

# THE MILITANT

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A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

VOL. 73/NO. 42 NOVEMBER 2, 2009

## Workers in Puerto Rico strike over mass layoffs

BY RON RICHARDS

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico, October 15—Tens of thousands marched here today as part of a one-day national strike. The protest was in response to layoff notices sent to almost 17,000 government workers. This is in addition to more than 7,000 who were laid off earlier in the year.

This second round of layoffs was announced at the end of September and will go into effect in November. With some exceptions, everyone working for the government with less than 13.5 years seniority will lose their job.

The layoffs were authorized by the "Fiscal State of Emergency Law," known as Law 7, which was signed March 9. The law also freezes the wages of government employees, tears up their union contracts, and increases some sales taxes.

Marchers were also protesting a law they say would allow the government to privatize many government services.

With 201,300 workers, the Puerto  
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## Benefits to run out for 900,000 of unemployed

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

Unemployment benefits are ending for hundreds of thousands of workers who have been without a job for six months, and in some cases for up to a year and a half. The National Employment Law Project estimates that an additional 900,000 workers will lose their benefits by the end of the year.

States provide 26 weeks of unemployment benefits. More than half of those receiving these payments are jobless after the benefits end. In September, for example, a record 5.4 million people had been unemployed for longer than six months.

For many no longer eligible for state benefits, the federal government has provided extended payments, in some cases for up to 53 additional weeks. But even these are being exhausted. Congress is currently discussing a further extension of benefits for another 14 weeks, plus an additional six weeks in states where unemployment rates, averaged over three months, exceed 8.5 percent. Meanwhile, the number of workers filing initial job  
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## 'Only working class can end social crisis'

Socialist candidate debates at N.Y. campus



Militant/Don Mackle

Maura DeLuca, left, Socialist Workers Party candidate for New York City public advocate, talks to Pace University students Annamaria Santamaria, center, and Anneliese Blommestein, right, after candidates' debate there October 19. DeLuca's message that "working class needs to take political power" contrasted sharply with views presented by her capitalist opponents.

BY BEN JOYCE

NEW YORK—"My campaign explains that the working class needs to take political power," said Maura DeLuca, Socialist Workers Party candidate for public advocate here. Some 30 people turned out October 19 at Pace University to hear a debate between DeLuca and her Democratic and Republican party opponents. An

audience of mostly students and other youth attended the university-sponsored program.

In addition to DeLuca, the panel of candidates included Democrat Bill de Blasio and Republican Alex Zablocki. Moderators Josh Rogers, associate editor of *Downtown Express*, and Lynn Rickert, editor-in-chief of *The*  
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## PUBLIC MEETING — NEW YORK CITY

### What Does the Dictatorship of Capital Have in Store for Working People?

- The Truth Behind "Financial Crisis" and "War"
- The Working-Class Response

#### Speakers include:

**Jack Barnes, Socialist Workers Party national secretary**  
**Mary-Alice Waters, editor, New International magazine**

**Saturday, November 7**

**Reception 2 p.m. — Program 3 p.m.**

**32BJ Service Employees International Union Hall**  
**101 6th Avenue, New York, New York**

**By subway, take the A, C, E, or 1 line to Canal Street**

#### Activities the following day Sunday, November 8

**307 W. 36th Street, 10th Floor North**

**10:00 a.m.** Discussion of Saturday's presentations with youth and workers interested in the program of the Young Socialists and Socialist Workers Party

**1:00 p.m.** National Meeting of the Young Socialists

**Noon:** Join *Militant* sales teams for final weekend of subscription campaign

**Hotel Vincci Avalon, 16 East 32nd Street (between 5th Ave. and Madison)**

**9:00 a.m.—2:00 p.m.** Meeting of the supporters of the communist movement

**For more info, call: (212) 736-2540 or (973) 273-0075**

**Sponsored by Socialist Workers Party, Young Socialists**

## Judge denies marriage license to interracial Louisiana couple

BY JACQUIE HENDERSON

HOUSTON—The refusal of a judge to issue a marriage license to an interracial couple in Hammond, Louisiana, has outraged many.

Beth Humphrey, a 30-year-old Hammond resident who works for a marketing company, called Keith

Bardwell, justice of the peace in Tangipahoa Parish, October 6 about getting a marriage license.

Humphrey is white. The man she planned to marry, 32-year-old welder Terence McKay, is Black.

The justice's wife asked if the cou-  
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## Join 'Militant' subscription target week Oct. 24–Nov. 1

BY TOM BAUMANN

October 21—The *Militant* is calling on its distributors and readers to join in an October 24–November 1 subscription sales target week. With an effort like this, carefully planned in advance, distributors can surpass their weekly averages sold up to now. It can also set the stage to exceed the goal for the eight-week subscription campaign by November 10.

We start the fifth week slightly behind schedule but with many local areas making significant gains. Our distributors are using the *Militant's*  
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# U.S. gov't moves to renew sections of Patriot Act

BY BEN JOYCE

The bipartisan Senate Judiciary Committee approved measures October 8 that would renew three sections of the USA Patriot Act, a set of laws passed in 2001 that greatly expand police agencies' ability to spy, search, and jail those deemed by the government to be a threat to "national security." The sections to be renewed are set to expire at the end of the year. If their renewal is approved by the Senate they would be extended until 2013.

The Barack Obama administration has been pushing to renew these provisions of the Patriot Act. On September 22, Todd Hinnen, deputy assistant attorney general, told the House of Representatives Judiciary Constitution Subcommittee that the Obama administration recommended renewing the sections set to expire because they provide "important and effective investigative authorities."

The three provisions expiring include one that allows police agencies to have roving wiretaps on multiple phones belonging to individuals who may or may not be considered to be "suspected terrorists." Another provision allows the FBI to demand businesses turn over "any tangible things" on record that may be relevant to an investigation. The third gives federal police outfits the ability to conduct surveillance against any non-U.S. citizen they claim is involved

in terrorism but may have no connection to any terrorist organization.

One week after the Senate committee approved the renewal legislation, the House of Representatives passed a bill granting the Department of Homeland Security a \$44.1 billion budget for fiscal year 2010, an increase of 6.5 percent from the previous year. The bill will fund agencies such as Immigration and Customs Enforcement, the Transportation Security Administration, and the Coast Guard. The legislation also provides up to \$800 million for physical and electronic fencing along the Mexican border.

The bill contains a measure to allow prisoners held at the infamous prison camp at Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, to stand trial in the United States. Prisoners would be allowed in the country only while they are being tried in U.S. courts.

The Obama administration has said it wants the prison camp closed by the year's end, but little progress has been made in finding places suitable to Washington to relocate the prisoners. There are still some 220 prisoners in the facility.

## Mexico conference on Martí, Juárez, Lincoln



Militant photos by Ben O'Shaughnessy

MONTERREY, Nuevo León, Mexico—Nearly 200 people—university professors, students, workers, and others—gathered here October 15–17 to discuss the political legacy and relevance today of the interrelated 19th century revolutionary democratic struggles in Mexico, Cuba, and the United States.

The International Conference on Martí, Juárez and Lincoln in the Heart of Our America took its name from three major figures in the history of the Americas: Cuban independence fighter José Martí; Benito Juárez, who led the Mexican bourgeois revolutionary forces in a war against the landed oligarchy and Catholic Church hierarchy, and then defeated Napoleon III's attempt to install a European monarch on the people of Mexico; and Abraham Lincoln, president of the United States during the revolutionary war that abolished slavery on U.S. soil. Participants came from Mexico, the United States, Cuba, Canada, Nicaragua, and Venezuela.

The conference featured keynote presentations by Armando Hart Dávalos (inset), one of the historic leaders of the Cuban Revolution, and panel discussion on a wide range of topics.

—STEVE WARSELL

### Help Sell the Militant



See distributors on page 8

## Quebec meat packers strike against concessions

BY MICHEL PRAIRIE

ST-HYACINTHE, Quebec—Workers at a meat-processing plant here went on strike October 9 against a new round of concessions demanded by Olymel, a giant Quebec-based agribusiness. The 480 workers are organized by the United Food and Com-

mercial Workers (UFCW).

In 2005 the workers agreed to a 20 percent cut in wages and benefits in face of Olymel's threats to close the plant. Union representatives said that this time the bosses are demanding another 16 percent to 17 percent in concessions, including a four-year wage freeze, increased work flexibility, and the right to subcontract work.

On the first day of the strike, anti-riot cops were dispatched in force to get managers out of the plant in face of some 200 pickets who were in a fighting spirit. The cops returned the evening of October 13 to get out eight trailer trucks filled with meat orders that could not leave due to the picketing.

Pierre Bibeau worked 12 years at the nearby St-Simon plant. That plant was closed in 2007. "When I came to the St-Hyacinthe plant, I lost \$378 per

week in wages and benefits," he told the *Militant* October 12 on the picket line.

On the picket lines, many strikers were especially incensed by the fact that Olymel made \$96 million in profits in 2008 (Can\$1 = US\$0.96) and already more than \$100 million this year, according to union representative Jean-Guy Plante.

Workers say they expect the strike to be long. Olymel announced it has moved some of the production to other plants. Because of several buyouts made by Olymel over the years, "we are in several unions," said Mario Paradis, a boner with 19 years in the plant. Some of the Olymel plants in Quebec are organized by the UFCW, others by the National Trade Union Federation. "But there is one single big boss," added Paradis. "We must help each other."

## THE MILITANT

### Free the Puerto Rican political prisoners!

*Oscar López Rivera and Carlos Alberto Torres are among the longest held political prisoners in the world, jailed by Washington for the 'crime' of fighting for Puerto Rican independence. The 'Militant' explains why the fight to free them is in the interest of all workers.*



Puerto Rican independence fighter Carlos Alberto Torres with granddaughter during January prison visit.

## SUBSCRIBE TODAY!

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# Washington, D.C. march demands equality for gays

BY PAUL PEDERSON

WASHINGTON—Tens of thousands of people marched past the White House to the U.S. Capitol here October 11 to demand an end to discrimination against gays and lesbians. The march was the first national gay rights protest since 2000.

Among the central demands of the march was the right of gay couples to civil marriage and to equal recognition of those unions in matters of immigration, health care, taxes, and all other areas. In 1996, the Clinton administration signed into law the Defense of Marriage Act, which defines marriage as between a man and a woman and allows each state to decide whether to recognize same-sex marriages. The marchers also demanded the repeal of the “don’t ask, don’t tell” policy, which bans military personnel from being openly gay while serving in the armed forces.

A debate unfolded on the eve of the action between the march organizers and those who said the march shouldn’t happen, that supporters of gay rights should wait for President Barack Obama’s administration to make good on its campaign promises.

Democratic congressman Barney Frank from Massachusetts led the attack on the action, calling it “useless” to march to try to pressure the Obama administration.

“The only thing they will be putting pressure on is the grass,” he told the press.

But speakers at the rally disputed that view. “We remember eight years . . . under a man named Bill Clinton,” Cleave Jones, one of the main organizers of the march, told the crowd. “Who went to our parties, who took our checks, who wrote flowery proclamations and gave some of us great jobs, and what did we get out of that? We got don’t ask, don’t tell and the Defense of Marriage Act.”

Julian Bond, chairman of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, was a keynote speaker at the rally.

“When the Iowa supreme court held

that the exclusion of gay and lesbian people from the institution of civil marriage does not substantially further any important government objective,” Bond said, “the court stated simply we have a constitutional duty to ensure equal protection before the law.”

“Are gay rights civil rights? My answer always is of course they are,” Bond said. “Rights for gays and lesbians aren’t special rights in any way. It isn’t special to be free from discrimination.”

Bond added, “We people of color ought to be proud that our movement has provided so much inspiration for others.”

Obama spoke at a dinner the same night organized by the Human Rights Campaign, the largest gay rights organization in the United States.

He told the gathering that he had called upon Congress to repeal the Defense of Marriage Act. He also explained why allowing gays to serve openly in the armed forces would help Washington pursue its wars and occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan.



Militant/Glova Scott

October 11 demonstration of tens of thousands in Washington, D.C., called for end to discrimination against gays and lesbians.

“We should not be punishing patriotic Americans who have stepped forward to serve this country. . . . especially when we’re fighting two wars,” Obama told the gathering. “We cannot afford to cut from our ranks people

with the critical skills we need to fight, any more than we can afford—for our military’s integrity—to force those willing to do so into careers encumbered and compromised by having to live a lie.”

## SWP fund picks up pace at halfway point

BY LAURA GARZA

The pace of contributions to the party-building fund for the Socialist Workers Party quickened this week with more than \$13,000 sent in. Six cities are now on schedule to make their quotas.

Supporters of the fund in every area are discussing how to get on schedule and raise pledges to close the gap between the current amount pledged of \$92,200 and the fund goal of \$95,000. Examples to be emulated are the decisions by supporters of the fund in Boston to raise their quota by \$400 and in San Francisco by \$500.

The purpose of the party-building fund is to aid the work of the Socialist Workers Party in bringing a revolutionary perspective to workers and young people.

“New York is now at \$15,570 pledged, getting closer to our goal of \$16,000,” wrote Seth Galinsky, organizer of the

fund drive there. Galinsky reported that a fund supporter in New York sent in a letter with an increased contribution explaining, “The spectacle of a Nobel ‘peace prize’ being awarded to the sitting president of the biggest imperialist power—while an increase of troops in Afghanistan is being planned to boot—well, this highlights the need for the Socialist Workers Party. I was convinced to raise my contribution from \$300 to \$400.” Another contributor upped her pledge by \$100, Galinsky wrote.

On October 10 supporters of the fund in Washington, D.C., held a fund meeting titled “Iran: Struggle for Democratic Rights / Working People in the U.S. Must Demand ‘Imperialist Hands Off!’” The featured speaker was Ma’mud Shirvani. Fund organizer in Washington Paul Pederson wrote that there were 22 workers and students at the meeting. “Participants came from Pittsburgh; Frederick and Baltimore, Maryland; Lorton, Virginia; as well as the Washington metro area. The audience included four students from area campuses. Those present made \$1,250 in new contributions and pledges,” he wrote.

In Seattle 42 people attended a party-building fund event where James Harris, co-organizer of the party-building fund, spoke.

Participants in the meeting engaged in a wide-ranging discussion after Harris’s talk. Chris Rayson, a railroad worker in the audience, described how the bosses’ attacks on safety and crew size added up to increased deaths of rail workers in the United States. Rayson said that 25 railroad workers lost their lives in on-duty accidents during 2008, up from 10 in 2007. So far this year 11 rail workers have died on the job.

Another participant asked Harris to explain who were the Deacons for Defense. In his talk Harris had referred to the group that organized armed self-defense against the Ku Klux Klan. Harris responded, “If you read the excerpt in the *Militant* from the new Pathfinder book *Malcolm X, Black Liberation*,

and the *Road to Workers Power* you will know more about the civil rights movement—and the working-class fight it really was—than many of those who claim to be experts. Plus, you will know the truth and see it in connection with the whole working-class struggle.”

Harris’s presentation was “right on the mark” said Robyn Tarbet, a seamstress for many years. “Where I work they have a callous attitude toward workers. I am sure that it can get worse. I’ll be back here,” Tarbet said.

“The initial effects of the economic crisis on the working class are devastating and initially workers are stunned,” said Harris. “But we will learn. There are few places where workers can come together and have a civil discussion on the economic crisis of capitalism; what we face and what we need to do. Having this kind of discussion is extremely important. But we also have to carry out successful actions together with other workers to gain the confidence needed to see that our class is capable of defending itself and winning.”

The meeting raised \$1,900 toward the quota.

### Party-building fund Fall 2009 ♦ Week 4 of 8

City	Quota	Paid	%
Newark, NJ	\$3,000	\$1,647	55%
Los Angeles	\$9,200	\$4,887	53%
Twin Cities, MN	\$6,600	\$3,475	53%
San Francisco*	\$13,500	\$6,896	51%
Chicago	\$9,500	\$4,849	51%
Houston	\$2,700	\$1,358	50%
Miami	\$3,000	\$1,407	47%
Boston*	\$3,200	\$1,283	40%
New York	\$16,000	\$6,368	40%
Washington, D.C.	\$5,500	\$1,815	33%
Seattle	\$7,000	\$2,249	32%
Des Moines, IA	\$2,400	\$720	30%
Atlanta	\$7,500	\$2,135	28%
Philadelphia	\$3,500	\$900	26%
Other		\$600	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$92,200</b>	<b>\$40,589</b>	<b>43%</b>
<b>SHOULD BE</b>	<b>\$95,000</b>	<b>\$47,500</b>	<b>50%</b>
*raised quota			

### Nursing home workers demand contract



Militant/Mike Fitzsimmons

More than 1,000 workers marched and chanted through the streets of Jersey City, New Jersey, October 17, demanding a contract for nursing home workers at four facilities owned by Omni Assets Management. The workers, members of Service Employees International Union Local 1199, have not had a contract since July 2007. According to the union, some workers earn less than \$8 per hour and have to pay \$400 per month for family health insurance coverage.

—MIKE FITZSIMMONS



Washington teachers, students fight firings

BY OMARI MUSA

WASHINGTON—Several thousand unionists and supporters held a rally here October 8 protesting the firing of 388 teachers and other school workers in early October. The main demand was that the workers, including 229 teachers, be reinstated.

The employees have been placed on administrative leave and will be dropped from the payroll November 2. In some cases they were escorted out of school by cops.

Several hundred students and their parents participated in the rally. Some 200 students protested three days earlier at McKinley Technology High School against the layoffs of teachers. Senior Kelvin Sherman told the *Militant* that he did not believe the teachers were being laid off because of poor performance. “They are being laid off because they stood up for us,” he said.

The October 8 protest was called by the Washington Teachers Union (WTU) and supported by local unions and top AFL-CIO officials. Union-sponsored buses brought students, parents, and hundreds of workers wearing T-shirts from several unions, including the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees; Communications Workers of America; United Food and Commercial Workers; and the WTU. There were also delegations of teachers from Prince Georges and Montgomery counties in neighboring Maryland.

Many of the students brought homemade signs saying, “Save Our Education” and “Support Our Teachers.” Teachers carried placards saying, “Let us teach.” One of the most popular chants was, “ABCD, keep our teachers layoff free.”

A 28-year veteran teacher told the *Militant*, “Enough is enough! This is the

end of the line for me. I’m here to support my coworkers and my union. We need to be in the streets.”

“We’re here strong and united,” said Sheila, a student at Spingarn High School. “Because [schools chancellor] Michelle Rhee messed up the funds shouldn’t mean the students and teachers have to suffer. We are about learning. They should fix the budget with no layoffs.”

A laid-off janitor said, “The administration has no respect for the teachers, students, or us. We want respect for our contribution to the education of the young people. I hate it that the teachers were escorted out by the cops. They treated them like they were criminals. We aren’t the criminals, they are.”

Most of the protesters’ fire was directed at Washington mayor Adrian Fenty and Chancellor Rhee, who had announced that the firings were to close a \$43.9 million gap in the school budget.

Rhee claims layoffs are necessary because of a need for “continued right-sizing” of the system. Since the end of 2008, 23 schools have been shut down, leaving the city with “too many” school personnel, including custodians, librarians, social workers, and guidance counselors, she says.

The cuts come after the city council slashed \$20.7 million from the 2010 budget.

Boston march demands ‘Troops out now!’



Militant/Ted Leonard

BOSTON—Chanting, “What do we want? Troops out! When do we want it? Now!” 1,000 people marched through the downtown area here October 17. The protest demanded, “All troops home from Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Iraq now.” The action was one of 40 held across the country that day.

The march was preceded by a rally that featured speakers from Iraq Veterans Against the War, Code Pink, an anti-foreclosure activist from City Life, and the president of United Electrical Workers District 2. A member of the Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan, who is touring the United States, also spoke.

Holly, a high school student from Concord, New Hampshire, said a bus came to the march and rally from New Hampshire. It picked up students in about a half dozen towns.

—TED LEONARD

Target week to give push to readership drive

**Continued from front page**  
special supplement featuring the introduction to the forthcoming Pathfinder book *Malcolm X, Black Liberation, and the Road to Workers Power* to boost subscription sales. Supporters of the socialist newsweekly in New York are making the supplement available free to anyone who subscribes. It normally sells for 50 cents.

This past week *Militant* distributors in Des Moines, Iowa, and Minneapolis organized to visit Midwest towns where large meatpacking plants are located. Over three days 16 subscriptions were sold in working-class neighborhoods, reports David Rosenfeld, who organizes the subscription effort in Des Moines. Nine people subscribed in Fairbault, Minnesota. At the Quality Pork Processors and Hormel plants in Austin, Minnesota, 21 workers bought copies of the paper as they were getting off their shift.

At the international conference on the political contributions of Cuban independence leader José Martí, Mexican president Benito Juárez, and U.S. president Abraham Lincoln, in Monterrey, Mexico, 25 workers, students, and professors from the United States, Mexico, Venezuela, and Canada subscribed to the socialist press, reports Martin Koppel.

Distributors in Montreal sold nine subscriptions to the *Militant* at the recent Quebec Social Forum held in that city.

John Studer from Philadelphia says supporters of the *Mili-*

*tant* there and in Washington, D.C., are planning to visit Georgetown, Delaware, this weekend where large meatpacking plants are located, as part of making their local quotas.

Many of the new subscribers are getting the *Militant* because they oppose the U.S.-led wars in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Pakistan. In Boston seven protesters subscribed at a demonstration demanding “All troops home now” and against Washington’s support of the Israeli occupation of Gaza. “One participant renewed his sub and gave a contribution to the Socialist Workers party-building fund,” reports Kevin Dwire.

At a similar action in San Francisco, two protestors got introductory subscriptions, says Lea Sherman. More than a dozen single issues of the paper and \$148 in books by Pathfinder Press were also sold.

Eight subscriptions were sold in the Miami area this week reports Emily Paul, including one at a meeting demanding the immediate release of

the Cuban Five. Four were sold to cab drivers at taxi stands at Miami area airports.

In many areas supporters of the *Militant* have been accumulating subscriptions by consistently organizing to sell to students on college campuses each Friday afternoon. Bill Arth from Los Angeles reports that three subs were sold this week at California State University at Dominguez Hills, bringing their total on that campus to nine for the drive.

“A few students are starting to ask for the paper by name,” reports Doug Nelson from New York, who has been selling regularly at the Borough of Manhattan Community College. Last Friday afternoon supporters of the *Militant* sold five subscriptions and 53 single issues to students at three colleges that are part of the City University of New York.

Ron Richards in San Juan, Puerto Rico, reports that 59 participants at a national work stoppage bought copies of the paper.



Militant/Ted Leonard

*Militant* supporters introduce people to paper at Boston antiwar demonstration October 17

'Militant' Subscription Drive

Sept. 12 – Nov. 10, 2009			
Week 5			
Country	Quota	Sold	%
UNITED STATES			
Seattle*	95	72	76%
Twin Cities, MN*	145	104	72%
New York	230	149	65%
Boston*	65	38	58%
Chicago*	115	67	58%
Washington, D.C.	100	57	57%
Los Angeles*	105	59	56%
Miami	110	59	54%
Newark, NJ	75	39	52%
Philadelphia	75	38	51%
San Francisco	150	71	47%
Houston	90	41	46%
Atlanta	130	52	40%
Des Moines, IA	110	41	37%
Other		3	
TOTAL	1595	890	56%
UNITED KINGDOM			
London*	80	58	73%
Edinburgh	35	25	71%
TOTAL	115	83	72%
Canada	100	46	46%
New Zealand	65	35	54%
Australia	50	25	50%
Sweden*	30	22	73%
Total	1955	1101	55%
Should Be	2000	1250	63%
*increased quota			



## — ON THE PICKET LINE —

### **New Zealand bus drivers, cleaners fight lockout**

AUCKLAND, New Zealand—Nearly 900 bus drivers and cleaners returned to work October 15 after fighting a lockout by NZ Bus in a contract dispute.

The workers were locked out October 8 after they decided to work to rule—refusing to drive buses with safety defects, not starting work earlier than the scheduled time, and keeping to speed limits instead of racing to meet tight timetables.

The workers earn from \$14.05 to \$16.75 per hour (NZ\$1.00=US\$0.72). Union members have rejected the company's offer of a \$1.80 raise in a three-year contract and givebacks in sick leave and disciplinary protections. While the workers agreed to end their work to rule they also rejected a new contract offer from the company of \$1.40 per hour over 30 months.

—Felicity Coggan

### **Chicago unionists support striking Teamsters**

CHICAGO—Some 200 people joined members of Teamsters Local 743, on strike at SK Hand Tools here,

for a solidarity fundraising event at the local's hall October 9. In addition to strikers, participants included unionists from several other locals, community activists, and family members.

"The struggle at SK Hand Tools is part of bigger attacks on all working people," said local president Richard Berg, addressing the event. "The SK workers have brought a working-class voice to the health-care debate in this country."

Workers at SK Hand Tools in Chicago and McCook, Illinois, have been on strike since August 25, after the company cancelled their health plan in May, without prior notification, in the midst of contract negotiations. The bosses are also demanding a 20 percent across-the-board pay cut and an additional cut of \$4 per hour for the first six months of the new contract. Twenty-four-hour picket lines have been maintained at both locations.

"President Obama is asking for health reform the way he wants it," said David Biedrzycki, a union steward at the Chicago plant. "Then we came out to demand what we want, health care for all."

—Ben O'Shaughnessy



Militant/Felicity Coggan

**Bus drivers and cleaners on picket line October 12 outside Roskill depot in Auckland, New Zealand. Some 900 workers were locked out by NZ Bus in pay dispute.**

### **Oil workers in Brazil strike for pay increases, inflation costs**

Oil workers at refineries in Brazil struck October 15 after Petrobras refused to agree to a wage increase plus

compensation for inflation. Around 10,000 workers struck at refineries in seven states, an official for the Sindipetro union told Bloomberg news agency.

The workers are seeking a 16 percent wage increase as well as inflation compensation. The company has offered 4.9 percent.

Another 10,000 workers are scheduled to begin a work slowdown October 17, according to an official of the FUP union.

Petrobras is investing \$174.4 billion in new fields, including the largest oil find in the Americas since 1976. It operates 13 refineries in Brazil according to Bloomberg. Its stock has risen 59 percent this year.

—Sam Manuel

## **UK trade union backs imperialist plans in Mideast**

BY PAMELA HOLMES

EDINBURGH, Scotland—The British Trades Union Congress (TUC) voted September 17 for a partial boycott of Israel.

General Secretary Brendan Barber described the TUC's "vision of the future for the Middle East" as "A two-state solution. The Road Map. Justice for the Palestinians. Security for Israel." These are all political themes pushed by Washington and its imperialist allies as well. Barber called for "targeted action—aimed at goods from the illegal settlements and at companies involved in the occupation and the wall."

Prior to the adoption of this position there were differences between officials of various unions over how far to go to put pressure on the Israeli government. A motion from the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) proposed a broader boycott, disinvestment, and sanctions against Israeli products. The GMB union opposed the wider sanctions.

The TUC General Council statement that was adopted reads, "To increase the pressure for an end to the Israeli occupation of Palestinian Territories, and the removal of the separation wall and the illegal settlements, we will support a boycott (where trade union members should not put their own jobs at risk by refusing to deal with such products) of those goods and agricultural products that originate in illegal settlements."

All the positions reflected class collaborationism and British chauvinism, presenting the British government as playing a progressive role in altering Tel Aviv's course and the Palestinians solely as victims of a brutal regime. They call on the governments of the United Kingdom, United States, European Union, and Israel to resolve the Palestinian issue, while reducing the role of the Palestinian people to one of formal relations between the TUC, Palestinian General Federation of Trade Unions, and Histadrut (the General Federation of Labor in Israel).

In his address, Barber explicitly pointed to the "key role" of the UK and U.S. governments. "President Obama is

now trying to move things forward, and we all wish him every success," Barber commented.

"We have a history of supporting boycotts, such as the one against apartheid in South Africa. There is no doubt that had an effect," Fire Brigades Union President Mick Shaw told the conference. The Palestine Solidarity Campaign described the TUC sanctions as a landmark decision.

The analogy with the mass sanctions movement against apartheid in South Africa is commonly made but is inaccurate. The call for international sanctions against apartheid South Africa was made by the leadership of the African National Congress, a mass, revolutionary democratic movement. The call was neither a pressure tactic nor a protest of the heinous nature of apartheid, but served as a powerful tool to strengthen the fight of the toilers themselves in their struggle for a non-racial democratic

South Africa, a revolutionary course for a new South Africa for all its citizens.

The TUC sanctions campaign against Israel, on the other hand, asks workers and others to back imperialist governments in their plans to further consolidate the division of the region rather than acting in solidarity with the region's toilers in building unity and a movement that can lead the struggle for a democratic, secular Palestine.

### **For further reading**

#### **Israel and the Arab Revolution**

Fundamental Principles of Revolutionary Marxism  
by Gus Horowitz—\$10

#### **Palestine and the Arabs' Fight for Liberation**

by Fred Feldman, Georges Sayad—\$7

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## — 25, 50, AND 75 YEARS AGO —



**November 2, 1984**

NEW YORK—In the dead of night in the early morning hours on October 18, 400 heavily armed New York City cops and FBI agents swooped down on homes in Brooklyn and Queens, and a Chinese restaurant, to arrest nine people the cops claim are "radicals" and "connected to the Black revolutionary group that committed the Brinks armored-car robbery three years ago."

A witness reported he was watching television shortly after midnight when a police spotlight beamed into his window. Looking out, he saw at least 50 cops in bulletproof vests carrying shotguns herding the inhabitants out of a nearby house. At another location the cops stormed into a home, kicking the door down. In spite of this provocative show of firepower, the cops admitted the arrests "occurred without violence" on the part of the victims of the raids.



**November 2, 1959**

OCT. 27—Hundreds of thousands of Cuban workers and peasants rallied to Premier Fidel Castro's call for a demonstration in Havana yesterday. Reacting against counter-revolutionary moves that led to the death of two people and the wounding of over 40, the angry demonstrators brandished placards reading: "We demand respect for our sovereignty;" "Agrarian reform against foreign monopolies;" and "We demand more executions."

The counter-revolutionaries, using American-made planes, apparently based in Florida, showered anti-government leaflets on Havana and other cities Oct. 21. Castro charged that the planes also bombed Havana and Pinar del Rio. During the air raids in Havana, terrorists in speeding automobiles machine-gunned and bombed people in the streets.



**November 3, 1934**

In the heart of the mighty "Dollar Empire" a new revolutionary workers' party will be launched in New York City, November 30 to December 2. The call for the organization convention will soon be issued by the Communist League of America and the American Workers Party.

This great step of revolutionary unity is the reply to the oppressive conditions of capitalism, the crying need for workers' leadership and the general chaos and confusion which strangles the labor movement. For over two decades the advanced workers' movement has been wracked by internal dissensions and splits. During this period capitalism has repeatedly given proof of its bankrupt character. No longer can it supply the need of the producers. The capitalist class faced with its doom has unleashed the forces of barbaric reaction.



# Strike in Puerto Rico

## Continued from front page

Rican government employed about 20 percent of the island's workforce before the latest layoffs. The official unemployment rate in September was 16.4 percent. This is the highest rate for September since 1993, when it was 17 percent.

The marchers, mostly government employees or students, started from eight different points around San Juan and converged on the Plaza las Américas, a major banking and commercial district. Around 50,000 protesters packed Roosevelt Avenue, the main thoroughfare of the central Hato Rey financial district in San Juan, reported Reuters. There were also contingents of truck drivers organized by the Teamsters union. Many workers from private businesses that were not on strike waved in solidarity with the marchers as they passed by.

In a failed attempt to limit participation in the march, the University of Puerto Rico closed the week of the strike. In spite of this, students and workers from the university's 11 campuses marched from the Río Piedras main campus. Large contingents came from regional campuses, including Humacao and Aguadilla.

The strike involved mostly government workers and students. It was backed by every union federation on the island, including the AFL-CIO; Change to Win; the Coordinadora Sindical, the main coalition of independent unions; and the Puerto Rican Teachers Federation.

All of Puerto Rico for Puerto Rico, a coalition that includes several unions and leaders of various churches, organized the main stage at the rally at the end of the march.

A separate speakers platform was set up by the Broad Front for Solidarity and Struggle, which includes many of the independent unions.

The Department of Education reported that 53 percent of its 40,000 teachers and 98 percent of students were absent.

The Puerto Rico Independence Party and the Popular Democratic Party (PPD), the largest opposition party in the Puerto Rican Congress, also joined the march. The PPD has called for cutting the workweek and wages of government workers instead of layoffs.

Prior to the strike, the government's chief of staff, Marcos Rodríguez-Ema, warned union truck drivers not to block operations at the ports. "Such actions are clearly defined in federal law as terrorism," he stated.

While most private businesses and the international airport were open, many dockworkers, who do not work for the government, joined the strike. The day after the march the island's Port Authority filed a lawsuit against unions at the port, including the Union of Dockworkers of Puerto Rico, affiliated with the International Longshoremen's Association in the United States. Port officials charged that the unions had organized an illegal conspiracy that interfered with interstate commerce. The lawsuit says that the Port Authority lost \$1 million and that the protest affected national security.

Puerto Rico governor Luis Fortuño claims the firings are necessary to help close a \$3.2 billion budget gap. The day of the strike he said the only alternative to the massive layoffs would be to close down the government. Fortuño said cutting hours and workers' wages would be a worse solution.

The government of Puerto Rico pays out more than \$768 million a year just in interest payments to wealthy bondholders of public debt. They will still get their money. The



Ricardo Figueroa

Tens of thousands march in San Juan, Puerto Rico, October 15 in one-day nationwide strike against layoffs and privatization of government services. Sign says, "Give me back my job."

Puerto Rican government is a leading issuer of tax-free bonds in the United States. Fortuño told Reuters he was concerned that Puerto Rico's bond rating could be downgraded.

Puerto Rico has been a U.S. colony since 1898, when U.S. troops wrested control of the island from Spain. Residents of Puerto Rico are subject to U.S. laws, courts, and military service. They are U.S. citizens, but have

no vote in presidential elections.

U.S. companies operating in Puerto Rico get huge tax exemptions and duty free access to the United States. The minimum wage in Puerto Rico varies by industry and can be as low as \$4.25 an hour.

Union leaders say that if the layoffs are not reversed they will plan another national work stoppage, possibly lasting several days.

## Socialist candidate speaks at N.Y. campus

### Continued from front page

Pace Press, fielded a range of questions to the candidates.

In opening statements de Blasio and Zablocki pointed to their experience in New York City and state politics as qualifications for the position. De Blasio is currently a city councilman and Zablocki a top staffer for State Senator Andrew Lanza.

DeLuca explained why she is unlike any of the capitalist candidates. She said her campaign starts with the need for working people to fight for political power. "That's the only way working people can put an end to the economic and social crises caused by the capitalist system, which produces ongoing imperialist war and a contin-

ued assault on workers' standard of living," she said.

DeLuca explained that her campaign supports struggles by working people to wrench concessions from the capitalists that "strengthen our position and fighting capacity." She pointed to some of the immediate demands that the Socialist Workers campaign calls for, such as ending all taxes on working people; immediate, unconditional legalization for all undocumented immigrant workers; and a crash public works program that would put millions of unemployed to work at union-scale wages, building housing, schools, transit, and other things working people need.

Rickert asked the candidates what they thought had prepared them for the position of public advocate. De Blasio said his experience on the city council's general welfare committee was important, while Zablocki cited being an entrepreneur, holding a degree in finance, and being an Eagle Scout.

DeLuca pointed to her experiences as a union garment worker involved in many social and political struggles. She pointed to fights against police brutality and to end the death penalty, citing the campaign to free Troy Davis—a Black man on death row framed up for killing a white Georgia cop.

She mentioned her participation in demonstrations against the imperialist wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and mobilizations in support of legalization for undocumented immigrant workers. DeLuca recently took part in a defense effort organized for an abortion clinic in the Bronx that has been targeted by rightists.

The candidates were asked what they would do to improve the environment and recycling in the city. Zablocki said he would advocate more paper recycling bins on street corners. Democrat de Blasio said that he would expand use of the city's waterways to cut down on overcrowded highways.

"It's a scandal that the capitalist class blames working people for the destruction of the environment," said DeLuca. "They pollute the air, water, and land with the same disregard and for the same reasons as they force workers to injure themselves and put their health at risk on the job." She said that it's big capital and industry that is responsible for pollution, not the workers.

"I like how she talked mostly about working people," said high school student Josh Melendez. "You don't hear that from any of the other candidates." Melendez was among several youth who stayed after the program to continue discussion with DeLuca and her campaigners. Questions ranged from health care and education to the Cuban Revolution and its importance today.

Annamaria Santamaria, a sophomore at Pace, told the *Militant* she strongly agreed with DeLuca's defense of a woman's right to choose abortion. "Not only should it be the woman's choice, but abortion and birth control should be covered by insurance," she said.

Pace junior Anneliese Blommestein said she appreciated hearing DeLuca's unique perspective. "The Democrats and Republicans are a lot alike," she said. "It's good to hear a different point of view than what you get in the two-party system."

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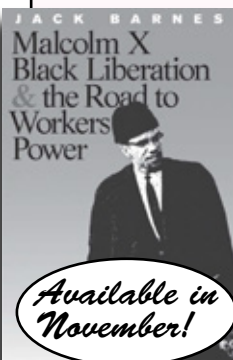
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**Pathfinder Press**





# The working class and the fight for education

***The Working Class and the Transformation of Learning: The Fraud of Education Reform under Capitalism* by Jack Barnes. Pathfinder Press, 2000. 36 pages. \$3.00**

BY CINDY JAQUITH

On his way to a fund-raiser in San Francisco October 15 President Barack Obama squeezed in a few hours to visit New Orleans. He stopped by the Martin Luther King Jr. charter school in the devastated Ninth Ward and gave a five-minute speech.

When he was growing up, Obama told the students, “We weren’t rich. We didn’t have a lot. But the one thing my mother and my grandparents told me was that if I worked hard in school . . . there wasn’t anything that I couldn’t do.”

## IN REVIEW

Obama has plied this and similar themes, especially when his audience is African American, that achieving an education is just a matter of individual initiative—in which social class and national oppression are irrelevant. If your kids get bad grades or don’t graduate it’s because they simply didn’t try hard enough, or you let them watch too much TV.

The book *The Working Class and the Transformation of Learning* by Jack Barnes, national secretary of the Socialist Workers Party, offers useful answers for working people to various schemes for “education reform” by Obama and others, both liberals and conservatives.

*Transformation of Learning* presents a completely different perspective: that education is a social and class question that can only be resolved as part of the working class mobilizing to carry out a revolution to replace the wealthy families in power today. The title is offered at a 50 percent discount to all those who purchase *Militant* subscriptions during the paper’s fall circulation drive.

The White House has launched a “Race to the Top” campaign, which promises federal grants for education to those cities that come the closest to meeting the following standards: lifting restrictions on how many schools in a district can be privately run charter schools and using test scores to determine which teachers are kept on and which are fired, an attack on seniority clauses in union contracts.

Charter schools are central to the

White House campaign. These schools receive public funding but are managed privately. They determine their own curriculum, set their own work rules for staff, and in most cases are nonunion.

Since Hurricane Katrina ripped through the Gulf Coast in 2005, New Orleans has become the first major city in the country to have more charter schools than public ones. The government simply never reopened many of the public schools, replacing them with nonunion charter schools instead.

### Individual or social issue?

Like education vouchers, the charter school program plays on the frustration of working-class families whose children attend dilapidated schools where many fail to graduate. It tries to get parents to seek an individual solution: how do I get “my child” into a good school where he or she can “get ahead”?

These programs undermine class solidarity and scapegoat the unions for poor schools. They are used to push privatization over government responsibility for basic social needs, part of the overall attack on the social wage that also includes chipping away at Medicaid, Medicare, and Social Security, all fought for by the working class as social solutions to social problems.

The two national teachers’ unions, the American Federation of Teachers and the National Education Association, criticize charter schools for the loss of dues-paying members and contracts, but offer no serious challenge to the “private is better” premise. In the absence of a serious fight to defend free, public education—by the teachers unions or any other labor or community groups—many parents resort to charter schools or pay for private schools that are often church-run.

“There is *no universal education* un-



Principal of Langston Hughes Academy Charter School in New Orleans with students. Jack Barnes writes that far from wanting workers to be educated, capitalists “need for us to be obedient . . . to lose any desire over time to broaden our scope and become citizens of world.”

der capitalism; there is no such thing as education ‘for all,’” Barnes writes in *Transformation of Learning*. “There is only ‘education’ for the working class, and a completely different kind of ‘education’ for the small propertied minority.”

### Capitalists seek obedience

“The purpose of education in class society is not to educate,” Barnes explains. “The purpose of education is to give ‘the educated’ a stake in thinking they are going to be different—slightly better off, slightly more white collar—than other people who work all their lives. In the process, the rulers hope to make those who manage to get a college degree more dependable supporters of the status quo.”

The opposite is the case for workers. “They need for us to be obedient, not to be educated. They need for us to have to work hard to make a living, not to be critical. . . . Above all, they need for us

to lose any desire over time to broaden our scope and become citizens of the world,” Barnes says.

“Until society is reorganized so that education is a human activity from the time we are very young until the time we die, there will be no education worthy of working, creating humanity,” Barnes writes. “There will only be the pretensions to education or to technical expertise of a small group of people.”

As he writes in the introduction, “This pamphlet approaches education . . . as a *social* question. As the fight for the transformation of learning into a *universal* and *lifetime* activity. It presents education as part of preparing workers and farmers ‘for the greatest of all battles in the years ahead—the battle to throw off the self-image the rulers teach us, and to recognize that we are capable of taking power and organizing society, as we collectively educate ourselves and learn the exploiters in the process.’”

## Outrage over racist judge in Louisiana

### Continued from front page

ple was interracial and told her that Bardwell would not sign the license if they were.

“We are used to the closet racism, but we’re not going to tolerate that overt racism from an elected official,” Humphrey told CNN.

“I don’t do interracial marriages because I don’t want to put children in a situation they didn’t bring on themselves,” Bardwell told the press.

“I’m not a racist. I just don’t believe in mixing the races that way,” he told AP, adding that he had “piles and piles of black friends. They come to my home, I marry them, they use my bathroom. I treat them just like everyone else.”

“I simply can’t believe he can do that. That’s blatant discrimination,” Humphrey told the *Hammond Star Tribune*. Humphrey and McKay got a certificate signed October 9 by another justice and married. “This doesn’t take care of the problem,” Humphrey told CNN. Bardwell has “been in his position for 34 years. So, it doesn’t take care of the problems that we have to deal with on a daily basis.”

The couple has support from many in Hammond as indicated by letters in the papers. David Hyde, a 51-year-old musician in Hammond, told the *Mili-*

*tant*, “We need to organize some protests of this outrage.”

In 1908 Louisiana officials adopted statutes declaring that “concubinage between the Caucasian or white race and any person of the Negro or black race” is a felony subject to imprisonment from one month to one year, with or without hard labor.

In 1921 the state prohibited “Negro and white families” from living in the same dwelling place and in 1932 added that “no person or corporation shall rent an apartment house or other like structure to a person who is not of the same race as the other occupants.”

That same year the state prohibited “Negroes and Indians” from marrying each other. In 1952 the state prohibited marriage between whites and “persons of color,” stiffening the penalty to up to \$1,000 and/or five years imprisonment. The Louisiana statutes were voided by the 1967 Supreme Court verdict in the case *Loving v. Virginia*.

In 1958 Richard Loving, a bricklayer who was white, and Mildred Jeter, Black and Native American, married in Washington, D.C., because interracial marriage was illegal in Virginia, where they lived.

A few weeks after they returned home they were arrested for violat-

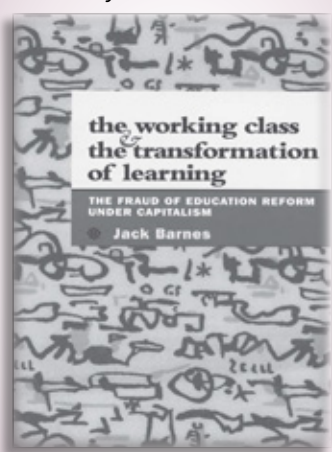
ing Virginia’s Racial Integrity Act of 1924. This law forbade those interracial couples that marry out of state from returning as husband and wife. They were sentenced to one year in jail. They received suspended sentences after agreeing not to return to Virginia together for 25 years.

In 1963, as mobilizations led by Black working people against segregation reached a high point, the Lovings decided to fight the reactionary law. They filed a lawsuit that slowly made its way through the courts. The state courts held that Virginia had legitimate purposes “to preserve the racial integrity of its citizens,” and to prevent “the corruption of blood.”

In a 1967 ruling the Supreme Court overturned all the previous decisions upholding the ban. The court said, “The Fourteenth Amendment requires that the freedom to marry not be restricted by invidious racial discriminations. Under our Constitution, the freedom to marry, or not marry, a person of another race resides with the individual and cannot be infringed by the State.”

At the time 16 states banned marriage between people of different races. South Carolina’s constitutional ban wasn’t removed until 1998 and Alabama’s only in 2000.

### The Working Class and the Transformation of Learning by Jack Barnes



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# How apartheid rule was overthrown in South Africa

Below is an excerpt from Nelson Mandela Speaks, one of Pathfinder's Books of the Month for October. In response to a massive struggle against apartheid rule, Nelson Mandela in February 1990 was freed after 27 years in South African prisons and the 30-year ban on the African National Congress (ANC) was lifted. In speeches and interviews in the book Mandela explains how the racist government was forced to bow to demands for the first one-person, one-vote nonracial elections in South African history. The piece below is from a speech Mandela gave to a crowd of 100,000 in Harlem, New York, on June 21, 1990, during an eight-city tour of the United States. Copyright © 1993 by Nelson Mandela and Pathfinder Press. Reprinted by permission.

## BOOKS OF THE MONTH

### BY NELSON MANDELA

[M]y dear brothers and sisters, comrades and friends, I am here to report to you that due to the enormous sacrifices of our people and the solidarity and support of people like you and the international community, apartheid is nearing its end.

We are on the threshold of momentous changes. Last month, at the initiative of the ANC, we met with President



ANC DIP/Nigel Dennis  
Nelson Mandela greets people in Kwa-Ximba-Natal Midlands, South Africa, March 14, 1993.

de Klerk and his colleagues. It was not a meeting of master and servant. It was a meeting of equals. At that meeting we reached an agreement on removing those obstacles, harboring the creation of a climate conducive to negotiations. We are confident that the agreement can be implemented in full as a matter of urgency. Equally, we are confident that you will continue to support us in this fight.

Let me say, with all sincerity, that we do not doubt the integrity of President de Klerk and his colleagues. Equally, we welcome the moves to repeal certain racist legislation and the state of emergency in the greater part of our country. Yet until the agreement has been implemented in full and there is profound and irreversible change, international pressure must be intensified and sanctions maintained. Keep the pressure on apartheid!

It is regrettable that in South Africa there is still a minority of a minority violently and vehemently opposed to a negotiated resolution of the conflict. Too many of them are heavily armed. Too many of them are to be found in the police force. Too many of them are mobilized and organized into paramilitary formations. They have the capacity, and it seems the will, to commit unspeakable atrocities.

But they will not deflect us from our chosen path. For our part, we understand and are sensitive to the fears about the future of many of our white compatriots. The ANC is profoundly committed and determined to do all we can to demonstrate that they have nothing to fear from a nonracial, nonsexist democracy. That indeed, only in a nonracial, nonsexist, united, and democratic South Africa will they be freed from the prison that is the apartheid system.

The ANC and the Mass Democratic Movement represent an unequaled diversity of cultures, languages, religion, tradition, and class. I am happy to report to you that there are increasing numbers of whites who not only realize that apartheid is unjust and a crime, but who are ready to be in the same trenches as their fellow black sisters and brothers.

As the struggle intensifies, the social base of the present government will be reduced, and more and more whites will join the ANC as equals, with equal duties, obligations, and responsibilities.

We are on the verge of victory. But the last mile of the freedom road could prove to be the most difficult and the most intractable. Thus our struggle cries out for organization, discipline, and unity. Struggle that does not strengthen organization can lead to a blind alley. Struggle without discipline can lead to

anarchy. Struggle without unity enables the other side to pick us off one by one.

We are, therefore, deeply involved in trying to bring about the unity in action of all those opposed to apartheid. Any individual, any group, any organization that seeks genuine unity in action will find a ready partner in the ANC.

We are fighting for a democratic South Africa. This means first and foremost, one person, one vote on a nonracial voters' roll. On this there can be no compromise.

For us, political power should be the basis for the economic empowerment of people. It is outrageous that in the richest country on our continent, with its vast economic resources, that millions should be deprived of the basic necessities of life. The gap between the haves and the have-nots, black and white, is totally unacceptable. Any new democratic state must address this historic injustice as a matter of urgency. It also means that we are irrevocably committed to realizing a society in which the fruits of our people's labor shall be distributed equitably. That the striking imbalance between the wealth of the minority and the poverty of the majority has to be addressed.

To bring an end to this old, unjust, inequitable social order, and bring into being a new one characterized by the notions of justice and equity, requires that we address the questions of the enormous economic power wielded by and concentrated in the hands of a minority of a minority.

Brothers and sisters, comrades and friends, victory is in sight. The light at the end of the tunnel is now beckoning. But we are not yet there. To reach the end of the tunnel requires that we intensify the struggle on all fronts. It requires that we make the necessary sacrifices. It requires that we remain unrelenting in pursuit of our goals.

The masses of the people of our country are ready for the final battle. Let me assure you they will not flinch from that last battle. It is their heroism, courage, and unquenchable fighting spirit which has earned them the respect and admiration of the international community. Our people symbolize the spirit of resistance and no surrender.

*October* **BOOKS OF THE MONTH**

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# Repeal the USA Patriot Act!

Working people should oppose moves by the Barack Obama administration to renew the sections of the Patriot Act due to expire at the end of this year. Instead, we should demand repeal of the law. Passed with bipartisan support in 2001 and renewed ever since, the law expands the powers of the FBI and other cop agencies to conduct spying, expanded searches, and disruption operations against organizations and individuals.

The Patriot Act's targets are not primarily "foreigners" or "terrorists," but the working class. As the worldwide economic depression deepens, the bosses and their government will use such laws to confront working-class resistance in the coming class battles over our standard of living, conditions of work, and imperialist wars. Under the guise of fighting "terrorism," they will more and more use wiretapping and other domestic surveillance to spy on working-class fighters and use anything they can, including "secret evidence," to victimize us in

the capitalist courts.

Since taking office Obama has extended the attacks on democratic rights that were being carried out by the Bush administration. This includes maintaining renditions—the sending of those suspected of "terrorism" to another country for detention and "interrogation"—and indefinite detention for many prisoners incarcerated at the U.S. prison camp in Guantánamo Bay, Cuba. Obama has also established a program to recruit and train spies on college campuses.

The groundwork for much of this course was laid out under the Clinton administration. The 1996 Anti-Terrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act allowed immigration police to jail immigrants using secret evidence, and broadened government powers to use wiretaps and to hold an accused person in preventive detention without bail.

Repeal the Patriot Act and end all government wiretapping, spying, and harassment!

## Benefits to run out for many jobless

**Continued from front page**

less claims has been more than half a million for 48 straight weeks, reported Market Watch October 15.

According to data released October 15 by the Barack Obama administration, 30,383 jobs have been created or "saved" through federal government "stimulus" contracts with businesses. An October 19 White House report estimated that 250,000 school jobs have been saved or created from federal grants to states. When the \$787 billion "stimulus" package was passed by Congress earlier this year the president claimed that it would create or save 3.5 million jobs over two years.

The capitalist rulers have poured hundreds of billions of dollars into shoring up the nation's largest banks, in hopes of getting lending going again, and for programs to encourage consumer spending. But this has had no effect on alleviating the economic crisis, which is rooted in declining capitalist production worldwide. U.S. factories in September operated at 70.5 percent of their capacity, more than 10 percent below the average in the years 1972 through 2008.

**No Social Security cost-of-living raises**

For the first time in more than 30 years there will be no cost-of-living increase for more than 50 million Social Security recipients next year, the government announced in mid-October. This decision is based on figures released by the Labor Department stating that consumer prices fell 1.3 percent for the year ending in September.

The government's official figures, which mask the real impact of rising prices, record a decline in prices of fuel and some types of food at the end of 2008 and early 2009. Energy prices, however, are listed as rising in August and September. Yearly costs for medical care services rose 3.3 percent in the consumer price

index, medical care commodities by 4.1 percent, and transportation services by 2 percent.

While eliminating next year's cost-of-living raises, President Barack Obama has called for another \$250 "stimulus" check for Social Security recipients.

Citing the federal consumer price index report, the Colorado state government said it planned to lower the state's minimum wage by four cents from its current level of \$7.28 per hour. The decline will actually be three cents since state levels cannot legally go lower than the \$7.25 per hour federal minimum wage. Colorado is one of 10 states where the minimum wage is tied to inflation, but the first one to attempt to lower it. The other states are Arizona, Florida, Missouri, Montana, Nevada, Ohio, Oregon, Vermont, and Washington.

Despite government programs aimed at preventing foreclosures, the number of filings hit a record high in the third quarter of this year, according to a RealtyTrac report. During that time, more than 935,000 homes received a foreclosure letter, which is either a default notice, auction notice, or bank repossession. This is a 23 percent jump over the third quarter of 2008. One in every 136 U.S. homes are in foreclosure.

In another development, New York State governor David Paterson has proposed a new round of budget cuts to hundreds of social programs and services, slashing \$5 billion from the current budget and the new one starting next April. The plan includes cuts of \$686 million from schools for the remainder of the school year, \$471 million from Medicaid and other health programs, \$113 million from the Metropolitan Transportation Authority, and \$3.3 million from libraries, reported the *New York Times*.

The governor has said deeper cuts are to come over the next several years to make up a projected deficit of nearly \$50 billion through March 2013.

# Medicare Advantage and 'health reform'

**BY BRIAN WILLIAMS**

Two letters to the *Militant* take issue with a formulation in a September 28 article on the Barack Obama administration's "health reform" proposals. The article stated that a plan to eliminate the private insurance Medicare Advantage program "would be an opening wedge for more attacks on Medicare and Medicaid."

As reader David Wilder points out, Medicare Advantage "is itself a wedge driven into Medicare" by opening it up to "private insurance schemes."

Medicare Advantage has been used by the U.S. rulers in their efforts to privatize Medicare, a process that is inevitable under the workings of capitalism. How-

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## REPLY TO A READER

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ever, many Medicare recipients have joined Medicare Advantage because of added benefits it offers, though with built-in limitations.

Under this program the government contracts with private insurers for policies like those under standard Medicare that cover doctor visits and hospitalization. Medicare Advantage also provides additional benefits like vision, dental care, and often prescription drug coverage.

It offers lower copayments and deductibles than standard Medicare coverage, but includes limitations on which doctors and hospitals a patient may visit. Medicare Advantage plans cover nearly 11 million people, 23 percent of all Medicare beneficiaries.

Medicare covers 80 percent of doctors' bills and medical procedures. Some turn to Medicare Advantage to cover the difference. Others take out "Medigap" insurance policies. About 90 percent of Medicare recipients have some form of supplemental insurance to cover the gap.

Basic Medicare provides no drug coverage. Seniors must use private insurers for prescriptions.

The "health reform" bills circulating in the Senate and House of Representatives project cutting more than half a trillion dollars from Medicare over 10 years, based on the claim that the Medicare trust fund will probably be out of funds within eight years.

This includes a proposal in the bill being promoted by Sen. Max Baucus to cut government payments to Medicare Advantage by more than \$100 billion. President Obama initially called for cuts of \$175 billion, arguing that the government is spending too much for those on Medicare Advantage that could instead go toward regular Medicare.

However, their plans are not to expand basic Medicare, but to make much deeper cuts. Proposals include raising premiums for some in higher-income brackets, cutting payments to hospitals and nursing homes, and reducing "overvalued services" by doctors. For the 45 million people covered by Medicare this translates into less available health care, rising premiums and copayments, and hospital closures.

Medicare was enacted in 1965 as a result of victories won during the two-decade-long working-class mobilization for Black civil rights. At that time more than 50 percent of those 65 and older had no health coverage. The Medicare program soon covered 95 percent of all seniors. In 1972 the program was expanded to individuals with significant disabilities, adding 2 million to its rolls.

The Democrats and Republicans have been steadily whittling away at Medicare since. Seven years after its enactment, Congress passed legislation allowing private health maintenance organizations to provide coverage for Medicare beneficiaries. In 1997 the Balanced Budget Act added more private insurers to the Medicare program. Medicare Advantage was then set up, resulting in the highest enrollment in private health plans in Medicare history.

All moves to slash Medicare should be opposed. Medicare, like Social Security, was won as a result of mass social struggles by working people. That is the only way it can be defended—a fight that starts from the point of view of health care as a right that is guaranteed everyone free of charge for a lifetime.

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## LETTERS

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**Medicare Advantage I**

In the September 28 issue of the *Militant*, an article by Seth Galinsky states that a proposal by President Obama to eliminate Medicare Advantage would be "an opening wedge for more attacks on Medicare and Medicaid." In fact, the enactment of Medicare Advantage in 2003 was an attack on Medicare. For the first time private insurance companies gained an open door to the lucrative prize of Medicare funds.

KMD  
Oakland, California

**Medicare Advantage II**

While I am in agreement with the *Militant* headline "'Health Re-

form' Plan Aimed Against Workers," and am in general agreement with Seth Galinsky's contribution to that article, I don't think that elimination of Medicare Advantage necessarily drives a wedge into Medicare. One of the advantages of Medicare is that it is a system that avoids private insurance

companies with all the redundant administrative waste and profit taking that they entail.

As I understand it, Medicare Advantage is itself a wedge driven into Medicare. It opened up Medicare to private insurance schemes, such as HMOs, PPOs, and the like so that they could make profits off the system.

David Wilder  
Cleveland, Ohio

**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.**

**'Militant' Prisoners' Fund**

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