

THE MILITANT

INSIDE

Cuba's internationalist mission in Angola
discussed at Havana book fair
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A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

VOL. 77/NO. 8 MARCH 4, 2013

New readers help win more subscribers to 'Militant'

BY LOUIS MARTIN

"I love that paper. It's for people without a voice," said subscriber Chaba Doye when visited by *Militant* supporters Tamar Rosenfeld and Bernie Senter Feb. 17 in the Harlem neighborhood of New York City.

EXPANDING READERSHIP DOOR TO DOOR

Doye said a friend of hers comes by each week to borrow the paper when it arrives, asking "Did you get the paper yet?"

"I'll have to get her to subscribe too, so I can get my papers back," said Doye, who bought three books on special for subscribers. (See ad on page 3 for the eight books on special with a *Militant* subscription.)

In the first 10 days of a five-week international campaign to sell at least
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Winter 'Militant' subscription campaign Feb. 9 - March 18 (week 1)

Country	quota	sold	%	1,950
UNITED STATES				
Miami	60	21	35%	
San Francisco	120	37	31%	
Houston	100	25	25%	
Washington	65	15	23%	
Chicago	130	29	22%	
Des Moines	100	22	22%	
Omaha	50	11	22%	
New York	300	63	21%	
Lincoln	15	3	20%	
Los Angeles	120	24	20%	
Twin Cities	100	20	20%	
Atlanta	115	21	18%	
Seattle	115	16	14%	
Philadelphia	85	11	13%	
Boston	65	8	12%	
Total U.S.	1540	326	21%	
Prisoners	15	4	27%	
UNITED KINGDOM				
London	100	19	19%	Should be
Manchester	50	17	34%
UK Total	150	36	24%	
NEW ZEALAND	60	13	22%	408
CANADA	70	15	21%	
AUSTRALIA	55	14	25%	
Total	1890	408	21%	
Should be	1950	507	26%	

Crisis grinds on workers as Europe production declines

Gov't 'austerity' hits hardest in Greece, Spain



Louisa Gouliamaki/AFP/Getty

Seamen at Greece's Piraeus port Feb. 6, day that riot police forced end to strike. Workers in Greece are among hardest hit as propertied rulers in Europe make workers pay for their crisis.

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

Manufacturing output is declining throughout Europe, making any economic recovery or improvement in the conditions of working people there very unlikely in the near term.

In the last quarter of 2012, gross domestic product, a measure of goods and services, declined throughout the eurozone at its fastest pace in four years, affecting all 17 nations in the

currency and trade bloc.

World trade slowed last year with major export-driven economies like Japan and Germany shipping less than in 2011. Imports to many countries of Europe from the U.S. also fell
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NYC school bus union officials suspend strike

BY SETH GALINSKY

NEW YORK—One month after it began, officials of Amalgamated Transit Union Local 1181 on Feb. 15 called off the strike here by 8,800 school bus drivers, attendants and mechanics.

Union members voted to strike after city officials announced that Employee Protection Provisions that

SOLIDARITY WITH SCHOOL BUS WORKERS! —editorial, p. 9

were won in a hard-fought strike 34 years ago were now "illegal." The strike ended with Mayor Michael Bloomberg, whose term expires in the fall, refusing to budge an inch.

Under the provisions, private companies the city hires to run all the school bus routes have to hire laid-off workers with seniority and wages intact before hiring off the street, regardless of which company workers were laid off from. Without the provi-

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'State of Union': Obama offers no plan to alleviate unemployment

BY JOHN STUDER

President Barack Obama's Feb. 12 State of the Union speech, a follow up to his Jan. 21 second Inaugural Address, proposed nothing to address workers' concerns about joblessness and other grinding effects of the worldwide crisis of capitalism.

COMMENTARY

Among the most striking things in face of persistently high unemployment is the lack of any consideration on the part of the Obama administration, or any other politician, of a government-funded public works program to put millions back to work, or any other measures to alleviate the burdens workers face.

In sharp contrast, presidents Franklin D. Roosevelt in the second half of the 1930s and Harry Truman after the end of World War II projected significant jobs programs as
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Omaha: Socialist Workers Party files for ballot in mayor, city council races



Militant/Candace Wagner

Fox 42's Curtis Casper interviews Maura DeLuca, SWP candidate for Omaha mayor, Feb. 19.

BY SARA LOBMAN

OMAHA, Neb.—"It's about building a movement of working people. We need to organize independently of the Democrats and Republicans," Maura DeLuca, Socialist Workers Party candidate for mayor here, told Curtis Casper, who interviewed her for Fox 42-TV Feb. 19 as she filed more than 2,200 signatures to be placed on the ballot.

"It's the only way workers have won anything in the past—from the Civil Rights movement to the fight for the 40-hour week," she said.

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Asia: Working class grows with spread of capitalist production

BY EMMA JOHNSON

In recent decades, the development of capitalism in Asia has drawn hundreds of millions into the industrial working class, bringing with it new social contradictions, sharpening class antagonisms and a growth of the potential gravediggers of capitalism.

This accelerated process began more than three decades ago with garment and other light industry in China, spurred by the expanded use of market methods and foreign capital investment.

More recently some of these industries have been shifting to a number of other Asian countries, where capital is being drawn to cheaper sources of labor. The trends have been given some impetus by rising wages in China as a result of workers’ struggles there. At the same time, the class struggle has followed wherever capital creates new industrial centers.

U.S. menswear retailer Jos. A Banks Clothiers Inc. has moved some manufacturing from China to cheaper locations in Asia, such as Indonesia. “The garment business always moves around the developing world,” CEO Neal Black told the *Wall Street Journal* March 13. “It brings jobs, those people become skilled and then move on to products like electronics.”

“So many foreign companies are competing for workers we wish the population would double,” Larry Kao, general manager of MedTecs, a Taiwanese company, which produces surgical suits at its 4,000-employee factory in the central lowlands of Cambodia near Vietnam, said to the *Financial Times* Jan. 13.

Four Seasons Fashions Ltd. is looking to move elsewhere after 20 years in China. “In Bangladesh the average monthly salary for garment workers is only around \$70 to \$100. If I produce here, price is much more competitive,” owner Rosa Dada told the BBC Aug. 29. She said wages in her factory in China have now reached \$400 to \$500.

In 1977 there were eight garment factories in Bangladesh. Today there are 4,500, employing 3.6 million workers, most of whom are women. The growth of the industry is at the center of capitalist development in Bangladesh, today comprising 80 percent of its exports, second only to China.

After large protests in 2010, the minimum wage was raised from \$20 to \$37. In June 2012 workers demonstrated for a further increase of 50 percent. For five days they clashed with police who used tear gas, rubber bullets and water cannons. All 300 factories in the industrial zone of Ashulia, on the outskirts of Dhaka, the capital, were shut down.

Cambodia: Garment workers strike

Cambodia had no garment industry until the mid-1990s. In 2010 it made up 70 to 80 percent of the country’s manufacturing exports and employs 50 percent of the manufacturing workforce, with 327,000 workers.

Social changes developing in the wake of capitalist expansion include an uprooting of the material basis for traditional dependent and home-bound roles of women.

About 90 percent of Cambodian garment workers are women from rural



Reuters/Chor Sokunthea

Workers on strike at Pine Great Garment plant in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, Sept. 15, 2010.

villages, uprooted from life in the countryside and thrown into large production centers primarily around the capital Phnom Penh and along the Thai border. Remittances to their families sustain an estimated 20 percent of the country’s 14 million people.

Over the past three years a number of strikes have taken place. The government raised the minimum wage from \$50 to \$61 a month in July 2010. Two months later 200,000 workers went on strike demanding \$93.

In May last year 5,000 workers at Singapore-owned SL Garment Processing Ltd. walked out of its Phnom Penh factory demanding a raise of monthly wages to \$91, an increase of \$30. They have a nominal eight-hour day six days a week, but are often required to work their day off, do 16-hour days and get no sick pay.

Today wages in the industry have risen to \$110-\$130 a month compared to \$85-\$100 three years ago. Food and rent in Phnom Penh can be up to \$80.

One feature of the recent and rapid expansion of capitalist industry in parts of Asia—and historically other less developed nations where this occurs—is its concentration, the size of the enterprises themselves.

The average size of garment factories is 1,000 workers in Cambodia and 800 in Bangladesh, with many having thousands working side by side.

Indonesia is Southeast Asia’s biggest economy and has grown rapidly over the last decade. During 2012 there were dozens of major strikes, centered mainly on demands for higher wages and a ban on hiring temporary workers. Hundreds of thousands of workers participated in a national strike Oct. 3, the first such action in nearly half a century. In November thousands of workers rallied outside parliament protesting a new social security law that will require them to pay for health services.

Factory workers earn an average basic salary of \$120 a month. Following protests, the new governor of Jakarta, the capital, agreed in November to raise the minimum wage from \$158 to \$228.

On Feb. 6, hundreds of workers rallied outside Jakarta City Hall, pressing the governor to force companies to pay the new wage, which many bosses have refused to do.

Malaysia’s first-ever minimum wage was just implemented. The government of Thailand raised the minimum wage in seven provinces last year by as much as 40 percent.

Meanwhile, electronics giant Foxconn, with 1.2 million employed in China, announced Feb. 2 that unions will be allowed at its factories and elections will take place at all of them during this year. The company has faced ongoing battles and skirmishes with workers since 2009.

THE MILITANT

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Sunca
Construction workers in Uruguay march for job safety after Jan. 29 death of coworker.

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Submissions to the *Militant* may be published in the newspaper in print and digital format. By submitting, authors represent that their submissions are original and consent to publication in this manner.

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

Subscription campaign

Continued from front page

1,950 subscriptions along with hundreds of books, supporters of the socialist newsweekly have signed up 408 readers, the great majority by going door to door in working-class neighborhoods.

During this same period, four workers behind bars subscribed to the workers' paper, prompting us once again to adopt a goal for prisoners as part of the effort. (See chart on front page.)

Doye is not the only *Militant* reader taking initiatives on her own to help circulate the paper.

"At first, I was going to brush you ladies off," said Hester Perryman-el, 39, when Betsy Farley and Alyson Kennedy knocked on her door in a high-rise apartment building in Chicago.

"But then I saw 'The Militant' on the paper and said, 'Wait a minute now.' For me this means sometimes you have to bend the system and not be part of a ma-

chine all of the time," she said.

After signing up, Perryman-el called her neighbor to tell her about the paper. Getting no answer, she bought a subscription for her anyway, sure that she would like it.

"When Terani Puangi renewed her subscription, she said two patients at the Maori health clinic where she works regularly read copies of the paper she brings," wrote Janet Roth from Auckland, New Zealand. Puangi subscribed when *Militant* supporters knocked on her door last fall.

Some 3,350 subscriptions and hundreds of books were sold during the fall effort and now many of these subscriptions are expiring. *Militant* supporters visit these readers to see if they would like to renew, to show them the books on special offer and to talk about how they can help win new readers among friends, neighbors, relatives and co-workers.

When Joanne Lachance checked out an article written by a *Militant* supporter who came to her door in a working-class neighborhood of Montreal, she asked if *Militant* writers are professional journalists.

After learning that the articles are written by ordinary workers, she said, "That means I could send an article on the day care workers strike or the actions on unemployment? I like that."

"The Miami-Dade schools want to contract out our positions to a private company, which wants to take away our



Militant/Michael Fitzsimmons

***Militant* subscriber Abel Gonzales (second from right) talks with Amanda Ulman, Katina Matthews and Jacquie Henderson, SWP candidate for Texas Senate, 6th District. The three visited Gonzales while selling *Militant* and books to workers door to door in Houston.**

benefits and pay flat wages—take it or leave it," said James, a custodian at a public elementary school in Miami, after seeing the *Militant's* coverage on the school bus workers' fight in New York. He asked that his last name not be used for fear of reprisal at work. He bought a subscription when supporters of the paper came to his door.

"What other jobs are you going to get right now?" asked James, adding that his workload has been increasing because the schools haven't been replacing workers who retire.

During the course of their recently concluded strike against United Natural Foods Inc., 14 members of Teamsters Local 117 subscribed to the paper, and strikers bought seven books on special offer, John Naubert reported from Seattle.

Katina Matthews met fellow *Militant* reader Abel Gonzales for the first time as she was campaigning door to door in

her neighborhood with Amanda Ulman and Jacquie Henderson, Socialist Workers Party candidate for Texas Senate. Gonzales and Matthews both subscribed to the paper during the fall drive.

"We can't let them intimidate us. I learned that from my experience organizing unions when I was a little younger," said Gonzales, who also talked about having to deal with racist violence against anyone considered Mexican when he was growing up in Texas.

Continue sending your reports, comments and photos by 9 a.m. EST every Monday.

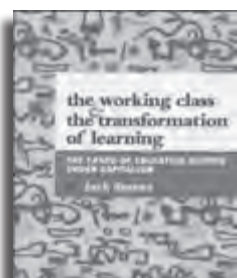
And if you want to join the effort to expand the readership of the socialist newsweekly, you can contact a distributor in your area listed on page 8, or contact the *Militant* to order a bundle at themilitant@mac.com or (212) 244-4899.



Militant/Dan Fein

"I'm revolutionary. That's right up my alley," Glenny Taveras (right) said when she got a subscription after Deborah Liatos knocked on her door in Far Rockaway, Queens, Feb. 16.

Special offers with 'Militant' subscription



The Working Class and the Transformation of Learning

The Fraud of Education Reform Under Capitalism
by Jack Barnes

\$2 with a subscription to the Militant (usually \$3)



Malcolm X, Black Liberation, and the Road to Workers Power

by Jack Barnes

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by Thomas Sankara

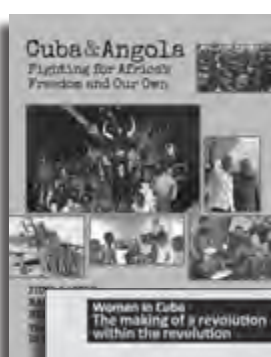
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Who They Are, Why They Were Framed, Why They Should Be Free

from pages of the Militant

\$3 with subscription (usually \$5)



Women and Revolution

The Living Example of the Cuban Revolution

by Asela de los Santos, Mary-Alice Waters and others

Publication offer: \$5 till March 31
\$3 with subscription (usually \$7)

—MILITANT LABOR FORUMS—

CALIFORNIA

San Francisco

Cuba and Angola: Cuba's Fight for Africa's Freedom and Their Own. Speaker: Betsey Stone, Socialist Workers Party. Fri., March 1, 7:30 p.m. 5482 Mission St. Tel.: (415) 584-2135.

CANADA

Montreal

Fight for a Massive Jobs Creation Program. Speaker: Beverly Bernardo, Communist League. Fri., March 1, 7:30 p.m. 7107 St-Denis, room 204. Tel.: (514) 272-5840.

AUSTRALIA

Sydney

Why the Working Class is Both Target of—and Solution to—Capitalism's Crisis. Speaker: Ron Poulsen, Communist League candidate for Senate in Sept. 14 federal elections. Sat., March 2, 6:30 p.m. Reception followed by program. Donation: \$5 waged, \$3 unwaged. *Upstairs, 218-287 Beamish St., Campsie.* Tel.: (612) 9718-9698.

—CALENDAR—

CONNECTICUT

New London

Humor From My Pen. An exhibit of political cartoons by Gerardo Hernández, one of the Cuban 5. March 2-9. Opening reception: Sat., March 2, 6-9 p.m. Film and discussion to follow at 8 p.m. *Provenance Center, 165 State St.* Tel.: (860) 405-5887.

**See distributors
on page 8**

‘His goal is not to tally votes, but plant seeds of revolution’

‘LA Times’ interviews SWP candidate for mayor

BY JOHN STUDER

“L.A. mayoral candidate’s old-school revolutionary platform.” That’s the headline of a Feb. 5 article by Gale Holland on the Socialist Workers Party campaign of Norton Sandler that appeared on page two in the *Los Angeles Times*.

The article opens: “The Los Angeles headquarters of the Socialist Workers Party is a storefront next to a *taqueria* on Western Avenue. The concrete path behind it is ringed by concertina wire. On Saturday afternoon, a man unloaded Air Jordans onto the hood of his Buick Regal around the corner and hawked them to passersby.”

“I think she was trepidatious about being in a typical L.A. working-class neighborhood,” Sandler said in a Feb. 19 phone interview. “Workers reading the article will immediately pick up on the author’s anti-working-class bias. We got a good laugh out of the article with vendors in the area. The man who sells shoes was among the first who signed our petition for ballot status. I joked with him that he got free publicity. ‘Yeah, but they didn’t include my picture,’ he protested in jest.”

“Sandler’s campaign has barely registered with the body politic,” Holland wrote. “But that’s OK: His goal is not to tally up votes, but to plant the seeds of revolution.”

“It’s important to have labor and the working-class point of view in the election, because we’re in the midst of a crisis,” Sandler tells her. “We present a road forward ultimately for working people.”

“Sandler, 67, is graying, bespectacled and affable, bearing some resemblance to the Wizard of Oz,” Holland wrote. “After a middle-class upbringing in Denver, Sandler spent 40 years as a steelworker, punch press operator and boilermaker. Most recently, he has been assembling power boards for a small Los Angeles company.

“His campaign is largely built around door-to-door canvassing in South Los Angeles, Boyle Heights and other working-class neighborhoods. Sandler and his supporters are calling for a massive, government-funded jobs program to build hospitals, day care centers and clinics in the city.”

“Man, do they want to talk about the capitalist crisis,” Sandler told the reporter. “As the struggle heats up, you’ll find more and more people talking in class terms.”

Holland notes that Sandler joined the SWP when he was an activist in the Black rights and anti-Vietnam War movements. He watched how the party participated and helped lead these struggles and decided to join because he decided it was the best hope of getting the U.S. out of Vietnam.

Sandler tells Holland he enjoys living in Los Angeles. “It’s a gigantic, working-class city with all the contradictions this stage of history brought us,” he said.

“The Socialist Workers Party grew out of a schism in the worldwide communist movement over Stalin’s break with Bolshevik leader Leon Trotsky,

whom he ordered assassinated. But the party also has a long history of factionalism,” Holland opines.

“While a student at UC Berkeley, I witnessed the divisions firsthand. Party members directed much of their vitriol at other leftists who pushed a different political line,” she wrote.

Holland refers to a 2011 article in the *Militant*, it seems in an attempt to make Sandler and his party look foolish.

“He came in for a political spanking himself,” she wrote, “by the party newspaper—the *Militant*. Sandler had drafted an article about an L.A. teachers rally protesting layoffs and cuts in school funding. Editor Steve Clark not only refused to run the story, but also printed a stinging rebuttal of Sandler’s positions, suggesting they perpetuated a ‘bourgeois fable.’

“Sandler said he found the critique ‘very useful,’” she writes.

Clark’s article, “Higher Taxes or Layoffs of Teachers? A Fake Trade-Off” is available on the paper’s website, themilitant.com, in the June 6, 2011, issue.

The *Los Angeles Times* article



Militant/Arlene Rubinstein

Norton Sandler, SWP candidate for Los Angeles mayor, campaigns Nov. 23 at protest in Paramount, Calif., demanding higher wages and health care coverage for workers at Walmart.

helped get across the working-class course the SWP fights for in its campaigns, despite the fact that, according to Sandler, the author ignored much of what he said.

She omitted, for example, “the fact that we sell books door to door,” said Sandler. “I think she couldn’t grasp that working people are anxious and willing to read serious political books.”

“She also omitted the context of the quote attributed to me that ‘every bus bench is home in L.A. to some-

body,’” Sandler continued. “I was responding to negative comments she made about the economic situation in Cuba. ‘You won’t see that in Cuba,’ I pointed out.”

“By the way,” Sandler told the *Militant*, “we got an immediate unsolicited contribution in the mail of a significant amount from a reader of the *Los Angeles Times* from Northridge. When I called him up to talk, he told me it was the first time he had given to a political campaign and signed up for a subscription to the *Militant*.”

SWP candidates in Omaha file for ballot status

Continued from front page

“Working people need to fight for a massive, government-funded jobs program to put millions to work building roads, schools, hospitals and other things workers need,” DeLuca’s running mate, Jacob Perasso, told Fox TV. Perasso is the SWP candidate for City Council District 4.

The candidates filed 2,205 signatures for DeLuca and 260 for Perasso with the Douglas County Election Commission. The requirements are 1,000 signatures of registered voters for mayor and 100 for city council. The two top vote getters in the April 2 primary election for each office will face off in the general election on May 14.

“We wrapped up the petitioning effort Friday, with more than double the number of signatures needed for DeLuca and myself,” Perasso told the *Militant*. Most of the petitions were collected on the street outside shopping centers and other busy areas.

“The next morning a dozen campaign supporters—from Omaha and Lincoln, Neb., as well as Des Moines, Iowa, and New York City—were out on the streets again,” Perasso said. “This time we were going door to door in working-

class neighborhoods across the city, campaigning for the Socialist Workers Party ticket and introducing working people to the *Militant* newspaper and socialist books and pamphlets.”

On Saturday evening, campaign supporters and friends—including several who had recently been introduced to the campaign—gathered over a dinner prepared by volunteers to celebrate the successful completion of the petition drive. Candidates said a few words about the effort.

“I enjoyed listening to the candidates explain the reaction they got campaigning,” said Lelanie Long, who works with Perasso at a electronic assembly plant and subscribed to the *Militant* at the dinner.

“The petition effort puts us in a good position to meet and talk with thousands more workers over the coming weeks and months,” DeLuca told the *Militant*. “This weekend 19 people bought subscriptions to the paper. Several commented proudly that they had signed to put Perasso or me on the ballot in the preceding weeks.”

“On one block the team I was on met three meatpackers from two different factories. All of them said that they

and many coworkers are working short hours,” Perasso said. “They were interested in our explanation that the economic crisis was the result of the normal workings of capitalism and that working people, who have the opposite interests from the bosses, need to break with the Democratic and Republican parties in order to effectively fight in our own interests and for working-class political power.”

Nebraska has one of the lowest official unemployment rates in the country, second only to North Dakota. But even according to government statistics, there are still nearly 40,000 workers who cannot find work here.

“I was laid off from my job at an insurance company last October and haven’t been able to get another one,” Yajaira Valles told Maggie Trowe and Joe Swanson when they came to her door. “I watch kids at my home, now.” She signed up for a subscription.

“Chuck Guerra, from Des Moines, and I stopped by to visit Michelle Hollie, as we were taking the *Militant* door to door in her neighborhood,” DeLuca said. Hollie, a catering worker, has been reading the paper since December.

“I like the *Militant* because it lets you know what’s going on all over the world, not just here in America,” Hollie said. “It’s encouraging.”

“I already can think of two people I know who will want this paper,” Hollie added, taking a couple of subscription cards. “I was talking to my cousin in Minnesota last week and he said he just subscribed to it up there.”

“These books all look good,” Hollie said, looking over the Pathfinder Press books offered on special with a subscription. (See ad on p. 3.)

She invited us to come back Saturday when she’s having a cookout, DeLuca said. “She told us to bring the books and more papers.”



“Now and then the workers are victorious, but only for a time. The real fruit of their battles lies, not in the immediate result, but in the ever expanding union of the workers.”

—Karl Marx and Frederick Engels

Written in 1848, the *Communist Manifesto* explains why communism is the line of march of the working class toward power, “springing from an existing class struggle, a historical movement going on under our very eyes.”

www.pathfinderpress.com

ON THE PICKET LINE

Goodyear workers in France rally against plant closing

RUEIL-MALMAISON, France—About 1,000 workers, most from the North Amiens Goodyear plant, demonstrated in front of Goodyear France headquarters in this Paris suburb Feb. 12, protesting the projected closing of the factory.

The CGT union in the plant, which represents 86 percent of the 1,173 workers there, has been fighting threats to close the plant since 2007.

At that time Goodyear proposed making new investments in both its plants in Amiens, which lies 90 miles north of Paris, on the condition that workers there accept rolling shifts, effectively eliminating most weekends.

Unions at the South Amiens plant, where 1,000 workers are employed, accepted the deal, and in return management guaranteed them jobs through 2014. The CGT at the North Amiens plant refused.

“It’s not us who are the criminals, that’s the bosses of Goodyear and of Arcelor Mittal,” Mickaël Wamen, a CGT official at Goodyear, told the rally in response to statements by company officials. Arcelor Mittal is threatening to close its steel mill in Florange in the east of France.

Unionists from the mill were among dozens of others from some 20 factories and other workplaces fighting layoffs who joined the rally.

These included 60 striking workers from the Peugeot plant in Aulnay; 20 workers from the South Amiens plant; workers from the Goodyear plant in Montluçon; a Total refinery in Normandy; the Ford plant near Bordeaux; and a group of women laid off by the mail-order firm 3 Suisses.

French labor law requires meetings between unions and management before layoffs can begin. The CGT at Goodyear is planning another demonstration to coincide with the next meeting scheduled March 7.

—Claude Bleton
and Derek Jeffers

Thousands of coal miners strike in Colombia

For the first time in 22 years, workers at the Cerrejón open pit coal mine in Colombia went on strike Feb. 7. Among their central demands are better health care for miners and higher wages and protection for temporary workers.

El Cerrejón, owned by mining gi-

ants BHP Billiton, Anglo American, and Xstrata, is the largest open pit mine in the world. It is located in a rural area in the northeastern part of the country.

There are 3,700 permanent workers who are represented by the union and “also some 8,000 temporary workers,” National Union of Coal Industry Workers (Sintracarbón) Press Secretary Alvaro Enrique Frías told the *Militant* in a Feb. 16 phone interview from Guajira province. The union wants the temporary workers to be given the chance to become permanent workers. “They should at least get double the minimum wage,” he said.

“Our biggest problem is health care,” Frías said. “The health services offered look beautiful on paper, but the reality is different. The necessary infrastructure does not exist here to meet the needs of the workers.”

“There are 700 workers with silicosis, lead poisoning and carpal tunnel syndrome among the permanent workers,” he said. Mine management refuses to recognize these are work-related injuries.

El Cerrejón broke off negotiations Feb. 17, demanding that the union agree to binding arbitration if an agreement isn’t reached in a few days.

“We believe in our company ... and we offer a responsible course,” Sintracarbón said in a Feb. 17 statement rejecting the company’s demands. “That’s a more than sufficient framework for resolving our differences and getting a collective agreement.”

—Seth Galinsky

After 2-month strike, BlueLinx workers in Miami return to work

MIAMI—“I’m glad to be back at work,” Dwayne Beal, a member of Teamsters Local 769, told the *Militant*. He and eight other Teamsters at BlueLinx went on strike Nov. 30, after the company threw their business agent out of the plant during the contract negotiation period. After more than two months, they returned Feb. 5.



Militant/Claude Bleton

Some 1,000 workers, most from North Amiens Goodyear plant, demonstrated Feb. 12 in Rueil-Malmaison, a suburb of Paris, against company plans to close down factory there.

BlueLinx is a building materials wholesaler with facilities across the country. During the strike, workers explained that they saw the company’s action as an attack on the existence of the union.

“The temps are benefiting from what we fought for,” Dan Harrell, a warehouse worker at BlueLinx told the *Militant* in front of the plant. Many of those the company hired to try to break the strike are still on the job, but under the agreement the strikers maintain their full seniority.

Teamster members also approved a new contract. It includes switching to an inferior insurance plan—something the company had pushed for and workers had opposed. “The strike was over unfair labor practices, not the economic issues,” Harrell said.

The strikers received solidarity from other unionists during their fight. UPS workers joined the picket line Dec. 20, and railroad workers refused to cross the picket line to deliver materials. Members of Teamsters Local 853, who work for BlueLinx in Newark, Calif., held a one-day work stoppage in late December in solidarity with the Miami workers.

“In California, BlueLinx is trying to relocate a distribution facility in

order to eliminate the workers’ union in the middle of a contract term,” according to a Jan. 20 *Teamster Nation* union flyer.

—Tom Baumann
and Naomi Craine

Wash. Teamsters ratify contract with organic food warehouse

SEATTLE—Drivers and warehouse workers of Teamsters Local 117 ratified a five-year contract Feb. 7 after a nine-week strike at United Natural Foods Inc. distribution center in Auburn, Wash.

The agreement, which passed by a vote of 122 to 11, “provides for the reinstatement of all workers, including the 72 who had been permanently replaced, health and welfare protections for workers, and meaningful wage increases,” according to a Feb. 8 statement from the local.

“Workers at UNFI stood together courageously in difficult conditions to fight for dignity and respect,” Tracey Thompson, secretary-treasurer of Local 117, was quoted as saying in the statement.

“It was a compromise, we’re glad to be back,” driver Jeremy Ray, 39, told the *Militant*.

—John Naubert

25, 50, AND 75 YEARS AGO



March 4, 1988

SHERIDAN, Wyo.—After five months on the picket line in strikes against Decker Coal and Big Horn Coal, miners are still refusing to buckle.

Negotiations between the United Mine Workers union and the two coal companies owned by Peter Kiewit & Sons remain stalemated. The Decker mine is north of here across the Montana border. Big Horn is in Wyoming.

Mine workers union representatives presented four separate proposals to Kiewit. Modeled after the recently approved national contract the union signed with the Bituminous Coal Operators Association, the proposals call for miners laid off at Decker or Big Horn to get three out of five new jobs at Kiewit’s four mining operations or at any operations the company may open in the future. Both negotiating sessions lasted 15 minutes, with the company rejecting the union’s proposals.



March 4, 1963

The prosecutor in Bloomington, Ind., has stepped up his witch-hunt of the Young Socialist Alliance at Indiana University. Monroe County Prosecutor Thomas Hoadley said on Feb. 22 that he will request a Grand Jury hearing on the local YSA. He said that he will seek indictments under the Indiana Communism Act.

The Bloomington witch-hunt stems from a demonstration last October opposing the U.S. blockade of Cuba. At that time twenty-two student demonstrators were met by a hostile mob of 2,000, who assaulted the demonstrators, kicked and punched them, and tore up their signs. Police arrested two of the right-wing hooligans.

On Jan. 15 Hoadley dropped charges against the two to “clear the way” for a Grand Jury investigation into the “part played by the YSA” in “inciting to riot” during the October demonstration.



March 5, 1938

The Roosevelt Administration plans to use relief agencies as a channel for recruiting for the next war. This came out into the open February 25 when the *New York Times* reported that the U.S. army recruiting service had asked the up-state W.P.A. for lists of unmarried men on home or work relief, in order to get them to enlist for military service.

According to the report, the W.P.A. [Works Progress Administration] therefore sent out letters “to all local public welfare commissioners outside of New York City” asking them to cooperate with the army in its recruiting as “a means of reducing your relief rolls and costs.”

The fact that the recruiting notices sent out by the army and navy proved completely ineffective, since not one person on relief joined the military service, shows that the army will have to compel them to join.



\$24

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US rulers debate drone assassination program

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

Hearings before Congress on President Barack Obama’s nomination of White House counterintelligence chief John Brennan to become CIA director has focused on the administration’s use of drone assassination programs, and its move to legitimize them through legal precedents and “rules.”

It has led to a debate in bourgeois politics on the effectiveness of the government’s drone program in advancing U.S. capitalists’ interests abroad, as well as the use of the president’s executive authority to decide who, including U.S. citizens, should be killed.

The drone program conducted by the CIA and the Pentagon’s Joint Special Operations Command has killed more than 3,000 people over the past decade, according to a Council on Foreign Relations report.

The program, which began under the George W. Bush administration, focused on the Federally Administered Tribal Areas of Pakistan near its border with Afghanistan. It was stepped up during the last year of Bush’s presidency and greatly accelerated in the first two years of Obama’s presidency. In Pakistan there have been 334 drone strikes since 2004—289 of them under Obama, according to the Long War Journal website. After peaking at 117 strikes in 2010, they’ve declined over the past two years, but still remain higher than under Bush.

In Yemen, 63 of the 64 airstrikes have occurred under Obama’s presidency, 42 of which were carried out last year, according to the Long War Journal.

One of the issues under debate at Brennan’s Feb. 6 Senate confirmation hearing was the Obama administration’s legal rationalizations for targeting



Reuters/Stringer

Destruction caused by U.S. drone in Yemen’s eastern province of Hadramout, Sept. 4, 2012.

U.S. citizens for drone assassination. At least four have been killed, including New Mexico-born Islamic cleric Anwar al-Awlaki in September 2011. While living in Yemen, the White House targeted him as an alleged central leader of al-Qaeda of the Arabian Peninsula.

Several days before the Senate hearing, the Justice Department leaked to NBC News an undated “white paper,” based on a memo that remains classified, summarizing the administration’s rationale for placing U.S. citizens on a “kill” list.

The memorandum asserts that the government may lawfully kill a U.S. citizen if “an informed high-level official” decides the target “poses an imminent threat of violent attack against the United States.”

The memorandum and Brennan’s confirmation hearing have spurred much comment from liberals and conservatives, who despite differences over whether or how to “reform” the program, express concern over the constitutional issues at stake.

These “sweeping claims of executive power are audacious,” writes Notre Dame law professor Mary Ellen O’Connell in a *New York Times* opinion piece. “For a threat to be deemed ‘imminent’ it is not necessary for a specific attack to be under way.”

“Although the Obama administration’s brief is directed at the assassination of Americans abroad,” comments Jeffrey Rosen in a *New Republic* article, “the arguments it offers could apply with equal force to the assassination of Americans at home.”

“American citizens should nonetheless be wary of granting the president the power to single out citizens for killing based simply on his own judgment. Aside from being plainly unconstitutional, it’s simply too much trust to place in a single individual,” writes James Joyner, managing editor of the *Atlantic Council*. “The notion that the government can compile a list of citizens for killing, not tell anyone who’s on it or how they got there, is simply un-American.”

Retired Gen. Stanley McChrystal, who led the Joint Special Operations Command and U.S. forces in Afghanistan, told the media that drones have led to resentment among those living in areas where they strike. Drones are “hated on a visceral level,” he told Reuters, and contribute to a “perception of American arrogance.”

Following the Senate hearing, Senate Intelligence Committee chairwoman Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.), Senate Judiciary chairman Pat Leahy (D-Vt.) and Sen. Chuck Grassley (R-Iowa) called for setting up a special court to review administration kill list proposals. It would be modeled after the secret courts set up under the Foreign Intelligence and Surveillance Act that have rubber stamped wiretaps and search warrants requested by spy agencies.

State of Union: no plan to alleviate joblessness

Continued from front page
part of their New Deal and Fair Deal platforms.

The difference is not one of ideology or political perspectives. The difference lies in the level of class struggle and the rulers’ response to it.

After an uptick in hiring in the mid-1930s, workers’ battles to organize unions and fight for measures to alleviate depression conditions put pressure on Roosevelt to make concessions, from jobs to the right to organize.

Millions of workers returning home after the Second World War, demanding jobs, higher wages and access to education, forced Truman to add 10 million workers to Social Security and increase benefits, raise the minimum wage 100 percent and pass the GI Bill.

The fact is there are no fiscal, monetary or other government policy measures that could reverse the slowdown in production, trade and employment that is at the heart of the economic and financial crises. The propertied rulers have no solutions, plans or ideas. They react pragmatically by going after the working class and hope their economic problems will somehow go away.

There have been few labor battles or other working-class social struggles that could unsettle the owners of capital today. Factors that place limits on such fights at this moment include high joblessness, which exacerbates competition among workers, and the lack of a

fighting perspective on the part of the union leaderships.

Under these conditions, the propertied rulers and their politicians don’t feel political pressure to direct part of their profits to fund a real government jobs program, or any other step to mitigate the effects of the crisis on workers’ lives. All the evidence is that, despite their economic problems, the rulers are confidently in attack-mode.

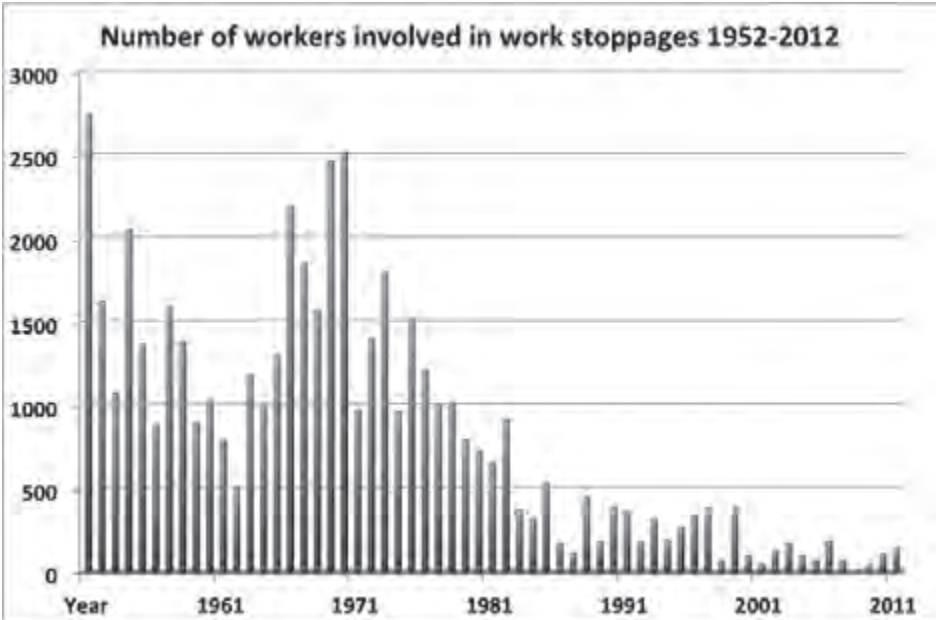
Coated with a liberal gloss and repeated references to speaking up for the “middle class,” Obama focused on domestic issues, outlining a series of tweaks and nostrums, many strikingly limited in scope.

He bragged that “after shedding jobs for more than 10 years, our manufacturers have added about 500,000 jobs over the past three.” He pointed to some companies that have relocated production to the U.S. from abroad, including Intel, Apple and Ford.

But the reason these bosses decided to move back is successes their class has had in making workers in the U.S. work longer, harder and faster for less pay.

Obama laid out empty “initiatives,” from mapping the human brain to making batteries more powerful. He called for additional steps for climate control and more emphasis on education in STEM courses—science, technology, engineering and math.

He also proposed an effort to get



Decline of strikes lowers pressure on rulers to concede government jobs program.

Europe crisis grinds on workers

Continued from front page
in 2012, a sign of shrinking markets on the continent.

In the less developed and less productive countries of Europe, capitalists' profits are under enormous pressure and their governments mired in debt. This is spurring a multifront assault on the living standards of working people, as the propertied rulers struggle to compete with capitalists of other nations while imposing fiscal austerity to stave off a collapse of government credit.

Workers in Greece are among the hardest hit.

"I earn less than 500 euros [\$667] a month as a result of the government's cut in the minimum wage last year," Dimitris Georgiou, 28, a worker in the cargo section of Athens International Airport, told the *Militant*. "I am still living with my retired parents and help out with the expenses, since they can't make a living with their low pensions."

"We used to be able to go out to a restaurant, to do things, to have some entertainment once in a while," said Nikos Gkiolias, a steelworker and former striker at the Elliniki Halivourgia plant in Aspropyrgos outside Athens. "All that is over. You work to eat. I'm not even discussing the situation of the unemployed here."

Basic necessities such as heating and health care have become out of reach for many.

"With most of us getting a 500 to 800 euro pension a month, we can't afford heating this winter and many don't have the money to buy medicines they need," Giorgos Demiris, 71, told the *Militant*.

"One of the biggest impacts has been on the national health care system," said Sofia Roditi, a leader of the union spouses' committee for workers at Elliniki Halivourgia. "To get a serious disease is a death sentence, unless you can afford private hospitals, which of course most workers and retirees can't."

Official unemployment rose to 27 percent in November, more than 6 percent higher than the previous year.

For youth 15 to 24 years old, 61.7 percent are without a job, according to Greece's Statistics Agency.

"In a country of 11 million, only 3.7 million people have jobs," reports the *Wall Street Journal*, and "economic activity has shrunk by over 20%" from four years ago.

"We now see homeless people sleeping everywhere in the streets of Athens. This is new," said Maria Plessa, an airline worker. "You can tell they are recently homeless from their clothes, blankets and so on. They were working jobs like mine not long ago."

The Greek government's latest round of tax hikes and spending cuts, including slashing of wages and pensions, is expected to lead to a further 4.5 percent decline in gross domestic product in 2013, the *Journal* said. Throughout 2012 it has dropped more than 6 percent. One round after the other of cuts and tax raises have been levied against working people as conditions for loans from the International Monetary Fund, European Central Bank and European Commission. The continual loans are being used to stave off default on payments to holders of government bonds.

Like Greece, Spain is among the heavily indebted countries of Europe where a contraction in employment is being exacerbated by government austerity measures.

In the fourth quarter of 2012, official joblessness stood at 26 percent. For youth aged 16 to 24 it was 55 percent. Under these circumstances, "being paid for the work you do is no longer something that can be counted on in Spain," according to a Dec. 16 *New York Times* article.

Most often workers stay in these jobs because they don't see other prospects. The *Times* article reports on a 36-year-old ceramics factory worker near Valencia owed \$13,000 in back wages, construction workers doing 12- to 16-hour days on false company promises that getting the job done early would guarantee payment, and even workers whose wages depend on local government financing, such as

Cuba: Internationalist Angola mission discussed at book fair



Militant photos by Tom Baumann (book panel) and Martín Koppel (photo exhibit)

HAVANA—The Havana International Book Fair, which opened here Feb. 14, is dedicated to Angola, and a number of book presentations and other events during the 10-day fair are related to that theme. Above, high school students from the Camilo Cienfuegos Military School (known as Camilitos) visit the Feb. 15 opening of a photo exhibit titled "Cuba and Angola: United in History." The images, from the archives of Verde Olivo, publishing house of Cuba's Revolutionary Armed Forces, depict Cuba's 1975-91 internationalist mission in Angola, in which Cuban volunteers and Angolan soldiers defeated invasions by the South African apartheid regime and its allies.

Top photo, Feb. 18 presentation of *Cuba and Angola: Fighting for Africa's Freedom and Our Own*, published by Pathfinder Press. At the microphone (far left) is Brig. Gen. Gustavo Chui, an interview with whom appears in the book. Others on the panel are (left to right): Brig. Gen. Harry Villegas, Martín Koppel (chair), Mary-Alice Waters and Jorge Sutil. Villegas and Chui were front-line officers in the battles fought in Angola. Sutil is a member of the National Bureau of the Union of Young Communists (UJC), responsible for the work with young workers, farmers and combatants. Waters is president of Pathfinder and the book's editor. Koppel, a Pathfinder editor, was responsible for the book in Spanish.

—RÓGER CALERO AND ELLIE GARCÍA

bus drivers and health care attendants, sometimes working without pay.

"While Spain and Italy are enacting growth-squelching spending cuts and tax hikes to rein in their budget deficits," the *Journal* wrote, "they still stand to see their government debt burdens increase as their economies continue to shrink."

Production slows in Germany

Germany, the continent's dominant economy and leading manufacturer, has seen its production output slow, with its gross domestic product declining 2.3 percent last quarter. At the same time, unemployment figures remain much lower than in other euro-zone countries—officially 6.9 percent.

The German economy is heavily dependent on export of goods and capital to the rest of Europe, and the adoption of the euro currency and trade bloc in 2002 was pressed by Berlin to give German capitalists further advantage in this regard. But the more recent contraction of economies in Europe and consequences of mounting indebtedness has led to a decline of German exports on the continent, which Berlin has been trying to compensate for by boosting its exports to Asia.

In France, among the economically stronger nations of Europe, manufacturing output dropped 2.3 percent in the fourth quarter, according to gov-

ernment figures. Official unemployment, now at a 13-year high, is 10.7 percent.

The bosses' drive in France is being promoted by the Socialist-Party-led government of François Hollande. French union officials agreed to concessions with the employers' group Medef in January that "include giving employers more flexibility to reduce working hours ... without incurring union strikes," reported the *Times*. "High levels of compensation that courts can award to laid-off workers would be trimmed. The five-year period that former employees now have to contest layoffs would be reduced."

Meanwhile, U.S. world exports rose 4.5 percent, a small increase compared to the 15.8 percent rise in 2011. At the same time, the U.S. economy has similarly shown no sign of recovery, with persistently high joblessness and a 0.1 percent decline in gross domestic product in the fourth quarter of 2012. Rather, the modest export increase is evidence that U.S. bosses have recently made greater progress in driving against workers' wages and working conditions, giving them an edge for now in the cutthroat competition for world market share.

Bobbis Misailides and Natasha Terlexis in Athens, Greece, contributed to this article.



New International no. 12 'Capitalism's Long Hot Winter Has Begun'

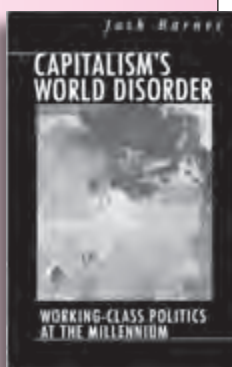
by Jack Barnes

Today's accelerating capitalist crisis accompanies a continuation of the most far-reaching shift in Washington's military policy and organization since the U.S. buildup toward World War II. Class-struggle-minded working people must face this historic turning point for imperialism, and chart a revolutionary course to confront it. \$16

Capitalism's World Disorder Working-Class Politics at the Millennium

by Jack Barnes

The social devastation and financial panic, coarsening of politics, cop brutality and imperialist aggression—all are products not of something gone wrong with capitalism but of its lawful workings. Yet the future can be changed by the united struggle of workers and farmers increasingly conscious of their capacity to wage revolutionary struggles for state power and to transform the world. \$25



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Engels on 1877: US labor movement ‘spread like prairie fire’

Below is an excerpt from “*The Labour Movement in America*” by Frederick Engels. It was the preface to the 1887 American edition of his *Condition of the Working Class in England* in 1844. The preface is included as an appendix in *Revolutionary Continuity: The Early Years, 1848-1917*, one of Pathfinder’s books of the month for February. The book is by Farrell Dobbs, who was a central leader of the Teamsters battles in the Midwest in the mid-1930s, and a central leader of the Socialist Workers Party. Copyright © 1980 by Pathfinder Press. Reprinted by permission.

BOOKS OF THE MONTH

BY FREDERICK ENGELS

Ten months have elapsed since, at the translator’s wish, I wrote the appendix to this book; and during these ten months, a revolution has been accomplished in American society such as, in any other country, would have taken at least ten years.

In February 1885, American public opinion was almost unanimous on this one point; that there was no working class, in the European sense of the word, in America; that consequently no class struggle between workmen and capitalists, such as tore European society to pieces, was possible in the American republic; and that, therefore, socialism was a thing of foreign importation which



Harper’s Weekly illustration

Cops attack Chicago meeting of socialist cabinetmakers who were discussing fight for eight-hour workday, July 26, 1877. Widespread strikes starting three days earlier shut down city.

could never take root on American soil.

And yet, at that moment, the coming class struggle was casting its gigantic shadow before it in the strikes of the Pennsylvania coal-miners, and of many other trades, and especially in the preparations, all over the country, for the great Eight Hours’ movement which was to come off, and did come off, in the May following.

That I then duly appreciated these symptoms, that I anticipated a working-class movement on a national scale, my Appendix shows; but no one could then foresee that in such a short time the movement would burst out with such irresistible force, would spread with the rapidity of a prairie fire, would shake American society to its very foundations.

The fact is there, stubborn and indisputable. To what an extent it had struck with terror the American ruling classes, was revealed to me, in an amusing way, by American journalists who did me the honor of calling on me last summer; the “new departure” had put them into a state of helpless fright and perplexity.

But at that time the movement was only just on the start; there was but a series of confused and apparently disconnected upheavals of that class which, by the suppression of Negro slavery and the

rapid development of manufactures, had become the lowest stratum of American society. Before the year closed, these bewildering social convulsions began to take a definite direction.

The spontaneous, instinctive movements of these vast masses of working people, over a vast extent of country, the simultaneous outburst of their common discontent with a miserable social condition, the same everywhere and due to the same causes, made them conscious of the fact that they formed a new and distinct class of American society; a class of—practically speaking—more or less hereditary wage-workers, proletarians.

And with true American instinct this consciousness led them at once to take the next step towards their deliverance: the formation of a political workingmen’s party, with a platform of its own, and with the conquest of the Capitol and the White House for its goal.

In May the struggle for the Eight Hours’ working-day, the troubles in Chicago, Milwaukee, etc., the attempts of the ruling class to crush the nascent uprising of Labor by brute force and brutal class-justice; in November the new Labor Party organized in all great centers, and the New York, Chicago and Milwaukee elections. May and November have hitherto reminded the

American bourgeoisie only of the payment of coupons of U.S. bonds; henceforth May and November will remind them, too, of the dates on which the American working class presented *their* coupons for payment.

In European countries, it took the working class years and years before they fully realized the fact that they formed a distinct and, under the existing social conditions, a permanent class of modern society; and it took years again until this class-consciousness led them to form themselves into a distinct political party, independent of, and opposed to, all the old political parties formed by the various sections of the ruling classes.

On the more favored soil of America, where no mediaeval ruins bar the way, where history begins with the elements of modern bourgeois society as evolved in the seventeenth century, the working class passed through these two stages of its development within ten months.

Still, all this is but a beginning. That the laboring masses should feel the community of grievances and of interests, their solidarity as a class in opposition to all other classes; that in order to give expression and effect to this feeling, they should set in motion the political machinery provided for that purpose in every free country—that is the first step only. The next step is to find the common remedy for these common grievances, and to embody it in the platform of the new Labor Party. And this—the most important and the most difficult step in the movement—has yet to be taken in America. ...

Consequently, the platform of the American proletariat will in the long run coincide, as to the ultimate end to be attained, with the one which, after sixty years of dissensions and discussions, has become the adopted platform of the great mass of the European militant proletariat.

It will proclaim, as the ultimate end, the conquest of political supremacy by the working class, in order to effect the direct appropriation of all means of production—land, railways, mines, machinery, etc.—by society at large, to be worked in common by all for the account and benefit of all.

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Solidarity with school bus workers!

After a bitter monthlong strike, New York City school bus workers suffered a blow when Amalgamated Transit Union officials suddenly ended the strike without any agreement on important job protections won in struggle in 1979.

Union officials told members they were suspending their strike indefinitely, based on the premise that one of the Democratic Party candidates for mayor this November would get elected and then fulfill vague promises to “revisit” the question of job security and wages.

As they return to work, the school bus workers will need to look out for each other and use their unions to defend themselves against bosses’ attempts to fire union stalwarts and go after job security, wages and working conditions.

From the outset, the workers and their union faced a determined offensive by the city administration, transportation bosses, courts and big-business dailies.

A battle is lost but the bosses’ war on workers continues. The propertied rulers have no solution to the worldwide crisis of capitalism. Protection of their economic interests amid the stiffening competition among them drive the capitalists’ attacks against our living standards, unions and very dignity.

The episodic resistance by workers today faces

two challenges: the discouraging effects of persistently high unemployment and the weakness of our basic combat organizations, the unions. The former is why workers need to fight for a government-funded jobs program to put millions back to work. The latter is the result of decades of misleadership and a “strategy” hinged on seeking “common ground” with the bosses and support for their political parties, most often the Democrats, in exchange for promises of reciprocity.

In addition to relying on our own collective power to advance our interests against those of the bosses, working people need our own political voice, our own political party independent of the two capitalist parties.

It’s through the working-class struggles and union battles to come that workers will gain experience, learn who our real friends and enemies are, become confident in our own capacities. This is how we will forge a class-struggle leadership and transform our unions into fighting instruments that champion the interests of all working people—organized and unorganized—in the economic, social and political arena, and transform ourselves in the process. And it’s along this fighting road that our unions can become schools for revolution that advance the struggle for a workers and farmers government.

Anti-labor outfit targets bus workers’ union

BY LOUIS MARTIN

During their monthlong strike, the New York school bus workers not only faced the New York City government, the bus company owners, the big-business press, the cops and the courts.

They also had to deal with a campaign by an anti-labor outfit called the Socialist Equality Party, also known as the World Socialist Web Site. Their intervention against the strike had nothing to do with building solidarity with the workers’ struggle. It was aimed at demoralizing workers resisting the bosses’ assaults. They showed up when the workers were locked in combat with the city and the bosses, seeking to turn them against their union, the Amalgamated Transit Union.

The Socialist Equality Party aims to get a hearing for its anti-union propaganda by painting itself as a socialist group on the side of the rank-and-file workers. Their main message to the bus workers was a call for them to quit their union. Bus workers “must organize independently of the union,” their flyers urged.

“The way the strike was shut down epitomizes how hostile the union apparatus is toward the workers trapped inside these organizations,” said one of their flyers dated Feb. 18.

In their circulars, the outfit makes no distinction between the unions and the policies of the current

leaderships, and they paint the union and the bosses as part of a conspiracy allied against the workers.

“The real scabs are the unions themselves,” said a flyer posted on their website Feb. 14 that they handed out to workers.

They suggested workers should just cross the picket line. “Privately, some workers stated that they think they should go back to work and save what they can of their jobs, paychecks and benefits,” they claimed. “Such sentiments are entirely understandable.”

The Socialist Equality Party and the World Socialist Web Site have a long history of anti-labor disruption aimed at workers engaged in often bitter struggles and at revolutionary working-class organizations like the Socialist Workers Party.

Their efforts pick up whenever workers are on the move. They don’t build any solidarity or participate in struggles. Instead, particularly as some fights wear on and workers face more difficulties, the outfit seeks out and feeds off frustrations, discouragement and demoralization.

Over the course of the last two years, they have intervened against the unions in a number of battles of workers on strike or locked out, including at Cooper Tire in Findlay, Ohio; Caterpillar in Joliet, Ill.; Con Edison in New York; and American Crystal Sugar in North Dakota and Minnesota.

LETTERS

Passes the paper around

I am sending a check your way for a subscription renewal and for another prisoner’s subscription.

I do pass the paper around here so people can get a news source that hasn’t been diluted by moneyed and imperialistic interests. Even people that don’t quite lean so socialist like the working-class perspective of the paper. And a lot of former union workers like to read the articles on picket lines and labor struggles.

*A prisoner
Arizona*

‘Green’ capitalists

Bloom Energy Corporation is considered on the cutting edge of “green” generator technology, pro-

ducing power generators used for data servers and other applications.

The company was fined by the U.S. Department of Labor for bringing 14 welding equipment operators and welders to Sunnyvale, Calif., from Chihuahua, Mexico, and paying them in pesos the equivalent of

\$2.66 an hour with no overtime pay for up to 55 hours a week for a two-year period.

The federal government forced Bloom to pay \$31,922 in back wages to each of the 14 workers. News reports do not say what happened to them. Most likely they went to another fight somewhere else.

*Raul Gonzalez
Redwood City, Calif.*

The letters column is an open forum for all viewpoints on subjects of interest to working people. Please keep your letters brief. Where necessary they will be abridged. Please indicate if you prefer that your initials be used rather than your full name.

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Bus strike ends

Continued from front page

sions bus companies competing for the contracts face more pressure and new opportunities to drive down wages and benefits.

In December, the Department of Education began soliciting contract bids without the provisions for 1,100 of the 7,700 school routes. School officials said they could save \$99 million a year on the new bids.

ATU International President Larry Hanley had been in talks with the five leading Democratic Party contenders for the upcoming mayoral race to figure out a way to end the strike.

In a Feb. 15 phone conference with the Local 1181 membership, Local 1181 President Michael Cordiello cited a Feb. 14 letter signed by the five candidates—Public Advocate Bill de Blasio, Comptroller John Liu, City Council Speaker Christine Quinn, former Comptroller William Thompson and former City Council member Sal Albanese—as the main reason the local executive board had decided to end the strike. Union members did not vote on the decision.

The five prospective mayors called on the bus workers to “return to their jobs and continue the battle in other ways.” They promised if elected “to revisit” the contracts “to insure that the important job security, wages and benefits of your members are protected within the bidding process, while at the same time are fiscally responsible for taxpayers.”

“Bloomberg’s like a dictator, he thinks everything should be his way,” Maria Filgueira, a driver at Grandpa’s bus company, said in a Feb. 19 phone interview. “They say we’ll have a better chance with the next administration. How do they know that? There’s not much difference between a Democrat and a Republican. No matter who you vote for, you lose.”

Lost the battle, but war continues

“What can we do? We lost the battle, but the war is still on,” Rainbow bus driver Wirman David Lopez told the *Militant* by phone Feb. 17. “Bloomberg has no heart. But we are not defeated. We have to show him we’re still standing.”

“I have mixed emotions about ending the strike,” Noemia Topete, a bus attendant in the Bronx, said. “I think if you call out a strike you should stay firm.”

While 8,800 workers belong to ATU Local 1181, more than 3,000 belonging to Teamsters Local 854, United Craft and Industrial Workers Union Local 91 or United Service Workers Union Local 355 crossed the picket lines pretty much from the start. Some bus companies are not organized by any union.

During the first week of the strike, at least 5,380 out of 7,700 routes were not running. But city officials and bus company owners succeeded in getting hundreds more buses on the road as the strike continued.

Even before the strike was over three bus companies sued to have the protection provisions immediately removed from their contracts. The first day at work after the strike, Joseph Fazzia, owner of three bus companies, fired more than 100 bus attendants, reported the *New York Post*.

Despite an onslaught of malicious press, especially in the *Post* and *Daily News*, painting strikers as selfish and indifferent to the needs of school children and their families, the *Journal* had to admit that many working people in the city sympathized with the strike.

“Before the strike, the union reps came by and asked us of all the issues on the table in the negotiations, which one can you live without,” Topete said. “But we need our Employee Protection Provisions, we need our pensions, we need our benefits. One is not more important than the other.”

“I’m not happy about ending the strike,” said Irma Burgos, a driver at Atlantic Express. “It doesn’t resolve anything. What we did in the strike helped us understand that it’s not only our union at risk, it’s all the other unions too,” she said.

Lea Sherman contributed to this article.

Correction

The article “Rally Supports Peugeot Strikers Near Paris,” in the On The Picket Line column in issue no. 7 incorrectly said the strike was called by the three unions in the Aulnay plant: the CGT, CFDT and SUD. These unions did call the strike but there are other unions in the plant.