

# THE MILITANT

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**Cuban student federation educates on history of revolutions**  
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A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

VOL. 72/NO. 12 MARCH 24, 2008

## ‘Workers will transform ourselves through fights’

SWP candidate addresses Minnesota students

BY TOM FISKE

MINNEAPOLIS—Twenty-five students at the University of Minnesota attended a March 6 discussion with Alyson Kennedy, the Socialist Workers Party candidate for U.S. vice president.

The theme of the class she spoke at is “The Cuban Revolution Through the Eyes of Cuban Revolutionaries.” Attendance at this session was op-

tional.

A lively question-and-answer period followed Kennedy’s opening remarks.

“The U.S. is a large country, set in its ways,” said one student. “What strategy do you employ to get popular support?”

“Workers are capable of a lot more than what we initially understand,” said Kennedy. She described a union-organizing struggle she was part of

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Militant/Robert Silver

Socialist Workers Party candidate for U.S. vice president Alyson Kennedy addresses March 6 class on the Cuban Revolution at the University of Minnesota in Minneapolis.

## Jobs decline in February

BY SAM MANUEL

WASHINGTON—U.S. employers cut a net of 63,000 jobs in February, according to a March 7 report from the Department of Labor. It was the second consecutive monthly decline, and the third for private sector jobs.

The same day Federal Reserve bank officials announced they would pump about \$200 billion into the banking system in hopes of alleviating a tightening credit crunch.

The February jobs decline brought the official unemployment figure to 7.4 million, or 4.8 percent. While the overall number of jobs fell, the unemployment rate dropped slightly due to some 396,000 people who have given up on finding a job.

The report refers to 1.6 million people as “marginally” attached to the labor force. These are people who have looked for work at some time in the past 12 months. In addition, there are 4.9 million people employed part-time, up 637,000 over the last year.

Unemployment among Blacks, is 75 percent higher than that of whites, at 8.4 percent. Among youth aged 16 to 19, unemployment is 29.5 percent for Blacks and 15.3 percent for whites. The unemployment rate for Latinos overall is 6.9 percent, and for Asians, 3 percent.

In the manufacturing sector, employers cut a net of 52,000 jobs. This

brings the total drop in manufacturing jobs to 299,000 over the past 12 months. Construction jobs were cut by 39,000 in February bringing the total jobs lost to 331,000 since the industry’s

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## Immigrant workers plan May 1 march in Houston

BY STEVE WARSHALL

HOUSTON—More than 70 working people attended a March 8 informational meeting here to plan for a May Day action for legalization of immigrants. The meeting also discussed a new attack on immigrants called the Secure America through Verification and Enforcement (SAVE) Act now pending before Congress.

A March and Rally for the Respect, Dignity, and Rights for all Immigrants is planned for downtown Houston at 2 p.m. on May 1, meeting at the Federal Building. May Day actions have been called around the country as part of “el súper jueves para los inmigrantes” (Super Thurs-

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## Chicago conference plans actions for legalization



Militant/Martha Contreras

Workshop on “Youth Involvement in Leading Immigrant Rights Struggles” at Convention in Defense of Immigrant Rights in Chicago planned April 12 event to build May Day actions.

BY BETSY FARLEY  
AND RYAN SCOTT

CHICAGO—A Midwest Convention in Defense of Immigrant Rights, held here March 8–9, brought together more than 200 workers and students from across the region to plan actions for legalization on May Day and respond to attacks against immigrant workers.

The conference was organized around three demands: legalization of

all immigrants, residency with civil and labor rights, and a halt to raids, deportations, and other acts of intimidation.

“In the middle of an economic crisis that threatens the jobs, homes, and health of families, undocumented immigrants are being made the scapegoat by politicians and commentators,” said Rosi Carrasco, a conference organizer and member of the La-

**Continued on page 4**

## U.S. government orders websites for Cuba travel to close

BY DOUG NELSON

By order of the U.S. government, at least 59 websites belonging to a British Virgin Islands–based travel agency that books Caribbean vacations for Europeans have been shut down. The move is part of Washington’s decades-long “cold war” against Cuba.

The British-owned company, Tour and Marketing International, has offices in the British Virgin Islands, Spain, and the United Kingdom. Cuba is one of many destinations the company books tour packages to. Its websites were registered with U.S.-based domain registrar eNom, which controls more than 10 million website names around the world.

In December 2004, the U.S. Treasury Department added the agency and its website domains to a “specially designated nationals & blocked persons” (SDN) list. By law, U.S. citizens and residents are forbidden from doing business with and compelled to freeze the assets of anyone on the list.

A Treasury Department statement at the time said the action was taken as part of Washington’s ongoing effort to “choke off dollars steaming to the [Fidel] Castro regime and make it more

difficult for the Cuban government to harden its internal security and military infrastructure.”

In October eNom pulled the plug on dozens of the company’s sites, including TourandMarketing.com, AboutCuba.com, BonjourCuba.com, and Cuba-Hemingway.com. The sites had operated since 1998.

Steve Marshall, a British travel agent living in Spain, runs the sites. He told the *New York Times* that eNom said they

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# N.Y. cops begin trial for killing Black youth

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

NEW YORK—After a 15-month wait, the trial of three cops charged in the killing of Sean Bell, a 23-year-old African American, began February 25 at the State Supreme Court in Queens.

Protesters rallied outside the courthouse that day, chanting “Justice for Sean Bell!” Many of them carried numbered signs from one to 50, referring to the number of police bullets fired at Bell, who together with his two wounded friends were unarmed. Some demonstrators told the media that they plan to be out there every day of the trial proceedings.

Five undercover cops gunned down Bell on Nov. 25, 2006, while he together with Trent Benefield, 23, and Joseph Guzman, 31, were sitting in Bell’s car outside a night club in Jamaica, Queens. Bell had gone there to celebrate his bachelor party hours before his scheduled wedding later that day. Both Benefield and Guzman were seriously wounded.

In March a grand jury voted to indict three of the cops. Detectives Gerscard Isnora, who fired 11 shots, and Michael Oliver, who fired 31 times, were charged with first- and second-degree manslaughter. Detective Marc Cooper, who fired four shots, was charged with reckless endangerment. Cops Michael Carey, who fired three times, and Paul Headley, who fired once, face no charges and are not on trial.

Claiming prejudicial pretrial publicity, the policemen demanded that their trial be moved outside of New York City. On January 23 an Appeals

Court judge rejected the request. The cops waived their right to a jury trial. The case is being presented before Queens State Supreme Court Justice Arthur Cooperman.

Among those testifying on the second day of the trial was Marseilles Payne, 32, a medical assistant who at the time of the shooting worked as a dancer at the night club. Payne was standing across the street and was an eyewitness to the cop’s assault on Bell and his friends. She said she saw a black minivan belonging to the cops crash into Bell’s car. “The driver of the minivan, he got out and started shooting. He was standing in front of the minivan and he started shooting,” she said, according to Reuters. Payne testified that she never heard the shooter identify himself as a police officer.

The same fact was also stated by Lt. Gary Napoli, the supervisor of the undercover cop unit on the scene that night. He testified February 29 that he never heard any of the cops identify themselves as police officers before opening fire.

## Miami bookstore features Malcolm X



Militant/Jim Kendrick

MIAMI—The Florida International University Bookstore on the school’s south campus here featured the new edition of Pathfinder’s *Malcolm X Speaks* as part of its Black History Month display.

—THERESA KENDRICK

## Working people in Asia, Africa protest food prices

BY VED DOOKHUN

March 1—As part of the unfolding capitalist financial crisis, agricultural commodities and food prices have jumped on a world scale. Workers and farmers in semicolonial countries dependent on grain imports are being disproportionately affected and face growing hunger.

Over the last year in Latin America,

Asia, and sub-Saharan Africa there have been protests against high costs of food and fuel. Governments were forced to increase food subsidies and hold down prices to maintain political stability.

In Burkina Faso, 200 people were arrested during protests last week that spread from cities in the north and west to the capital Ouagadougou. The protests came two weeks after the government announced it would take measures to curb price hikes on basic goods and did nothing. Protesters stoned government offices and blocked the main highway with burning tires.

In Cameroon, 20 people were killed in the last week, when a strike by taxi drivers turned into a broader protest against increased fuel and food prices. Similar protests have taken place in Yemen, Senegal, Mauritania, and Morocco, where 34 people were jailed for protesting.

The Pakistani government announced in February that it would reintroduce the

ration card for the first time since the 1980s. This would allow workers and farmers to purchase basic food items at subsidized prices from state outlets.

Similarly in Russia, the government had to extend a price freeze on milk, eggs, vegetable oil, bread, and kefir, a fermented milk drink, for three months when it expired in January.

According to the United Nations World Food Program, which provides food for 73 million people in 78 countries, a 40 percent increase in food prices in the last year endangers its ability to continue providing food. The agency threatened to cut rations to countries dependant on aid if it doesn’t receive more funds to supplement its \$2.9 billion budget.

Last year, the United States, the world’s largest corn exporter, tilted the world production of cereal crops by producing nearly 14 million tons of corn for ethanol fuel. This was 20 percent of

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## THE MILITANT

### U.S. out of Iraq and Afghanistan

*The ‘Militant’ campaigns for the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of all imperialist troops from Iraq and Afghanistan.*

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U.S. Army/Sgt. Timothy Kingston  
U.S. soldiers prepare “clearing operation” with local militia February 16 in villages southeast of Baghdad, Iraq.

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# Colombia gov't apologizes for raid into Ecuador, continues provocations

BY CINDY JAQUITH

The governments of Colombia, Ecuador, and Venezuela reached agreement March 7 to reduce hostilities after an air strike against Ecuador by the Colombian military six days earlier. The provocative attack by Bogotá, a key U.S. ally in the region, took Latin America a step closer to war.

The Ecuadorian government broke relations with Bogotá over the territorial violation and sent 3,200 troops to the border area where the air strike occurred. The government of Venezuela also recalled its ambassador and sent 9,000 troops to its border with Colombia. Venezuelan president Hugo Chávez threatened to end all trade with Colombia. The Nicaraguan government broke off relations with Bogotá.

A March 7 meeting of the Río Group, made up of 20 Latin American and Caribbean governments, adopted a resolution condemning "the violation of Ecuador's territorial integrity." Colombian president Alvaro Uribe issued a formal apology to Ecuadoran president Rafael Correa and said there would be no more raids. The governments of Venezuela and Nicaragua restored diplomatic relations with Bogotá, but as of March 10, the Ecuadorian government had not yet done so.

The March 7 resolution also stated a "firm commitment to combat threats to the security of all states coming from the action of irregular forces or crimi-

nal ones, in particular those linked to drug trafficking." This was understood to refer to the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), a guerrilla group that has carried out armed struggle against successive Colombian regimes for more than four decades. The government of the United States, Colombia, and the European Union all label the FARC "terrorist." For years, Washington and Bogotá have charged the FARC with involvement in the cocaine trade, and on that basis steadily built up the Colombian military.

Uribe justified the raid into Ecuador saying the Colombian military was targeting a FARC base. The raid killed 24 FARC members, including its second-in-command, Raúl Reyes.

Since the election of Hugo Chávez to the presidency in Venezuela, Washington has stepped up its military aid to neighboring Colombia. The U.S. government has given more than \$5 billion to Colombia's army and police since the William Clinton administra-



Some 40,000 people march in Bogotá, Colombia, March 6 against war moves against Ecuador by the Alvaro Uribe administration and government support for paramilitary death squads.

tion launched Plan Colombia in 2000.

The chief victims of the military buildup have been trade unionists, peasants, and other opponents of the Uribe government. The Colombian Commission of Jurists reports that between July 2002 and June 2005, paramilitary death squads linked to the government killed or disappeared an average of 1,060 persons per year.

The buildup also gives Washington a military advantage against its opponents

in Latin America by operating through Colombia. Colombia's army is more than twice the size of the Ecuadoran and Venezuelan armies combined.

Two days after Uribe apologized to Correa, the Colombian military released messages and files it claimed to have found on Reyes's computer showing a plot by Chávez and the guerrillas to topple Uribe, as well as extensive financing by Chávez and support from

**Continued on page 4**

## Serbian government dissolves parliament

BY CINDY JAQUITH

The Serbian government dissolved parliament March 10, reflecting differences in Belgrade over how best to block the progress of Kosova, which declared its independence from Serbia February 17.

Disagreements in the coalition government center on whether or not to pursue membership in the European Union, the majority of whose members have recognized Kosova as an independent state.

Meanwhile, Serb police stopped hundreds of former army reservists from marching to the border to remove a "Republic of Kosova" sign March 9.

Ninety percent of the Kosova population are ethnic Albanians, who have been oppressed by the government of neighboring Serbia. The February 17 independence declaration ended Belgrade's power to impose discrimination against the Albanian majority.

The Serbian government is calling on the 120,000 Serbs who live in Kosova to ignore Kosovar authorities. Civil servants who remain loyal to Belgrade will get salary raises, in some cases doubling their current earnings, according to Radio Netherlands. The same report says that "there has been no great tension between Albanian and Serbian Kosovans. Fears of ethnic violence or large streams of Serbian refugees have proved unfounded."

While all political parties in the Serbian government oppose Kosova's independence, they have differences over how to respond to the changed situation.

Serbian Prime Minister Vojislav Kostunica and the Radical Party, which has the largest number of seats in the parliament, are calling for no integration into the EU unless Kosova is somehow returned to Serbian control. They favor breaking diplomatic ties with all governments that recognize Kosova.

Serbian president Boris Tadic calls

for forging ahead on Serbia joining the EU and trying to use that as a wedge to attack Kosova's sovereignty. "If we join the EU, then we can make sure that this outlaw state [Kosova] never becomes an EU member," he said on a TV talk show. Members of Tadic's Democratic Party have argued that refusing to join the EU now will unnecessarily isolate Serbia politically and economically.

Serbia lags behind many east European countries in foreign capitalist investment. Reuters reported that Serbia gained about \$11 billion in foreign investment over the last eight years,

while Croatia, also a part of the former Yugoslavia, brought in \$20 billion during the same period. Bulgaria, which is an EU member, received \$7.5 billion in 2007 alone.

Before the Serbian government fell, plans were under way to offer lucrative investment opportunities, including floating shares in two large state-run enterprises, phone company Telekom Srbija and pharmaceutical maker Galenika, and selling about 750 state-owned firms and real estate, Reuters reported.

Elections in Serbia are scheduled for May 11.

## Tel Aviv invades Gaza Strip

BY PAUL PEDERSON

The Israeli government sent tanks and troops into the Gaza Strip March 1. They occupied a section of the northern part of the territory and withdrew two days later.

Tel Aviv preceded its invasion with escalating air strikes and attacks by unmanned drones. More than 120 Palestinians were killed in six days of air and ground assaults.

The pretext for the invasion, dubbed "Operation Warm Winter," was an increasing volume of short-range missiles fired from Gaza into Israeli border towns.

Visiting Israel March 5, U.S. secretary of state Condoleezza Rice called Gaza a "terrorist state." She said Hamas (Islamic Resistance Movement) "holds the people of Gaza hostage" and is "trying to make the path to a Palestinian state hostage to them."

Hamas has been the ruling party in Gaza since it won elections there in January 2006. In the months following the elections, sharpening clashes between Hamas forces and those loyal to Fatah, the former ruling party, culminated in an open battle through which Fatah was driven from Gaza. Washington and Tel Aviv have sought to deal with and bolster the Fatah leadership and weaken

Hamas.

"Since Hamas took Gaza Strip, we adopted a dual strategy," Israeli foreign minister Tzipi Livni told a March 5 press conference with his U.S. counterpart. "And when I say 'we,' the meaning is the international community and, of course, the United States of America, Israel, and the pragmatic leaders in the Palestinian Authority."

Livni continued, "The idea is to work with diplomatic leaders, to try and find and reach a peace treaty with them while simultaneously working in order to delegitimize Hamas as a terrorist organization."

Alongside steady attacks on suspected Hamas militants in Gaza, Tel Aviv has enforced a near-total economic blockade. According to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs the "1.5 million Gazans still rely on Israel for all their supplies." It reported that only 32 truckloads of goods entered Gaza from Israel in the last week of January. Prior to June 2007, 250 truckloads entered per day.

The majority of households in Gaza have power outages up to eight hours per day—some for more than 12 hours a day. Half the population has access to running water for only four to six hours a day.

## —CALENDAR—

### NEW MEXICO

#### Farmington

**Changing Woman Conference.** Fourth annual conference organized by Navajo women coal miners and students at the University of New Mexico School of Law. The keynote speaker is Anna O'Leary, leader of the Morenci Miners Women's Auxiliary during the Phelps Dodge copper strike of 1983–86 in Arizona. April 7, 2008. *Henderson Fine Arts Center, San Juan College. Sponsored by Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, McCune Charitable Foundation, UNM School of Law, BHP Billiton. For information contact Rosie Foster at (505) 598-0418 or rosiewil.foster@gmail.com.*

## —MILITANT LABOR FORUMS—

### IOWA

#### Des Moines

**The Oppression of Women and the Deepening Economic Crisis.** Speaker: Helen Meyers, Socialist Workers Party. Fri., March 21. Dinner, 6:30 p.m.; program, 7:30 p.m. 3707 Douglas Blvd. Tel: (515) 255-1707.

### ILLINOIS

#### Chicago

**The Roots of Women's Oppression, How Women Can Win Equality Today.** Speaker: Betsy Farley, others. Fri., March 21. Dinner, 7 p.m.; program, 8 p.m. 3557 S Archer Ave. Tel: (773) 780-1190.

### WASHINGTON

#### Seattle

**Some Experiences of Chinese and U.S. Seamen in World War II—In Response to Imperialist Crises.** Speaker: Tom Leonard, veteran leader of Socialist Workers Party, former merchant seaman. Sat., March 22. Dinner, 6:30 p.m.; program, 7:30 p.m. 5418 Rainier Ave. South. Tel: (206) 617-0522.



# Chicago conference

Continued from front page

tino Organization of the Southwest, in opening the plenary session. "But we are not responsible for the crisis. We have the right to be recognized as residents, to have papers, and to choose citizenship. Fundamentally we have the right to dignity."

"We need to work to get the unions to support the May Day actions this year," said Jorge Mújica, a leader of the March 10 Movement and organizer for the United Electrical Workers. He pointed to several examples in the Chicago area where workers have successfully fought company attempts to fire workers over Social Security "no-match" letters.

At Wheatland Tube, a Chicago manufacturer of tubing and conduit, workers belonging to the United Steelworkers union have prevented the company from firing 63 workers with supposed discrepancies in their Social Security numbers, according to Héctor Gómez, a worker at the plant. "For two years the company has been trying to fire these workers," Gómez said. "Some have 17 years seniority, and the company wants to replace them with lower-paid new hires."

Twenty-five young people, most of them high school students, participated in a workshop on youth involvement in the immigrant rights struggle. Workshop participants are planning an April 12 citywide gathering "where young people who want to organize for the May 1 march can come and speak out and learn," said Tania Unzueta, 24.

A panel took up immigrant rights and the elections. Speakers were Socialist Workers Party candidate for U.S. president Róger Calero, Green Party candidate for U.S. Congress in Illinois District 4 Omar López, and Shaun Harkin from the International Socialist Organization.

Later in the conference Mújica listed the positions of all the Democratic and Republican party candidates in the presidential election, pointing out that all of them support the border wall and none of them call for legalization of the undocumented.

Workshops were also held on the fight against racism, the North Atlantic Free

Trade Agreement (NAFTA), fighting anti-immigrant laws, and the impact of the war on the fight for legalization.

A workshop on organizing a Washington, D.C., lobby day May 1 discussed a proposal for legislation that would give five-year renewable visas to undocumented workers. Emma Lozano of Chicago immigrant rights organization Sin Fronteras (Without Borders) said the Congressional Hispanic Caucus is expected to introduce this legislation in March. Jesse Diaz, a professor at University of Illinois Chicago, urged delegations from major cities where May Day marches are organized to be part of the lobbying effort in Washington. Others spoke to the need to keep organizing visible actions in the streets.

"I haven't been to one of these meetings before, but I went to the march last year and I came to the conference when I heard about it," said Rosalba Priego from Chicago. "We shouldn't be pessimistic, we need to keep doing this. We have the opportunity, we have the political strength, and we cannot be seen as victims."



Militant/Martha Contreras

Ismael Monroy from the Coalition for Justice in the Maquiladoras in Valle Hermoso, Mexico, and Perla Cruz, a worker at Key Safety Systems in Valle Hermoso, speak on a panel at the March 8 session of the Midwest Convention in Defense of Immigrant Rights in Chicago.

The conference concluded with a call to unions, community organizations,

and activists to organize a massive march on May Day in Chicago, with the participation of workers and immigrants from all the Midwest states, and to organize local demonstrations across the Midwest.

## Workers in Virginia protest bill empowering local cops to enforce federal immigration law

BY SETH DELLINGER

WOODBIDGE, Virginia, March 2—More than 1,000 workers packed two successive meetings today on the eve of the implementation of a new law empowering Prince William County police to enforce federal immigration law. The meetings were organized by Mexicanos Sin Fronteras (Mexicans Without Borders), an immigrant rights group that led several large marches and rallies opposing the law as it was being debated last year.

"We don't want to create more fear," Ricardo Juárez, a leader of the group, told the meeting. "We want to provide clear information so that you can make clear decisions."

Immigration lawyer Linda Johnson stressed the constitutional right to remain silent in the face of police questioning.

"You have the right to remain silent. You don't have the right to not be arrested," Corey Stewart, chairman of

the Prince William County Board of Supervisors, later told the press.

"A lot of people are scared, but we have to keep fighting," José Rivas, 30, a construction worker from El Salvador, told the *Militant*.

Edgar Rivera Montecino, 32, a painter from Honduras, held a sign in

English and Spanish that read "Thank you Prince William for separating our families . . . now we are more united than ever!" He said a friend who is facing deportation proceedings and has been forced to wear an electronic ankle bracelet by immigration authorities helped make the sign.

## Colombian gov't apologizes

Continued from page 3

Correa for the FARC. Chávez denied the charges and said the documents were forgeries.

The March 10 *Washington Post* noted that Washington could use the charges "to cite Venezuela as a state sponsor of terrorism" and urge UN Security Council action based on a 2001 resolution that prohibits all states from providing financing or havens to "terrorist" organizations.

Most Latin American governments expressed opposition to the raid on

Ecuador. Washington, on the other hand, has shown no signs of abating its military buildup in Colombia or its support for Uribe. On March 4, U.S. president George Bush called on Congress to adopt a "free trade" accord with Colombia, calling it "a matter of national security."

Meanwhile, the Colombian defense ministry announced March 7 that another top leader of the FARC, Manuel Muñoz, had been killed a few days earlier by his own troops. Bogotá claims there have been hundreds of desertions from the FARC in recent months.

A February demonstration in Bogotá supporting Uribe's war against the FARC drew several hundred thousand, according to the BBC. On March 6, following the incursion into Ecuador, some 40,000 marched in Bogotá against the war and Uribe's use of paramilitary death squads. "Uribe is the one who has always wanted war—and the United States too," marcher Jorge Sánchez told Fox News.

## Immigrant workers plan Houston May 1 march

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day for immigrants).

"Many people have told me that it's the May Day 2006 and 2007 marches that caused the racists like the Minutemen to mobilize," Teodoro Aguiluz, director of the Central American Resource Center, told the meeting. "But it's just the opposite. These anti-immigrant groups were organizing long before then. In fact, it was our marches that put a stop to the Sensenbrenner bill which would have criminalized almost all of us," he said, referring to a law that would have made it a federal offense to aid undocumented workers.

"The situation now for immigrants is a real mess now, especially with local police now doing the work of the *migra*," said Aguiluz. "If you forget your license, you just hope you don't get stopped because before you know it you'll be trying to get out of jail. With new laws being written in Congress, cities will not get federal funds if they don't

cooperate with the ICE," he said, referring to the Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement.



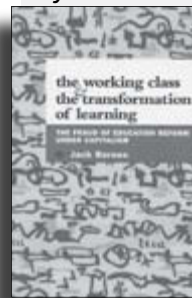
The meeting began with a celebration of International Women's Day and a presentation by Olivia Espinosa, head of a new women's organization Sisterhood Association Giving Love to Their Own (HADAS). Espinosa also promoted the demonstration. In addition, Aura Espinosa from Immigrant Families and Students in the Struggle (FIEL), and María Jiménez from América para Todos (America for All) spoke to the group urging action in defense of immigrant workers.

Those present grabbed up posters and more than 20,000 cards building the march. Leafleting teams will get out the news about the demonstration in working-class neighborhoods and churches. Another information meeting is planned for the southwest area of Houston March 18.

The meeting was covered extensively by Channel 45, one of the major Houston TV stations broadcasting in Spanish.

**The Working Class and the Transformation of Learning**  
The Fraud of Education Reform under Capitalism

By Jack Barnes



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# Canadian Parliament debates extension of troops in Afghanistan

BY MARK GRIEVE  
AND JOHN STEELE

TORONTO—A parliamentary debate on extending Ottawa's military intervention in Afghanistan until 2011 began February 25.

Prime Minister Stephen Harper of the Conservative Party hopes to have the extension passed before an April 2–4 NATO meeting in Bucharest, Romania. At the meeting Harper is expected to ask for 1,000 more NATO troops as well as helicopters and unmanned drones to assist the Canadian forces in Kandahar, Afghanistan.

A “non-partisan” review of Canada's role in the Afghan war was released January 28. Harper commissioned the review, known as the Manley Report, last year. The report makes the point that the Canadian military's combat and so-called reconstruction and training activity in Afghanistan are intertwined and can't be separated. It also recommends the addition of 1,000 NATO troops.

The report has bridged differences between the Liberals and Conservatives about the weight to give to “reconstruction” relative to combat activity for Ottawa's troops. Referring to the motion to extend the mission in Afghanistan, Liberal Party leader Stephan Dion said, “I agree with the Prime Minister that what we have now is neither a Conservative motion nor a Liberal motion—it is a Canadian motion.”

“Canada should be a leader in the world, not a follower,” said Harper, supporting the motion to extend the mission in Afghanistan. “And in today's dangerous world, Canada must have a credible military to be a credible leader.”

In the days prior to the debate top military leaders on both sides of the Canada-U.S. border weighed in.

Chief of Defence Staff Richard Hillier, speaking to the Conference of Defence Associations in Toronto, said Parliament should unanimously pass a motion expressing support for Canadian troops. Hillier's speech implied waffling in Parliament on the issue could lead to increased Canadian casualties.

The day before the February 25 debate began, Adm. William Fallon, head of the U.S. Central Command and the officer responsible for U.S. troops in Iraq and Afghanistan, rejected any distinction between combat and reconstruction roles. “You can't say ‘we're going to do this and not this.’ You need a comprehensive and coordinated approach to this problem,” he said.

On March 2 the 79th Canadian soldier was killed in Afghanistan. Canada has maintained 2,500 troops in Afghanistan since 2002.

Federal budget figures show the commitment of Canada's capitalist rulers to prosecuting the war. Ottawa's military budget in inflation-adjusted dollars is at its highest level since World War II at \$18 billion.

The intensification of Ottawa's role in the imperialist war abroad is also reflected in deepening attacks on the democratic rights of workers at home. In tandem with the tabling of the mo-

tion to extend the Afghanistan mission Ottawa reissued “antiterrorist” security certificates for Hassan Almrei, Adil Charkaoui, Mohamed Harkat, Mahmoud Jaballah, and Mohamed Zeki Mahjoub, all of whom have been jailed or are under house arrest and threatened with deportation. The security certificates were reissued following court-ordered cosmetic changes to the legislation which allows the government to jail without charges or public evidence non-citizens whom it accuses of being a threat to national security.

## UK bank nationalization highlights weak economy

BY PETE CLIFFORD

EDINBURGH, Scotland—After months of trying to secure private investment for the failing Northern Rock bank, the British government announced February 18 it was nationalizing the bank, the country's fifth-largest mortgage lender. This stop-gap measure has shed light on the fragility of the British economy.

In September, the Bank of England bailed out Northern Rock as it was poised to crash. The private bank had loaned more money than it took in from customers and made up the shortfall by borrowing from other banks. This proved profitable so long as the housing market expanded and loans were easily available from other banks. When the “subprime” mortgage crisis hit in the United States, lending between banks came to a virtual halt. Thousands of Northern Rock customers lined up to withdraw their money.

The Northern Rock crisis had an impact on other banks. Shares in the Alliance and Leicester bank fell 31 percent on September 17 alone. “Unless immediate action was taken, there was every possibility, not just of a continuing run on Northern Rock, but queues forming outside other banks too,” wrote Bill Jamieson in a February 19 opinion piece in the *Scotsman*.

London spent £25 billion (1£=US\$2) on the bailout. With the nationalization,



Canadian Department of National Defence

Afghani troops train with Canadian military near Kandahar, Afghanistan.

the government has now taken responsibility for £91 billion of liabilities. Chancellor Alistair Darling called the move “business as usual,” reflecting the government's denial of the financial crisis unfolding here.

The United Kingdom's budget deficit is more than 3 percent of its GDP, “the worst of any major country in Europe or North America,” according to the *Daily Telegraph*. Albert Edwards, global strategist for French bank Société Générale, speculates that the deficit may soar to 10 percent if the economy slides into recession. In addition, the decline of the pound sterling's value relative to the euro is leading to a shift of foreign investment away from the United Kingdom.

Richard Lambert, director of the employers' organization Confederation of British Industry, told the London *Times* January 1 that the global credit crisis could have a tougher impact here than in other countries because of the United Kingdom's dependence on the financial sector, which accounts for nearly 10 percent of the GDP.

On March 2 HSBC, Britain's largest bank, reported total losses of £13.3 billion and bad debts of £8.7 billion. Most of this was related to subprime mortgages in the United States that people could not pay back after interests rates jumped.

The Royal Bank of Scotland (RBS), the world's fifth largest, lost £1.6 billion

through the subprime crisis and nearly half a billion pounds through recent bond insurers troubles. In addition, RBS has £2.5 billion worth of “risky” assets.

On March 1, mortgage hedge fund Peloton Partners was forced into a fire sale of \$2 billion of its assets. Peloton made its money through bets on subprime securities in the United States. It had been seen as one of the major success stories of hedge funds in the United Kingdom. With the mounting credit crisis, the banks were no longer willing to risk loans to Peloton and demanded their money back.

The financial crisis has an impact on working people, as well. According to the January 19 London *Times*, the prices of household staples such as milk, cheese, and eggs are up 15 percent year-on-year, while meat is 7.5 percent more expensive and bread nearly 6 percent. Government inflation figures are just 2.2 percent.

In early January major household gas and electricity suppliers raised their prices by up to 15 percent. Even before this, 3 million in the UK were considered “fuel poor,” spending more than 10 percent of their income on these utilities.

The most dramatic recent price rise has been on car fuel. According to the Automobile Association, petrol prices were 103.62 pence a liter (\$7.83 a U.S. gallon) January 9, up from 88.25 pence a liter a year ago.

## 25, 50, AND 75 YEARS AGO



March 25, 1983

MIAMI—Cops in Liberty City here went on another rampage two nights in a row in the Black community March 13 and 14. Thirty-one Black youths were arrested the first night, 50 the second.

Their crime? Attending weekend street discos at African Square Park on Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard.

Anger against cops runs high here. At least five Blacks have been murdered by cops in the last six months. On March 13 they also killed a Cuban in Little Havana.

The latest Black victim, 22-year-old Donald Harp, was killed by a Dade County cop March 4. The cop shot Harp in the chest.



March 24, 1958

An American bomber which accidentally hurled an atomic bomb on March 11, lacked only the fuse necessary to transform Florence, South Carolina, into a nuclear-horror crematory. As it is, the blast scattered plutonium while exploding TNT, which ripped a hole 75 feet wide and 35 feet deep, injuring six persons, including four children.

The detonation was felt over a radius of one mile, but its significance, dramatizing the U.S. government's ever readiness to visit massive nuclear “retaliation” on peoples whose social system it doesn't favor, was felt around the world.

The first answer is to take the A and H-bomb out of the hands of the military and scrap the entire nuclear-weapons stock-pile.



March 25, 1933

CHICAGO—The famous Kincaid battle between Peabody's company thugs, scab miners, all armed for battle and the pickets of the Progressive Miners Union has been shifted to the court struggle for the moment. The result of this fight in which fifty pickets were attacked by two hundred thugs and scabs, has been the indictment of 54 members of the PMA and the Women's Auxiliary charged with law violations of various kinds.

Twenty-two of the indicted miners are under charges of murder or double murder.

It becomes increasingly clear that Peabody Coal Company in alliance with the UMWA and the state forces are intent upon gaining convictions in this case.



# Socialist candidate speaks on ‘Elections and Immigrant Rights’ at Midwest conference

BY JOHN HAWKINS

CHICAGO—Róger Calero, Socialist Workers Party candidate for U.S. president, was in Chicago March 7–9 to address an immigrants’ rights convention and to campaign among students.

Calero campaigned at the University of Illinois Chicago March 7. Several students signed up to be contacted about campaign activities. One of them said, “I really want you to get in touch with me. I’m a socialist myself and I think capitalism is wretched and has to go.”

“My running mate Alyson Kennedy and I are following through on our pledge to go wherever those in struggle invite us,” said Calero at a campaign event that evening. He told the audience that he had been invited to speak at a workshop called “Elections and Immigrant Rights” at the Midwest Convention in Defense of Immigrant Rights the next day.

The need for independent labor political action was the axis of the debate at the workshop. Sharing the panel with Calero were Shaun Harkin of the International Socialist Organization and Green Party candidate for Congress in Illinois’s 4th District Omar López.

In the workshop Harkin argued for “pressuring Clinton and Obama.” López said that the movement for immigrant rights should “support candidates that support the immigrant agenda,” adding that none of the leading Democratic and Republican candidates, Hillary Clinton, Barack Obama, and John McCain, fit that criteria. López said that the movement for legalization had failed in the legislative arena since Congress has not passed immigration reform legislation.

“We have to bust through the illusion that you can make the changes we need within the framework of the two-party system,” said Calero. “If you’re disillusioned with Congress, it’s because you had illusions in Congress to begin with.”

“U.S. Rep. Jim Clyburn from South

Carolina, for example, says supporters of legalization should try an ‘incremental’ approach to immigration reform,” said Calero. “He says that’s how civil rights legislation was won in the 1960s. But Jim Crow segregation was uprooted by Black workers and their supporters marching, sitting in, standing up to cops with their dogs and fire hoses. Waiting for ‘friendly’ politicians couldn’t end Jim Crow and it can’t win legalization.”

Calero pointed to the emerging working-class vanguard and the place of immigrant workers within it as reflected in mass mobilizations the last two years on May Day and in union organizing efforts. He said that along the road of increasing class struggle workers can transform the trade



Militant/Martha Contreras  
Socialist Workers Party presidential candidate Róger Calero, right, campaigns March 8 at Midwest Convention in Defense of Immigrant Rights in Chicago.

unions into fighting instruments that throw their weight into movements of social protest by working people, like the fight for legalization.

“We need a new class party—a la-

bor party based on fighting unions, independent of the parties of capital, that can be a vehicle for working people to fight in the political arena,” Calero said.

## Seattle-area warehouse workers organize against firing of socialist campaign supporter

BY JOHN NAUBERT

KENT, Washington—Workers at the Unionbay warehouse in this Seattle suburb are defending their coworker Cecelia Moriarity, who was fired one week after campaigning with Socialist Workers Party candidates after work.

Moriarity joined SWP candidate for vice president Alyson Kennedy and SWP candidate for governor Chris Hoepfner at the parking lot entrance February 7 to campaign for the socialist alternative. Democratic Party candidates Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton were in Seattle campaigning the same day.

More than half of the 150 workers at the warehouse are “temp workers” placed by Volt Temporary Services. Moriarity was one of those. She is known on the job as a supporter of the *Militant* newspaper and of the Socialist Workers Party candidates.

Moriarity said that Unionbay management claimed “a half-dozen people had come forward” to say she had been stealing food from the food truck. No proof was ever presented nor was Moriarity given an opportunity to respond to the false accusations before being fired.

Moriarity and seven coworkers spoke to the driver of the food truck the day after she was fired. He said he knew of no problem and that the company had come to him. He said he had told the company he didn’t know anything about it or who they were talking about and was apologetic

that Moriarity had been fired.

The reaction of many workers has been disbelief. “That’s out of character,” said one worker.

“I think the company was worried because Kennedy was out there talking about the need for a union,” said Frank Chambliss, another worker. “What bothers me is there is no due process. We have no union, so the company can do almost anything they want.”

Worker Jim Bynum helped organize a delegation to Volt to report what the driver said. Volt manager Carla Voss said that the decision was made by Unionbay management.

Discussions about the firing went on all day long the day after Moriarity was fired. “People should be able to support any candidate they want,”

said one coworker, not buying the company’s accusations of stealing.

One week later, Voss called Moriarity to tell her that “because coworkers had come forward in your defense, Volt had looked into the facts, and will find you a new job placement but not at Unionbay.” Moriarity has accepted the offer by Volt to take a new job.

Hoepfner, who also works at Unionbay, has been talking with his coworkers about why this is a partial victory. “The socialist campaign will not be intimidated and will continue to get out the working class alternative to the twin capitalist parties of war, racism, and increasing unemployment,” he said.

John Naubert works at Unionbay.

## Kennedy speaks in Minnesota

Continued from front page

as a coal miner in Utah. “At the start of the fight, some workers said, ‘We can’t change anything.’ But we had a deep impact on other miners in the West and set back the company we struck against. We accomplished far more than we ever imagined. And we changed ourselves in the process.”

A Somali-American student asked, “Is a revolution in the U.S. possible without violence?”

“In this country the ruling rich use violence to hold down the working people,” said Kennedy. In the late 1870’s for example, “in order to defeat the gains of Blacks and poor whites under Radical Reconstruction, the rulers launched the violence of groups like the KKK,” she said.

“In reaction to the ruling class offensive against working people and the spread of imperialist wars, in the years to come there will be mass struggles,” said Kennedy. “They will be defensive in character.”

The same student later asked, “Is a

revolution possible short of a big economic crisis?”

“All evidence is that we are in the beginning stages of an economic crisis,” said Kennedy. “It will have its ups and downs, but it will force workers in the U.S. to fight to defend ourselves. The big question will be whether or not there is a leadership that will lead the workers to victory. This is exactly what the Socialist Workers Party is preparing for.”

After the class, several students stayed around for informal discussion. Seven signed up to be on the mailing list of Young Socialists for Calero and Kennedy. One bought a subscription to the *Militant* and joined socialist campaigners at a conference in Chicago to defend the rights of immigrant workers two days later.

Kennedy also spoke along with Rebecca Williamson, the Socialist Workers Party candidate for Congress in Minnesota’s 5th District, at a Militant Labor Forum here. Local radio station KFAI also interviewed her.

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# Cuban student federation educates youth on history of revolutions, lessons for today

BY BEN O'SHAUGHNESSY

HAVANA—Cuba's Federation of University Students (FEU) is campaigning to involve youth here in actions and discussions aimed at increasing their knowledge of revolutionary struggles in Cuba and internationally and explaining their relevance for today.

The FEU, which organizes 200,000 university students across the island, decided at its last national congress in December 2006 to sponsor actions marking anniversaries of major events in the class struggle. In a March 3 interview here and a phone interview a week later, FEU vice president Fernando Luis Rojas described some of these activities.

The events held in 2007, Rojas said, culminated with celebrations of the 85th anniversary of the FEU's founding on Dec. 20, 1922. Over the decades the student organization has been marked by its involvement in anti-imperialist and broad social struggles. The first FEU president was Julio Antonio Mella, who three years later was a founding leader of Cuba's first Communist Party.

Last year's events included a celebration of the 50th anniversary of the March 13, 1957, assault on the presidential palace, in which FEU president José Antonio Echeverría was killed during an attempt by the Revolutionary Directorate to overthrow U.S.-backed dictator Fulgencio Batista.

On November 6, Rojas said, about 500 students packed into a University of Havana theater for a rally organized by the FEU under the theme "90 years of the Silenced Revolution." They celebrated and discussed the October 1917 Russian revolution, when workers and peasants in that country, led by the Bolshevik Party under V.I. Lenin, overthrew the capitalist regime and established a workers and peasants government, opening the door to the world's first socialist revolution.

The rally was sponsored by the FEU along with the Antonio Gramsci Studies Program of the Juan Marinel-

lo research center and a group called the Workshop on the Bolshevik Revolution, the History of the USSR and Cuba: Critical Analysis for the 21st Century, which is part of the Gramsci program.

In attendance were students from the University of Havana and other campuses in the city, as well as other youth. Rojas noted that, unlike some campus activities where youth groups and faculty departments organize attendance by assignment, those who participated did so on their own initiative. The turnout was larger than expected, with students packing the theater and overflowing into adjoining hallways.

Rojas said the students had publicized the rally through their own resources, producing a colorful poster they put up all over the campus and in nearby areas.

The FEU organized the event to encourage Cuban youth to learn more about the Russian Revolution. "The example of that revolution, which is relevant for us today in order to defend the Cuban Revolution and confront capitalism," Rojas told the *Militant*.

The theme of the event was "The Revolution Silenced," he said, because "imperialism has tried to silence the gains of the first years of the Russian Revolution. Those advances were also silenced by Stalinism, when the socialist state degenerated in the Soviet Union" under the regime headed by Joseph Stalin.

The two speakers at the rally were Rojas, as vice president of the FEU, and Fernando Martínez Heredia, a veteran revolutionary fighter and writer on Marxist politics who currently heads up the Gramsci Studies Program.

## Early years of Russian Revolution

Speaking to the students on November 6, Rojas noted that many young people in Cuba know little about the October 1917 revolution. He said that studying the revolution's early years under Lenin's leadership, especially, "can offer us clues to understand the

relevance of our road."

Rojas said that while "nothing can be expected from capitalism," a revolutionary perspective cannot be built without a program, and an "antiprogram" of criticizing capitalism is not enough.

In arguing for a way forward, it is important to point to "the experiences of the October Revolution and its early years," he said. For example, the emergence of soviets (councils) of workers and peasants as vehicles for "popular decision-making" in revolutionary Russia offer a contrast with "the false and deceitful schema of bourgeois 'participation'" in politics. "The soviets were the state," he underlined.

Martínez Heredia said the socialist revolution in Russia, involving millions of people, "went beyond any conceivable boundaries with its organized, conscious actions, and it dared to win and change history." It helped internationalize the struggle for socialism, "and national and popular liberation movements everywhere in the world found their horizons remarkably broadened by the Bolshevik revolution."

Martínez Heredia emphasized that young people today need to learn the real history of revolutionary struggles in Cuba, and its continuity from Mella and Antonio Guiteras—a leader of the 1930–35 revolutionary upsurge in Cuba—to the 1959 revolution under the leadership of the July 26 Movement headed by Fidel Castro, Ernesto Che Guevara, and others.

Following these speeches, the assembled students marched to the plaza in the middle of the University of Havana campus and waited until midnight. Then they celebrated the



Poster advertising November 6 rally in Havana on the 90th anniversary of the Russian Revolution, sponsored by Cuba's Federation of University Students. The event was part of an ongoing campaign by the FEU to organize youth into activities discussing revolutionary struggles around the world and their lessons for today.

November 7 anniversary with a singing of the Internationale and Hymn of the July 26 Movement. The date of the Bolshevik-led insurrection is November 7, or October 25 according to the old Julian calendar.

Excerpts of the speeches by Rojas and Martínez Heredia were published in the university magazine *Alma Mater*, and the full text was posted on the magazine's website, [www.almamater.cu](http://www.almamater.cu). The November 11 issue of the Cuban daily *Juventud Rebelde* ran excerpts of Rojas's remarks, and a news report on the event appeared in the cultural magazine *La Jiribilla* and in *Caminos*, the magazine of the Martin Luther King Center in Havana.

Rojas told the *Militant* that the FEU has decided to extend its campaign of political education into 2008, leading up to the 50th anniversary of the triumph of the Cuban Revolution on Jan. 1, 2009. It will be organizing celebrations of events including the popular uprising in Colombia on April 9, 1948, known as the *Bogotazo*, in which Fidel Castro participated as a radicalizing youth; the May 1968 revolutionary upsurge in France; and 80th anniversary of the birth of Che Guevara on June 14.

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## Cuba travel websites closed

Continued from front page

blocked his domains after receiving a call from the Treasury Department; the domain registrar said they learned the sites were on the SDN list through a blog.

Marshall was given no notice. "I came to work in the morning, and we had no reservations," he said. "We thought it was a technical problem." He has been rebuilding his business using a European domain registrar and new website names. Many of same sites now end with the .net suffix, instead of .com. If he wants his websites removed from the list, he would have to appeal to the Treasury Department.

The public SDN list currently fingers

more than 3,700 individuals, companies, and vessels, 360 of which are linked to Cuba. According to the Washington, D.C., law firm Wiley Rien LLP, the Treasury Department "has a track record of non-public designations" as well. Penalties for doing business with a company or person on the list accused of a connection with "terrorism" can reach as high as \$10 million and 30 years in jail.

Many of the thousands of names and aliases on the blacklist are common, particularly Muslim, names. Like the government's "no-fly list," the SDN list has generated criticism from civil libertarians and legal professionals, including over numerous cases of mistaken identity.



# Social Security and fight for working-class unity

*Below is an excerpt from Capitalism's World Disorder. The Spanish-language edition of the book, El desorden mundial del capitalismo, is one of Pathfinder's Books of the Month for March. The excerpt below is from a talk reprinted in the book that was given by Socialist Workers Party national secretary Jack Barnes, at regional socialist educational conferences in Greensboro, North Carolina, and Des Moines, Iowa, in 1999. Copyright © 2000 by Pathfinder Press. Reprinted by permission.*

**BY JACK BARNES**

As workers today face fewer possibilities of getting jobs and holding them, the capitalists' attacks on social welfare programs take a bigger toll. If workers have unemployment benefits, if we have workers' compensation, if we have supplemental unemployment benefits, and



Corbis/Viviane Moos

**People line up for a jobs fair in New York City, February 2004. Cuts in unemployment benefits, workers compensation, and other social welfare programs aim to weaken confidence and unity of the working class and drive down wages and working conditions.**

workers and our families must cover without government programs—the less confident we are. The more likely we are to rush right back out, begin looking for work, and take a job for one, two, three, four dollars an hour less. This is not an unusual experience for many people in this room.

The so-called culture war is at the heart of this assault. Its aim is decisive to the right, and ultimately to the class dominance of the entire bourgeoisie: to single out the layers of the working class who suffer most from this assault and blame *them* for the social crisis of capitalism. Point to *them* as an infection in the social order. Go after human solidarity. Go after everything we have won *as a class*. And by doing so, drive down the wages and conditions of the class as a whole. That is what the employers and their politicians in both parties aim to do.

The rulers try to convince people, for instance, that the conditions faced by the elderly are not the problem of the middle-aged or the young. The capitalist does not care about the first thirteen years of workers' lives; then he cares about our ability to work hard for the next fifty years; then he hopes we die quickly. That coarse attitude is what the rulers try to get layers of the working population to accept as well.

The most revealing explanations of

what the bipartisan assault on Social Security is all about are those made by some of the more boldly forthright statisticians and economists. They say: when we passed Social Security legislation in the mid-1930s, when we conceded to the rising industrial union movement there was a need for it, we never expected to have to pay out most of it, because average life expectancy in the United States was lower than the retirement age of sixty five. (Yes, *lower*, by about five years on average, much lower than that for workers, and more than ten years lower for Blacks.) But now workers live some ten years longer than retirement age, on average. So our lifespan has become a big problem for the rulers. Why won't you people face this? the "experts" ask.

Read their economic articles; read their debates and arguments about the Social Security fund. This is the capitalists' complaint. To them, Social Security was a concession. It might ameliorate some problems that could otherwise become destabilizing, but they never intended for workers to live off it for very long. The insurance specialists, the actuaries had it all figured out: Look at the averages, they said; few will get much *of* anything for more than a year or two. We can handle that; don't worry.

Workers had a different view. For us,

Social Security was the beginning of the attempt to moderate the dog-eat-dog competition imposed on the working class under capitalism. Social Security was an initial step by our class—by those who produce wealth—toward conquering the social organization of conditions necessary for life, such as education and health care, *for a lifetime*. Workers think of each other in terms of a lifetime. We cannot think of each other the way capitalists think of us. We cannot make ourselves think of other human beings as though they do not exist up to the age of thirteen or after the age of sixty-five. That is not how workers function. We have a different class view, a different moral view of society. Elementary human solidarity is in our interests, not in conflict with them.

For the working class, there is no real Social Security that does not cover the entire *lifetime* of a worker. For the working class, there is no real education that is not *lifetime* education.

That is what the battle for Social Security was and remains. It was never just about pensions. What we won in 1935, with all its inadequacies, nonetheless encompassed the first federal-guaranteed universal unemployment benefits and the first guaranteed disability compensation. It established the Aid to Families with Dependent Children program that politicians in both parties are talking today about dumping. Out of the Black rights battles of the 1950s and early 1960s, the working class won the extension of Social Security to include health benefits like Medicare for the elderly and Medicaid for workers with very low incomes.

To the political vanguard of the working class, Social Security has always been about the battle to bring *all* welfare payments, *all* medical claims, *all* supplemental payments for education and child care into a comprehensive, nationwide, government-guaranteed entitlement. That is why the term "the social wage" is a useful one. We are talking about something that goes beyond the wage any individual worker receives from an employer. We are talking about something that the working class and labor movement fight to establish as social rights *for all*.

## BOOKS OF THE MONTH

we get laid off after working for three or four years someplace, we don't go out to look for a job the next morning. We don't want to. We don't have to.

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# A correction on Kosova

Coverage on Kosova in the last two issues of the *Militant* contained political errors.

An article in the March 10 issue was titled “Kosova ‘independence’ includes continued NATO occupation.” It argued—beginning with the quote marks around the word independence—that Pristina’s February 17 Declaration of Independence did not genuinely establish Kosova as an independent nation. The main reason presented was the continued presence of NATO troops and the pending arrival of European Union administrators.

But Kosova *is* independent. The presence of imperialist troops there in no way changes that fact—or the degree to which communists champion what Kosovar working people have accomplished. The Albanian majority had been subjected to superexploitation and discrimination by the Serbian government. Having gotten the boot of Serb oppression off their necks, working people now fight for jobs, economic development, and workers’ rights from a higher plane.

Imperialist troops operate in dozens of nations that have won independence throughout Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Middle East. But it would be absurd to argue that working people in Africa, for example, are today no better off than when they chafed under the tyranny of British, French, Belgian, or Portuguese colonial masters.

Independence in Kosova is an unintended consequence of the imperialist war drive, as is the autonomy Kurds have carved out in Iraq. These are unwelcome developments for the imperialists that they are too weak to reverse. Nonetheless, Washington showed its true face when it gave the green light to the recent Turkish invasion in northern Iraq directed against the

Kurdish people.

The editorial printed in the March 17 issue had a defensive tone, suggesting *Militant* readers should be disappointed with the outcome of the struggle for self-determination in Kosova. While characterizing independence as an advance, it stated: “Given the defeats inflicted by the Stalinist regime in the former Yugoslavia, the national struggle in Kosova does not begin with a revolutionary proletarian leadership.”

But where in the world today—outside of revolutionary Cuba—do struggles by working people, from trade union fights to battles for national liberation, “begin with revolutionary proletarian leadership?” Marxists champion all struggles by the oppressed and exploited, regardless of their leadership.

The March 17 editorial also said, “Only through the fight for self-determination will space open up for a communist leadership to emerge that can forge links to anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist struggles worldwide.” But the fight in Kosova today is not for self-determination. That was already won. That victory *has* opened up space for workers and farmers in Kosova to develop their organization and confidence.

In December 1917, right after the victory of the Russian Revolution, the Bolshevik government granted independence to Finland. Pehr Evind Svinhufvud, a right-winger who persecuted the Finnish Communist Party, became president. “We were aware that the present hero of Finland Svinhufvud . . . was our public political enemy and that in the future he would spare no one of us,” wrote Bolshevik Commissar of Justice I. Steinberg. “But if we set the Finnish people free from Russian oppression, there will be one historical injustice less in the world.”

# Employment declines in February

Continued from front page  
peak in September 2006.

After months of denying the depth of the financial and economic crisis unfolding in the United States, many financial commentators swung in the other direction after the jobs report was issued.

“Godot has arrived,” wrote Edward Yardeni, a former chief investment strategist for Prudential Equity Group, E.F. Hutton, and Deutsche Bank, who has been among Wall Street’s most optimistic economic forecasters. “We are falling into a consumer-led recession,” Yardeni said. He added that aggressive rate cuts by the Federal Reserve should help the economy rebound in the second half of the year.

Within minutes of the release of the Labor Department’s report, JPMorgan Chase and Lehman Brothers added their voices to those declaring that a

recession appears to have begun.

Even though the Federal Reserve sharply cut short-term interest rates twice in January and has signaled that it will do so again at its March 18 meeting, rates for home mortgages and other forms of commercial loans have continued to rise. Capitalists are demanding steep risk premiums as a condition for investment in securities backed by mortgage debt.

In addition, the ratio of homeowners’ equity to the value of their homes fell below 50 percent for the first time in history, according to the Federal Reserve. About 30 percent of all homes bought in 2005 and 2006 have mortgages that are higher than their resale value. Nearly 8 percent of all mortgage loans are past due or in foreclosure, according to a Mortgage Bankers Association report.

# LETTERS

## Kenya I

The British policy of divide and rule favored settlers from England and didn’t benefit the Kikuyu.

In her popular book *Imperial Reckoning: the Untold Story of Britain’s Gulag in Kenya*, for example, Carolyn Elkins states on page 12 that the Kikuyu were “the ethnic group most affected by the colonial government’s policies of land alienation, or expropriation.”

It must also be an oversimplification to state that the Kikuyu “have dominated the government since independence in 1963.” The Kenyan government was headed by Daniel arap Moi, a Kalenjin, from the death of Jomo Kenyatta in 1978 until 2002.

Eric Simpson  
San Francisco, California

## Kenya II

In several articles in the *Militant*

on the current situation in Kenya you have stated that the Kikuyu “were favored by the British during colonial rule and ran many shops, restaurants, banks, and factories. They have dominated the government since independence in 1963.” It seems to me that statement is one-sided at best and not entirely accurate.

The Mau Mau movement, which fought against the British colonial rule, was predominantly Kikuyu. Some estimate that 50,000 Kikuyu or more were murdered by the British colonialists and their agents during the rebellion in the ’50s, not to mention the tens and perhaps hundreds of thousands who were detained, “relocated,” beaten, and worse. If that is being “favored” by the “civilized” British imperialists, god help those who are less favored.

Seth Galinsky  
Des Moines, Iowa

*The readers above are correct. Ten of thousands of Kikuyu—driven from their lands and herded onto reserves—became a key component of the labor supply for white-settler plantations. They were also given jobs as clerks, office workers, and minor administrative positions in the colonial government. The Militant will run a more in-depth background piece on the struggle for Kenya’s independence, and its relationship to developments there today, in the coming weeks.*

—The Editor

**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.**

# N.Y. health workers strike for benefits



Militant/Emily Paul

Nursing home workers picket in Bronx, New York, March 9.

## BY DAN FEIN

NEW YORK—“Up, up, up with the union—Down, down, down with the bosses!” chanted some 30 striking members of Service Employees International Union 1199 outside the Kingsbridge Heights Rehabilitation Center on March 9. Some 220 health-care workers have been on strike since February 20 over health-care benefits.

According to a union fact sheet the workers have not had a contract since 2002. They lost their health benefits last November. Helen Sieger, the owner of the nursing home, made payments late to the workers’ health benefit fund, resulting in being \$2.7 million in arrears and the termination of benefits.

Jeffrey Wojciechowski, a kitchen worker, said, “We are fighting for a contract. [Sieger] got very greedy and also stopped paying for vacations and holidays for the kitchen workers. A temporary agency is bringing in unqualified scabs to care of the patients.”

David Thomas, a union member with 20 years seniority said, “We are fighting for benefits and a contract. We have to win this. We’ll stay out as long as it takes. She is trying to push the union out.”

A solidarity rally is planned for March 15 at 10 a.m. at the picket line.

# Food price protests

Continued from page 2

the world crop. The price of corn has doubled in the last year, reaching a 12-year high of \$5.25 a bushel. The United States exports 70 percent of the world’s total corn exports, much of which is used for livestock feed. Many countries rely on imported corn as a staple.

The price of rice jumped 20 percent in the last year. Wheat is now \$20 a bushel. Government backing for ethanol production has led to a high demand for corn to be used as fuel. In addition to driving up the price of corn as food, this also means that less and less farming is being devoted to growing soybeans, especially in the United States and Asia. Prices for soybeans have skyrocketed, reaching an all-time high in February of \$14.22 a bushel.

In January 10,000 Indonesians protested the increased soy prices, which rose 50 percent in one month and 125 percent over the last year. Much of Asia relies on soybeans as a source of protein.

The increase in the cost of staples has led to an 18 percent increase in food prices in China, 13 percent in Indonesia and Pakistan, and 10 percent or more in Latin America, Russia, and India.

## Corrections

In the March 17 issue, the first sentence of the fourth paragraph of the article “Socialist presidential candidate speaks on Georgia campuses” should have read “Calero also campaigned at the University of West Georgia during his February 23–25 tour stop here.” The article “Teachers in Puerto Rico strike for better conditions,” also in that issue, incorrectly identified Dennis Rivera as the president of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU). He is the chair of SEIU Healthcare.