

THE MILITANT

INSIDE
Working-class fight for the right to vote marks US history
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A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE VOL. 80/NO. 33 SEPTEMBER 5, 2016

Milwaukee: ‘Indict cops for killing of Sylville Smith’

BY BETSY FARLEY

MILWAUKEE — More than a week after Sylville Smith, a 23-year-old African-American youth, was shot to death here Aug. 13, the Milwaukee Police Department still refuses to release video footage from the bodycam of the cop who shot him. Police claim that Smith ran from a car following a traffic stop, and that he had a gun in his hand. Twenty seconds later he was shot dead. The cop who killed Smith has been identified as Dominique Heaggan, who is also Black.

Angry protests broke out after the killing and the following night in the Sherman Park neighborhood on Milwaukee’s North Side. As demonstrators clashed with police in riot gear, six businesses and a few cars were set on fire. Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker deployed the National Guard, and a 10 p.m. curfew was imposed to drive teenagers off the streets.

While what actually happened remains unclear, many Blacks here, who face regular cop harassment and abuse, said they understood why people exploded.

Smith’s death is just the latest such
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Socialist Workers Party says, ‘Fight to defend right to vote’



July 13, 2015, Winston-Salem, North Carolina, march to protest moves to restrict voting rights, a key question for working class. Recent court rulings have pushed back some restrictions.

SWP campaign confronts Tenn. curbs on voting rights

BY JOHN STUDER

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — “In Tennessee, throughout the South and

SWP ON BALLOT IN TENNESSEE

nationally, the capitalist rulers are attacking working-class voting rights, especially those of workers who are
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Struggle over right to vote in US continues today

BY MAGGIE TROWE

The attack on the right to vote, which hits workers and farmers the hardest and falls disproportionately on those who are African-American, is a central question in U.S. politics. Growing protests across the South and in other parts of the country are putting a spotlight on the centuries-long struggle. Recent court rulings register progress, but the fight is far from over.

In June 2013 the U.S. Supreme Court struck down a key part of the 1965 Voting Rights Act, won in blood in the mass Black rights struggle that overthrew Jim Crow segregation. The justices ruled that forcing states and regions with a history of voter suppression to obtain federal “preclearance” before changing voting laws is unnecessary.

“The conditions that originally justified these measures no longer characterize voting in the covered jurisdictions,” Chief Justice John Roberts wrote.

It is true that deep changes have been wrought in the social outlook of working people in the South, reflected in the widespread support for the removal of the Confederate Battle Flag from the Capitol in South Carolina last year. But the ruling families and racist officials in many places previously covered by the Voting Rights Act immediately took advantage of the court ruling to ram through new restrictions in the name of preventing much trumpeted but rarely existing cases of “voter fraud.”

Within hours of the decision, Texas officials said they would enforce a voter ID law previously blocked for disenfranchising Blacks and Latinos. In Mississippi and Alabama state of
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US-Turkish war moves in Syria seek to block Kurds

BY NAOMI CRAINE

Turkish troops, backed by U.S. airstrikes, drones and special operations forces, launched a major offensive inside Syria Aug. 24. They are driving to take the border town of Jarabulus from Islamic State, and to block Kurdish-led forces from doing so.

“Our forces began an operation

US, TURKISH, SYRIAN HANDS OFF KURDS!
— Editorial, p. 8

against Daesh,” Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said, using a derogatory Arabic term for Islamic State, “and PYD [Kurdish Democratic Union Party] terror groups.”

Washington continues to seek some deal with Moscow and Tehran, as well as Ankara, that can defend its imperialist grip on the region. But conflicting national interests keep posing
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Buses ready to roll for miners’ Sept. 8 rally to defend pensions, health care



UMWA June 14 rally in Lexington, Kentucky, protests threats to miners’ pensions, health care.

BY SUSAN LAMONT

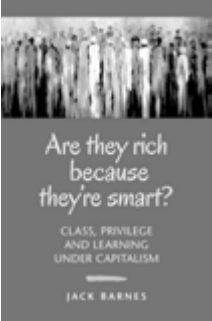
ATLANTA — “We have eight buses going from Alabama,” said Mike Foster, 66, who worked at Walter Energy’s No. 4 Mine in Brookwood, Alabama, for 36 years before retiring in 2013, in an Aug. 20 phone interview. Union miners from the coalfields of Alabama, along with family members

and supporters, will be joining others from West Virginia, Kentucky, southern Illinois, western Pennsylvania and elsewhere for a Sept. 8 national protest in Washington organized by the United Mine Workers of America.

The rally demands Congress pass the Miners Protection Act, which
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Are They Rich Because They’re Smart?

Class, Privilege and Learning Under Capitalism
by Jack Barnes



“In the coming battles forced upon us by the capitalist rulers workers will begin to transform ourselves and our attitudes toward life, work and each other. Only then will we learn what we’re capable of becoming.”

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Colo. meatpackers fired for prayer breaks win jobless benefits

March in Richmond, Virginia, demands \$15 minimum wage

‘Our priority is one-on-one discussions with workers’

BY MAGGIE TROWE

“The Socialist Workers Party can go door to door in any working-class neighborhood and get a fantastic response,” Jacob Perasso, SWP candidate for U.S. Senate from New York, told Liz Benjamin, the host of “Capital Tonight,” a daily news and political program on the Time Warner Cable channel in the Albany, New York, area, Aug. 12. “Our priority is having one-on-one discussions with working people at their doorsteps about the economic crisis that is deeply impacting people across the globe.”

While in the region, Perasso and SWP campaigners visited the picket line of members of United Auto Workers Local 1508 locked out by Honeywell Aerospace in Green Island since May 9. The company also locked out union members in South Bend, Indiana.

“The Socialist Workers Party stands with your struggle,” Perasso told Pat Fisk and other pickets. “We point to fights like yours as examples of working-class resistance that deserve the solidarity of unions, workers and small farmers everywhere.

“We’re getting good support from the community and other unions,” Fisk told Perasso, who is a member of the United Transportation Union on leave from his job as a freight rail conductor for CSX Transportation to campaign.

“The bosses are on a campaign across industries and borders to get us to accept lower wages and rising health care costs,” Perasso said. “This is their answer to the economic crisis. The Democratic and Republican parties back the

attacks by companies like Honeywell.”

SWP presidential candidate Alyson Kennedy walked the picket line with locked-out UAW Local 9 members in front of the Honeywell facility in South Bend Aug. 17. Tom Ross told her the company “had brought in people to watch us work for two months before the contract expired and now they’re scabs doing our jobs.”

“Your struggle, which is an example of resistance and deserves solidarity, shows that there are two classes in the U.S., the capitalist class and the working class, with sharply counterposed interests,” Kennedy said. “The Democrats and Republicans defend the capitalist class. My party defends the working class. I will use my campaign to win support for your fight.”

Trump, Clinton campaigns flounder

Democratic candidate Hillary Clinton is leading Republican Donald Trump in the polls, but both parties are divided, and both candidates continue to poll highly negative ratings.

For several weeks a wide spectrum of bourgeois political figures and their journalistic mouthpieces have ramped up a shrill and vitriolic campaign insisting “Trump must be stopped at any cost.” The *New York Post* called it “the complete collapse of American journalism as we know it.”

The majority of the U.S. capitalist rulers are telling the Republican Party nominee he won’t be president. Trump’s response is to charge that the elections will be “rigged.” Trump told a North Carolina rally that if restrictive voter



Jacob Perasso, SWP candidate for U.S. Senate from New York, on Albany-area Capital One TV Aug. 12. Perasso, rail unionist on leave to campaign, backs locked-out Honeywell workers.

ID laws are not enforced, people will be “voting 15 times for Hillary.”

The FBI has disclosed it has found 15,000 new Clinton personal emails on government business that it will release publicly before the election. Republicans in Congress are calling for charges to be filed against her.

And new revelations show Clinton used her position as secretary of state to raise millions for the Clinton Family Foundation — which took in \$278 million in 2013 alone — from people looking for “access” and favors from the State Department.

Clinton’s response has been to try to deflect the spotlight from herself by ramping up charges that Trump has financial ties to Russia and China, and is a “Kremlin puppet.”

‘Workers should control production’

Perasso also campaigned door to door in Hoosick Falls, N.Y., population 3,400, where residents have been dealing with water contaminated by toxic perfluorooctanoic acid, a carcinogen used in Teflon, from four Honeywell and two Saint-Gobain Performance Plastics plants there.

“They’ve covered up the water problem for 18 months,” Melissa Dufresne, a retired nurse’s aide, told the socialist campaigners. “The chemicals have been in the soil and pipes for years. Nothing is being done.”

Jennifer Rawlings, a member of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, told Perasso, “My house is

now worth zero because of the water. A lot of people got up and left, but I can’t move because I’m retired. ”

“The Socialist Workers Party urges workers to fight for a national government-funded public works program to employ millions at union-scale wages to repair the decaying infrastructure and build things workers need, from more housing to schools to medical and day care centers,” Perasso told Rawlings. “Many towns and cities have decaying and contaminated water systems, from Flint, Michigan, to Hoosick Falls, and they should be rebuilt from top to bottom. The owners of Honeywell and Saint-Gobain should be held accountable and should pay for the reconstruction here.

“The bosses and their government prioritize profits over human needs. To bolster profits, they jack up production rates, make our jobs more dangerous, endanger the environment and slash public funding, letting everything fall apart,” he said. “We have to build a movement of workers that can fight for safety on the job and to take control of the stewardship of nature. The two go hand in hand. If workers had political power and controlled production, we wouldn’t be facing these disasters.”

Both Rawlings and Dufresne got copies of the *Militant* and asked socialist campaigners to come back for further discussion.

Willie Cotton in New York and Dan Fein in Chicago contributed to this article.

THE MILITANT

Cuba stands in solidarity with Venezuela

As Washington steps up its attacks on Venezuela, Cuba’s solidarity “will not be weakened in the slightest,” said President Raúl Castro, addressing Cuba’s National Assembly in July.

Some 46,000 volunteer Cuban health workers, teachers and others are in Venezuela.



Juventud Rebelde/José M. Correa

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Socialist Workers Party: Cop brutality part of capitalist rule

BY DAN FEIN

MILWAUKEE — Socialist Workers Party presidential candidate Alyson Kennedy joined supporters campaigning door to door in the Sherman Park neighborhood here Aug. 19, where 23-year-old Sylville Smith was killed by the cops the week before. She added her voice to those demanding prosecution of the cop who shot Smith.

“The anti-police rioting comes from years of being oppressed,” Gary Holloway, a 36-year-old unemployed Black worker, told Kennedy. “I don’t agree with burning down our community, but our people were lashing out from anger over the killing.”

“In Cuba, where the workers and farmers made a socialist revolution, taking charge of their own destiny, the police are part of the working class, not a tool of oppression and violence against them like they are here in capitalist society,” Kennedy told Holloway. “We’re campaigning to build the Socialist Workers Party to follow their example, to lead a mass working-class movement to take political power here in the U.S.”

“There is power in numbers. I am very interested in the Socialist Workers Party,” Holloway said. “Call me.”

Vicki Pearson told Kennedy she heard police sirens when Smith was killed. She had participated in the fight to desegregate the schools in Milwaukee when she was a student. Formerly a medical assistant, Pearson is now disabled.

“A lot has to change,” Pearson said after Kennedy explained her party believes the crisis will worsen and the working class needs to take power. “I also think the economy is going to get a lot worse before it gets better. I always vote, and this time I am voting for Clinton as the lesser evil.”

“But when you vote for the so-called ‘lesser evil’ you can be sure that what you’ll get will be evil,” Kennedy said. “I’m asking you to vote for what you want, to support the working-class alternative to all the capitalist parties, the Socialist Workers Party.”

Holloway and Pearson both got the new Pathfinder Press book *Are They Rich Because They’re Smart? Class, Privilege and Learning Under Capitalism* and a subscription to the *Militant*.

“I think Sylville ran from the cops because he didn’t want to end up in jail,” Mario Ford, a 25-year-old factory worker who knew Smith from when they were kids, told Kennedy when she knocked on his door. “He may have been armed — the video hasn’t been

released yet — but that doesn’t give the cops a license to kill.

“The police have a blue brotherhood where they cover up for each other — like in Chicago where seven cops wrote false reports about the killing of Laquan McDonald,” he said.

After the Chicago cops finally released the dashcam video of the 2014 killing of McDonald last November, a wave of protests swept the Windy City for weeks. Chicago cop Jason Van Dyke was indicted for murder.

“We need to keep up the demonstrations against police brutality and killings,” said Kennedy, who is from Chicago and participated in the protests there.

SWP: Stop attacks on voting rights in Tennessee

Continued from front page

African-American,” Socialist Workers Party presidential candidate Alyson Kennedy told the press here Aug. 18. “Their photo-ID requirements to vote, aggressive purges of voter rolls and other restrictions are aimed at disenfranchising workers and working farmers.

“This assault also hits our party,” Kennedy said as she filed an additional 491 signatures for ballot status, “because it deprives workers here of being counted when they sign to put the SWP on the November ballot.”

Party supporters filed 569 signatures Aug. 8 but Tennessee’s secretary of state’s office said only 30 percent were valid. “We answered by more campaigning, gathering 1,060 signatures overall,” Kennedy said.

The Division of Elections office verified Aug. 24 that Kennedy will be on the state’s ballot.

The SWP campaigned in 38 cities and rural towns across the state. One reflection of the support won by the SWP here is that when the party began campaigning there was only one *Militant* subscriber in the state, today there are 78.

On the heels of the 2013 Supreme Court decision gutting the 1965 Voting Rights Act — a conquest of the Black rights movement that overturned Jim Crow segregation — Tennessee officials passed a law restricting the right to vote.

The new rules disenfranchised people who had been voting for years. In one notorious case, Dorothy Cooper, a 96-year-old Black woman who had managed to vote all her life, even under Jim Crow, lost that right because her ID was in her married name and



Militant/Dan Fein

“We need to keep up protests against police brutality and killings,” SWP presidential candidate Alyson Kennedy tells Daviyone Lewis, left, and Gary Holloway in Milwaukee Aug. 20.

she didn’t have a marriage license.

Her plight attracted a lot of media attention, and the state commissioner of Safety and Homeland Security had to make election officials give her the ID she needed.

SWP campaigners got a good response when they encouraged workers to attend the United Mine Workers Sept. 8 rally in Washington to defend miners’ pensions and health care.

They explained that the Socialist Workers Party was the working-class party in the race, against the Democrats, Republicans and all the other bourgeois-minded campaigns.

The socialists find the Mideast wars are on workers’ minds.

“It tears me up to see what is happening in Syria today,” Michael Harden, 56, a custodian at the Musicians Hall

of Fame, told Arlene Rubinstein when she knocked on his door in Nashville Aug. 17. “I feel like we’ve been at war all my life. Politicians from both parties tell us how they are going to end war, only to explain that for one reason or another, now is not the time. This system needs wars to survive. Workers need to end wars so we can survive.” Harden got a copy of the *Militant* to learn about the party and gave his phone number for future discussion.

In Columbia, SWP campaigner Lea Sherman met Leigh, a young mother who used to work in a center for so-called juvenile delinquents, but quit because it didn’t do anything for them. Columbia is a town of 35,000 an hour south of Nashville.

“I mentioned the news reports that

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Protest cop killing of Sylville Smith

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incident of police killings and brutality leading to protests here. James Perry died while in police custody in 2010, as did Derek Williams the following year. Williams’ death by suffocation was recorded on video while he was restrained in the back of a police car. Perry, who was epileptic, died in the booking area of Milwaukee’s County Jail after cops had placed a mask over his head. In 2011, Jeanine Tracy was punched and dragged out of her car by her hair during a traffic stop.

And in 2014, Dontre Hamilton was shot 14 times and killed by Milwaukee cop Christopher Manney. Hamilton, who suffered from schizophrenia, had been sleeping on a downtown park bench. His death sparked months of protests and a campaign led by his mother, Maria Hamilton, who formed Mothers for Justice United. The group helped organize demonstrations and built the national “Million Moms March” in Washington in 2015 against police killings.

No charges have been brought against any of the cops in these killings.

Mothers for Justice United has joined Kimberly Neal, Smith’s sister, calling for the cop who killed Sylville Smith to be charged. Black community organizations and groups from the American Civil Liberties Union to Wisconsin Jobs Now have joined in demanding officials release the video footage from Heagman’s body camera.

“Until these police are held account-

able — charged, convicted, and put in jail for their actions — they will keep on doing this,” Maria Hamilton told the *Militant*. “We are going to keep on fighting. The politicians won’t do it for us.”

One of the burned businesses, a BP gas station, was the site of protests a month earlier after a clerk, the owner’s son, threatened a group of children outside the store by firing a gun into the air. “They were just kids being rowdy,” Mario Ford, a factory worker who lives in the neighborhood, told the *Militant*. “There was no justification to fire a weapon.”

After neighbors organized a boycott of the station, the clerk was charged with disorderly conduct and fired.

While Police Chief Edward Flynn blamed the unrest on “outside agitators” from the Revolutionary Communist Party who came from Chicago, Mayor Tom Barrett and media accounts said it was young people from Sherman Park who were intent on causing trouble. But many who live in Sherman Park tell a different story. “This is a close-knit, welcoming neighborhood,” Vicky Pearson told the *Militant*, describing a block party she helped organize just a week earlier. “We had a DJ and a bouncy house for the kids, serving brats and corn on the cob, and nearly 300 snow cones.

“Just as the death of that young man is devastating, so is the vandalism,” Pearson said. “We need to continue to protest in a positive way or nothing’s going to change.”

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Join the SWP campaigning and give to the \$30,000 fund to help Kennedy and Hart travel to Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, France and Puerto Rico.

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US-Turkish war moves

Continued from front page
obstacles, and each aborted attempt leads to unforeseen shifts in the positions and alliances of the capitalist rulers involved. The one constant is that the impact on working people is catastrophic.

The U.S.-Turkish assault on Jarabulus began as Vice President Joe Biden arrived in Ankara.

He immediately announced Washington’s insistence the Kurds pull back and stay out of the area. “They must go back across the [Euphrates] River,” he said. “They cannot and will not, under no circumstances, get American support if they do not keep that commitment. Period.”

Biden is seeking to patch up relations with Turkish officials, who accused Washington of complicity in an attempted coup last month.

Biden’s demands mean U.S.-backed Syrian Democratic Forces — dominated by the Kurdish People’s Protection Units (YPG) — would have to leave the city of Manbij, south of Jarabulus, which they took from Islamic State last week. This had been the jihadist group’s main route to its remaining footholds on the Turkish border.

During the years of war, Kurdish forces have gained control of a large area along the Syrian-Turkish border, and proclaimed their autonomy in March. Whatever their conflicts on other questions, this is an unwelcome development for the ruling classes of Iran, Iraq, Syria and Turkey — all countries where the Kurds are an oppressed people.

Syrian gov’t shifts to attack Kurds

Over the last month, the Bashar al-Assad regime, Moscow and Ankara have made significant shifts in their positions. The Syrian dictator depends on Russian and Iranian military backing.

Meanwhile, Erdogan has aided Islamist groups fighting against Assad, and views Tehran as a rival for influence in the region. But he has been seeking to mend ties with Moscow, meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin Aug. 9. At the same time Erdogan’s government has been waging a war against the Kurdish population in southeastern Turkey.

Syrian government warplanes began bombing Kurdish-held areas for the first time Aug. 18, hitting parts of the northeastern city of Hasakah following days of clashes between Kurdish police and pro-Assad forces.

Until now there has largely been a

de facto cease-fire between the Syrian government and the YPG, allowing Assad’s forces and their allies in Moscow and Tehran to focus their assaults against opposition forces.

Turkish Prime Minister Binali Yildirim hailed the bombing of Hasakah, telling reporters in Istanbul Aug. 20 that the Syrian “regime has understood the structure the Kurds are trying to form in the north [of Syria] has started to become a threat for Syria too.”

Yildirim also said Ankara is now willing to accept Assad remaining in power during a transitional period on the road to an end in hostilities.

The Assad government’s priority had been fighting opponents who were supported by Ankara, Ahmad Hisso Araj, a Kurdish spokesperson for the Syrian Democratic Forces, told the *Wall Street Journal*. Now there “is evidence of the Turkish-Syrian regime rapprochement,” he said.

Washington responded to Assad’s bombing of Hasakah with its own air patrols over the area. There are some 300 U.S. special operations troops there working with the YPG and other opponents of Assad fighting Islamic



U.S.-backed Turkish forces launched offensive against Syrian border town of Jarabulus, on banks of Euphrates River.

State. U.S. warplanes will “defend troops on the ground if threatened,” warned Pentagon spokesman Jeff Davis.

Mounting death toll

The civil war in Syria began in 2011 after the government crushed mobilizations of hundreds of thousands of people demanding political rights and an end to Assad’s regime. It has since become a multifront battleground.

U.N. envoy Staffan de Mistura said in April some 400,000 people had died in the war, and the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights says nearly 5,000 died each month in May, June and July.

The eastern area of Aleppo, controlled by opponents of Assad, has been under siege for weeks, cutting off 300,000 residents from food and other supplies.

The fighting has also limited aid deliveries to 1.5 million people in gov-

ernment-controlled western Aleppo.

The Russian government has used the war in Syria to assert itself in the Mideast and to gain greater maneuvering room with Washington there, in eastern Europe and elsewhere.

Officials from Moscow’s defense ministry gloated Aug. 16 that Russian warplanes were carrying out bombing runs over Syria from an Iranian air base. This was the first time in decades Tehran has allowed foreign military operations to take place from Iranian soil. The decision provoked sharp opposition within Iran’s ruling class.

Five days later Iran’s Defense Minister Hossein Dehghan complained Moscow was “showing-off and inconsiderate” in publicizing the arrangement. The next day foreign ministry spokesman Bahram Ghasemi declared, “The operation was temporary and is over now.”

Endless Mideast wars: Catastrophe for working people

BY EMMA JOHNSON

As the wars in Syria, Iraq, Yemen and elsewhere in the Middle East continue with no end in sight, the catastrophe visited on working people across the region continues to worsen. Last year alone, millions more were forced to leave their homes, with many also driven from their countries. The refugee crisis in turn has caused political turmoil in Europe, furthering the unraveling of the European Union.

The vast majority of refugees end up in neighboring countries. Out of the close to 5 million people who have fled Syria, 86 percent are in Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan. Every fifth person in Lebanon is a Syrian refugee.

“We’re stuck here. We can’t go on and we can’t go back,” Hikmat, a farmer, told the United Nations Refu-

gee Agency in June. He lives in a tent near a shopping center in Lebanon with his wife and children. “My children need to go to school, they need a future,” he said.

Half of the refugees are children. Of the million refugees in Lebanon, 250,000 of those aged 3-18 are out of school. With adults risking arrest if they work, many families rely on child labor to survive.

With rising costs for rent, food, health care and heat, Syrian refugees face disastrous living conditions. More than half of those in Lebanon can’t afford enough food and some 70 percent live on \$3.84 or less a day. The majority lack residency status and cannot legally work.

The number of people displaced within their own countries in the

Middle East increased by nearly 5 million in 2015.

Yemen accounted for half those people — a result of the Saudi Arabian monarchy’s airstrikes and military intervention to prop up the tottering regime of Abdrabbuh Mansour Hadi against the Tehran-backed Zaidi Shia rebels known as Houthis, who seized the country’s capital in February. Workers and peasants also fall prey to the forces of al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula and Islamic State.

The total number of internally displaced in Syria, Iraq, Yemen and Afghanistan stands at 15 million.

With no prospects of going home, months become years in the lives of impoverished refugees living in makeshift camps with inadequate

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—MILITANT LABOR FORUMS—

CANADA

Calgary
Stop the Attacks on Muslims! Speaker: François Bradette, Communist League. Fri., Sept. 2, 7:30 p.m. *Dragon City Mall, 328 Centre St. SE, Unit 246.* Tel.: (403) 457-9044.

UNITED KINGDOM

London
U.K. and All Foreign Troops Out of the Middle East! Speaker: Ögmundur Jónsson, Communist League. Fri., Sept. 2, 7 p.m. *2nd floor, 83 Kingsland High St., E8 2PB.* Tel.: (020) 3583-3552.

—ON THE PICKET LINE—

MAGGIE TROWE, EDITOR

Help the *Militant* cover labor struggles around the world!

This column gives a voice to those engaged in battle and building solidarity today — including miners fighting attacks on retirees' pensions and healthcare, workers locked out by Honeywell and construction workers demanding safe conditions. I invite those involved in workers' battles to contact me at 306 W. 37th St., 13th Floor, New York, NY 10018; or (212) 244-4899; or themilitant@mac.com. We'll work together to ensure your story is told.

— Maggie Trowe

Colorado meatpackers fired for prayer breaks win jobless benefits

DENVER — In a victory for the labor movement and a blow against anti-Muslim attacks, the Colorado Department of Labor ruled that more than 100 workers — fired over eight months ago from the Cargill Meat Solutions plant in Ft. Morgan for taking Muslim prayer breaks — must receive unemployment benefits. “No person should be expected to choose between fidelity to their religion and their job,” the labor department stated.

The majority of the fired meatpackers are from Somalia. For nearly a decade Cargill had allowed workers who are Muslim to relieve each other to pray during work. In a sudden change of policy last Dec. 15, management told second shift workers they would no longer be allowed to do so. Leaders of the workers tried to get the bosses to back off, but they refused.

Over 150 workers on that shift were absent Dec. 21 to protest the attack. Cargill fired them two days later.

When the workers filed for unemployment Cargill challenged their claims. After losing nearly 20 appeals, the company withdrew the remaining challenges in May. Lawyers for the workers announced the Department of Labor ruling in early August after the deadline for appeals expired.

An Aug. 8 statement by attorneys for the Council on American-Islamic Relations and the law firm that represented many of the workers, welcomed the victory. “Cargill’s decision to suddenly forbid Muslim employees from praying at work,” it said, “reveals a company embracing odious

and obvious discrimination.”

— Karen Ray

March in Richmond, Virginia, demands \$15 minimum wage

RICHMOND, Va. — Over 2,000 workers from all over the U.S. marched here Aug. 13 demanding a \$15 an hour minimum wage. The demonstration capped a two-day Fight for \$15 convention.

Sandra Rubio, a McDonald’s worker from Houston, said she makes \$8.25 per hour after working there 25 years.

Marchers included child care, laundry, airport, McDonald’s and other fast-food workers, adjunct professors and home health aides. Many carried signs linking the fight for \$15 to the fight against police brutality.

“I was surprised to meet professors here who told me they are making less than \$15 an hour,” said Ben, an AT&T worker from Atlanta. He said the Communications Workers of America is trying to organize wireless phone store workers in Atlanta.

Endless Mideast wars: Catastrophe for working people

Continued from page 4

health care and education, which led more than a million to make their way to Europe last year, or die in the attempt.

Led by the richer capitalist states in the north, governments within the European Union responded with “temporary” border controls, essentially scuttling their agreement for EU-wide visa-free travel. As a result, close to 200,000 people are stuck in camps in Greece and Italy, often in squalid con-

Chilean workers demand gov’t-guaranteed pensions



Reuters/Rodrigo Garrido

“AFP: a starvation pension” and “AFP should die so that the retirees can live,” were among the signs carried by hundreds of thousands of workers, unionists, students and other protesters in 300 cities and towns across Chile Aug. 21, including Santiago, above. The privately run AFP, Pension Fund Administrators, was set up by the U.S.-backed Augusto Pinochet dictatorship in 1981 to get rid of social security.

Workers are required to deposit 10 percent of their wages into the accounts. The system was touted as a model of the superiority of the free market. The AFP investment companies take half of the workers’ contributions as “fees” for their role in speculating in stocks and bonds with the funds. According to the Santiago-based Fundación Sol, 90 percent of retirees get less than \$233 a month, well under the minimum wage of \$380.

Protesters demand the private profit system be dismantled wholesale and replaced with government-guaranteed social security.

— SETH GALINSKY

Protesters marched to the monument of Robert E. Lee, commanding general of the pro-slavery forces in the U.S. Civil War, for a rally. “Labor without livable wages is nothing but

a pseudo form of slavery,” Rev. Dr. William J. Barber II, president of the North Carolina NAACP, told the crowd.

— Ruth Nebbia and Mike Galati

25, 50, AND 75 YEARS AGO



September 6, 1991

ISTANBUL, Turkey — Tens of thousands of Kurds took to the streets in the city of Diyarbakir July 10 to protest police killings and state of emergency measures imposed by the Turkish government in the country’s eastern region. An estimated 40,000 Kurds participated in a funeral in Diyarbakir for Vedat Aydin, leader of the People’s Labour Party (HEP). Aydin was found dead three days after being taken from his home by the police.

As the funeral march proceeded the police began shooting into the crowd, throwing tear gas and savagely beating people.

The events in Diyarbakir mark a turning point of the struggle of the Kurdish people in Turkey for their national rights. This struggle has been given impetus by the fight of the Iraqi Kurds for autonomy in the wake of the imperialist war against that country.



September 5, 1966

A Sept. 6 court-martial has been set for the Fort Hood Three, the GIs jailed by the Army after they initiated a court challenge against the legality of the Vietnam war.

Pfc. James Johnson, Pvt. Dennis Mora and Pvt. David Samas had filed an application for an injunction in federal court June 30 against being sent to Vietnam on the grounds that the war there was “illegal, immoral and unjust.”

On July 7 they were illegally arrested by New York City and military police, minutes before they were scheduled to address a public meeting on their action.

They were confined at Fort Dix, New Jersey, until July 14 when they were ordered to board a plane for Vietnam. On refusing, the three soldiers were placed in solitary confinement. The Fort Hood Three Defense Committee has won support from a broad cross-section of the anti-war, civil rights communities.



September 6, 1941

ST. PAUL, Minn. — Nearly 400 militant colored men and women from the Twin Cities met in the Hallie Q. Brown settlement house in St. Paul last week to “have it out with the governor” on the matter of discrimination against Negroes in the Minnesota Home Defense Guard. But Republican Governor Harold Stassen, ambitious anti-labor politician who wants to be the next president of the United States, failed miserably in an attempt to explain his refusal to order the acceptance of Negroes into the state military forces by passing the buck to army officials and citing a non-existent military “code.”

Called by the Minnesota Negro Defense Committee, this meeting climaxed eight months of protest by Negroes in the state against the gross inequality and discrimination against colored men and women in the home defense forces and defense industries.

visa-free travel to Europe for Turkish citizens and to restart talks about Turkish EU membership, Ankara agreed to take back refugees who reached Greece.

But after the failed coup in Turkey, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan’s ensuing assault on political rights and mass arrests, and his charges of EU and U.S. complicity in the coup, the agreement is in limbo. The Turkish government says if visa-free travel is not in place by October, the deal is null and void.

Refugee crisis roils EU

Nevertheless, the number of people reaching the continent has fallen by three-quarters, with barbed wire blocking borders along routes tens of thousands of refugees had previously used.

The refugee crisis is at the top of the political agenda in virtually all European countries, and anti-immigrant, anti-EU political formations have seized on it to push their line and foster violence against Muslims and Arabs. At the same time, Islamic State terror assaults have spread across the continent.

These developments have driven another nail in the coffin of any dreams of a united capitalist Europe.

The international attention the refugee streams to Europe brought last year is largely gone, but there is no end in sight to the wars, the social dislocation and the worldwide capitalist economic crisis they stem from. A Europol/Interpol report in May said there were 800,000 refugees in Libya hoping for an opening to attempt the journey across the Mediterranean Sea.

‘Coal Miners on Strike’ shows how miners fought and won

In 1977 thousands of members of the United Mine Workers of America went on strike. They stood up to the government and the bosses and forced the coal companies to back down.

In 1981 once again the coal bosses tried to force the miners to make major concessions and once again the miners went on strike. As part of building solidarity, the Socialist Workers Party campaigned with the pamphlet *Coal Miners on Strike*, with articles reprinted from the *Militant*, selling hundreds of copies to workers and young people from coast to coast. Today miners face many of the same questions that were central to both strikes. Below is an excerpt from the chapter “The 111-day 1977-78 Coal Strike.” Copyright 1981 by Pathfinder Press. Reprinted by permission.

This was their [coal bosses] first attempt in more than thirty years to break the power of an established industrial union.

They believed the UMWA was a ready target. Its “unruliness,” as the coal operators saw it, stemmed in large part from the measures of union democracy the miners had won when they ousted the corrupt regime of Tony Boyle in 1972 and elected a reform leadership. The miners union not only stood in the way of profits from the projected coal boom, but it also provided an undesirable model of rank-and-file insurgency for the members of other unions. ...

Growing numbers of working people agree that such things as:

- the *right* to a job,
- the *right* to free education,
- the *right* to free medical care,
- the *right* to a secure retirement,
- the *right* to a clean and safe environment — that these are just and necessary if we are truly to enjoy “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness” in today’s world.

The miners had won some rights in previous battles — such as free medical care — that set an example for other workers.

Worst of all from the bosses’ point of view, the miners were fighting to defend

these rights. And that example made it harder to take away the rights of others.

Health care

The incredibly high cost of decent medical care — or any medical care at all — is one of the biggest problems facing workers throughout the country. But through hard-fought strike battles in the 1940s, the UMWA laid the basis for the most comprehensive health-benefits plan of any union.

Miners and their families received a medical card. It entitled them to free services at any clinic or hospital that was part of the system. No forms. No paperwork. No insurance company. No “deductibles.”

All costs were paid from a UMWA benefits fund, which was financed by payments from the coal companies based on the amount of coal mined and the number of hours worked.

Not only the miners benefited. With the aid of the UMWA fund, new clinics and hospitals were built throughout Appalachia. Health care for the entire region was transformed, since these facilities provided low-cost care to all.

From the beginning, however, the health-fund system suffered from one fundamental weakness — just like every other pension or health benefit that is limited to a single industry or union rather than provided for all by the government as a social responsibility — *it tied the miners’ benefits to the well-being of the companies.*

When the industry was in decline, as it was throughout the 1950s and early 1960s, benefits were cut back. Thousands of miners, widows, and pensioners had their cards taken away.

The coal industry recovered during the 1960s and has been booming in the 1970s — ever since oil prices went up 400 percent and coal became a more attractive energy source again. But de-



Militant/Stu Singer

Coal miners demonstrate in Washington, D.C., for black lung benefits, March 9, 1981.

spite soaring profits for the industry, payments into the fund did not keep pace with the even steeper increase in health-care costs.

The companies, however, blamed the fund’s financial crisis on wildcat strikes. In July 1977 — hoping to weaken the miners before the national strike — they engineered an unprecedented slash in the medical benefits. These couldn’t be restored without “labor stability,” the bosses claimed.

Then when negotiations opened, the coal operators set out to cut their costs even more by abolishing the UMWA fund and the free medical-card system altogether. ...

Pensions

The plight of UMWA pensioners stemmed from the same source as the attack on health care — inadequate funding by the companies.

Under the 1974 UMWA contract a separate pension fund was set up for miners who retired after January 1, 1976. This was supposedly necessary to comply with a new federal law regulating pension plans.

Retirees covered by the old fund — about 80,500 at the time of the strike — got a maximum of \$250 a month. Some 6,500 who retired later got

more, an average of \$425.

Miners bitterly opposed this inequity. They demanded equal pensions at a level that assures a decent livelihood for all retirees.

In addition, the 1976 UMWA convention voted to fight for cost-of-living provisions for pensions, so that retired and disabled miners would no longer see their benefits eaten away by inflation.

The coal operators hoped that the pension issue would pit older miners and retirees against the younger miners. To their surprise and dismay, the young miners fought militantly against any settlement that wasn’t fair to the pensioners.

“If they can take away the pensions and benefits of the retirees, they’ll do it to us when our time comes,” a Black woman coal miner in Pennsylvania told the *Militant*.

Such solidarity is the opposite of the “just look out for yourself” attitude that is fostered by capitalist society. And it’s the opposite of “business unionism,” which aims to secure gains only for a select group of workers, to the exclusion of others. It points toward the union movement adopting a broader social outlook and putting its muscle behind the demands of all the downtrodden and oppressed.

UMWA buses ready to roll for Sept. 8 protest

Continued from front page

would continue funding health care and pensions for retired coal miners, their spouses and dependents. It is scheduled to be voted on in September.

“We have 100 buses coming,” Phil Smith, UMWA spokesperson in Washington, told the *Militant* by phone Aug. 22. “We’re looking to have as big an action as we can.”

From Alabama, “buses will go from Bessemer, Tuscaloosa and Jasper,” said Foster. “The union is asking everyone to come and support the miners.

“The rally is very important,” Foster said. “We won guaranteed health care and pensions in 1946 and this bill is needed to keep funding those programs. Miners and their families depend on them.”

After a national strike by 400,000 union miners that year, the UMWA won lifetime health care guaranteed by the federal government. But coal bosses are increasingly using a loophole to drop their obligations to pay into the fund — declaring bankruptcy.

Five of the largest coal employers — Peabody Energy, Water Energy Inc.,

Alpha Natural Resources Inc., Patriot Coal and Arch Coal — have declared bankruptcy in the last year, raising the total to over 50.

The coal bosses use government bankruptcy courts to try to tear up union contracts, putting hard-fought gains in wages, work rules and safety won over decades of struggle on the chopping block. Today the overwhelming majority of a shrinking number of working coal miners are in nonunion mines. Deaths and injuries are increasing.

The Miners Protection Act would fund the union pension and health care plans, even if the bosses enter bankruptcy proceedings.

In recent years there has been a resurgence of black lung disease to levels not seen since the 1970s. Some 2,000 miners die from black lung each year, more than 70,000 since 1970.

As in other mining areas around the country, coal miners in Alabama have been hard hit by the grinding capitalist depression and collapse of energy prices, which since September 2014 have cost more than 170,000 workers in mining and coal-related industries

their jobs.

“The layoffs in coal and steel have hit our whole community hard, not just the workers who’ve lost their jobs,” UMWA member Wilson Maxwell told the *Militant* by phone Aug. 21. Maxwell, 59, works at Seneca Coal Resources’ preparation plant in Concord and lives in nearby Fairfield, like many other miners and steelworkers. Seneca bought the Oak Grove coal mine and Concord prep plant earlier this year, demanding immediate changes in the union contract.

When union members in April voted down the concessions demanded by the new bosses, Seneca laid off 49 miners.

Miners had few alternatives in the area. US Steel Corp. announced last August that it was closing the blast furnace and hot rolling mill at Fairfield Works, resulting in the lay-off of some 1,100 United Steelworkers members.

Under the gun, Mine Workers approved a contract in July that included a \$5 an hour pay cut, an end to overtime pay after eight hours, loss of some personal days and other concessions.

“Everybody who can possibly go to Washington on Sept. 8 needs to go,” Maxwell said.

The Changing Face of U.S. Politics

Working-Class Politics and the Trade Unions

by Jack Barnes

Building the kind of party working people need to prepare for coming class battles through which they will revolutionize themselves, their unions, and all society. \$24

Also in Spanish, French, Farsi, Swedish, Greek

Coal Miners on Strike

Articles from the 'Militant' on the 111-day 1977-78 strike, the 1981 strike and contract rejection vote, the fight for health care, pensions and compensation to black lung victims. \$7

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Working-class fight for right to vote marks US history

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

The fight to win and extend the right to vote has marked the class struggle in the U.S. from the first American Revolution and the Civil War to overthrow slavery through the fight for women's suffrage and voting rights for 18-year-olds. This key battle for the working class continues today against new restrictions and aggressive efforts to purge workers from the voting rolls.

Male residents of the 13 original American colonies of the British monarchy were required to own a certain amount of land or personal property or pay a tax to vote. Catholics were barred from voting in five colonies and Jews in four.

When the American Revolution triumphed, the new rulers drew up a constitution that lacked clear political protections against state attacks on basic rights. Rural farmers launched Shays' Rebellion in Massachusetts in 1786, arms in hand, protesting high taxes and mounting debts, helping to force the addition of the Bill of Rights to the U.S. Constitution in 1791.

The Constitution gave states the right to regulate who may vote, guaranteeing the southern slave owners' grip on power. Most states limited the franchise to Caucasian men of property. When George Washington was elected president in 1789, only 6 percent of the population could vote. Property restrictions remained on the books for decades.

Every new state that joined the Union after 1819 denied Blacks the right to vote. In the 1850s the first literacy tests were adopted in Connecticut and Massachusetts, aimed at denying Irish-Catholic immigrants the vote.

In the face of moves by the slavocracy to expand its territory in the first half of the 19th century, opposition to slavery grew among Northern industrialists, the growing working class, Midwestern farmers and others. The abolitionist movement also gave impetus to the fight to extend the vote to women. In 1848, delegates at the first women's rights convention in Seneca Falls, New York, called for women's suffrage.

The victory of the second American Revolution — the Union triumph over the slaveholders, followed by more than a decade of Radical Reconstruction governments backed by northern troops across the South — opened opportunities for Blacks to vote, hold office and advance political and social fights.

The Radical Reconstruction regimes passed laws advancing rights that benefited all toilers — Caucasian workers and farmers as well as freed slaves. This included establishing the first free public schools in the South, public hospitals and medical care for the poor.

However, the right of African-Americans to vote was not formalized in the

Constitution for almost five years after the Confederate surrender in 1865. The 15th Amendment, adopted in February 1870, stated, "The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude."

The 14th Amendment, ratified in 1868, had guaranteed U.S. citizenship to freed slaves. A year earlier, the Reconstruction Act adopted by Congress made suffrage for Black males a precondition for readmission to the Union of former Confederate states.

But between 1863 and 1870 proposals to enfranchise Blacks were defeated in more than 15 northern states and territories. Outside the South only Iowa and Minnesota adopted universal male suffrage. When the 15th Amendment was submitted to states for ratification in early 1869, it was initially rejected by

legislatures in New York, New Jersey, Ohio, California, Delaware and others.

The rise of racist resistance to the gains of Blacks and the spread of reactionary thug outfits like the Ku Klux Klan dealt blows to efforts to forge common struggles of Black and Caucasian working people in the South. The Radical Reconstruction governments were overthrown when northern capitalists, fearing deepening workers struggles, pulled out federal troops in 1877. This was the worst setback for the U.S. working class in its history.

The victorious rulers in the South, utilizing the Klan and other racist outfits, imposed Jim Crow segregation and crushed the voting rights of African-Americans. Resistance by Blacks, often backed by Caucasian farmers, was drowned in blood.

Lengthy residence requirements, poll taxes, literacy tests and property

requirements were implemented in 1890 in Mississippi, and spread across the South. In Louisiana, the number of Black registered voters fell from 130,000 to 1,342. By 1940, only 3 percent of eligible African-Americans in the South were registered.

Jim Crow ruled for over 70 years. But with the rise of mass battles to throw off colonial rule after the second imperialist world war, struggles for Black rights, including the right to vote, gained ground in the South. In the 1950s and '60s a massive proletarian Black-led civil rights movement destroyed Jim Crow segregation, leading to passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

These revolutionary developments, which had wide sympathy among workers across the country, had a profound effect on social relations and politics.

Fight for women's suffrage

In the early 1900s, growing numbers of working-class women, unionists and socialists threw their weight into the fight for women's suffrage. With passage of the 19th Amendment in 1920, women won the right to vote.

In 1971, as hundreds of thousands of youth were drafted into the U.S. army to fight and die in Vietnam to defend Washington's imperialist interests, and mass protests grew in the streets at home and on military bases worldwide, the rulers felt the pressure to extend voting rights to 18-year-olds.

Defense of the fundamental right to vote continues on the agenda for the working class today.



May 19, 1870, five years after end of Civil War, mass six-mile-long march in Baltimore celebrates victory in passage of 15th Amendment to U.S. Constitution, guaranteeing Black men right to vote.

Struggle over right to vote continues today

Continued from front page

officials moved to enforce ID laws that were awaiting preclearance.

The North Carolina legislature passed a sweeping law restricting access to voting, ending voter registration on the day of the election, limiting early voting and imposing a strict photo ID requirement.

Similar laws were passed in Tennessee and elsewhere in the South, as well as in Wisconsin, Michigan, Kansas and North Dakota, many in states where the Republican Party controlled the government.

Workers who are convicted on felony charges permanently lose their right to vote in 10 states. They must wait until they serve out all probation

or parole to apply to vote in 24 additional states and often face arbitrary restrictions.

In Tennessee, one of the most restrictive states, persons convicted of a felony since 1981 may apply for restoration of suffrage after completing their sentence, if they have paid all outstanding court-ordered restitution or child support.

These attacks have met with resistance. Voting rights was a key demand in the march of 80,000 in March 2015 commemorating the hard fought 1965 Selma-to-Montgomery civil rights protests.

The North Carolina NAACP has organized dozens of voting rights protests across the state in recent years. Thousands marched July 13, 2015, in Winston-Salem at the start of a federal trial challenging new state restrictions.

Voting rights was the theme of the NAACP's Aug. 1-Sept. 16, 2015, 1,000-mile Journey for Justice march from Selma, Alabama, to Washington, D.C.

The protests have had an impact.

The 5th District Court of Appeals ruled July 20 that the Texas voter ID law "has a discriminatory effect on minorities' voting rights."

The North Carolina law was declared unconstitutional July 29 by the 4th Circuit Court of Appeals. Its provisions "target African Americans with almost surgical precision," wrote Judge Diana Gribbon Motz. The same day voting restrictions in Wisconsin were voided by a federal district court.

But many obstacles remain, especially at local levels. In March, the City Council in Daphne, Alabama, reduced the number of polling places from five in neighborhoods where Caucasians and African-Americans live to just two in majority-Caucasian areas.

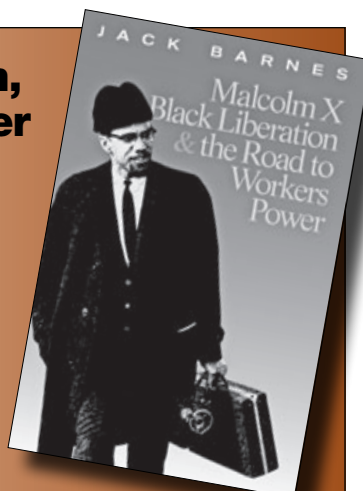
In January, after the St. Louis County government placed 18 polling places inside police stations, the NAACP demanded they be moved. Voting in a cop station "is far too similar to an unofficial Jim Crow law" in a county whose population is 24 percent African-American, Esther Haywood, St. Louis County NAACP president, told the *St. Louis American*.

And in Sparta, Georgia, residents protested and filed a lawsuit after the Hancock County Board of Elections and Registration sent sheriff's deputies to the homes of more than 180 Black citizens ordering them to appear in person with proof of residence or lose their right to vote.

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

"Don't start with Blacks as an oppressed nationality. Start with the vanguard place and weight of workers who are Black in broad proletarian-led social and political struggles in the United States. From the Civil War to today, the record is mind-boggling. It's the strength and resilience, not the oppression, that bowls you over." — Jack Barnes **\$20**

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US, Turkish, Syrian hands off Kurds!

It's in the interests of working people around the world to support the Kurdish people's struggle for self-determination. We urge our readers to join or initiate meetings and protests to speak out against the U.S.-Turkish offensive in northern Syria, Ankara's war against the Kurds in Turkey and the Syrian government's attacks on Kurdish forces in Hasakah.

The Kurds have a long history of struggle against discrimination and national oppression in Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria. When French and British rulers divided the Middle East after the first imperialist world slaughter, setting new national borders in the process, one of their goals was to divide and weaken the Kurdish people. Kurds remain the largest national-ity on earth without their own homeland.

An independent Kurdish republic came into existence in northern Iran after a revolutionary uprising established a workers and peasants government in neighboring Azerbaijan in December 1945. Both were crushed a year later by the Iranian monarchy, with the complicity of the Stalinist regime in Moscow, dealing a heavy blow to the Kurdish people and working class throughout the region.

A new rise in the Kurdish national struggle has been one of the unintended consequences of Washington's endless wars in the Mideast since the first U.S. war in Iraq in 1991. In the aftermath of that slaughter, "the Kurdish people have come to the center stage in world

politics as never before," said Socialist Workers Party National Secretary Jack Barnes at the time, "not primarily as victims, but as courageous and determined fighters for national rights." (See the article "Opening Guns of World War III: Washington's Assault on Iraq," published in issue no. 7 of the magazine *New International*.)

Today there are some 5 million Kurds in the autonomous Kurdish region in northern Iraq, and another 2 million in areas under Kurdish control in Syria. These conquests give impetus to their aspirations for national independence, especially in Turkey, home to 15 million Kurds. Despite all their conflicting interests and alliances, the capitalist rulers of the United States, Syria, Turkey, Iran and Iraq all oppose an independent Kurdistan.

Washington has alternately posed as a defender of the Kurds — doling out aid with an eyedropper — and blocked moves toward Kurdish sovereignty, depending on its shifting relations and alliances with the different capitalist rulers in the region. Just look at Vice President Joe Biden's arrogant demand Aug. 24 — and Ankara's delight with it — that Kurdish militia fighters in Syria, Washington's supposed allies, "must go back across the river ... *period*," and give up territory liberated from Islamic State west of the Euphrates.

Get all U.S. troops, warplanes and drones out of the Middle East now!

Anger at US colonial rule grows in Puerto Rico

BY SETH GALINSKY

The U.S. rulers are getting worried about their rule in Puerto Rico — as its economy is in a free fall, the Zika virus explodes as a social crisis on the island, and people are growing angrier at Puerto Rico's status as an outright colony of Washington. That comes through in the Aug. 16 *New York Times* article "Puerto Rico's Financial Woes Revive Calls for Independence." The article is based on an interview with long-time *independentista* and Puerto Rican Nationalist Rafael Cancel Miranda.

Cancel Miranda, now 86 years old, spent a total of 25 ½ years in U.S. jails. The first time was for two years for refusing to register for the draft prior to the Korean War. He got out in 1951. He was arrested again in March 1954 after firing a gun during an armed protest in the U.S. House of Representatives together with Lolita Lebrón, Andrés Figueroa Cordeiro and Irving Flores.

Today, Cancel Miranda continues to tell the truth about Puerto Rico's colonial status and — to the consternation of the *Times* editors — "younger people receive him as a legend."

Cancel Miranda told the *Militant* in a phone interview Aug. 22 that every chance he gets he talks about the fight to free Puerto Rican political prisoner Oscar López Rivera, jailed in the U.S. for more than 35 years for his activities in defense of independence for the island.

But the *Times* article said not a word about López. The U.S. rulers see López as "an enemy for fighting for freedom," Cancel Miranda said. "But we see him as a Puerto Rican patriot." A growing coalition of groups on the island and on the mainland is organizing for a large national concert and event demanding freedom for López in front of the White House in Washington Oct. 9.

The United Nations had declared the 1950s a "decade of decolonization" and Puerto Rico was on its list of colonies to be freed. But at U.N. hearings in 1953, U.S. delegates twisted arms and argued that Puerto Rico had become a "free associated state" — a U.S. commonwealth — and succeeded in having the island removed from the list.

"I was there," Cancel Miranda told the *Militant*. "It was a total sham in the face of the world." The armed action was a way of exposing that lie.

"Simón Bolívar said that empires maintain their domination better through deception than through force," Cancel Miranda said. "A people who are fooled are easy to control. But now people in Puerto Rico and Puerto Ricans in exile are

seeing through the deception."

And that worries the editors of the *Times*. "Now it seems that most Puerto Ricans believe the associated free state was a sham," the article notes.

In the interview Cancel Miranda points to the impact of the worldwide capitalist economic crisis on the people of Puerto Rico, and recent colonial measures taken by Washington, including the imposition of a U.S. fiscal control board in an effort to ensure the Puerto Rican people pay for the island's \$72 billion debt to bondholders and hedge funds.

The *Times* says the board "will soon hold sway over the island."

The board has the power to sell Puerto Rican government assets, lay off public workers, overturn any law or regulation that it decides is "inconsistent" with its mission, and impose criminal penalties on anyone who fails to carry out its decisions.

In reality, Cancel Miranda told the *Militant*, Puerto Rico has been "under the rule of an imperialist board" ever since Washington made Puerto Rico its colony in 1898. What's different now is that "even they have to admit it."

The crisis on the island is due to the capitalist economic crisis, Cancel Miranda said, "but also because of colonialism, the rule of Wall Street. We don't have any powers to resolve our own problems. They control everything."

"We have always resisted the empire," Cancel Miranda told the *Militant*. "But now bigger battles are coming."



Rafael Cancel Miranda, right, at March 22 protest in San Juan.

SWP in Tennessee

Continued from page 3

an average of 20 military veterans are committing suicide every day," Sherman told the *Militant*.

"My neighbor committed suicide this year," the young woman said. "He would get deployed abroad for long stretches. It's terrible."

Leigh said she liked what the SWP had to say and asked the campaigners to come back to talk some more.

"Workers are sent abroad to fight and die for capitalist exploitation from Iraq to Afghanistan," Kennedy told the press Aug. 18. "They come home, injured and exhausted, from unpopular wars that drag on and on, to find depression conditions, few jobs and bureaucratic disregard and contempt from the Veteran's Administration. The Socialist Workers Party says bring all the troops home now!

"As today's crisis drives capitalist regimes to deepening conflicts, many, led by Washington, are armed to the teeth with nuclear weapons. The SWP demands unilateral U.S. nuclear disarmament and fights to take political power out of the hands of the imperialist war-makers.

"Our party is your party," Kennedy told workers. "Vote for what you WANT, even if you don't get it today, NOT for what you don't want, guaranteeing that you'll keep on getting it."

LETTERS

Solitary confinement

In March a group of Florida civil rights and mental health advocates, religious leaders and journalists sent a letter to the Department of Justice asking for an investigation of the Florida prison system's "over-use" of solitary confinement, racial discrimination in its application and abuse of incarcerated individuals.

The group states that one in eight prisoners is in solitary, some 12,500 people. Black men are overrepresented by 10 percent, Black women by 20 percent. Some 22 percent of mentally ill prisoners are in solitary as are one-third of the 138 children under 18 held in adult prisons.

Jim Kendrick
Miami, Florida

Oregon refuge occupation

You wrote in the Aug. 8 issue on the Oregon refuge occupiers. Ten defendants have pled guilty, one Bundy acknowledged his involvement, and another tried to escape from prison. Ryan [Bundy] has also declared himself a sovereign citizen not subject to federal law.

I'd have more sympathy for the occupiers if they cared about the land they'd occupied, protesting government misuse, but they didn't. The occupiers destroyed public property and paved a road through the wildlife sanctuary, despite having benefited from government subsidies for years.

These aren't the heroes or victims we're looking for.

Heath Row
Los Angeles, California

Editor's note: Whatever you might think of the actions of the ranchers and their supporters who occupied the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge to protest federal attacks on their rights and livelihood, and to oppose the unjust imprisonment of ranchers Dwight and Steven Hammond, working people should stand up and protest their imprisonment and the cop killing of Robert "LaVoy" Finicum.

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

'Militant' Prisoners' Fund

The Prisoners' Fund makes it possible to send prisoners reduced rate subscriptions. To donate, send a check or money order payable to the Militant and earmarked "Prisoners' Fund" to 306 W. 37th St., 13th Floor, New York, NY 10018.