOR FORUMS—

NEW YORK

Manhattan

Support Workers’ Right to Organize Unions Fri., Aug. 13. Dinner, 7 p.m.; program, 8 p.m. 307 W. 36th St., 10th floor (use north elevators). Suggested donation: \$5 for dinner, \$5 for program. Tel: (212) 629-6649.

TEXAS

Houston

Celebrate the Grand Opening of the New Center in Houston for the Socialist Workers Party 2004 Campaign, Pathfinder Books, and the Militant Labor Forum Speaker: Tom Leonard, longtime leader of the Socialist Workers Party and retired merchant seaman. Sat., Aug. 14. Reception and dinner, 6 p.m.; program, 7:30 p.m. 4800 W. 34th St., suite C-51A. Tel: (713) 869-6550.

UTAH

Price

2 Billion People in the World Have No Electricity—Support the Right of Semi-Colonial Countries to Expand Electrification Fri., Aug. 13, 7:30 p.m. *Militant Labor Forum Hall, 11 West Main, Room 103.* Suggested donation: \$5. Tel: (435) 613-1091.

CANADA

Montreal

Celebrate the Opening of Pathfinder Books and the Militant Labor Forum Hall. Speaker: Sébastien Désnautels, Militant reporter at Alcoa strike; others. Sat., Aug. 7. Program, 4 p.m.; Dinner and party at 6:30 p.m. 6955 Boulevard St. Michel (corner of Bélanger). Suggested donation: \$5 for program, \$10 for dinner. Tel: (514) 284-7369.

CORRECTIONS

In the July 27 *Militant*, the caption on the bottom of page 4 read: “Left, Bob Fivecoat from UMW Local 9953—a retirees local—and Anne Fivecoat. ‘We just want to say how proud we are that you stood up for your rights’, said Bob Fivecoat.” It was Anne Fivecoat who made this statement, however, not Bob. Also the name of the photographer was misspelled. The correct spelling is Teri Moss.

In the August 3 issue, the article “Showdown on concessions looms at Nebraska Tyson meatpacking plant” said: “Asked about the possibility of a strike, union president Marvin Harrington told the *World Herald*, ‘The way things went with Cherokee and Wisconsin, it looks like things are headed that way.’ He was referring to other Tyson plants where the company forced major concessions.” The latter sentence, which was added in the editorial process, is incorrect. At the plant in Jefferson, Wisconsin, the company did force major concessions after a yearlong strike. Workers at the plant in Cherokee, Iowa, however, voted down the concession contract Tyson proposed and are currently working under the conditions of the old contract.

Also in the same issue, the author of the article “At hip-hop meet, socialist responds to anti-Semitism” incorrectly attributed the statement “You need to learn about who Lyndon LaRouche really is” to Ben Ramos, a Puerto Rican independence advocate. Ramos, however, told the *Militant* he did not attend that conference—even though organizers listed him on the event’s program as one of the presenters—and therefore he could not have made the statement. Another participant, whom we could not identify, made this statement.

—LETTERS—

‘Fahrenheit 9/11’

I was glad to see that “Fahrenheit 9/11” was criticized in the letters column [August 3 *Militant*]. While of course it was easy for the filmmakers to laugh at Bush, the film completely side-stepped the major issues in world politics today. I hope to see more in the *Militant* in coming weeks about this film, which has created quite a sensation among liberals worldwide.

Mike Hunt
Minneapolis, Minnesota

Mine bosses

I thought *Militant* readers might like to know a little more about the record of Wilbur Ross, a lead investor in Newcoal LLC. The article in the August 3 *Militant*, on the miners’ protest at the Horizon bankruptcy proceedings in Lexington, Kentucky, reports that Newcoal is seeking to take over Horizon’s nonunion mines.

Ross is the head of the International Steel Group, which is

now the largest steel producer in the U.S. Ross’s specialty is buying up bankrupt companies and taking over their facilities after these companies have shed all responsibility for retiree benefits. His efforts began with LTV and have included Bethlehem Steel and Weirton Steel. Bethlehem alone had responsibility for about 95,000 retirees and dependents. The purchases of LTV and Bethlehem were completed only after \$6.7 billion in unfounded pension liabilities were dumped on the Pension Benefit Guarantee Corp. and retiree health-care benefits were eliminated.

In reopening some of the idled LTV plants, Ross’s company secured concessions from the union and established what the bosses see as the benchmark in the industry, cutting and combining jobs. At that time, the contract was said to give ISG a cost advantage of about \$100 a ton over other unionized steelmakers. When workers at U.S. Steel and National Steel voted a concession contract up last year, which will bring job cuts of over 25

percent, it was said to be modeled on the ISG contract.

Tony Lane
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

On Jew hatred I

The statement “Who is the real president of the United States? Is it Sharon or Bush?” and “U.S. foreign policy is determined by Israel and its supporters in Washington,” sounds like a Pat Buchanan or a Lyndon LaRouche anti-Semitic perspective. Some narrow Black nationalists spew similar anti-Semitic webs. [See “SWP candidate in New Jersey responds to anti-Jewish remarks at national hip-hop conference” in August 3 *Militant*.]

The nebulous left buys into neo-conservative plots. “Neo-conservative Jews make George W. Bush’s Middle East policies” say left leaning types. The panelist’s statement requires more context before the tag anti-Semitic remark applies.

Ken Morgan
Baltimore, Maryland

On Jew hatred II

The “On Jew-hatred” article by Robert Simms in the July 6 issue (No. 25) overstates the point that only anti-Semitism is behind the calling of attention to (as journalists such as Seymour Hersh, *New Yorker*, have) “neo-cons” in the Defense Dept., State Dept., etc. as a “conspiracy” (poor word choice) in their war plans for Iraq and other countries throughout the Middle East, Latin America, and Asia. The author also implies that the “Jewish lobby in Congress” is not the reason Washington strongly supports Israel, but that this partnership is unbreakable because it “serves the interests of the US ruling class.” Can’t both apply?

AIPAC (American Israel Public Affairs Committee), one of the most influential lobbies, always has its annual meetings here in Washington, D.C. because of its proximity to Congress. Indeed, the “inner circle” of neo-cons proudly and sophomorically refer to themselves as the “Vulcans” [see *Washington Post* article

of about 6 to 8 (?) months ago] in their mission of orchestrating a new American century-world order. The author should also ask the Palestinians (and Palestinian-Americans) who have lost many family members and friends about how they feel about U.S. support and funding of the Zionist Israeli occupation of their homelands.

Whether some of the neo-cons are Zionists or not, it’s certain they all subscribe to and promote the aggressive imperialist course the U.S. and Israel are pursuing. Finally, the U.S. ruling plutocracy doesn’t discriminate. It has room enough for membership from Zionists and non-Zionists alike.

Bob Snyder
Greenbelt, Maryland

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

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

Australian rulers close ranks on Iraq

Labor Party drops call for Iraq troop withdrawal, affirms alliance with Washington

BY RON POULSEN

SYDNEY, Australia—In the run up to federal elections here, the opposition Labor leadership has backed away from a controversial proposal to pull Australian troops from Iraq by the end of the year. Mark Latham, the new leader of the Australian Labor Party (ALP), has acted to assure the ruling families that if his party wins the election the ALP would continue to be a reliable pillar of the war party and of Canberra's strategic alliance with Washington.

The coalition government of the Liberal and National parties under Prime Minister John Howard is seeking a fourth term at national polls later this year. Howard's government sent Australian troops to join the U.S.-led wars in Afghanistan and Iraq over the last three years.

Foreign Minister Alexander Downer said in March that the Canberra-Washington alliance would have been weakened "very substantially" if the Australian government had not sent troops to Iraq. The ruling class here has traditionally allied itself with London and Washington to advance its own imperialist interests in the Pacific and around the world. During Howard's visit to Washington in June, U.S. president George Bush and Secretary of State Colin Powell described Latham's withdrawal proposal as "disastrous."

U.S. deputy secretary of state Richard Armitage said at the time that countries like Australia could not have an "a la carte" alliance to pick and choose in their allegiance to Washington. He also claimed after talks with Labor figures that the ALP leadership was "rent up the middle" over U.S. relations.

Several liberal capitalist politicians, mainly from the ALP, protested these statements as "interference" from Washington in the election process. Others, like Labor state premier of New South Wales Robert Carr, warned Latham of Washington's sensitivities over the occupation of Iraq. Latham attacked Howard's use of the statements by Armitage as risking "running down public support for the U.S. alliance."

Latham's promise to pull Australian troops out of Iraq "by Christmas" came days after José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero



Getty Images

Australian and U.S. soldiers in Baghdad in December 2003. The Australian government has supplied 2,000 troops to the U.S.-led occupation force.

of the Spanish Socialist Party was elected prime minister of Spain. Zapatero had promised to pull Madrid's troops out of Iraq, and did so after taking office. Latham's call caused alarm in ruling circles despite ALP pledges soon afterwards to keep Australian naval and air forces in the Arab-Persian Gulf region as part of the imperialist encirclement of Iraq, as well as small forces inside the country.

War on 'identifiable sources' of attack

On July 12, Latham brought his former rival in the ALP leadership, Kim Beazley, back to the front benches of the party as his military spokesman. Beazley, an ardent supporter of the Australian government's alliance with Washington, was defense minister in a previous Labor government from 1986 to 1990, when Canberra sent troops the U.S.-led Gulf War. He later served as deputy prime minister. Howard, while in the opposition in 1990, had said Beazley would be the only Labor member of his ideal "war cabinet."

The same day, Latham gave a speech to the Australian Institute of International

Affairs pledging a military commitment to future U.S.-led wars against any "identifiable source" of attack, saying this was why the ALP backed the U.S.-led war on Afghanistan. He described Washington as a "force for good" in the world. He further qualified his controversial call for the withdrawal of Australian troops from Iraq "by Christmas." A Labor government, he said, would continue a form of military commitment to the occupation of Iraq, albeit under United Nations command.

This contrasted with a speech on foreign policy Latham had given April 7, soon after his election as ALP leader. Appealing to "Australia first" nationalism, he had declared "a sovereign foreign policy" would mean directing "military capabilities primarily to the defense of Australia...rather than to expeditionary forces overseas."

U.S. ambassador to Australia Tomas Schieffer welcomed Latham's policy "evolution." Schieffer said the ALP's differences with Washington had "narrowed."

Before his ascension to the ALP leadership, Latham had criticized Bush as "the most incompetent and dangerous president

in living memory." He had also called Howard an "arselicker" for being among the first to join Washington's "coalition of the willing." He and other ALP leaders had said they opposed the U.S.-led invasion without full UN backing.

Soon after being elected opposition leader at the end of last year, Latham held a press conference, flanked by the Australian and U.S. flags, to affirm his support for the Australian capitalists' key alliance in the world. Latham later explained in an ABC TV interview that as leader of the opposition he now had responsibility "to put the American alliance...as the starting point."

At the same time, Latham issued a joint statement with his shadow foreign minister Kevin Rudd. Titled "Australia's Alliance with the United States," the statement said alignment with Washington is fundamental to the Australian rulers' "national interests" and security. They said the alliance was "formed by Labor Prime Minister John Curtin" in 1941 during World War II in the midst of interimperialist conflict with Tokyo. Saying this has been the stance of "every Labor leader over the past 62 years," the statement noted that "from time to time our interests will differ, as they did on Iraq."

Joint bases with Washington

In February, Latham and Rudd made a much-publicized tour of Pine Gap, a key U.S. communication center for spy satellites in central Australia. Latham described the base, now run as a "joint" station, as "a very important facility in Australia's national interest."

On July 9, Australian ministers for defense, Robert Hill, and foreign affairs, Alexander Downer, met U.S. defense secretary Donald Rumsfeld and Colin Powell at annual bilateral talks in Washington. At the end of the meeting, the two governments announced a set of joint military training bases to be set up in northern Australia.

The three ranges will be at existing Australian military sites near Rockhampton in Queensland, and near Darwin and Katherine in the Northern Territory. They will be linked by high technology communications to U.S. bases, including the U.S. Pacific War Fighting Center in Hawaii.

Tens of thousands of U.S. and Australian forces will use the facilities to conduct joint operational training, including with live munitions. The base near Darwin is planned as a staging post to store heavy U.S. military equipment such as tanks for rapid deployment in the region.

Michael McKinley of the Australian National University noted that the new bases would extend Washington's capacity for intervention in Southeast Asia and the Pacific. Underdeveloped countries in the region, he said, will see this as another step in Australian imperialism's role as Washington's "deputy sheriff."

Chris Evans, Labor's military spokesman, who has now been replaced by Beazley, welcomed the bases plan. "Labor has always strongly supported joint training between the Australian Defence Force and the military forces of all our allies, including the United States," Evans said.

Ontario steelworkers strike tire plant

BY MICHEL DUGRÉ

KITCHENER, Ontario—More than 1,000 members of United Steelworkers of America (USWA) Local 677, employed by B.F. Goodrich, have been on strike since June 1 at its tire plant here about 60 miles west of Toronto. Goodrich is owned by Michelin, the world's largest tire manufacturer. Michelin has three other tire plants in Canada, none of which are unionized.

The company is demanding a reduction in labor costs of up to 15 percent. All new employees would be hired at 68 percent of the current wage rates. They would reach their maximum wage after 18 months, at 85 percent of current wages. The company plans to establish a new service operation unit, including warehouse workers, with wages about a third lower than those of other employees. It plans to cut health benefits, demanding, for example, that workers start paying 10 percent of the cost of medical insurance.

Some 94 percent of workers voted to go on strike against these concession demands.

The bosses claim that the survival of the plant is in question. "We recognize that some elements of our settlement offer will be difficult for Kitchener employees," the company said in a recent statement. "However, changes must be made to make the plant competitive and improve its viability."

No significant production is taking place in the plant now. Few trucks, some empty,

are running in and out of the facility.

On one day recently, two truck drivers from the same company came by the plant a few minutes from each other. Strikers tried to convince them not to cross the picket line. "My rig cost me \$80,000," one of the truck drivers replied. "How do you think I'm going to pay for that?" The other asked where he could turn around, which he did to the applause of all strikers.

On June 19, one driver from the Challenger truck company hit three strikers on the picket line.

The Michelin tire empire, based in France, is demanding that all its plants worldwide reduce their production costs by 15 percent. Tire manufacturers have been trying to cut costs complaining that increased raw material prices such as oil and rubber don't leave them enough profit margins.

Paul Shrum, vice president of the 1,000-member USWA Local 677, said that Michelin has implied that if the union doesn't accept concessions then "investment in the plant would be in jeopardy." Shrum added that the Kitchener plant is as competitive as any other Michelin plant in North America and that Michelin has the added benefit in Canada of "public medicare and a lower Canadian dollar for U.S. exports."

Other unions have lent their support to the strikers. A United Food and Commercial Workers union local in the area gave food to strikers. The local teachers' union has also backed the strike.

About 10 percent of the workforce at the

struck plant are women. All were hired since the imposition by the company of a two-tier six years ago.

Scott Cowsill, union steward of the striking local, said there is strong solidarity and workers are anticipating a prolonged fight. "We're a united family and we're going to stick it out," he said. "Everybody is in for the long haul."

Michelin has won its reputation among trade unionists in Canada of being staunchly anti-union by successfully resisting, with governmental support, decades-long efforts by the labor movement to organize its three plants in Nova Scotia.

Union members said all supporters are welcome to visit their picket line at 131 Goodrich Drive, Kitchener, Ontario; Tel.: (519) 894-7912; E-mail: uswa677@golden.net

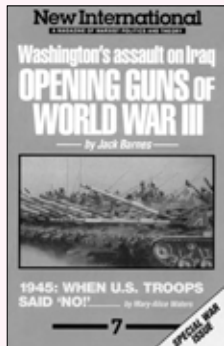
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