

Hunger for solidarity spurs sales of 'Militant'

BY MICHEL POITRAS

Four hundred twenty nine workers and youth signed up for subscriptions to the *Militant* during the first nine days of a seven-week international campaign to win 2,200 readers! The initial response puts the drive ahead of schedule and reflects growing interest in a socialist paper published in the interests of working people.

The hunger for solidarity and desire among working people to effectively fight the bosses is also reflected in sales of *Teamster Rebellion*, one of five books on special discount with a subscription. The book by Farrell Dobbs, who was a central leader of the communist movement, recounts the successful strikes and organizing drive in 1934 by Teamsters Local 574 in Minneapolis.

In the Red River Valley, 14 more workers and their supporters battling a lockout by American Crystal Sugar

Continued on page 4

No 'recovery' for workers as wages fall, jobs stagnate

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

As far as working people are concerned—who face protracted high unemployment, declining wages, and rising debt—the so-called economic recovery they've been told

WORLD CRISIS IS ONE OF CAPITALIST RULE

—See editorial, p. 9

they're living through is anything but that. Declining capitalist production, trade, and employment are at the root of today's worldwide economic depression. Bosses, along with other sections of the capitalist class and their governments, are responding by pressing ever harder to make workers foot the bill.

During the officially recognized recession from December 2007 to June 2009 median household income declined by 3.2 percent. From the time the recession ended through June 2011, it fell 6.7 percent, according to a study by two former Census Bureau officials reported in the *New York*

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Sugar workers battling lockout are 'not alone'

Unionists, youth join Fargo demonstration



Militant/Frank Forrestal
Demonstration in Fargo, N.D., October 8 in support of workers locked out by American Crystal Sugar was joined by school employees, postal workers and young people.

BY FRANK FORRESTAL

FARGO, N.D.—Waving picket signs saying “End the lockout” and “Support sugar workers,” about 75 people demonstrated on the Veterans Memorial Bridge here October 8 in support of workers locked out by American Crystal Sugar in the Upper Midwest. Passing cars and trucks honked in support.

“We came out to support the sugar workers,” said Linda Pederson, chief steward of the Minnesota School Employees Association. “We see what’s happening all around us. They are trying to destroy our unions and our rights.” Pederson, who came with about 15 other school workers, explained that their union is under attack too. “We are now into our second year without a new contract.”

The Minnesota School Employees

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Fall 'Militant' subscription campaign				
Oct. 1–Nov. 20 (week 1)				
Country	quota	sold	%	2,200
UNITED STATES				
Lincoln	20	9	45%	
Seattle*	175	56	32%	
Boston*	60	17	28%	
New York*	260	67	26%	
Chicago*	165	35	21%	
Bloomington	5	1	20%	
Philadelphia	90	17	19%	
Twin Cities	140	26	19%	
Atlanta*	170	31	18%	
San Francisco*	170	28	16%	
Los Angeles	150	24	16%	
Miami	90	14	16%	
Des Moines	150	19	13%	
Houston	80	5	6%	
Washington, D.C.	60	1	2%	
New Paltz	15	0	0%	
Total U.S.	1,800	350	19%	
UNITED KINGDOM				
London*	120	23	19%	
Manchester	60	11	18%	
Total UK	180	34	19%	
New Zealand	80	17	21%	429
CANADA	75	10	13%	
AUSTRALIA	65	18	28%	
Total	2,200	429	20%	should be
Should be	2,200	314	14%	
* Raised goal				

Union at military truck plant in Wisconsin rejects concessions

BY BETSY FARLEY

OSHKOSH, Wis.—Workers at the huge Oshkosh Corp. truck plants here rejected a proposed union-busting contract by a two-to-one margin October 8.

Oshkosh manufactures and rebuilds

heavy duty vehicles for the U.S. military used in Afghanistan, Iraq and elsewhere.

This is the second time in eight days members of United Auto Workers Local 578 have rejected the bosses' pro-

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Photo courtesy the Oshkosh Northwestern
Autoworkers exit meeting after voting down concession contract pushed by Oshkosh Corp.

René González, 1 of Cuban 5, released from federal prison

BY MICHEL POITRAS

Cuban revolutionary René González walked out of the federal prison in Marianna, Fla., at 4:30 a.m. October 7. He was greeted by his daughters Irma and Ivette, his brother Roberto, his father Cándido, and his lawyer

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- Prisoners in California renew hunger strike 5
- Afghanistan: Ten years of imperialist war 7

As UK bosses skirt new law, agency workers turn to unions

BY PETE CLIFFORD

MANCHESTER, England—More than a million workers in the United Kingdom who work through employment agencies are seeing their hopes dashed that a new European Union law would improve their situation. In fact many employers are using the occasion to deepen the exploitation of these workers and insecurity of their livelihoods.

Agency workers, as they’re called here, are found in many sectors from private manufacturing to government jobs where they often work alongside others directly employed, but for lower pay and with worse conditions. It’s not uncommon for them to work under these circumstances for years. They can be sent home or fired at any time without notice.

The new Agency Workers Directive that went into effect in the UK October 1 says that after 12 weeks at the same workplace, agency workers must get the same pay and conditions as directly employed workers.

The number of agency workers has mushroomed in recent years. While no official figure exists, the *Daily Telegraph* estimates that out of a workforce of 29 million, 1.4 million work under employment agency contracts.

Some 2.4 million are officially unemployed in the country; an additional 1.2 million people work part time because they are unable to find full-time work. The expanding number of agency workers, many of whom don’t get full-time hours, is a part of this picture.

“The agencies are using a loophole to avoid the new law,” James Connor told

the *Militant* outside the Jaguar Land Rover car plant in Halewood. Connor is one of 686 workers employed through Staffline agency to work for DHL Exel Supply Chain, which handles the shipping of parts to Jaguar and Land Rover suppliers.

Staffline workers receive £200 (\$312) a week less doing the same work than they would as direct DHL employees.

Staffline is pressuring these workers to individually sign contracts with the agency to skirt implementation of the new law, a common practice throughout Europe known as the “Swedish derogation.” Staffline and other employment agencies contend the new law does not apply to so-called permanent workers for the agencies.

The first 300 to sign are being told they will be guaranteed a five-day workweek, with the remainder getting only two days, reported the *Liverpool Echo*.

“They say we will now work with a permanent contract, but for the agency, not for DHL,” explained Carlos Kowalska. “The agency is saying we can be assigned to work at other places and therefore we’re not linked to workers in this factory.”

In response Connor says “loads have joined the union.” He went to a Unite union meeting held to protest the new contract. Some 500 Staffline workers have signed up for the union, Carol Devereux, an organizer for Unite, the country’s largest union, told the *Militant*.

Of the 3,000 workers at the Liverpool Jaguar plant, 686 are employed by Staf-

Hundreds protest school aide layoffs in New York



Militant/Dan Fein

Some 500 people, mostly American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees District Council 37 members, rallied at City Hall in New York October 4 to protest the pending layoffs of 700 public school employees, mostly school aides, many of them part-time workers. Those marching included members of the Professional Staff Congress, the union representing faculty and staff at the City University of New York.

“I am here to support my brothers and sisters who are getting laid off,” said Mary Smith, a school aide and member of District 37.

About 150 “Occupy Wall Street” protesters joined in support of the action. “I am here to stand up with everyone and say no to the injustices all around us,” commented Rich Drinkwater, a youth from Red Bank, N.J., who came with the Wall Street demonstrators.

—DAN FEIN

line workers, and 1,000 production-line assemblers work for Manpower, another agency, earning just 80 percent of the directly employed rate.

At McVities biscuit plant in Manchester, 150 workers employed through the Prime Time agency, the author of this article among them, have no guaranteed hours and work alongside 600 company workers.

“I class it as lucky if I get two shifts in,” said Liam Gilbert. “McVities workers get a full week and are paid at least 50 percent more.”

Agency workers at McVities often get texts a few hours before work to tell them they are not needed.

Kevin Groves protested, “You don’t get proper notice if you get cancelled a shift.”

The lower wages and job insecurity of agency workers is used as a lever against the conditions of those directly employed. For example, bosses at the Park Cake Bakery in Oldham have set up a two-tier system among

their direct employees. New hires get minimum wage with no guaranteed hours, said Roy Streeter, regional officer of the Bakers, Food and Allied Workers Union.

“This legislation was supposed to protect agency workers, but really it’s putting more at risk,” Streeter told the *Militant*. In response, the union is organizing a strike vote for the 500 directly employed workers. As is generally the case, agency workers at Park Cake are not organized by the union.

“A third of employers are planning to avoid the new rules by ending agency workers contracts in their eleventh week,” reported the *Daily Telegraph*. For all its loopholes, bosses oppose the Agency Workers Directive. David Frost, director of the British Chambers of Commerce, urges postponement of “this kind of red tape.” Prime Minister David Cameron wants to dilute the law, according to the *Telegraph*, which contends the law will cost £2 billion and “derail the British recovery.”

THE MILITANT

“The ‘Militant’ has inspired me to act.”

“The ‘Militant’ is great because it talks from the perspective of working people. Reading about people who are fighting back has inspired me and pushed me to act.”

—Jessica Garraway
student, University of
Northern Iowa, Cedar Falls



Militant/Maggie Trowe

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Signed articles by contributors do not necessarily represent the Militant’s views. These are expressed in editorials.

US dairy farmers hit by same crisis as workers

BY FRANK FORRESTAL

MUSCODA, Wis.—In recent years small farmers, especially dairy farmers, have been hit hard by the capitalist economic crisis.

Wisconsin, the second largest milk-producing state in the U.S., has seen scores of dairy farmers go out of business. It now has 11,993 dairy farms compared with about 14,600 five years ago, according to the state Department of Agriculture.

Small dairy farmers haven’t caught up since 2009 when they were hit by a perfect storm of high input costs and low prices paid by distributors for their milk. Prices fell from around \$18 per hundred pounds in 2008 to about \$12 in 2009.

Milk prices paid to farmers have returned to the 2008 level, but many went out on the limb to hold onto their farms and are now saddled with enormous debts.

“For most dairy farmers this means we are keeping up, but far from catching up,” said Randy Jasper, a soybean and corn farmer here. “I know this firsthand because my son owns a dairy farm and he is barely breaking even. It’s not a whole lot better for grain farmers.”

“I can’t even count the number of people I know who are going to quit milking cows,” Joel Greeno, a dairy farmer from Kendall, told the *Journal Sentinel*.

“While milk prices are somewhat better,” said Jim Goodman, an organic dairy farmer from Wonewoc, “we still face high input costs. Feed costs are really high, whether it’s grain or hay. Plus this year has been a dry one and our yields are lower.”

Dairy farmers in particular are adversely affected by government subsidies to ethanol, which led to a big demand for corn among biofuel producers.

Prices for corn feed, which account for a large portion of dairy farmers’ expenses, have gone through the roof.

Prices of fertilizer, fuel, seed and machinery are also high.

Jasper said he recently had to dish out more than \$800 for air filters for his combine. “Just for air filters, can you believe it?”

Goodman pointed to yet another input—the price of land. “Whether you buy or rent it, the prices are way up there,” he said. According to recent bank reports, the price of farmland across the Midwest has risen dramatically. In parts of Iowa, prices rose as much as 23 percent last year.

“Dairy farmers lost one-third of their equity in 2009 alone, with hundreds and even thousands of dollars being lost per cow,” said a recent Tufts University study titled “Still Waiting for the Farm Boom.”

In Minnesota banks sent out 3,700 default notices to farmers, an 80 percent increase over recent years.

Wisconsin autoworkers reject concession contract

Continued from front page

posals that would allow the hiring of temporary supplemental workers and raise premiums for medical insurance coverage.

Oshkosh’s five-year contract offer would also raise workers’ health care costs. The only substantive change from the company’s first offer was a paltry increase from 8 percent to 8.5 percent in wage raises over five years. Either way, workers say the pay raises would be negated by increased medical insurance premiums.

“Oshkosh Corporation is not broke, they have been hiring, not laying off,” Bridget Fredrich, an assembler for 10 years who rebuilds military vehicles used in Iraq, told the *Militant*. “Why should they hire temporary workers at lower pay with less rights? Everyone deserves the same opportunity.”

“We voted no,” added Carol Johannes, also an assembler with nine years at the plant. “It’s the same offer with slightly different language. You



Militant/Maggie Trowe

Wisconsin farm of Randy Jasper. Farmers are “beaten down by big business just like workers. We both need solidarity,” dairy farmer Jim Goodman told the *Militant*.

Many working farmers depend on nonfarm income from their spouses or other family members, who often work in nearby factories, hospitals or other businesses. This income in the rural areas too has been hard hit by the capitalist crisis. “This is sometimes not noticed as much,” said Goodman, “but many farm families

have been hit with layoffs, just like in the cities.”

This is one of the reasons that some farmers joined the big labor protests in Madison last winter, said Goodman. “Our interests are more in common because we are beaten down by big business just like workers. We both need solidarity.”

can’t trust the company.”

The big majority of the 3,100 union members packed an aircraft hanger for the vote on Saturday. After casting ballots many emerged with thumbs-down gestures and said they intend to resume informational pickets in the community. Hundreds of UAW members joined pickets in downtown Oshkosh during the negotiations last week, carrying signs that read, “Union Proud,” “First Madison, now Oshkosh,” and “We are not Harley-Davidson.”

Under threats of massive layoffs last year, members of the United Steelworkers and International Association of Machinists narrowly approved a seven-year concessions contract with Harley-Davidson that included a wage freeze, a hike in health care expenses and the right to hire temporary workers at lower pay.

Contributions start rolling for party-building fund drive

BY MARY MARTIN

As of October 11, \$2,786 has come in for the Socialist Workers Party annual fund drive. Next week a chart in the *Militant* will list collections received from each area during the first week.

“So far we have pledges that total more than half of our \$4,000 quota,” wrote Jacquie Henderson from Houston. “We went door to door with the *Militant* and SWP election campaign of Amanda Ulman for mayor last week. A Spanish-speaking construction worker searched all through his house for money for a *Militant* subscription and also handed us \$5 ‘for your party.’”

In Seattle, two people from Longview, Washington, bought subscriptions and gave contributions totaling \$15. One is a member of ILWLU Local 21 and the other is from someone in the community who supports the union fight there.

Karly Schwalbach, a 10-year worker at Oshkosh, told the *Oshkosh Northwestern* that a number of the new hires came from Harley-Davidson and other companies that pressured workers to accept concessions. “If anything, I think their presence makes us stronger,” she said.

“This contract proposal was downright degrading,” Andrew Schaller, a 12-year worker at the plant, told the *Militant*. “The workers made this company what it is. We put them into the Fortune 500.”

Schaller is one of many workers at Oshkosh who joined protests in Madison earlier this year against the attacks on public workers. “An attack on one union is an attack on all,” he said. “This country was built by the working class, starting with the American Revolution. The working class goes to the wars, and makes all their products. Why should we be pushed down and humiliated?”

The previous contract expired September 30, and UAW Local 578 has authorized a strike. Union officials say they hope to return to the bargaining table soon. Workers returned to their regular shifts on Monday, October 10.

—MILITANT LABOR FORUMS—

CALIFORNIA

Los Angeles

Employer Offensive Met with Labor Resistance and Solidarity: Strengthening the Road to Workers Power. A Party-Building Fund Meeting. Speaker: Frank Forrestal, Socialist Workers Party. Sat., Oct. 22. Dinner, 6 p.m.; program, 7 p.m. 4025 S. Western Ave. Tel.: (323) 295-2600.

San Francisco

Greece: Economic Depression, Austerity—Challenges Facing Working People. Speaker: Eric Simpson, Socialist Workers Party. Fri., Oct. 21, 7:30 p.m. 5482 Mission St. Tel.: (415) 584-2135.

FLORIDA

Miami

Spreading Ties of Solidarity, Preparing for the Working-Class Battles to Come. A Party-Building Fund Meeting. Speaker: Joe Swanson, Socialist Workers Party. Sat., Oct. 22. Dinner, 6 p.m.; program, 7 p.m. Donation: \$5 for program, \$7 for dinner. 719 NE 79th St. Tel.: (305) 757-8869.

WASHINGTON

Seattle

Workers’ Resistance to the Worldwide Economic Crisis: From Greece to the Midwest Sugar Workers to West Coast Longshore Workers Fighting Union Busting. A Party-Building Fund Meeting. Speaker: Maggie Trowe, Socialist Workers Party. Sat., Oct. 22. Dinner, 5:30 p.m.; program, 6:30 p.m. Donation: \$5 for dinner, \$5 for program. 5418 Rainier Ave. S. Tel.: (206) 323-1755.

—CALENDAR—

IOWA

Keokuk

Labor History: United States, Iowa and Keokuk. Sat., Oct. 22, 9 a.m. *Keokuk Labor Temple, 301 Blondeau St. Sponsored by Lee County Central Labor Council and Iowa Federation of Labor. For more information: (319) 524-3011.*

MINNESOTA

Minneapolis

Humor from My Pen. An Exhibition of Political Cartoons by Gerardo Hernández, one of the Cuban Five. November 1-13. *Opening Reception, Sun., Nov. 6, 2 p.m. Regla de Oro Gallery, Art and Fair Trade Gifts, 3007 Lyndale Ave. South. Sponsor: Minnesota Cuba Committee. Tel.: (612) 367-6134.*

AUSTRALIA

Sydney

Public Forum to Commemorate the Levine Ruling: 40 Years of Legal Abortion. What Challenges Remain Today? Sun., Oct. 23, 1 p.m. *NSW Teachers Federation House, Club Room, 23-33 Mary St., Surry Hills. Sponsor: Women’s Abortion Action Campaign. Tel.: 0407-665-857.*

Party-Building Fund Oct. 1 - Nov. 20

Area	Quota
Atlanta	\$8,000
Boston	\$3,800
Chicago	\$10,000
Des Moines	\$3,000
Houston	\$4,000
Lincoln, Neb.	\$200
Los Angeles	\$8,500
Miami	\$3,200
New York	\$20,000
Philadelphia	\$3,700
San Francisco	\$14,000
Seattle	\$9,000
Twin Cities	\$6,000
Washington	\$7,500
TOTAL	\$100,900
GOAL	\$100,000

‘Militant’ subscriptions

Continued from front page

bought subscriptions, bringing the total 135 receiving the *Militant* in this area each week. On the picket line in Drayton, N.D., two workers bought the entire four-volume Teamster series, which includes *Teamster Rebellion*, *Teamster Power*, *Teamster Politics* and *Teamster Bureaucracy*.

At a rally in Fargo, N.D., organized by members of the sugar workers’ union and a group of young people putting together an “Occupy Wall Street” movement in the area, socialist workers sold a subscription to a young unemployed worker who told them, “I only have \$500 in the bank and if I don’t get a job soon, I’ll be evicted from my apartment. But I would rather starve than take a job as a strikebreaker at Crystal.”

Members of the Socialist Workers Party in Seattle sold 10 subscriptions to members of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union engaged in a hard-fought battle against a company attempting to crush their union with the help of the police and courts. Four of these new subscribers bought copies of *Teamster Rebellion*. Another picked up a copy of *Teamster Power*.

Young people and workers at Occupy Wall Street actions in New York and similar demonstrations across the country are snatching up the *Militant* along with books on revolutionary working-class politics. “Our literature table was busy from the moment we set up to well after the event was over,” said Willie Cotton about one such event on the lawn of the Iowa state capitol in Des Moines October 9. “Many were looking for answers to the capitalist crisis and 14 subscriptions were sold that day and at similar events in neighboring towns over the weekend.”

In New York City, 38 subscriptions and 223 single copies have so far been sold at Occupy Wall Street events near Zucotti Park in Lower Manhattan, along with a number of Pathfinder books.

“On Saturday,” wrote Alyson Kennedy from Chicago, “a team of SWP members traveled to Oshkosh, Wis., to

talk to members of United Auto Workers Local 578 at the truck assembly plants there. They sold five subscriptions to workers attending the local union meeting that rejected a contract proposal for the second time. (See front page article.) On Sunday, another team sold three subscriptions going door to door in a working-class community near one of the truck plants.”

Kennedy also reported that seven participants in a Chicago demonstration against Washington’s war in Afghanistan bought subscriptions. More than 1,000 people joined the action, including a large contingent of youth and workers from the ongoing Occupy Chicago protest at the Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago.

In Atlanta, Janice Lynn and Lisa Potash went back October 7 to speak to the Kraft Foods Nabisco workers at the afternoon shift change. A week earlier workers there had participated in a protest organized by their union against a company plan to outsource their jobs.

“We sold 14 single copies of the *Militant*,” wrote Lynn. “Many workers were interested in the growing solidarity being won by the locked-out sugar beet workers in the Midwest, as well as by the article on their own protest. Two workers pulled over their cars and signed up for a subscription.” Both had seen the *Militant* before and one of them also bought a



Militant/Mary Martin

John Naubert, Socialist Workers candidate for Seattle Port Commissioner, right, and retired longshore worker Mark Downs, left, talk with ILWU member Brian Pellham outside picket tent in Longview, Washington. Since start of drive, 29 ILWU members in region have bought *Militant* subscriptions, 10 of whom also bought *Teamster Rebellion* or *Teamster Power*.

copy of *Teamster Rebellion*.”

“I’ve been missing the *Militant*! Come in,” said Marcelo Valencia to members of the Communist League in New Zealand going door to door in Auckland, reported Janet Roth. Valencia, 35, who works as a caregiver for the elderly, explained he used to subscribe but had lost contact when he moved.

“I like the *Militant*,” Valencia added, “because its comments are real.” He was especially interested in reading news about workers’ struggles in the U.S. He renewed his subscription and

bought a copy in Spanish of *Malcolm X*, *Black Liberation*, and *the Road to Workers Power* by Jack Barnes. Four other subscriptions were sold in the same neighborhood that day.

Since last week, Young Socialists at the State University of New York at New Paltz and a *Militant* supporter in Bloomington, Ind., have adopted quotas in the drive. In addition, distributors in Houston, New York City and Seattle recently increased their quotas, bringing combined international adopted goals to 2,210!

Marietta Armstrong workers: ‘We’re still fighting’

BY JANET POST

MARIETTA, Pa.—Workers locked out here since July 17 by Armstrong World Industries pledged to keep fighting, following approval of similar concession contracts at two other Armstrong plants.

“We are standing up for what we believe in and we are more united than ever,” Bernie Montgomery told the *Militant* while picketing outside the plant October 9.

The locked-out members of United Steelworkers Local 285 are continuing to picket 24/7. They rejected the bosses’ contract offer, which demanded concessions on wages, health benefits, pensions, seniority and overtime. The lockout includes 220 union members and some 40 unorganized workers. Management and replacement workers, bused across the picket line in company vans and buses with tinted windows, have resumed some production at the plant.

Earlier that day, members of a different unit of Local 285 voted October 9 to accept a concession contract with Armstrong World Industries at the company’s flooring plant in Lancaster, Pa.

The three-year Lancaster contract cuts pay for new hires and creates a third pay tier, according to Local 285 President Joseph Rumberger. At the same time it offers a \$10,000 bonus to anyone retiring during the life of the contract. Rumberger estimated that 90 of the 140 workers will be eligible to retire.

The contract will replace wage increases with lump sum payments and a 401(k) plan will replace pensions for newly hired workers.

“I’m already on a second tier and now they can move me to the warehouse on a third tier,” a young worker on his way to vote told the *Militant*. “Plus my age group will have no pension or retiree health benefits. This vote is going to divide the older and younger workers right down the middle. I’m going to vote ‘no.’” He declined to give his name, citing voting privacy. Thirty workers picked up copies of the *Militant* on their way into the meeting.

At a press conference after the vote, Rumberger announced the result, say-

ing that the contract had been “hard to swallow but we do want to work.” He added that while no one was happy about the company’s proposal, “the economy is tough.” In the group of workers standing behind him during the press conference, one worker shouted out, “This is the worst contract ever!”

“We will still support our brothers and sisters in Marietta and do all we can to help,” stated Rumberger.

Two days before the Lancaster vote, production workers at the ceiling plant in Macon, Ga., voted 84 percent for a four-year contract that included an average annual wage raise of less than 2.4 percent and elimination of retiree medical benefits, according to Steve Gibble, Local 285 vice president.

“It’s pretty obvious what the company is trying to do,” Brian Wilson, a locked-out worker in Marietta, told the *Militant*. “They want to keep us divided. Many of the older workers may well take these offers.”

“The company will likely use Lancaster and Macon to put more pressure on us,” said production worker Luba Simpson.

Bruce Webster, also a production worker at the Marietta factory, said he was not surprised that Armstrong offered Lancaster workers lump sum payments instead of a wage increase. “That’s their slight of hand,” he said. “They can’t come right out and say it’s a ‘wage freeze.’”

The locked-out workers have received solidarity from members of Glass, Molders, Pottery, Plastics and Allied Workers Local 376 at the Anvil foundry in Columbia, Pa., according to union member Gene Miller. “It ain’t over. We’re still fighting,” he insisted.

Special offers with *Militant* subscription

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by Farrell Dobbs ~~\$19~~ **\$10 with subscription**

The story of the strikes and union organizing drive the men and women of Teamsters Local 574 carried out in Minnesota in 1934, paving the way for the continent-wide rise of the Congress of Industrial Organizations as a fighting social movement.

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The Changing Face of U.S. Politics Working-Class Politics and the Unions

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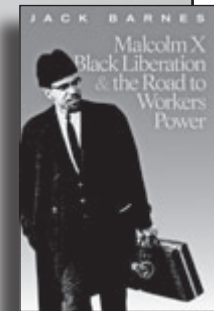
Is Socialist Revolution in the U.S. Possible?

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

Prisoners in California resume hunger strike

BY BETSEY STONE

SACRAMENTO, Calif.—For the second time this year, prisoners are on hunger strike in California.

As with the three-week hunger strike in July, this action was initiated by prisoners in the Special Housing Unit at Pelican Bay in northern California and spread to other prisons. According to prison figures released to the press, nearly 12,000 inmates were part of the strike September 28, including inmates from California who are now imprisoned in Arizona, Mississippi and Oklahoma.

The prisoners decided to renew the strike when it became clear that, despite initial promises by prison authorities, the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation was not acting on its promise to meet prisoners' demands.

The action has taken the form of a rolling strike, with some inmates resuming eating to regain strength. This, along with the fact that information on the strike is filtered through prison authorities, makes it difficult to tell how many are involved in the action.

The hunger strikers are demanding an end to long-term solitary confinement. In the Special Housing Units, prisoners are locked in windowless cells for 22 or more hours a day. They are allowed out only to shower or exercise alone. At the Pelican Bay SHU, more than 500 have lived in these conditions for 10 years or more, 78 for 20 years or more.

The prisoners also call for ending group punishment and punishment for refusing to inform on other prisoners, for improvements in abysmal medical care and food, the right to wear warm clothes, a wall calendar, and the right to take correspondence courses.

"We are fighting for the prisoners' just demands," says Kendra Castañeda, whose husband is one of hundreds of prisoners who began the strike on September 26 at the Calipatria State Prison in southern California near the Mexico border.

Prisoners at Calipatria are asking that they be allowed to have TVs and radios, which are denied since they are supposedly there temporarily on a waiting list to be sent to the Special Housing Units in Pelican Bay.

Prison officials are cracking down on this hunger strike more harshly than in July. A memo signed by Corrections Undersecretary Scott Kernan and distributed to inmates warned that the department is treating the new hunger strike as a "mass disturbance," saying any prisoner who joins the protest will be subject to disciplinary action.

Two of the prisoners' lawyers, Carol Strickman and Marilyn McMahon, have been barred from the Pelican Bay Prison on the basis that they are being investigated for violating laws governing "the safe operations" of the facility.

At an October 5 rally here of close to 50 supporters of the hunger strikers, Strickman reported that Annie Weills, a lawyer who traveled to Pelican Bay to meet with five clients, was allowed a brief meeting with only one, Todd Asker. Weills found that Asker, one of the leaders of the hunger strike, had been moved to a cold cell, with inadequate clothing.

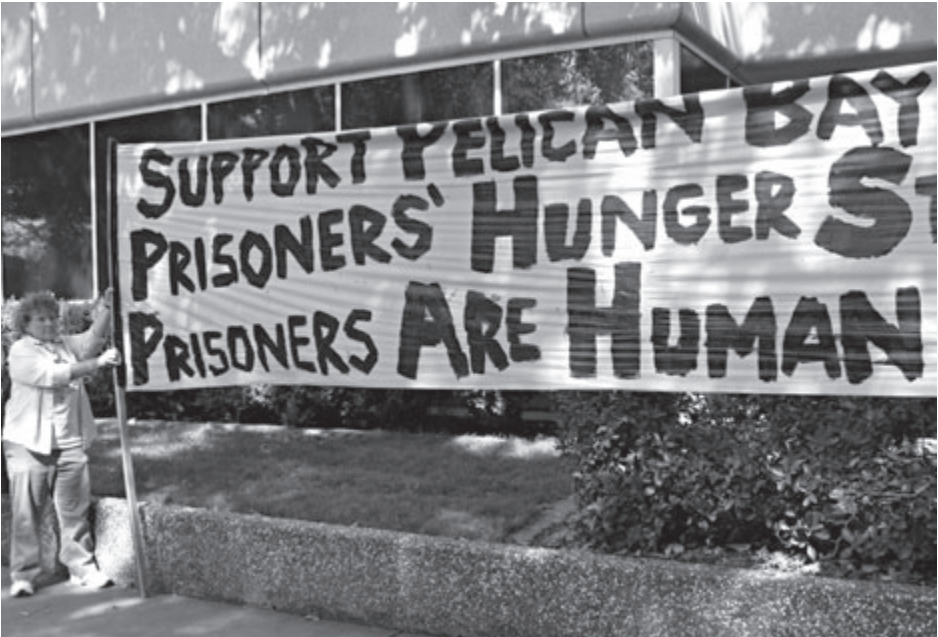
Rally speakers described other re-

taliatory actions against the prisoners, including withholding of medical care and cell searches. Irma, who has two sons in the Pelican Bay SHU and asked that her last name not be used, said that the hunger strikers are not being allowed family visits.

"How can you call a hunger strike a mass disturbance when it's not violent, when it's peaceful," she said.

According to the Prisoner Hunger Strike Solidarity website, the numbers of hunger strikers began to drop after the California Department of Corrections intensified its crackdown. At Calipatria, prison authorities at first denied liquids to the hunger strikers, despite their filing medical requests that this be done. Then they began to serve the liquids on food trays and counting those who took them as not being on strike.

Prison authorities have tried to undermine the impact of the action by charging that the protests are the work of prison gangs. Prisoners and their supporters continue to point out that the



Militant/Betsy Stone

Linda Evans, leader of Prisoner Hunger Strike Solidarity coalition, holds banner at protest in Sacramento, Calif., October 5. Prisoners are demanding end to long-term solitary confinement, better food and medical care, and right to take correspondence courses.

unity achieved in the strike across racial lines refutes this claim.

"It's the opposite of gangs. It's unity for human rights and decency," said Elizabeth Valencia, a teacher in Los Angeles whose friend is in prison.

"We all stand strong together and we all strive for the rights of not only Pelican Bay and Calipatria but for ALL PRISONERS IN OUR SITUATION,"

a group of Calipatria prisoners said in a letter sent to the Prisoner Hunger Strike Solidarity coalition in Oakland.

Information on future actions in support of the hunger strike can be found at prisonerhungerstrikesolidarity.wordpress.com

Arlene Rubinstein contributed to this article.

Coal miners fight Peabody's attempts to block union

BY BETSY FARLEY

PADUCAH, Ky.—Workers at the Willow Lake mine in Equality, Illinois, are fighting to force Peabody Energy, the world's largest privately owned coal company, to recognize the union and negotiate a contract. The United Mine Workers of America won a union representation election at the mine in late May.

Hearings by a National Labor Relations Board administrative law judge on Peabody's challenge, asking the NLRB to overturn the election, ended here September 30. A decision is pending.

Only one other mine in Illinois is organized by the UMWA, Springfield Coal's Crown III underground mine in Macoupin County.

The right to a union safety committee and pensions were among the reasons 51 percent of the workers at Willow

Lake voted to join UMWA Local 5929. The Willow Lake mine, which opened in 2002 and produced 3.4 million tons of coal last year with 444 workers, has a long record of safety violations.

In 2010 Peabody was fined \$174,000 for dangerous conditions there, including inadequate roof support and excessive coal dust. In July of that year a supervisor was killed when a shuttle car hauling coal struck him—the first death at the mine. In 2009 the mine had an accident rate more than double the national average.

The case for Peabody was argued by the antiunion law firm Ogletree Deakins, the same firm that conducted the company's campaign against the union prior to the vote.

"Ogletree Deakins made the videos shown in the captive audience meetings that threatened workers with closing the mine if they voted in the union.

They provided training for the supervisors," said Art Traynor, attorney for the UMWA.

Peabody claimed the UMWA resorted to "intimidation and threats, coercion and fraudulent conduct" to win the election. The company also accused miner Wade Waller of threatening to run over another worker with a piece of mining equipment.

Lawyers for the UMWA and NLRB have charged that Peabody committed violations of the National Labor Relations Act, including threatening to close the mine; the firing of Waller, a well-known union activist; and refusal to recognize and bargain with the union.

"The miners will continue to focus on building solidarity in the workplace and negotiating a union contract," Traynor said. "The legal process is only secondary to that."

25, 50, AND 75 YEARS AGO



October 24, 1986

Workers at Delta Catfish Processors, Inc., in Indianola, Mississippi, voted by a 58 percent majority October 10 to join the United Food and Commercial Workers union. The vote marked a victory for an organizing drive that faced a well-financed campaign of intimidation by the company.

Delta Catfish is the largest employer in Sunflower County in the Mississippi Delta. Each day the 1,050 workers kill, fillet, and freeze some 400,000 pounds of catfish raised on farms in the region.

Ninety percent of the workers are Black. Their pay averages \$3.90 an hour—and when the supply of fish runs out they must often punch out and wait without pay for another truckload.

Mississippi, with only 9 percent of its workers belonging to unions, is one of the least unionized states in the country.



October 23, 1961

A fourth victim of the Monroe, North Carolina, "kidnap" frame-up has been arrested. FBI agents on Oct. 12 seized Mrs. Willie Mae Mallory in a private home in Cleveland, Ohio, where police had maintained a "stake-out." The 34-year-old Afro-American woman was taken without a struggle though the FBI wanted circulars had listed and described her as "dangerous" and said she was likely to be carrying a concealed revolver.

Well known as a militant fighter for civil rights, she is a friend of Robert F. Williams, the Monroe Negro leader who, after eluding the FBI on the same "kidnap" frame-up, has been granted political asylum in Cuba. A supporter of Williams' newsletter, *The Crusader*, she had several times gone to Monroe to assist him with its publication.



December 26, 1936

Within several weeks the 75th Congress will be in session. Those workers who supported Roosevelt and the Democratic party in the recent election are due for a rude awakening.

Now that the election is safely over and labor's votes no longer needed, Roosevelt is showing his true colors. The drastic slash in the W.P.A. rolls is a case in point. Pious speeches on peace are indeed made in South America, but at the same time new war vessels are launched and authorized at home.

Labor's hopes of legislative gains are dimmed by Roosevelt's growing beliefs that recovery has already taken place, and that prosperity is now at hand. For those who accept those beliefs, there is no further need of emergency measures, regardless of the presence of 10,000,000 unemployed.

René González released

Continued from front page

Philip Horowitz.

The U.S. government prevented his wife, Olga Salanueva, and his mother, Irma Schwerert, from being present. The State Department refused to grant Schwerert a visa in time to travel. Salanueva has not been allowed to enter the country or see her husband since the U.S. government deported her in 2000.

González, who was released in the custody of his lawyer, was ordered to report to Federal District Court in Miami on October 11 for a probation hearing.

González is the first of the Cuban Five to be released after serving more than 13 years in jail for “general conspiracy” and “failure to register as a foreign agent.” The other four are Gerardo Hernández, Antonio Guerrero, Ramón Labañino and Fernando González.

The five were living and working in southern Florida gathering information for the Cuban government on the activities of counterrevolutionary groups with a long history of violent and at time murderous attacks against Cuba, as well as supporters of the Cuban Revolution in the U.S. and elsewhere. The organizations have for years operated from bases on U.S. soil with impunity.

In 1998 the five were arrested in highly publicized FBI raids. After being held for almost 17 months in solitary confinement, they were tried and convicted in 2001 on a range of trumped-up charges, including conspiracy to commit espionage and, in the case of Hernández, of

conspiracy to commit murder. The revolutionaries were given sentences ranging from 15 years in the case of René González to double life plus 15 years for Hernández.

González, who holds dual Cuban and U.S. citizenship, was also sentenced to serve three years of “supervised release.” It is common for citizens of another country to be allowed to return to their own country to serve probation.

On September 16, however, U.S. District Judge Joan Lenard rejected as “premature” a motion from René González that he be allowed to return to Cuba while on parole. Lenard presided over the 2001 trial, and imposed the supervised release as part of his sentence.

González’s lawyer Horowitz said he plans to file a new motion arguing for González to be allowed to return to Cuba.

On October 11 several prominent members of Actors and Artists United for the Freedom of the Cuban Five sent a letter to President Barack Obama asking for René González’s immediate and safe return to his wife and family in Cuba. Among the signatories are Edward Asner, Jackson Browne, Peter Coyote, James Cromwell, Mike Farrell, Danny Glover, Elliot Gould, Bonnie Raitt and Susan Sarandon.

Last month Bill Richardson, former governor of New Mexico, traveled to Havana on what he said was a personal trip and presented an “unofficial” offer by Washington to waive René González’s supervised release in the



Cuban revolutionary René González, center, with youngest daughter Ivette and father Cándido, shortly following his October 7 release after 13 years in U.S. prison on frame-up charges.

U.S. in exchange for an agreement by the Cuban government to release Alan Gross, a U.S. citizen serving a 15-year sentence in Cuba for distributing satellite equipment as part of a covert State Department operation to undermine the Cuban Revolution.

Cuba rejected Richardson’s proposition after he arrogantly vowed to stay in Cuba until he met Gross, who he described as a “hostage” of Cuba.

In an October 9 interview in Mexico, Ricardo Alarcón, president of Cuba’s National Assembly, told the Associated Press that it would be unreasonable to expect “a unilateral gesture” to release Gross.

“I can’t believe someone would seriously think that there could be a negotia-

tion,” said Alarcón, equating González, “a man who was about to complete his sentence . . . and a man who is just about to start serving his.”

In a September 23 interview in the *New York Times*, Cuban Foreign Minister Bruno Rodríguez Parrilla spelled out Cuba’s position on the matter: “I do not see any way in which we can move on toward a solution of the Mr. Gross case but from a humanitarian point of view and on the basis of reciprocity.”

“René would never accept being exchanged, leaving his comrades in prison,” said his wife Olga Salanueva to BBC Mundo last week. “We would be more than thrilled to see the Cuban Five return home. If the cost is freeing Gross, then fine. But for the five.”

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Paprika workers in New Zealand fight layoffs

BY FELICITY COGGAN

WARKWORTH, New Zealand— “We won something instead of nothing,” said Botau Retire, union delegate for the Northern Amalgamated Workers Union, referring to a fight here against layoffs at Southern Paprika.

The workers accepted a deal in which 13 would be laid off, but will be rehired in November as permanent seasonal workers for five to nine months each year. All will receive severance payments.

Southern Paprika employs nearly 70 people in this small town, an hour’s drive north of Auckland. The company grows, grades and packs capsicum, mainly for export to Japan. Most of the workers are immi-

grants from the South Pacific islands of Kiribati and Tuvalu.

Retire, 22, has worked for Southern Paprika for two and a half years. Last year in response to discrepancies in bonus payments and abusive treatment, he decided to join a union. A Google search brought up the Amalgamated Workers Union and he joined online. A further 25 joined after an open meeting organized by the union at the plant, though numbers have dropped since under company intimidation. Ten of those who will be laid off are union members.

Workers also were angered by a text message received on a company cellphone earlier this year. It said, “The best Christmas present I could have would be a black man swinging

from a tree.” No one was ever held responsible for the incident.

Workers planned their fight through meetings at the plant open to both union and nonunion workers and at a public meeting in town September 14, organized together with the local Kiribati community.

Puna Tokia, 29, who was laid off, said he doesn’t feel secure under the new arrangement. There is no money to send back to his family in Kiribati and he is worried the redundancy money (unemployment payments) will run out before he goes back to work. “It seems unfair—just because we joined the union,” he said.

Baskaran Appu contributed to this article.

For further reading . . .

United States vs The Cuban Five:
A Judicial Cover-up

by Dr. Rodolfo Dávalos Fernández



From start to finish, the proceedings were tainted, corrupt, null and void, vindictive. Every right of the accused to ‘due process of law’ was flouted.

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Articles from pages
of the *Militant*

Contact distributors listed on page 8
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‘Blood money’ turned over to ‘help build the party’

Writing from Houston, Jacquie Henderson reports sending \$52 to the Socialist Workers Party’s Capital Fund that she received as an “attendance bonus” from the bosses at the machine shop where she works.

“This is the blood money that we get if we miss not one minute of work,” writes Henderson. “We work a mandatory six days a week. I was too new on the job to disqualify myself from the ‘bonus’ last month, so I’m sending it to help build the party.”

Blood money is a term communist workers use to describe so-called bonus payments handed out by capitalist owners or their government as bribes, most often to press workers into accepting speedup, wage cuts, concession contracts, and dangerous work conditions. The Capital Fund helps finance long-range plans of the party.

Often opportunities for these contributions come from unexpected sources. “A weird windfall” is how Wendy Lyons from Los Angeles described her recent donation to the fund. She was helping some friends find an apartment. “I asked a landlord next door to me if she had any apartments in the neighborhood for rent,” writes Lyons. “Turned out she had quite a few empty places. The landlord said she would give me \$300 if they took the apartment. They got the apartment and the party gets the \$300.”

—BRIAN WILLIAMS

‘Occupy Wall St.’ actions spread to cities across US

Draw thousands affected by capitalist crisis

BY SETH GALINSKY
AND RUTH ROBINETT

NEW YORK—Thousands of young people, students, middle-class layers, and workers—both employed and jobless—have joined Occupy Wall Street protests here over the last several weeks. Zuccotti Park, a few block’s from the Wall Street financial district, has become a magnet for those who are being battered by the capitalist economic crisis and are looking to do something about it.

Some come just for a few hours, others have been camped out in the square for days or weeks. One university student from Virginia skipped classes and hitchhiked to New York to take part. Forty students from the University of Kentucky raised thousands of dollars to join the action for a few days.

United in opposition to Wall Street as a symbol of capitalist greed, participants represent a wide spectrum of political views. Handmade signs abound, often colorfully reflecting its wielder’s personal experience: “College degree=Unemployment. Thanks Wall Street,” “I am a social worker student who owes \$60,000 in loans. I am the 99%,” and “F*** your unpaid internship.” A smattering of conspiracy theorists and a fringe of rightists are also present promoting their nostrums.

Inspired by the protest, similar actions have spread to cities and towns throughout the United States, tapping into a growing sentiment that something is wrong and needs to change. Under the Occupy Wall Street banner, many have joined in labor protests: from demonstrations in support of laid-off school aides, postal workers, and building workers in New York to rallies backing locked-out sugar workers in the Upper Midwest.

“I used to think the government had my best interests in mind, but now I know that’s not true,” Fashion Institute

of Technology student Steven Robinson told the *Militant*.

“We need more jobs, cheaper tuition for college, higher wages,” said Marcio Martinez, a recent high school graduate.

Stacey Taylor and her husband are truck drivers who came from southern Indiana to join the protests. “We pay our share of taxes and the top 1 percent doesn’t,” she said.

Occupy Wall Street began September 17 as an open-ended protest in response to a call by Adbusters, an anarchist collective in Canada. Adbusters states it is a “global network of artists, activists, writers, pranksters, students, educators and entrepreneurs” whose aim is to “topple existing power structures and forge a major shift in the way” we live.

The first day of protest attracted about 2,000 people. When New York police wouldn’t allow the demonstrators to protest on Wall Street, they set up camp instead a few blocks away at Zuccotti Park, where hundreds slept overnight.

The protest gained momentum after cops arrested 80 demonstrators during a September 24 march and were videotaped attacking several women with pepper spray.

The arrests and police brutality, instead of intimidating the protesters, gave them a boost and won broad sympathy. More started streaming in from all over the country.

In the largest action so far, some 10,000 people joined an October 5 march organized by unions in solidarity with Occupy Wall Street. Among others, the protest was actively built by groups forming part of the Democratic Party’s left wing, including the Working Families Party and MoveOn.org.

The second issue of *The Occupied Wall Street Journal*, a four-color broadsheet, responded to criticism that the organizers had raised what they are



Militant/Paul Mailhot

Occupy Wall Street demonstration in Zuccotti Park in Lower Manhattan October 11.

against, but not any clear demands of what they are for. “No list of demands” was the headline of the editorial note. Arguing that the occupation itself is the goal, the paper said, “We are speaking to each other, and listening. This occupation is first about participation.”

‘Millionaires March’

On October 11, Occupy Wall Street organized a “Millionaires March” up 5th and Park avenues outside the homes of the owners and CEOs of several banks and large corporations.

Referring to a 2 percent New York tax on millionaires that will expire in December, Occupy Wall Street organizer Doug Forand told the press, “This is fiscally, economically, and morally wrong.”

“The American people understand that not everybody has been following the rules; that Wall Street is an example of that,” President Barack Obama said of the protests. Obama and other Democratic Party figures have been demagogically arguing that the problem is Republican opposition to “sharing” the

burdens of the economic crisis.

“So far the Wall Street Occupiers have helped the Democratic Party,” said Robert Reich, former labor secretary in the William Clinton administration. “Their inchoate demand that the rich pay their fair share is tailor-made for the Democrats’ new plan for a 5.6 percent tax on millionaires.” To get the Democrats to fight for the plan “pressure from the left is critically important,” he said.

Some conservative politicians and papers have attacked the protests, others have taken a more careful, muted stance.

According to the *Wall Street Journal*, Republican presidential candidates Ron Paul and Rick Santorum “empathize with the protesters’ frustration but they don’t agree with all of their goals.” But not Republican candidate Herman Cain. “If you don’t have a job and you’re not rich, blame yourself,” he said.

Many of those participating in Occupy Wall Street actions around the country are open to working-class politics and are attracted to unfolding struggles by workers.

Socialist Workers Party members have sold dozens of subscriptions to the *Militant*, hundreds of single copies of the paper, as well as literature from Pathfinder Press, at rallies and encampments in New York and around the country.

These activities have become fertile ground for discussing the need for working people to resist the mounting attacks by the bosses and their government, and to organize a movement that can wrest political power from the exploiters and reconstruct society on foundations of human solidarity, not profit for a few.

Afghanistan: Ten years of imperialist war

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

On the eve of the 10th anniversary of Washington’s invasion of Afghanistan, hundreds of people marched through the streets of Kabul, the capital, demanding the immediate withdrawal of U.S. and NATO troops from the country.

At the October 6 action demonstrators chanted “No to occupation” and “Americans out,” and denounced a proposed strategic cooperation agreement permanently establishing U.S. military bases in the country.

The Pentagon currently has 92,000 troops stationed in Afghanistan. Nearly 39,000 additional soldiers from 48 other countries are also part of the NATO force there, commanded by U.S. Gen. John Allen.

“The United States said it came to help the Afghan people,” Farzana, a 22-year-old woman, told Associated Press. “All it has left behind

is the blood of the Afghan people. We want the U.S. to leave.”

Meanwhile in Iraq, the U.S. and Iraqi governments have yet to sign an agreement on a long-term U.S. military presence there as the end of the year deadline approaches and 43,500 U.S. troops remain. The Iraqi government agreed

they want U.S. troops to stay but without their previous immunity from prosecution under Iraqi law, an unacceptable caveat for Washington.

“Any kind of U.S. presence demands that we protect and provide the appropriate immunity for our soldiers,” said Defense Secretary Leon Panetta.



Hundreds of people marched through streets of Kabul October 6, marking 10th anniversary of U.S. invasion of Afghanistan, demanding immediate withdrawal of U.S. and NATO troops from the country.

Jack Barnes

**CAPITALISM'S
WORLD DISORDER**

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WORKING-CLASS POLITICS
AT THE MILLENNIUM

PathfinderPress.com

Crisis stems from rule of capitalists

The lives of hundreds of millions worldwide are being affected in myriad ways by the ruinous consequences of a brewing crisis of historic magnitude. Underlying this crisis is the contraction of production, trade and employment throughout the world capitalist economy.

In the U.S alone since 2007, household income has gone through its largest decline in decades. Nearly 26 million workers are without full-time jobs and the average period of unemployment has nearly tripled since 2007.

In addition to shrinking paychecks, layoff notices or health care or pension cancellations from the boss, many workers also face the growing burden of unpayable debts from home mortgages to college loans, marked as “assets” in bank ledgers that are packaged and sold in ponzi schemes promising handsome return for the propertied owners.

Facing declining profits in production, capitalists seek other avenues to maximize returns. Instead of investing in expanding productive capacity, they blow up debt balloons fueled by investment in increasingly complex and leveraged “financial instruments.”

As the world financial system becomes increasingly unstable and begins to shake, the crisis appears to be rooted in banking and finance. But this is not the source of the problem; it is merely a symptom.

Layoffs and shutdowns mount alongside the growing necessity and ability to increase production. The problem is not something gone awry with capitalism or of excesses that need to be regulated

and checked by a correct government policy. Capitalism is functioning the only way it can; the crisis is a product of its natural and lawful workings.

The owners of the factories, mines, mills, land, etc. who buy and sell the labor power of the toiling majority hold political power and use *their* government to advance *their* interests.

Layers of working people in the United States—from sugar workers in the Upper Midwest to dockworkers in the state of Washington and others—are resisting the drive by the employing class to roll back living standards and job conditions and deal blows to the unions in order to boost their profit margins.

Tens of millions of workers, farmers, and youth—from Greece, Spain, and elsewhere across Europe; to villages, towns, and cities in Asia, Africa, and the Americas; to Wall Street and across the U.S.—are recognizing the miserable future capitalism offers them, a future of economic devastation, stepped-up assaults on political rights to organize, and spreading bloody imperialist wars.

As long as workers’ confidence and practice of solidarity continues to grow as a result of these struggles, we get stronger. “Now and again the workers are victorious, but only for a time,” says the *Communist Manifesto*. “The real fruit of their battles lies not in the immediate result, but in the ever-expanding union of the workers.”

It’s today’s struggles that will lay the basis for forging a mass working-class movement capable of wresting power from the hands of the capitalist rulers and building a society based on human needs and solidarity, not profits.

Locked-out sugar workers ‘not alone’

Continued from front page

Association released a statement urging its members to participate in the action: “The lockout began August 1st, pushing these hardworking folks out onto the streets since that time. The Moorhead units’ initiative shows the importance of strength and unity across all unions. If it happens to them, it could happen to us.”

By a margin of 96 percent, more than 1,200 members of the Bakery, Confectionery, Tobacco Workers and Grain Millers International Union at sugar plants concentrated in the Red River Valley region of Minnesota and North Dakota voted to reject the company’s “final” offer July 30. The contract included concessions in wages and health benefits as well as stipulations that would allow the company to increasingly contract out union jobs.

In response, American Crystal locked out all union workers at its five factories in Minnesota (Crookston, Moorhead, and East Grand Forks) and North Dakota (Hillsboro and Drayton), as well as two small plants in Chaska, Minn., and Mason City, Iowa.

Before the lockout began, the company made plans with Strom Engineering, a scab-herding outfit, to bring in hundreds of replacement workers, who have been working in the plants for more than two months now.

Several postal workers came to show their support on the bridge. “Right now the government is threatening to close 66 post offices down in rural Minnesota,” said Richard Veller, a mail clerk and member of the American Postal Workers Union. “Many retired workers and farmers depend on the post office. That’s where a lot of them get their medicines.”

Several young people involved in recent protests in “Occupy Fargo-Moorhead” also came to show their solidarity.

“American Sugar is trying to shove this contract down our throats,” said Terry Johnson, who works at the plant in Moorhead.

One of the main issues for workers is American Crystal’s drive to weaken the union by contracting out jobs. American Crystal is pressing for the right to subcontract work in situations where “the

Company does not own equipment to perform the work,” where union members lack necessary skills, and where there are not enough union workers—instead of simply having the equipment and training and hiring union workers.

“If we accepted this language, it would destroy the union,” said Brad Nelson, vice president of the BCTGM local in Drayton.

The sugar beet industry in the Red River Valley is dominated by large capitalist farms, providing the company a substantial base of support among beet farmers.

Nonetheless, last week the *Militant* reported than an anonymous farmer donated 2,000 pounds of potatoes to the union. Since then this farmer has donated another 2,000 pounds, which the union delivered this past week to embattled workers in Drayton and Hillsboro where the state government denies unemployment compensation to locked-out workers.

Sugar workers win solidarity

The BCTGM union continues to reach out for and receive solidarity. The workers are sending delegations to speak before the Minneapolis and St. Paul Regional Labor federations October 12.

“A motion was made and carried at our last union meeting that we will be sending a \$1,000 donation,” said Stephen Lech, who was a leader in the fight by United Steelworkers Local 7-669 against a 14-month lockout by Honeywell at its uranium plant in Metropolis, Ill.

“It’s important for the members of the BCTGM locals in Minnesota and North Dakota to know they’re not alone in their struggle. We didn’t forget about the solidarity shown to us during our lockout and we want to show the same solidarity to the sugar workers.

“We learned that our 14 months on the picket line wasn’t in vain. We were proud to take a stand and have no regrets we held out. We’re aware of their struggle and we’re thinking about them.”

Donations can be sent to BCTGM Local 167G, 100 N 3rd, Suite 50, Grand Forks, ND 58203. Write checks to BCTGM 167G with “2011 BCTGM lockout” in the memo line.

‘No recovery’

Continued from front page

Times. The overall decline is the largest in decades.

Over the past several years the employment and wage gap between men and women has narrowed. This is not because of gains being made by women, however, but because of a relatively faster decline in jobs and wages for men, as the bosses seek to profit off the lower price they can pay for the labor of women. Median earnings for men fell by 6 percent from 2007 to 2010, according to the American Human Development Project, while women’s income declined 0.9 percent.

Nearly 26 million workers in the U.S. are without full-time jobs, according to Labor Department statistics. In addition to 14 million listed as officially unemployed, another 9.3 million—an increase of nearly 450,000 from the previous month—have been forced into part-time hours, and another 2.5 million aren’t counted because the government says they’re not looking for work.

The official unemployment rate has hovered at or above 9 percent for over the past two years. But real unemployment is much higher—almost 23 percent if you figure it the way the government used to before 1994 when the Clinton administration rejiggered employment statistics.

About half the 103,000 new jobs the government claims were created in September include 45,000 striking Verizon workers returning to work.

Those unemployed long-term have been rising to record levels. The average length of time a person was unemployed jumped from 16.6 weeks in December 2007 when the recession began to 40.5 weeks this past September, the longest in more than 60 years, according to government figures.

Capitalist rulers are trimming their expenses to ensure uninterrupted payments to bondholders. State and local governments cut 90,000 jobs in the past quarter, reported CNN. Despite increased enrollment, “278,000 teachers and other public school employees have lost their jobs since the recession began in December 2007,” noted an October 8 *New York Times* editorial.

The rising debt crisis of the government and financial institutions is marked by declining production. “The global manufacturing sector is in its worst shape since the summer of 2009, as slowing economic growth and the deepening eurozone crisis takes their toll on the world’s factories,” reported the *Financial Times*.

Capitalists are holding back from spending while sitting on large cash reserves because investments in plants and equipment do not bring sufficient return. U.S. businesses have raised cash reserves to 6 percent of their total assets, the highest level since at least 1952, while their spending on new equipment is the lowest since the late 1950s, Doug Cliggott, from Credit Suisse told the *Times*.

This declining investment in production is part of a decades-long trend that has gone hand in hand with the expansion of ever more complicated and risky speculation in stocks, derivatives, mortgage-backed securities, and other forms of fictitious capital as the propertied rulers invest in whatever brings the highest return.

Meanwhile, about one in five homeowners nationwide owe mortgages greater than what their homes are currently worth. This is true of nearly half of all homes in Arizona. In that state Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, the now government-controlled financial agencies that fund more than 70 percent of home mortgages, have declined to forgive even small amounts of mortgage debt in a program in which federal funds would cover half the losses.

The two mortgage giants are among the highly leveraged and increasingly concentrated financial institutions deemed “too big to fail,” whom the government has moved to prop up by absorbing billions of dollars in losses.

As John Hussman, an economic analyst and investment fund manager, wrote in early October: “To say that Bank of America can’t be allowed to ‘fail’ is really simply to say that Bank of America’s bondholders can’t be allowed to experience a loss.”