

THE MILITANT

INSIDE
Vote for Communist League
in Canada elections!
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A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE VOL. 75/NO. 18 MAY 9, 2011

Syria rebellion spreads despite gov't repression



AP Photo
 Demonstrators march demanding political rights in Homs, Syria, April 22, one of many in country that day. Government forces killed more than 100 protesters nationwide.

BY SETH GALINSKY

Demonstrations in Syria for political freedoms and relief from the effects of the world capitalist economic crisis continue to spread despite unrelenting government repression.

More than 100 people were killed by the government's forces on April 22 alone, according to some reports. The next day thousands joined funeral marches for those killed, and were attacked again.

"The people want the overthrow

of the regime," chanted mourners in Douma, a suburb of Damascus.

"We haven't been able to reach the graveyard yet because snipers and security forces in uniform are shooting at the funeral procession from rooftops and the streets," a participant told the *Los Angeles Times* in a phone interview.

A video clip from Daraa, a town of 75,000 where the protests against the regime began in mid-March, shows

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Rally in Brooklyn supports locked-out building workers



Militant/Dan Fein
 Rally for locked-out building workers at Flatbush Gardens in Brooklyn, New York, April 26.

BY SARA LOBMAN

BROOKLYN, New York—More than 300 workers joined a spirited rally outside Flatbush Gardens apartments here April 26 to support 70 locked-out maintenance workers and porters at the large housing complex.

The workers have been fighting a

lockout by Renaissance Equity Holdings since Nov. 29, 2010. Landlord David Bistricher hired replacement workers when the union refused the company's "best and final" offer that would have slashed pay by more than 30 percent, cut vacation time, and

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Supporters of immigrant rights protest Georgia law

BY JANICE LYNN

ATLANTA—A May Day rally at the capitol here protesting an anti-immigrant bill passed April 14 by the state legislature will be among dozens of actions across the country that day demanding immigrant rights and legalization of the undocumented.

Several parts of the Georgia legislation are similar to an anti-immigrant law adopted in Arizona last year. Gov. Nathan Deal has said he will sign the

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Obama: 'Ordinary folks don't pay attention'

BY CINDY JAQUITH

President Barack Obama once again displayed his class contempt for working people in remarks to an exclusive gathering of wealthy backers in Brentwood, California, April 21. Attendees included Hollywood figures George Clooney, Steven Spielberg, Tom Hanks, Will Ferrell, and others.

Acknowledging that his 2012 race will be tougher than in 2008, the pres-

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Talking with workers about response to capitalist crisis

BY PAUL MAILHOT

Supporters of the *Militant* newspaper are reaching out to the working class in city and country through the paper's spring subscription campaign. By going door to door in workers' neighborhoods they will be tapping into the growing interest in a working-class response to the capitalist crisis.

The international goal is to win 2,000 new and long-term readers between April 23 and June 6.

The increased receptivity among working people to the *Militant's* fighting perspective was demonstrated beginning in early February, when political upheavals spread in the Middle East and working-class resistance started to grow from Wisconsin and throughout

the Midwest of the United States. During that time, supporters of the paper have won more than 1,060 new readers.

The chart with quotas and the first

Taking the 'Militant' door to door

week's results of the international campaign will be printed in next week's issue.

Leading up to the start of the six-week subscription drive, socialist workers from the Midwest fielded teams that knocked on doors in working-class communities throughout Wisconsin and in Keokuk, Iowa. "Working people are

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Libya: White House talks about pullback, launches drone strikes

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

Just weeks after President Barack Obama said Washington was ending its airstrikes in Libya, his administration April 23 unleashed aerial drones armed with Hellfire missiles on the country. The move subjects one more place to the flying remote-control assassins, which are deeply resented by working people from Pakistan to Yemen.

Since coming to office, the Obama administration has greatly expanded the use of drone strikes in Pakistan, from 35 in 2008 to 53 in 2009 to 118 last year. In mid-March a Predator strike killed more than 40 civilians in the remote tribal areas of northwest Pakistan, according to Pakistani officials. The day before the first drone strike against Libya, at least 26 people, including civilians, were killed by a CIA drone attack in Pakistan's North Waziristan tribal region.

Now the White House plans to use drones to attempt to identify and kill supporters of Moammar Gadhafi mixed among the civilian population in densely populated urban areas.

The drones are "uniquely suited for

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Closing space to speak is not in workers' interests

BY FRANK FORRESTAL
AND PAUL MAILHOT

A front-page article in last week's issue of the *Militant*, headlined "Prounion rally in Wisconsin outnumbers antilabor action," gave an inaccurate account of the competing April 16 protests at the Wisconsin Statehouse in Madison.

The article also failed to explain why efforts by union members and others to shout down Republican Party politician Sarah Palin were a display of weakness not strength of the labor movement, damaging the political and moral standing of working people in the fight for our rights.

AS I SEE IT

Since mid-February, workers in Wisconsin have helped open a broad discussion among workers and farmers in the United States and beyond about the unrelenting attacks that the government and employers are raining down on us. Despite talk in the big business media about a "recovery," the devastating economic and social consequences of assaults on working people since the acceleration of the world capitalist crisis in 2007 continue to pile up. Actions of up to 100,000 in front of the Statehouse in Madison have helped focus world attention on these attacks and workers' beginning resistance to them.

On April 16, some 5,000 workers, many of them union members, turned out in Madison once again for a demonstration against antilabor legislation and proposed cutbacks in needed social programs. That working-class message

was not reported by the major capitalist media, however.

Instead, the dailies and TV newscasters focused on an attempt by a substantial number of union supporters there—although nowhere near a majority of those demonstrating for labor rights that day—to shout down Sarah Palin, who was speaking at a nearby rally associated with the tea party.

Like Democratic Party politicians who addressed the prounion rally on the opposite side of the capitol, Palin demagogically proclaimed she had been a union member herself. At the same time, she denounced working people who have protested Republican governor Scott Walker's antiunion legislation and budget cuts, calling them "violent rent-a-mobs."

Many working people, as well as middle-class individuals facing mounting uncertainties due to the capitalist crisis, turned out to hear Palin. Like other bourgeois politicians in both parties, she pretends to present an alternative for working people to government policies and bureaucratic indifference.

Palin denounced the Barack Obama administration and other Democratic Party politicians, a message that gains a hearing from many workers and small business owners who feel the blows coming down on millions today.

The *Militant* account of the April 16 rallies reported: "While prounion forces organized a counterrally on the opposite side of the capitol, thousands of union supporters intermingled with the tea party protest. They chanted and yelled prounion slogans, and rang cowbells. At

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Socialist in Miami joins immigrant rights rally



Militant/Naomi Craine

MIAMI—Deborah Liatos, Socialist Workers Party candidate for mayor of Miami-Dade County, speaks at March 28 immigrant rights protest in the Little Havana neighborhood here. "This fight for legalization of undocumented workers is needed to unite our class in struggle against the bosses and their government," she said.

In the coming weeks, Liatos and campaign supporters will be joining families protesting the recent killings of seven Black men by Miami cops, and May Day demonstrations in defense of unions and rights of immigrant workers.

Liatos is also campaigning for the release of the Cuban Five, who have been in U.S. prisons since 1998. Fernando González, Gerardo Hernández, Antonio Guerrero, Ramón Labañino, and René González were framed up and convicted by the government on bogus "conspiracy" charges. The five had been monitoring the activities of counterrevolutionary Cuban American paramilitary groups in South Florida that have a history of carrying out violent actions and sabotage against Cuba.

—NAOMI CRAINE

Florida: protesters denounce U.S. deportations of Haitians

BY BERNIE SENTER

MIAMI—Thirty people protested April 15 in front of the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) offices here against the resumption of deportations to Haiti, which were suspended last year following a massive earthquake that killed hundreds of thousands.

The U.S. government deported 27 Haitians in January, the first group since the suspension. The second group, 19 Haitians, was deported the day of the protest.

Among those deported in January was Lyglenson Lemorin, 36, a 24-year legal resident of the United States. He was framed up by the government on "terrorism" charges along with six others, known as the Liberty City 7. Lem-

orin was found not guilty of all charges in federal court. After his trial he was imprisoned by immigration authorities, convicted by an immigration judge for the same "terrorism" charge, and deported.

Lemorin's son, Lukenson, was killed in an automobile accident in South Florida on April 1. ICE officials refused to allow Lemorin to attend the funeral in Miami.

One of those deported to Haiti with Lemorin died a few days later in a Haitian jail of cholera-like symptoms.

Last year's earthquake destroyed Haiti's capital, Port-au-Prince, resulting in mass homelessness. The resulting squalid conditions led to a cholera epidemic.

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THE MILITANT

Egyptian workers press fight for rights

Since Egyptian dictator Hosni Mubarak was ousted, new political space has opened up for working people to organize and act. Read about these developments and other struggles by our class throughout North Africa and the Middle East. Don't miss an issue!



Textile workers in Mahalla, Egypt, stomp picture of Mubarak during 2008 strike.

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Not ‘anybody but Harper,’ but fight for workers power

BY BEVERLY BERNARDO

MONTREAL—As the May 2 federal election approaches here, some 1.5 million workers in Canada are unemployed, by the government’s own understated figures. Many workers and farmers owe more and more of their income to the banks. Working people face rising gas and food prices. Federal and provincial governments are cutting social benefits, while hiking fees on tuition and services.

Meanwhile, the imperialist government here is joining in daily airstrikes against Libya by the Washington-led NATO alliance. And Ottawa’s participation in the war against Afghanistan continues, with 1,000 troops set to remain after a promised reduction later this year from some 3,000.

Yet campaign coverage in the capitalist-owned newspapers and TV in the lead-up to the election is focused not on all this but instead on opinion polls showing a jump in support for the New Democratic Party (NDP). The NDP is a social-democratic party linked to the class-collaborationist union officialdom in Canada.

Quebec polls show the NDP well ahead of the bourgeois-nationalist Bloc Quebecois (BQ). The BQ holds the majority of Quebec’s seats in parliament.

Across Canada an April 26 poll shows support for the governing Conservative Party headed by Prime Minister Stephen Harper at 35 percent, with the NDP in second place ahead of the Liberal Party.

Most of the union officialdom is calling on workers to support “Anybody but Harper,” hoping the outcome lays the basis for a coalition capitalist government with some combination of the Liberals, NDP, and BQ.

The Communist League (CL) is running Joseph Young, an industrial worker, for parliament in the Montreal riding of Papineau.

The CL is the only party campaigning for working people across Canada to organize working-class solidarity in face of capitalism’s devastation of

the lives, livelihoods, and political rights of working people here and the world over.

Young and Communist League campaign supporters have participating in labor solidarity actions from Quebec to British Columbia, a March 31 demonstration in Montreal protesting tuition hikes, and an April 9 protest against Ottawa’s participation in wars in Afghanistan and Libya. They have handed out the CL platform and sold the *Militant* on the job, on street corners, and door-to-door in working-class neighborhoods.

Young points out that the NDP “is joining in the ‘law and order’ campaign of the other capitalist parties, calling for hiring 2,500 more police officers.” The CL platform opposes cop brutality and other attacks on the



Inset: Joseph Young, Communist League candidate in Montreal constituency of Papineau, speaking April 8. Above: Young’s supporters joined picket April 12 opposing deportation of Dany Villanueva.

rights of working people. Young’s supporters joined a picket April 12 opposing the deportation of Dany Villanueva, the brother of Fredy Villanueva, who was killed by Montreal

cops in August 2008. “Working people need to build a revolutionary movement of millions to take political power out of the hands of the capitalist class,” says Young.

Raise \$116,000 for Militant Fighting Fund!

BY DOUG NELSON

The response from supporters worldwide has led organizers to raise this newspaper’s international fundraising goal to \$116,000, from the \$110,000 reported earlier. And, combined with growing resistance and political responsiveness among working people this year, to rename this international drive—previously the Militant Fund—the *Militant Fighting Fund*. Already \$115,800 has been pledged.

A fighting fund more closely ties this effort together with the campaign by supporters of the *Militant* to gain new and long-term readers as workers begin to respond to the cumulative impact of three years of deepening capitalist crisis and look for ways to fight. Political discussions with those signing up for or renewing subscriptions to a newsweekly “published in the interests of working people” are a good way to win first-time contributors.

Broadening the base of financial support is not only essential for the viability of the workers’ press. It’s also a way for partisans of the paper to get to know each other.

“There are many regular *Militant* readers in the Washington, D.C., area who have never been approached about helping to support the paper financially,” wrote Paul Pederson. “In the course of visits with four subscribers in Baltimore,

\$300 was contributed to the fund.” The eight-week fund campaign runs through May 30. The money raised helps cover operating expenses for the paper and its distribution around the

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‘Militant’ subscription drive

Continued from front page

willing to give you more listening time now and get into a discussion with you about what is on their minds,” said Tom Fiske from the Twin Cities in describing the response to the *Militant* in Eau Claire, Wisconsin. A small team there sold six subscriptions and a copy of *Malcolm X, Black Liberation, and the Road to Workers Power* by Jack Barnes.

“On April 21 a team went to Keokuk, a town of 10,000, where 237 members of Local 48G of the Bakery, Confectionery, Tobacco Workers and Grain Millers union have been locked out of the Roquette America corn processing plant since September 2010,” wrote Maggie Trowe.

“April Jacobsen looked through the *Militant* and liked it, but wasn’t sure she had the money. Her husband Robb, who is a locked-out Roquette worker, overhearing the conversation, came over and pulled out money for the subscription. When I showed them several books sold

at reduced prices with the subscription, Robb pointed to *Is Socialist Revolution in the U.S. Possible?* by Mary-Alice Waters and said, ‘I want that one.’”

Two other workers in Keokuk bought copies of the *Changing Face of U.S. Politics* by Jack Barnes, a handbook for working-class fighters, one of four books being offered at a discount with a subscription.

Over the April 30–May 1 weekend socialist workers will be going door-to-door in working-class communities before and after participating in the May Day demonstrations being organized in many cities by labor unions and immigrant rights organizations.

The *Militant* is appealing to its many new readers to talk to a coworker, neighbor, or friend and convince them to try out the paper for 12 weeks. Those who would like to also join teams that will be knocking on doors introducing working people to the paper can contact distributors listed on page 8.

—MILITANT LABOR FORUMS—

CALIFORNIA

San Francisco
A Working-Class Paper That Helps Bring Fighters Together—Benefit for the Militant Fighting Fund Drive. Speaker: Paul Mailhot, participant in *Militant* reporting team to Cairo. Sat., May 7. Dinner, 6:30 p.m.; program, 7:30 p.m. 5482 Mission St. Tel.: (415) 584-2135.

GEORGIA

Atlanta
Egypt: After Mubarak’s Fall, Workers Use Opening to Organize and Act in Politics—A Firsthand Account from ‘Militant’ Reporting Team. Speaker: Angel Lariscy, participant in *Militant* reporting team to Cairo. Sat., May 7. Dinner, 6:30 p.m.; program, 7:30 p.m. 476 1/2 Edgewood Ave. Tel.: (404) 525-5200.

WASHINGTON, D.C.

Celebration of the 1961 Cuban Victory at Bay of Pigs. Speaker: Leah Morrison, Socialist Workers Party. Sat., May 7, 7:30 p.m. 143 Kennedy St. NW Suite 15. Tel.: (202) 536-5080.

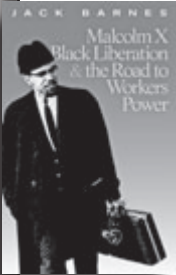
‘Militant’ Fighting Fund

April 2–May 30 (week 2)

Country	Quota	Paid	%
UNITED STATES			
Boston	\$4,000	\$1,225	31%
Atlanta	\$7,800	\$2,330	30%
San Francisco	\$14,000	\$3,575	26%
Chicago	\$10,000	\$2,230	22%
Los Angeles	\$8,500	\$1,895	22%
New York	\$21,000	\$4,637	22%
Twin Cities	\$7,000	\$1,190	17%
Des Moines	\$3,400	\$365	11%
Houston	\$3,000	\$211	7%
Philadelphia	\$4,000	\$275	7%
Washington, D.C.	\$8,500	\$445	5%
Miami	\$3,000	\$155	5%
Seattle	\$8,600	\$0	0%
Other			
Total U.S.	\$102,800	\$18,533	18%
Canada	\$6,400	\$1,200	19%
New Zealand	\$3,500	\$1,370	39%
United Kingdom	\$1,600	\$0	0%
Australia	\$1,500	\$0	0%
Total	\$115,800	\$21,103	18%
Should be	\$116,000	\$29,000	25%

Special offers with Militant subscription

Malcolm X, Black Liberation, and the Road to Workers Power by Jack Barnes \$20 \$10 with subscription



This book helps us understand why it is the revolutionary conquest of power by the working class that will make possible the final battle for Black freedom—and open the way to a world based not on exploitation, violence, and racism, but human solidarity. A socialist world.

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Is Socialist Revolution in the U.S. Possible? by Mary-Alice Waters \$7 \$5 with subscription

The Working Class and the Transformation of Learning by Jack Barnes \$3 \$2 with subscription

Contact distributors on page 8—subscription rates on page 2



Pathfinder Press

Chicago cop indicted for beating handcuffed youth

BY JOHN HAWKINS

CHICAGO—A cop who beat a nineteen-year-old youth here while fellow cops watched has been charged with aggravated battery and official misconduct. Police Sergeant Edward Howard Jr., appeared in court April 15 in the beating of Gregory Jeffries last October 11.

The beating took place at a takeout restaurant on the city's South Side. The entire incident was captured on surveillance video and clearly shows Howard striking Jeffries in the face several times as about half a dozen cops stood around and did nothing to protect the youth. Jeffries's hands were cuffed behind his back. Both Jeffries and Howard are African American.

Cops originally charged Jeffries with criminal trespass but dropped the charges last December.

The incident made headlines here last October when it happened. Jeffries, a student at Kennedy King College, said that on October 11, as he walked out of King Gyro restaurant at 79th Street and South Vincennes Avenue, seven or eight police cars pulled up. He was suddenly arrested and put in handcuffs.

"I asked, 'What am I getting arrested for?' and one of them hit me in the

chest," said Jeffries.

He said a female officer asked him where he lived, then "smacked" his hat off his head. Jeffries said Howard then came over. "[The sergeant] hit me about four or five times, busted my top and bottom lip," Jeffries said.

Cops originally claimed Jeffries spat on one of them. That claim was revised at Howard's arraignment. They now claim that Jeffries was preparing to spit at one of them, and that they knew this because he cleared his throat.

"My momma asked if I spit on the officers and I said, 'No, where did that come from?' If they did say that, they're lying, because none of that happened," said Jeffries.

Former police superintendent Jody Weiss suspended the police powers of



Police officer Edward Howard Jr. (center) leaves courthouse April 15 after being charged with beating up 19-year-old Gregory Jeffries (inset).

Howard and a number of the officers who failed to intervene and placed them on administrative duty pending the outcome of a police investigation.

Jeffries has filed suit in federal court

against the Chicago Police Department, charging excessive force, assault and battery, false arrest, false imprisonment, failure to intervene, denial of medical attention, and malicious prosecution.

Supporters of Troy Davis launch petition for clemency

BY LISA POTASH

ATLANTA—Supporters of framed-up death-row inmate Troy Davis are demanding the Georgia parole board grant him clemency. The U.S. Supreme Court rejected Davis's latest appeal March 28, potentially clearing the way for the state of Georgia to execute him.

Davis was convicted of killing a police officer in Savannah, Georgia, in 1989. Since the 1991 trial, seven of nine witnesses pressured by the police to testify against Davis have retracted or changed their testimony.

Two thousand people signed a clemency petition for Davis April 16–18 in Savannah. A common response of signers was "They haven't let him out yet? Where do I sign?"

Like other inmates Davis has been subjected to arbitrary treatment. After prison authorities claimed they found a cellphone in Davis's cell while he wasn't there, Davis was placed "in segregation" for 30 days. His phone privileges were suspended and he was barred from any contact visits for a year.

Last December a delegation of representatives from the Georgia NAACP, Georgians for Alternatives to the Death Penalty, the Southern Center for Human Rights, and family members of death row prisoners visited the Georgia Department of Corrections, securing a promise to restore some contact visits for death row inmates, according to Martina Correia, Troy Davis's sister.

Those interested in building support for the clemency campaign can find information at several websites, including troyanthonydavis.org, amnestysusa.org, naacp.org, and gfadp.org.

Georgia anti-immigrant bill draws protests

Continued from front page

bill into the law. Most sections are expected to go into effect July 1.

Some 23,000 petitions were delivered April 11 opposing the legislation. About 150 people protested and held a vigil outside the capitol building three days later. The law would:

Require Georgia businesses with more than 10 employees to use the federal E-Verify program to check the immigration status of new hires;

Punish people who use a fake identification to get a job, with up to 15 years in prison and up to \$250,000 in fines;

Empower local and state police to arrest undocumented immigrants and transport them to state and federal jails, and to check the immigration status of anyone they suspect has committed a crime, including for minor traffic violations;

Punish people who, while committing another crime, transport or "harbor" undocumented immigrants or encourage them to come to Georgia, with imprisonment for up to 12 months and up to \$1,000 in fines.

Georgina Perez, 21, of Marietta, who came to Georgia from Mexico when she was three years old, told the *New York Times*, "The politicians forget that we are human beings. We have our houses here in Georgia. We went to school here. We have families here. For them to criminalize us was disgusting."

She was one of seven undocumented students who stopped traffic in front of Georgia State University in downtown Atlanta April 5 and unfurled a banner that read, "We will no longer remain in the shadows."

The May Day rally here is being organized by the Georgia Latino Alliance for Human Rights.



Militant/Jacob Perasso

More than 6,000 marched in Atlanta against anti-immigrant legislation March 24

25, 50, AND 75 YEARS AGO



May 9, 1986

For nine months meatpackers in Austin, Minnesota, have been fighting a determined battle against the giant George A. Hormel & Co. The strikers are fighting for dignity and safety on the job—and to defend the union.

They are up against the company's goons, union-busting lawyers, and scabs who are backed up by the cops, courts, National Guard, and state government.

In the course of this struggle, the meatpackers of United Food and Commercial Workers Local P-9 have won broad support from other unionists throughout the country, and from working farmers, students, and other progressive-minded individuals. Close to 6,000 of these supporters came to Austin April 12 to demonstrate their support for the struggle against Hormel.



May 8, 1961

It is now clear that Washington is drafting plans for a direct attack on Cuba before the end of the year.

This is openly acknowledged by correspondents of major news publications who have been involved in an unprecedented series of "off-the-record" top-echelon Washington briefings.

The plan to attack Cuba is also the real reason for Kennedy's demand that the press practice self-censorship. His claims that news accounts of the plans for the CIA-sponsored [Bay of Pigs] invasion was a factor in its defeat is so much hogwash. The Cubans (and most of the rest of the world) were fully aware of the invasion plans long before any news was trickled to the people of this country. The purpose of the censorship proposal is to catch the American people, not the Cubans, off guard.



May 9, 1936

The action of the Cuban Supreme Court and of the Congress, calling for an investigation of recent murders of bourgeois opponents of the Batista dictatorship, signalizes an effort by Batista to broaden the base of his support.

Any investigation made will be a farce, for the murders were committed by Batista's own gunmen. Batista hopes to make peace with his bourgeois opponents. Having outlawed all the labor organizations and imprisoned nearly five thousand workers, sharecroppers, and intellectuals, Batista wants to unite all the "respectable elements" of the population to maintain the status quo.

Batista's conciliatory gestures toward the opposition bourgeoisie go hand in hand with systematic continuance of the white terror. No day passes without someone being murdered.

Vote Communist in Canada election

In the May 2 federal elections in Canada, the Communist League is the only campaign defending working people in face of the deepening capitalist crisis and opposing Ottawa's participation in imperialism's wars from Afghanistan to Libya.

Joseph Young is the Communist League candidate for parliament in the Papineau riding in Montreal. We urge readers in that constituency to vote for Young, and for working people across Canada and elsewhere to support the international working-class course the CL is campaigning for. Helping to sell subscriptions to the *Militant* is one good way to do that.

Young and other Communist League campaigners are building solidarity with working people in the United States who are mobilizing to defend their living standards, political rights, and unions. The CL campaign joins in actions supporting workers rebelling against capitalist tyrannies in North Africa and the Middle East; locked-out steelworkers in Hamilton, Ontario, defending pensions; and unionists at Air Canada defending wages and benefits.

All the other parties—the governing Conservatives, Liberals, New Democratic Party (NDP), Quebec-based Bloc Quebecois, and Greens—defend the capitalist system that is devastating the lives of working people. The NDP—a party tied to the union officialdom, whose jump in preelection opinion polls is surprising bourgeois public opinion—is no exception. When the NDP governed in Ontario in the early 1990s, to cite just one example, it carried out wage cuts and other attacks on government workers.

We urge readers to reject the union officialdom's

call for workers to vote for “Anybody but Harper”—the Conservative prime minister. The union and NDP tops hope to replace Stephen Harper's cabinet with another imperialist government composed of some combination of the Liberals, NDP, and BQ.

The Communist League is campaigning on a working-class platform of *what they are for*, not *who they are against*.

As part of the capitalist disaster for working people worldwide, the CL explains, hundreds of thousands in Canada are without work and jobless benefits. Growing numbers are forced to work for “temp” agencies at minimum wage with no job security. Gas and food prices are rising, while workers' wages fall. Health care is deteriorating, with millions having no family doctor. Taxes and fees are a growing burden on working people. Intrusion by the capitalist government in workers' lives expands on every front.

Working people in Canada need to build a revolutionary movement of millions of workers and farmers to take power out of the hands of the ruling capitalist families. Only along that revolutionary road, explains the Communist League candidate, can working people in Canada bring to power their own government—one they can use to advance the struggle against class exploitation, racism and national oppression of all kinds, the second-class status of women, and imperialist militarism and war.

Solidarity with workers and farmers in struggle across Canada, North America, and around the world!

Support the Communist League campaign!

Rally backs locked-out building workers

Continued from front page

forced workers to pay for health insurance.

“We're here fighting for better conditions,” Alan Jones, one of the Flatbush Garden workers, said. “I started working here 10 years ago for \$8.50 an hour. I've finally worked my way up to \$20 and they want to push me back nearly to where I started. I rent a studio apartment here too,” he added. “So every month I give them back \$850!”

The rally participants were overwhelmingly members of Local 32BJ of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) who are building workers at various apartment buildings and complexes throughout New York City. “I came down to show support,” said James Watkins, a porter at Kings Village apartments,

also in Brooklyn. “It's them today, but it could be us tomorrow.”

Members of the Flatbush Gardens Tenants Association also participated in the rally. “Before they went after the workers, the owner here went after the tenants,” said Michele Purdie, who has lived in the apartment complex for more than 15 years. “Four years ago they tried to put in individual meters to force each tenant to pay for electricity. We stopped that. But then they took photos of people's air conditioners and started charging for that. Now they go after the workers. The union has to fight for the unemployed and others, not just their members.”

Chris Hoepfner contributed to this article.

Closing space not in workers' interests

Continued from page 2

times the chanting was so loud that it drowned out the speakers.”

Contrary to the impression given by this account, however, from the standpoint of advancing workers' class interests, there was nothing positive about this effort to disrupt the tea party rally and prevent Palin from being heard. Whatever the broader aims of many involved, shouting down Palin was an attempt to silence someone with an opposing point of view. And many workers—not only those who share Palin's views, but many others still looking for an explanation of the crisis and how to effectively fight its consequences—rightly reject such conduct as thuggish.

The April 16 events were in marked contrast to what happened at an earlier tea party protest in Madison on February 19, also reported in the *Militant*. That rally drew about 1,000 people. Tens of thousands of working people came to the pronoun demonstration that same day—some estimates were as high as 70,000.

Protesters marched around the capitol for hours and never tried to disrupt the tea party rally. To the contrary, at times those denouncing Governor Walker's antilabor legislation debated and argued with those who had come to hear the tea party speakers, seeking to sow doubts and neutralize some and to convince and win over anyone they could.

Closing down space to organize and speak is not in the interests of the working class in face of the capitalist class and its massive apparatus of state repression. Ultimately any actions aimed at silencing the expression of views will be used against working-class organizations by the capitalist government, their courts and cops, and their hired goons.

Taking the moral and political high ground in championing the right to speak and organize today will stand labor in good stead tomorrow, when we are called on to defend, by any means necessary, our pickets, our meetings, and our class organizations.

Militant fund

Continued from page 3

world. The Militant Fighting Fund will also make it possible for the paper to continue covering working-class struggles around the world, from Egypt to the U.S. Midwest.

Supporters of the *Militant* who are organizing to collect pledges should send in reports about their efforts, including what contributors have to say about the paper.

Send your contribution directly to the *Militant* at 306 W. 37th St., 10th floor, New York, NY 10018, or contact a distributor near you, listed on page 8.

‘Ordinary folks’

Continued from front page

ident denied that the reason is mounting capitalist economic assaults on working people and spreading wars under his administration. No, the problem, he says, is that workers just don't understand.

“When I talk to ordinary folks, they are not always paying attention,” Obama scolded. “If you ask them about Medicare, they'll say, ‘I love that program but I wish government wouldn't get involved in it.’”

Apparently, workers' attention deficit disorder kicks in whenever we express suspicion of the government and its bureaucratic intrusion into our lives.

Right now, Obama tells us, he is fighting to “save” Medicare. His plan? First, the White House aims to slash spending on prescription drugs and calls for \$136 billion in cuts to Medicare Advantage over 10 years. Tens of millions of workers and farmers strongly oppose this assault on our access to health care.

Second, Obama says he will authorize the Medicare Independent Payment Advisory Board, set up under the administration's 2010 health-care “reform” law, to “make additional savings by further improving Medicare.” Translation: more red tape and a further reduction of services. Something millions of working people also oppose. So, who's not paying attention?

As workers, we're forced to wait in long lines time and again for everything from food stamps and unemployment compensation to getting a driver's license or mailing a package. The privileged middle-class professionals, academics, foundation officials, and other “meritocratic” social layers Obama represents aren't subjected to these repeated indignities.

Nor do they have to worry about what Medicare will be like when they turn 65. Their health and pension benefits will be many times more secure.

Why shouldn't working people distrust a board appointed by the capitalist government deciding how much health care we can receive, and under what conditions? Why shouldn't we, as Obama put it, “wish government wouldn't get involved”?

Opposition to big government and to capitalist bureaucracy of all kinds—far from being reactionary, as often presented by liberals and left radicals—represents a step forward in class consciousness. Likewise, popular antipathy toward liberals with social engineering schemes such as taxes on high-fat foods.

It's a recognition that working people need to defend ourselves *against* the government. Not *depend on it* more and more.

This is not the first time Obama has obliviously put his disdain for the working class on display for all to see. At another campaign fund-raiser in California prior to the 2008 election, Obama said that in traveling through the recession-stricken Midwest, he found a lot of working people who “get bitter, they cling to guns or religion or antipathy to people who aren't like them or anti-immigrant sentiment or anti-trade sentiment.” But that's “not surprising,” Obama added.

When Obama lectured an African American church congregation in Chicago on Father's Day that year he told people they shouldn't “just sit in the house and watch ‘Sports Center.’ . . . [R]eplace the video game or the remote control with a book once in awhile.”

Targeting Black males, he said, “We need fathers to recognize that responsibility doesn't just end at conception. . . . Any fool can have a child. That doesn't make you a father.”

The stratum of bourgeois-minded professionals and upper middle-class individuals Obama emerged from and represents is accurately described in the book *Malcolm X, Black Liberation, and the Road to Workers Power* by Jack Barnes, national secretary of the Socialist Workers Party.

“While the existence and expansion of these strata are largely divorced from the production process, they are very much bound up with the production and reproduction of *capitalist social relations*,” Barnes says.

“They have a *parasitic* existence. . . . Many of them pursue careers—in the universities, the media, ‘think tanks,’ and elsewhere—that generate ideological rationalizations for class exploitation and inequality (as they strive to ‘reform’ it, of course). . . .

“Their attitudes toward those who produce society's wealth—the foundation of all culture—extend from saccharine condescension to occasional and unscripted open contempt, as they lecture us on our manners and mores.” That's why the president is perturbed that we “ordinary folks” aren't always “paying attention.”

U.S. military exercises aimed at North Korea

BY CINDY JAQUITH

Washington continued provocative military maneuvers aimed against North Korea as U.S. secretary of state Hillary Clinton visited South Korea April 16–17. Ever since its failure to overturn the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) government in the 1950–53 Korean War, the U.S. government has refused to sign a peace treaty with Pyongyang. It maintains 28,500 U.S. troops in South Korea.

The joint U.S.–South Korean exercises began with Key Resolve at the end of February, which tested “the allied forces’ capability to bring troops and equipment to the peninsula in the event of an emergency,” according to the *Korea Times*. Key Resolve ran through March 10. Foal Eagle—another aspect of the drills in which troops carry out live-fire ground, naval, and air maneuvers that involve dozens of fighter jets and helicopters—continues through April 30.

On April 15, a national holiday in North Korea, tens of thousands of leaflets against the DPRK government, along with dollar bills and DVDs, were dropped by balloons launched from across the border in

South Korea. South Korean troops also fired shots into the North, an act Seoul later claimed was “accidental.”

The Chinese government is seeking to reopen talks on the DPRK’s nuclear program, which broke down in 2009 when the imperialist powers increased sanctions against North Korea. Parties to the talks were Washington, Seoul, Pyongyang, Tokyo, Beijing, and Moscow. Washington and Seoul insist there can be no negotiations until Pyongyang stops producing enriched uranium and ends nuclear and ballistic missile testing.

Clinton and South Korean president Lee Myung-bak said little about the talks when they spoke to the media after their meeting. Instead, Clinton emphasized her promise that Washington will sign a free trade agreement with South Korea soon. Meanwhile, President Barack Obama issued an executive order banning the import of all North Korean products.



U.S. Army/Sgt. Daniel Wallace

U.S. soldiers from 1st Squadron, 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment, stage their vehicles for loading onto rail cars at Camp Carroll, South Korea, March 3. Unit was headed toward border with North Korea as part of Key Resolve/Foal Eagle war maneuvers.

U.S. troops out of Korea and the Pacific!

The following is a message to Kim Jong Il, general secretary of the Workers’ Party of Korea, from Steve Clark on behalf of the National Committee of the Socialist Workers Party. The message was sent to mark the April 15 national holiday in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea.

The Socialist Workers Party and Young Socialists send internationalist greetings on the occasion of your April 15 national holiday. We pledge our ongoing solidarity with the Korean people’s struggle to reunify your country after sixty-six years of imperialist-imposed division.

As US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton prepares to visit South Korea later this month, Washington is con-

ducting its annual Foal Eagle joint military exercises with Seoul. This nuclear saber-rattling is an affront to the national sovereignty of the Korean people—one that this year is taking place as a US-organized “coalition” approaches its fourth week of air strikes and “special forces” ground operations in Libya. Like the partition of Korea, the assault on Libya is being carried out under the fig leaf of a United Nations resolution.

Here in the United States in recent months and weeks, working people have mobilized in Wisconsin, Ohio, and other states to express solidarity in response to stepped-up union-busting attacks by the capitalists and their governments. These actions mark the first resistance of this kind and scale by the working class and

unions in this country since the acceleration of the world capitalist crisis in 2007.

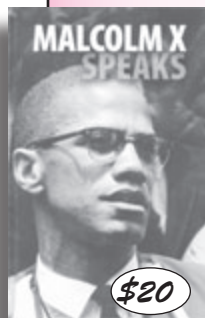
At the same time, workers, farmers, and youth in one country after another across North Africa and the Middle East are standing up against capitalist tyrannies and demanding fundamental political liberties and the right to organize and act to combat joblessness, rising food prices, and other attacks on their living and job conditions.

It is among working people like these, in the United States and worldwide, that the Korean people will find support and solidarity for your fight for national unity and sovereignty.

U.S. troops out of Korea and the Pacific!

Korea is one!

Malcolm X Speaks



“I believe that the Mau Mau was one of the first and foremost of the liberation movements on the African continent. And in every instance on the African continent where the point was made, it took groups that were committed—committed to any means nec-

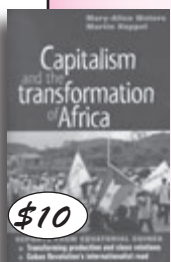
essary to bring recognition and respect to their people. Whether it be on the African continent, or whether it be in Mississippi, Alabama, New York City, it takes groups of people, be they white or be they black, who are committed to any means necessary to preserve the lives and property of people.”

—Malcolm X, January 1965

Capitalism and the Transformation of Africa

Reports from Equatorial Guinea

by Mary-Alice Waters and Martin Koppel



Reporting from Equatorial Guinea in central Africa, the authors focus on the social transformations unfolding, as revenues from offshore oil extraction are used to build infrastructure on which rising labor productivity, industry, and progress depend. Pulled into the world market as never before, both a capitalist class and a working class are being born. Here also, in accounts of the work of volunteer Cuban medical brigades in Equatorial Guinea, is the living example of Cuba’s socialist revolution.

PathfinderPress.com

Suit exposes brutality of British rule in Kenya

BY ÓLÖF ANDRA PROPPÉ

Four Kenyans have brought a case against the British government for torture and abuse during their struggle against colonial rule in the 1950s. Their stories are representative of thousands of Kenyans who suffered similar atrocities at the hands of the British imperialists.

Britain ruled Kenya from 1895 until the country won independence in 1963. The British settled by stealing land from Kikuyu, Masai, and other ethnic groups. They forced people into “reserves” akin to the Bantustans of apartheid South Africa and enforced their laws—much in the same way as the white supremacists in Pretoria—through an identity pass system.

Encouraged by anticolonial struggles in India and elsewhere, a movement for “land and freedom” began to grow among the Kikuyu people after World War II. In 1952 independence fighters, named the “Mau Mau” by the imperialists, launched a guerrilla struggle against British rule. For two years 20,000 men and women fought

the British Empire from the woods armed with homemade weapons.

Official UK figures put the death toll in the eight-year British offensive that followed at 11,000, including 1,090 hanged by the colonial administration. The Kenya Human Rights Commission says 90,000 Kenyans were executed, tortured, or maimed and 160,000 held in detention camps.

In their lawsuit, Ndiku Mutua, Paulo Nzili, Wambugu Wa Nyingi, and Jane Muthoni Mara, all in their 70s and 80s, detail the abuse they received from British troops. Mutua and Nzili were castrated. Mutua was left to die but was rescued by independence fighters. Nzili was tortured by a method similar to water-boarding. Nyingi was beaten unconscious during the 1959 Hola camp massacre where 11 were clubbed to death. Mara described how she was sexually abused.

Government lawyers want the case dismissed. In a combination of imperial arrogance and legal sophistry, they argue that with the declaration of independence in 1963 all responsibilities of

the colonial government were passed over to the new, independent Kenyan government.

As the case has unfolded the Foreign and Commonwealth Office has been forced to admit to the existence of hundreds of boxes of documents smuggled out of Kenya on the eve of independence. One of these is a 1956 letter in which Provincial Commissioner C.M. Johnson asks Kenya’s attorney general to prevent the prosecution of abuses because otherwise, he said, “each and every one of us, from the Governor downwards, may be in danger of removal from public service.”

Britain’s crimes in Kenya were not reported in the capitalist press at the time. But the Dec. 19, 1955, *Militant* reported: “One of the bloodiest and most barbaric massacres in history is taking place in Kenya—and, contrary to the picture painted by the U.S. press, the savagery is being committed by the ‘civilized’ British imperialists and not by the Kikuyu people, who, rather, are the victims.”

UK: Bahrain gov't yanks scholarships of protesters

BY ANDRÉS MENDOZA
AND HUGO WILS

MANCHESTER, England—Students from Bahrain studying in the United Kingdom have had their scholarships and monthly allowances cancelled by the Bahraini government for taking part in protests here calling for democratic and political rights in their homeland.

Bahrain is nominally a constitutional monarchy but the king appoints one of two houses of parliament. Shiites, who make up the majority of the population, face pervasive discrimination. Since February there have been large demonstrations in Bahrain demanding more freedoms and an end to Shiites' second-class status. The regime has responded with a crack-down and in March brought in Saudi and United Arab Emirates troops to quell the protests.

Student Sulaiman Nasser said that after he participated in a recent protest for political rights, "my parents, who live in Bahrain, received a call from the Ministry of Education to tell them that my scholarship had been suspended," he told the *Militant*. "We call only for justice, democracy, and equal rights. We are protesting because we want the killings and arrests to stop."

The cancellation of scholarships came after a March 20 demonstration where 300 picketed in front of the BBC radio station here in Manchester in support of the struggle of Bahraini workers, students, and others. Protesters, many of them women, called for an end to the occupation

by Saudi troops. People held hand-made placards, including one that read: "UK, US, Bahrain—Partners in Crime."

Activists say at least a dozen Bahrainis in the United Kingdom have lost their scholarships and monthly allowances for participating in the protests.

"My future is not clear to me," said Ahmed Thabet. "I can't support myself here because they cancelled my monthly allowance. I was planning to go back, but it's hard for us because if we go back we are certain we'll be arrested by the Bahrain authorities."

The Bahrainis are urging student unions at the University of Manchester and University of Salford to support their fight.

"Continuing to protest is the only thing we can do," said Rashid Abdulrahman. "We sacrificed too much already—we can't go back. I am proud of what I did and I will continue."

White House unleashes drone strikes in Libya

Continued from front page

urban areas" where "it's very difficult to pick friend from foe," said Marine Gen. James Cartwright, vice chairman of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Cartwright said this step was being taken because the Libyan military has altered its tactics. "You are seeing a much more dispersed fight, people that are digging in or nestling up against crowded areas," he said.

Cartwright, often described as Obama's "most favored general," is

California demonstration condemns Syrian regime



Militant/Arlene Rubinstein

ANAHEIM, California—More than 200 spirited protesters demonstrated here April 24 in solidarity with protests in Syria against the rule of President Bashar al-Assad. "The only way to have justice is to get rid of the regime," said Tarif Hawasly, one of the protesters. "The victory will come from within the Syrian people." Participants included Syrian Americans as well as immigrants from Afghanistan, Egypt, Jordan, Libya, Palestine, and Yemen. Some had joined a protest to end Moammar Gadhafi's tyrannical regime in Libya the day before.

—ARLENE RUBINSTEIN

Rebellion in Syria spreads

Continued from front page

unarmed demonstrators throwing rocks at tanks sent to crush the rebellion along with 3,000 soldiers.

According to Al Jazeera, the regime's forces are going door-to-door in Daraa and Douma, searching homes and arresting residents.

On April 19 President Bashar al-Assad lifted the country's state of emergency laws to give the impression that he was making democratic concessions to the protest movement. But the repression continues unabated and other repressive laws remain in effect.

Members of some 15 different military and police forces are immune from prosecution. Opposing the ruling Baath party is essentially illegal. Membership in the Muslim Brotherhood, for example, is punishable by death.

Assad and the Baath party drape themselves in the mantle of anti-imperialism and resistance to the Israeli government's oppression of the Palestinian people. The reality is quite different, however. Syrian troops participated in the U.S.-led war against Iraq in 1991, and Assad has clamped down on Palestinian groups in Syria.

The Syrian ruler and his supporters charge that the demonstrators are "dupes" of a "great conspiracy" that includes both al-Qaeda and the

Israeli government.

Assad's regime is based on a narrow layer of capitalist families, mostly from the Alawite minority, a branch of Shiite Islam, that makes up about 11 percent of the population. Most Syrians are Sunni Muslims. Assad also has supporters among the Christian minority and a layer of Sunni merchants.

While many of the antigovernment protests have taken place in predominantly Sunni areas like Daraa, others have spread to cities with large Alawite populations, including the port cities of Latakia, Tartus, and Baniyas.

"We're not from the Muslim Brotherhood and we're not *salafists*," chanted protesters in Homs, referring to an Islamist sect with ties to Osama bin Laden. "We want freedom." There have also been demonstrations in the mostly Kurdish city of Qamishli in northern Syria.

When the protests first began, U.S. president Barack Obama called on both the Syrian government and protesters to "avoid violence." He said that Assad should "advance a meaningful reform agenda." As the protests continued, Obama hardened his stance. On April 22 Obama charged that the Syrian regime was seeking "Iranian assistance" and he threatened to impose economic sanctions.

considered a likely replacement for Adm. Michael Mullen as chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff later this year.

Cartwright and Vice President Joseph Biden argued in 2009 that instead of sending an additional 30,000 U.S. troops to Afghanistan, the U.S. military should instead increase drone attacks and send 10,000 special forces. The idea was that "rather than sitting there protecting people these troops would engage and kill the enemy," wrote Bob Woodward in *Obama's Wars*. "We can sort of use [the Taliban's] tactics against them," Cartwright is quoted as saying in the book.

The Pentagon has been deploying drones for spying missions over Libya since the civil war between opposition forces and Gadhafi's troops began in mid-March, said Defense Secretary Robert Gates April 21, but this is the first time they'll be used for airstrikes.



U.S. Air Force photo

Maj. Rick Wageman operates virtual cockpit of Predator drone from base in southern Afghanistan, October 2010.

At least two Predator drones will be patrolling Libya at all times.

Acknowledging that the imperialists' military intervention in Libya "is likely to take awhile," Gates downplayed the drone airstrikes, saying they provide "a very limited additional role" and should not be considered "mission creep."

"Drone attacks have become an addictive tool of U.S. national security policy," wrote David Ignatius, an associate editor of the *Washington Post*. "It brings a weapon that has become for many Muslims a symbol of the arrogance of U.S. power into a theater next door to the Egyptian and Tunisian revolutions."

On Sunday talk shows some capitalist politicians embraced the goal of targeting Gadhafi for assassination. Republican senator Lindsey Graham, a member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, called for using U.S. airstrikes in Tripoli to "cut the head of the snake off."

Sen. John McCain, who recently visited Benghazi, Libya, backed targeting Gadhafi and called on Washington to recognize the opposition Transitional National Council as Libya's official government. Washington "has got to play a greater role on the air power side," he said, as "our NATO allies neither have the assets, nor frankly the will."

Britain's former prime minister, Anthony Blair, expressed apprehensions about alternatives to Gadhafi's rule. "I know quite a lot about what makes up the different compositions of the rebel groups—some will be people we would want fully to support, others would have a somewhat different view as to how Libya develops," he told Danish TV.

London, Paris, and Rome announced in mid-April that they're sending military advisers into Libya to train rebel forces.

Locked-out steelworkers: ‘We’ll last one day longer’

BY MITCHEL ROSENBERG

PHILADELPHIA—“Solidarity is the main thing, it’s fight or die,” Christian Musselman told the *Militant*.

Musselman is one of two members of United Steelworkers (USW) Local 7-669 from Metropolis, Illinois, who visited here April 21. He spoke to Steelworkers from Local 10-1 in Linden, Pennsylvania, the last stop in a tour of six union locals in the region with co-worker Brad Hunt to build support for their fight against Honeywell’s union-busting lockout at its Metropolis uranium enrichment plant.

Honeywell locked out the workers after they voted down the company’s “last, best, final offer” in June 2010. The union members have been picketing the plant ever since. The company is demanding elimination of seniority and retiree medical benefits, pension cuts, and a wage reduction of 10 percent over three years.

The two “road warriors,” as they call themselves, received a “substantial donation” from a union local in Pittsburgh, Musselman said. Their second stop was a “thank you visit” with members of USW Local 12698 who work at Honeywell’s Delaware plant. The local there has supported the fight against their employer for some time, said Hunt.

Local 10-901 in Marcus Hook, Pennsylvania, organized a “bucket drop,” a plant gate collection where members could donate on their way in and out of work. Local 10-1 in Philadelphia voted to donate \$500 monthly.

“We’re in a heck of a fight, but we’re gonna win,” said Musselman. “We’ve lost a little bit of money, but what we’ve learned about unions is priceless. Our strategy is to last one day longer” than the company.

Several other locked-out workers from Metropolis traveled to Morristown, New Jersey, where union support-



Militant/Sara Lobman

Steelworkers from Metropolis, Illinois, protest in front of Honeywell’s corporate offices in Morristown, New Jersey, April 25 prior to shareholders meeting. Forty participated, including workers and union officials from Honeywell plants in United States and United Kingdom.

ers protested outside Honeywell’s April 25 shareholders’ meeting.

Invitations for “Road Warrior” tours can be sent to USW Local 7-669, PO Box 601, Metropolis, IL 62960. Call (618) 524-7474. Email lockouthelp@

usw7-669.com. Donations are payable to USW Local 7-669.

Mitchel Rosenberg is a member of USW Local 10-1 at the Sunoco refinery in Philadelphia.

ON THE PICKET LINE

Canada coal miners win retirement benefits in strike

MONTREAL—Coal miners at Teck Resources Elkview mine near Sparwood, British Columbia, ended their 68-day strike April 7. They won an extension of medical benefits to retirees, who had never had them before.

The 689 miners, members of United Steelworkers Local 9346, voted 58.7 percent in favor of the proposed contract. On March 19, the miners had rejected a company offer by 57 percent.

The contract runs for five years. The company will increase its contribution to the workers Registered Retirement Savings Plan, which is tied to the stock market.

Teck has six coal mines in western Canada and 63 percent of the coal is shipped to Asia. The Elkview mine produces coal used in steelmaking. Demand is up in particular because of flooding of coal mines in Australia, the world’s biggest producer of this kind of coal.

—Joe Young

Truck drivers in China strike to protest port fees, low wages

Truck drivers, many of them owner-operators, began a three-day strike April 20 in Shanghai, one of the world’s largest ports, over rising fuel costs and port fees, and the whittling away of their real wages by rising inflation in China.

Blocking roads with their trucks, some 2,000 strikers demonstrated April

20 and the following day near the city’s Waigaoqiao port. Baton-wielding police attacked the workers, arresting some and injuring others. The protests spread to other ports in Shanghai, including Baoshan and Yangshan.

“One of the government’s greatest fears is that popular discontent over inflation could spark a wider protest movement,” said the *Financial Times*.

The Chinese government has increased fuel prices twice this year, the latest being a 5 percent rise in early April. The country’s official inflation rate rose to a 32-month high of 5.4 percent in March, which includes a nearly 12 percent jump in food costs.

“Everything is going up except the transportation payment,” a 38-year-old driver involved in the protest actions told the *Wall Street Journal*. The 1,200-yuan transportation payment he gets for hauling a container amounts to \$184. It hasn’t changed in a decade. Yet rising diesel prices and other costs have reduced his actual take-home pay to about \$30.

In an effort to quell the protests, Shanghai’s Municipal Transport and

Port Authority announced April 23 it would repeal a fuel surcharge and reduce some port fees.

—Brian Williams

Air Canada workers fight for contract

MONTREAL—“Mobilization seems to be the order of the day,” said Jamie Ross, acting president of Canadian Auto Workers (CAW) Local 2002. Some 100 union members and their supporters rallied at the airport here April 21 to support the fight by Air Canada workers in the CAW for a decent contract. The contract for the 3,800 sales and service workers across Canada expired February 28. Since 2002 workers’ wages at Air Canada have not kept pace with even half the inflation rate. Management is demanding pension cuts of up to 50 percent.

—Beverly Bernardo

California grocery store workers authorize strike

LOS ANGELES—At meetings throughout Southern California, grocery store workers voted April 20 to authorize a strike if a contract cannot be

reached with three large grocery store chains.

The contracts expired March 6 at Ralphs (a subsidiary of Krogers), Vons (Safeway), and Albertson markets. They have been extended day to day since. Some 62,000 retail clerks are employed by these chains.

Outside a contract vote meeting in Burbank, Mark Meshkat, a wine steward at Ralphs, told the *Militant*, “They are trying to take away holiday premium pay, make you work seven days in a row with regular pay. They want to expand the number of miles you can be forced to drive to work from 25 to 40.” Meshkat said the majority of the retail clerks work part-time and with rising gas prices the long commute to work has devastating consequences.

United Food and Commercial Workers Local 770 president Rick Icaza told the *Los Angeles Times* that employers also want to reduce meat-cutter hours, which could result in 700 union jobs being lost, increase worker payment for health care, and eliminate Health Maintenance Organization medical coverage.

—Norton Sandler

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