

THE MILITANT

INSIDE

Basic Vegetable strikers
stand up to bosses, thugs

— PAGE 4

A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

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Thousands in Puerto Rico: 'Free the prisoners now!'

Protesters demand unconditional release of patriots

BY MARTÍN KOPPEL
AND MIGDALIA JIMÉNEZ

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico — Braving a torrential down-pour, thousands of people marched through the streets of this city August 29 to chants of "Libertad! Libertad!" (Freedom! Freedom!) demanding the unconditional release of all Puerto Rican political prisoners. They filled the streets with Puerto Rican flags, umbrellas, and colorful banners.

Seventeen advocates of Puerto Rico's independence have been locked up in Washington's jails, many for almost two decades, because of their involvement in the fight against U.S. colonial rule. Some are serving sentences of up to 90–105 years.

The broad support the campaign for the prisoners' release has won in this island nation was evident in the number of workers as well as high school and college youth who marched, many with their own hand-made signs. It was also reflected in the range of religious figures and politicians from different parties who attended or endorsed the action.

The protest was also marked by the surge in



August 29 march in San Juan demanding freedom for pro-independence political prisoners was the biggest such action to date. Banner from island of Vieques reads, "Vieques is present: unconditional release," responding to White House offer to release some prisoners under conditions many consider outrageous.

mass opposition here to the U.S. Navy's occupation and use of the island of Vieques for bombing practice. It was difficult to find a demonstrator who, besides supporting the freedom of

the independentista prisoners, didn't have some strong words about Vieques and why the U.S. military should get out. This sentiment has

Continued on Page 6

Farmers rally in Minnesota to demand gov't relief

BY DOUG JENNESS

WACONIA, Minnesota — Some 1,200 working farmers and their supporters rallied here August 21 to demand the federal government adopt measures to help farmers get out of the crisis they are in. Participants came from every corner of the state and from many organizations, including the Minnesota Farmers Union (MFU), National Farmers Organization (NFO), the Central Minnesota COACT,

Stop all foreclosures now!

— Socialist Workers campaign statement, page 10

and the Minnesota Farm Bureau. Most of the farmers participating work relatively small farms and are the most vulnerable to the worsening price-cost squeeze.

Market prices for hogs, as well as for corn and soy beans, are at record lows. Many farmers, unable to pay for seeds, fertilizers, machinery, bank loans, and land — whose costs stubbornly stay high — are being forced to foreclose. This burden has been worsened for many farmers by the results

Continued on Page 3

Socialist workers organize campaign to sell 'Capitalism's World Disorder'

Effort is part of joining toilers in cities, rural areas in struggle

BY JEFFARTHUR

ATLANTA — "This conference has been earned by the progress the party is making in advancing the third campaign for the turn," said Norton Sandler. Speaking for the Socialist Workers Party's Trade Union Committee, a body charged with leading the party's work in the industrial unions, Sandler opened a na-

tional conference of socialist trade unionists here August 28–29.

Some 150 members of the SWP and Young Socialists — workers in the garment, textile, meatpacking, rail, steel, oil, airline, aerospace, and automobile industries — met to discuss how they are advancing their ability to function as competent fighters alongside a grow-

ing layer of workers and farmers today resisting the devastating conditions created by the workings of the world capitalist system. At the center of this effort by the party and YS is the third campaign for the turn — a concerted drive to get jobs in packinghouses, garment shops, textile mills, and coal mines; to deepen

Continued on Page 7

Teachers in Detroit walk out despite gov't threats

BY CHUCK GUERRA

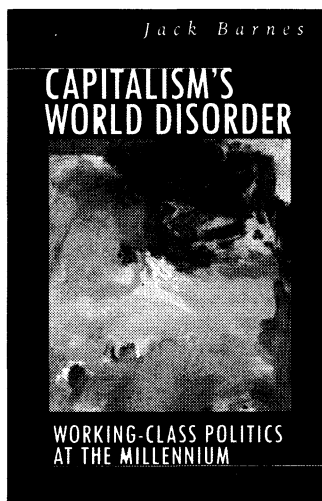
DETROIT — At a mass membership meeting on August 30, Detroit teachers voted by an 80 percent majority to reject a 10-day contract extension recommended by their union leadership. On August 31, which would have been the first day of classes, picket lines went up at all Detroit high schools and elementary schools. There was no attempt to hold classes; school officials had told students to stay home until it became known how many teachers would heed their appeal to cross the picket line. At the end of the first day of picketing so few teachers had crossed that classes were canceled for a second day. The school district has 172,000 students and 7,200 teachers.

At issue in the fight is the attempt by the state and city governments to "reform" the Detroit schools. Last March, the Michigan state legislature dissolved the elected Detroit school board and replaced it with one appointed by the mayor. In the current dispute, the school board is proposing to give wide power to local principals, lengthen the school year, and institute measures such as merit pay, which ties pay raises at each school to improvements in students' performance on standardized tests.

"People should read the contract before making up their minds on it," said Mark Karaim, a teacher at Northwest High School, referring to media attempts to portray the teachers as selfish. Among the proposals that

Continued on Page 5

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



JACK BARNES

"Revolutionary-minded workers must learn to read broadly, to take complicated questions seriously and work at them—and to study together with co-workers, youth, and newly won members of the communist movement. The capitalist rulers do everything they can to confuse workers, to make us believe we must rely on experts, wizards, and pollsters. They try to obfuscate — about economics, about stocks and bonds, about the monarchy in Britain, about the church in Poland, about class relations in the United States, about education and wage differentials, you name it."

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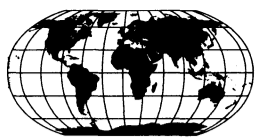
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Workers strike against austerity in Colombia — page 10



Rail workers strike in Peru

Rail workers in Peru occupied the San Pedro station in Cuzco August 25, helping shut down the line from that city to the ancient Inca city of Machu Picchu. Both tourist and freight lines are now closed down. Pickets have blocked freight trains at Cosicha near the capital Lima. The regional directory of industry and tourism said that army helicopters have started a replacement service between Cuzco and Machu Picchu.

The workers are protesting a deal handing the state-owned railways to a private consortium for 30 years. They are demanding a guarantee of five years' work instead of the one year promised under the deal, and severance payments of \$5,000.

Ecuador gov't defers debt

Ecuador's government announced August 25 that it will defer a payment of \$96 million, due at the end of this month, on so-called Brady Bonds. Created in the 1980s and named for the then-secretary of the U.S. Treasury, these bonds repackaged defaulted loans in 18 Latin American countries and are backed by U.S. Treasury securities. Estimates of Ecuador's total foreign debt reach as high as 100 percent of its gross domestic product. Interest payments due in 1999 run to 42 percent of the annual budget.

The U.S. Treasury and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) approved the deferral, in hopes it will buy time for the Ecuadorian government to carry out economic "reforms" demanded by the IMF in exchange for a new \$400 million loan. There is mass opposition, however, to the attempts to impose austerity measures. Protests and strikes in March and July forced the government to back off fuel price rises, the sale of state-owned assets, and other proposals.

UK-Argentina military exercises

British and Argentine armed forces are planning a joint military exercise later this year. This will be the first bilateral mission involving the two countries since the 1982 Malvinas war, fought over the Malvinas Islands off Argentina's Atlantic coast. In that conflict British forces defeated Argentine troops, laying hold once again of this colonial territory, dubbed the "Falklands" by London.



Merchants and street vendors in Ecuador protest in mid-July against government attempts to hike fuel prices and taxes. They demanded President Jamil Mahuad resign.

In recent years, the two forces have cooperated under UN command in Cyprus and Kuwait. As economic conditions in Argentina have become more depressed and volatile, President Carlos Menem has been working to cement closer ties with the imperialist powers.

Rallies protest Philippines gov't

Up to 150,000 people rallied in Manila and others elsewhere in the Philippines August 20. They gathered to oppose the proposals of the government of President Joseph Estrada to rewrite the country's constitution. Estrada wants to scrap provisions that limit or ban foreign ownership of businesses and land. Rally participants also criticized him for corruption and attempts to muzzle the press. To the fore in the protests were major figures in the bourgeois opposition to Estrada, like former president Corazon Aquino and leaders of the Catholic Church.

Forests are burned in Indonesia

Hundreds of fires are burning in the rain forests of the Indonesian islands of Kalimantan (Borneo) and Sumatra. Smog from the fires has disrupted some airliner flights and blurred

the skyline in parts of South Asia, and has been blamed for a collision at sea that killed 10 people. The owners of large plantations use the fires as a crude means of clearing land for their enterprises. Indonesian officials say they suspect 176 companies of using the method, which is forbidden under the country's laws, but none have been successfully prosecuted.

Government officials from 10 countries in the region discussed the growing problem in Singapore on August 26. Environmentalists warn that a repeat — or worse — of the 1997 crisis is on the cards. The smog at that time turned noon into dusk in nearby Malaysia, and cost Indonesia \$9 billion. Police arrested 60 small-scale farmers for setting the fires, but 80 percent of the fires began on "plantations controlled by a few politically connected growers and timber barons," according to one analyst.

Sell-off of Daewoo to begin

Daewoo, the second largest conglomerate in south Korea, is on the chopping block. Facing imminent collapse under the weight of \$50 billion of domestic and foreign debt, the company has agreed to the sale of its shipbuilding, electronics, and brokerage companies. The company will hold on to its car manufacturing business and some other divisions.

The Daewoo group accounts for more than 5 percent of south Korea's gross domestic product, and employs more than 150,000 people. Since the economic contraction dubbed the "Asian crisis" in mid-1997, the government in Seoul has faced pressure from imperialist lenders and governments to break up the large conglomerates known as *chaebol*. Although banks and corporations from Japan and capitalist countries in Europe and North America are hoping to profit from a fire sale of Daewoo's assets, they are nervous the com-

pany might still default on its debts.

China 'spy' charges unravel

The former chief of counterintelligence at Los Alamos National Laboratory stated in mid-August there is "not a shred of direct evidence" to support allegations of spying against We Ho Lee. The scientist was employed at the laboratory until he was fired in March for "security violations" amid a blaze of publicity about supposed Chinese theft of U.S. nuclear weapons secrets. A report by the U.S. Senate Committee on Governmental Affairs raised doubts about the case against Lee, and also about the charges against Beijing. "We take no position ... whether ... nuclear weapons information was in fact compromised," states the report.

The witch-hunting accusations have served Washington in a period of rising tension between the governments of China and the U.S. ally and client state of Taiwan. Washington has assumed a more openly hostile stance to the Chinese workers state.

U.S. force to leave Haiti, for now

The Clinton administration announced August 25 that the 480 U.S. troops in Haiti will be pulled out by the end of the year. Under the banner of the United Nations, 20,000 U.S. forces invaded Haiti in 1994 in the name of restoring order following the 1991 military coup that ousted newly elected President Jean-Bertrand Aristide. The invading forces reinstated an Aristide government weaker and more beholden to imperialism. Earlier this year President René Préval dissolved the Haitian parliament.

U.S. troops will now have a "frequent presence, not a continuous one," in Haiti, said Pentagon spokesman Admiral Craig Quigley. Four hundred UN forces acting as advisors to the police force will remain deployed in Haiti.

Court allows school vouchers to continue in Cleveland this year

A federal judge issued an injunction halting a tuition voucher program 18 hours before the start of the school year. Under the scheme the state provides scholarships to the tune of \$2,250, covering up to 90 percent of the tuition fees in private and religious schools. U.S. District Judge Solomon Oliver Jr. stated in his August 24 decision that "the Cleveland program has the primary effect of advancing religion." Critics of vouchers also explain they are part of an ideological and financial attack on public education. The groups that brought the issue before the court include Americans United for Separation of Church and State, the American Federation of Teachers, and the American Civil Liberties Union.

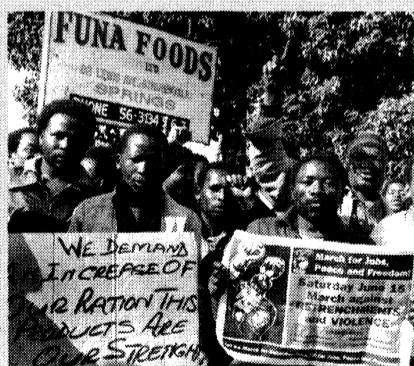
Ohio's attorney general filed an emergency appeal against the decision. Three days after the original decision Oliver said the vouchers could continue for now to avoid "disruption." There was "no substantial possibility" he would ultimately support the voucher program, he stated.

— FRANK EVANS

THE MILITANT

Class struggle in South Africa

Workers throughout South Africa are waging strikes and protest actions demanding wage increases. These demonstrations include large numbers of workers who are black and white together, reflecting the advances in the democratic revolution. The 'Militant' brings you coverage as the class struggle unfolds. Don't miss a single issue!



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Editor: NAOMI CRAINE

Young Socialists column editor: CECILIA ORTEGA

Business Manager: MAURICE WILLIAMS

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Strikers in Ontario say, 'It all comes down to respect'

BY SYLVIE CHARBIN
AND AL CAPPE

DURHAM, Ontario — "Scab Hall of Shame," reads the sign by the highway outside Interforest Ltd., located in this town, about 100 miles northwest of Toronto. Since May 24 some 375 men and women, members of Industrial Wood and Allied Workers Union of Canada (IWA) Local 500, have been on strike at this wood veneer plant, one of 19 facilities Interforest owns worldwide.

Strikers told the *Militant* that in addition to contract demands, it was how they were treated on the job that drove them to strike.

"It all comes down to respect. Every horror story you ever heard about a place was going on in there," said one worker who did not want to give his name. "They think we're monkeys," he said. He was referring to a remark made at a bargaining session by the human resources manager and reported to a union meeting. The manager had said that "you can put any monkey in a pair of coveralls, give him a banana and he'll do anything you want him to do."

The company has carried out speedups and ongoing harassment. Workers are expected to produce about 2,000 sheets of veneer per hour, doing work which involves heavy lifting and operating hazardous equipment such as a slicer with a 20-foot razor sharp knife. The plant is cold and damp in the winter, hot and humid in the summer.

The rising anger against this treatment, felt by both longtime and more recently hired workers, was expressed at the union meeting that rejected the company's first contract offer and voted 93 percent in favor of strike action.

According to striker John Metherel, a key contract issue is the pension plan. The company now contributes a maximum of Can\$400 per year to the pension fund (Can\$1=US\$.67). "There's one guy who's been in the plant for 28 years. He's retiring at the end of August, but he'll only get \$526 a year." The workers' average wage is about Can\$13.90 an hour. The starting wage is Can\$7.15 and it takes a full year to get full rate in the classification.

The union wants the company to increase its contribution to the pension plan by 5 cents per hour in each year of a three-year contract and to raise wages by 35 cents in each of the first two years of the contract and 40 cents in the last. The company has offered three cents for the pension plan in the first and last year only and 25, 25, and 30 cents in wages.

The company has hired scabs and said it intends to resume production. A court injunction issued August 13 limits picketing to eight strikers per gate and sets a limit of 10 minutes on stopping vehicles, and 15 minutes on trucks. Previously, strikers had mobilized to successfully block buses carrying management and 25-30 scabs, according to the strikers' estimates.

Company security guards videotape picket line activity, attempt to provoke strikers, and have followed some of them when they leave the line. A worker on the picket line was struck by a scab's vehicle August 23. It was the second such incident.

"This is the first time I've ever been in a union," said machine operator Chrystelle Ayerhart, who has been in the plant three and

Independence for East Timor!



August 23 student protest in Jakarta, Indonesia, demands independence for East Timor. Up to 10,000 rallied in the capital Dili two days later. Independence sentiment is unquenched by the terror campaign of Indonesian-backed militias, which escalated around August 31 UN-sponsored ballot on autonomy or independence.

a half years. "This strike has taught me how important unions are." Ayerhart has participated with other strikers in picketing some of the managers' homes, handing out leaflets in the neighborhood explaining the reasons for their strike. The strikers are determined to win and are discussing ways to make their struggle known and gain support.

Workers from the area have visited the picket line, in particular some teachers and nurses. The union is organizing a yard sale

and barbecue on Saturday, September 11, from 8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. The event will take place at the picket trailer directly across the road from the plant. Other trade unionists have been invited to participate. For further information, call the picket trailer at (519) 369-3830.

Sylvie Charbin is a member of the International Association of Machinists. Al Cappe is a member of the Canadian Auto Workers.

1,200 rally to demand aid for farmers in Minnesota

Continued from front page

of a severe flood in the northwestern part of the state two years ago.

A chart at the front of the meeting detailed the costs for growing an acre of soybeans, an acre of corn, and an acre of wheat and the yield and income farmers could expect from each of those acres. The average loss per acre: corn, \$106; wheat, \$76; and soybeans \$54.

The meeting was chaired by MFU president David Frederickson, who explained that one of the sponsors' goals of the "Rural Crisis Accountability Day" was uniting a cross-section of the rural population to let the state's U.S. legislators know that they are "accountable" for the current crisis. In this spirit, Steve Lindholm from the Minnesota Bankers Association had a prominent place among the speakers, and the banner at the front indicated that the two principal spon-

sors were the MFU and the bankers group.

In an article on the eve of the meeting Frederickson wrote, "Our goal is to bring all 10 of our Washington, D.C., lawmakers — eight U.S. representatives and two U.S. senators" — to the meeting. Three representatives and Sen. Paul Wellstone showed and were all given the platform to speak. In addition, a number of state legislators were introduced and some of them spoke. Minnesota AFL-CIO president Bernard Brommer also addressed the crowd.

The only farmers to speak were several of eight spokespeople from each congressional district selected at meetings around the state. Mark Froemke, a sugar refinery worker and local union official from East Grand Forks, stressed the important economic connections between city workers and farmers and the need for collaboration.

Frederickson said the rally was part of a series of meetings that will culminate in a Washington, D.C., Fly-In September 9-15 organized by the National Farmers Union.

This effort, he said, is to put pressure on Congress to alter the 1996 Freedom to Farm Act. Rep. David Minge from the southwestern part of the state outlined several proposals he said he will introduce when Congress ends its summer recess. They include controlling production through getting farmers to set aside acreage, adjusting the federal marketing loan program to give farmers a bigger subsidy, and speeding up the development of a federal crop insurance plan.

In informal discussions many farmers expressed their frustration. Many said they need emergency relief, but above all a solution is needed to the price-cost crunch.

Elwood Lips, a soy and corn farmer from Rice County, told the *Militant* that "farmers aren't looking for a handout, but a fair price." He said, "The politicians made a lot of promises; now let's see what they do when they go back to Washington where they live." Lips is a veteran of the NFO's withholding actions of the 1960s, when farmers dumped milk and kept other produce and livestock

from getting to market in order to force bargaining agreements with the processors. Still an NFO activist, he is also part of the Feedlot Front.

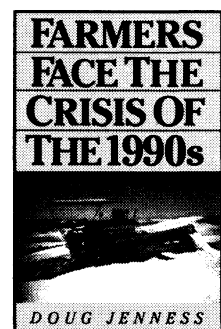
Lips said that he was planning to join other farmers at the State Capitol September 1 for a hearing on farm prices initiated by Wellstone and U.S. Sen. Byron Dorgan from North Dakota.

A week before the Waconia rally Gov. Jesse Ventura angered many farmers when he took a tough line against more emergency relief. At the Minnesota Rural Summit in Duluth he said, "We just need to get the government, doggone it, out of the way." Ventura criticized the \$70 million in aid approved by the state legislature, which he allowed to become law without his signature. He had called for only \$10 million in relief.

Doug Jenness is a member of United Steelworkers of America Local 9444 in Minnesota.

from Pathfinder

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Iowa farmers call for government action

BY TIM MAILHOT

DES MOINES, Iowa — More than 200 farmers and supporters rallied here August 22, calling for government action to relieve the financial crisis working farmers are facing. Speakers included local and national politicians and representatives of farm organizations, clergy, and labor unions. The meeting was one of a series of "Rural Unity Days" organized by the National Farmers Union (NFU) in 16 states across the Midwest.

Gene Paul, national president of the National Farmers Organization, pointed out that the Freedom to Farm Act of 1996 encouraged farmers to plant fence row to fence row. "But dumping our produce on the world market doesn't work for farmers. We don't export. The traders and processors that buy from us do the exporting, and they're making the money."

Jim Braun of the Friends of Rural America echoed this, stating, "I'm tired of hearing that exports are our savior. [Meatpacking giant] IBP has doubled its exports since 1990 and

quadrupled its profits in 1998. Meanwhile, hog farmers are getting one-quarter of the price they did in 1990."

A number of speakers pointed out that the problem was that farmers can't get a price for their produce and livestock, but offered no solution. There were also calls for anti-trust action against the big food processors and traders, who have increased their power through mergers and greater control of the market.

About 30 unionists attended, including members of the United Steelworkers of America (USWA) on strike against Titan Tire, as well as members of the International Association of Machinists, International Union of Operating Engineers, United Auto Workers (UAW), and American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees.

Doug Bishop of UAW Local 997 at the Maytag appliance plant said, "It's not just agriculture, it's a struggle for jobs. We have to stick up for each other."

Dave Neil, president of the UAW's Iowa

State Community action program, was another speaker. He pointed out that the farm crisis was already getting its reflection in agriculture-related industries. At John Deere, which produces agricultural implements, workers have been laid off one out of four weeks for most of the year, and will be laid off one out of three weeks through October. Layoffs have also hit the Bridgestone/Firestone Ag Tire plant in Des Moines, with a few hundred on temporary layoff through November.

After the rally Jim Kalbach, a farmer for 37 years from Stewart, Iowa, said he was getting out. He'd gone over his finances with his banker and it just won't work anymore. "I'd be in better shape if I'd worked at McDonald's all those years," he told this correspondent. Upcoming rallies will be held in Kansas, Missouri, Montana, Ohio, Oklahoma, South Dakota, and Colorado.

Tim Mailhot is a member of United Steelworkers of America Local 310.

Vegetable strikers stand up to bosses, thugs in California

BY JASON VERGARA

KING CITY, California — More than 700 workers at Basic Vegetable Co., members of Teamsters Local 890, went on strike July 7 and are maintaining a 24-hour picket line at both the production facility and at the warehouse. Workers at the plant produce onion and garlic powder.

The initial vote to strike was 555 in favor to 2 against. A second strike ballot was 626 in favor and 10 against. No strikers have crossed the picket line. Basic Vegetable has arranged for a contracting company to bus scabs in and out of the plant every day from Avenal — a two-hour drive away. Avenal is in California's Central Valley, which has high unemployment due to a devastating freeze last winter. Strikers estimate that there are around 150 replacement workers and up to 150 salary workers crossing the picket line.

The strike was called when workers refused to accept further concessions in their new contract. "We hope they settle the strike soon and offer us a decent contract. The company wants to get rid of benefits and we want more," said one striker to *Militant* correspondents who visited the picket lines August 22.

A striker who has worked at Basic for 25 years explained that the company has been taking away a little in every contract, but now they want to take away a lot all at once.

"More than anything, this strike is about dignity. Many people have worked here for years and given their lives to this company," said another worker on the picket line.

Another striker said, "This struggle is important for us and our families and also the community and other workers."

Farm workers and members of the United Farm Workers union often join the picket lines, especially on the weekends. The majority of workers at Basic Vegetable are Mexican, and many strikers said that if they didn't work here they would be working in the fields.

Fritz Conle, a union representative of Teamsters Local 890, estimates that since the strike began the raw material intake into the plant has been around 60 percent, but Basic is only able to produce a third of the normal output. According to strikers, the company's most recent contract offer is worse than the original one they voted down.

Basic is proposing to reduce the work week by two and a half hours, which would reduce workers' pay by approximately \$1,800 per year. It also proposes to freeze wages for the next three years and to get rid of the eight-hour-a-day pay guarantee. The bosses want to be able to select crew leaders based on "merit" rather than seniority.

Further, Basic wants to eliminate jobs such as grounds work, custodian jobs, and garbage truck drivers and contract them out. The company wants to replace the present pension plan with a new 401k plan, and cut the \$1.25 per

hour it presently puts aside to 42 cents.

Finally, Basic proposes that a \$20 "medical co-pay" be taken from worker's paycheck every month, allegedly to recoup losses due to the strike.

Pro-company thugs attack strikers

"In King City the police are charging strikers with terrorist threats. There has been a lot of harassment with outrageous charges and frame-ups," Conle said.

On August 18 eight strikers went to Avenal, to handbill replacement workers in order to explain why they are on strike and try to convince them not to cross the picket line. As the scabs were being loaded on the bus, a supervisor organized 30 of them to beat up the strikers. Police have arrested no one, claiming it is the same as a domestic violence case — they will not make any arrests unless they witness the actual beating.

Basic workers are standing strong. On August 15, Teamsters Local 890 organized a march through the streets of King City in which union members say 4,000 supporters



Some 4,000 people, including farm workers, marched to support Teamsters on strike against Basic Vegetable Co. August 15 in King City, California.

participated. A large contingent from the United Farm Workers took part. Other unions from around the state joined the march, including different Teamsters locals, members of the Service Employees International Union, plumbers, hotel and restaurant workers, electrical workers, and carpenters.

At a rally before the march, California AFL-CIO leader Art Polasky said that this strike is currently the biggest for the Teamsters union in North America and the larg-

est in the state.

On August 22 strikers gave leaflets out to people at the King City Fair in the center of town to win support.

Jason Vergara is a member of the Young Socialists. Deborah Liatos, a member of the United Food and Commercial Workers and Larry Lane, member of the International Association of Machinists, contributed to this article.

Workers, residents fight contamination from nuclear plant in Kentucky

BY FRANK EVANS

PADUCAH, Kentucky — "They would put [contaminated uranium] in a hopper — the stuff was scattered all over," said Al Puckett outside the Paducah Gaseous Diffusion Plant on August 18. Puckett, a former worker and shop steward of the Oil Chemical and Atomic Workers (OCAW), now retired, told the *Militant* he is one of around 80 residents of the area who are waging a suit against the plant's operators. "They were blowing that plutonium into the atmosphere," he said angrily.

Puckett and other residents had treated water lines extended to them by the Department of Energy in the early 1990s, after studies they commissioned showed the presence of plutonium and uranium in local wells.

Three plant employees, along with the Natural Resources Defense Council, have filed another suit against Lockheed Martin and Martin Marietta, which operated the Paducah plant for the Department of Energy (DOE) during the 1980s and 1990s. The worst contamination reportedly occurred during the previous 32 years, when Union Carbide operated the plant, but that company is shielded from court action by the statute of limitations. Filed in June, the suit received increased publicity after the scandal was covered by the *Washington Post* during August.

Testimony from current and former workers at the plant, and other accumulating evidence, provide a hair-raising glimpse of operations at this major nuclear facility, which employs around 1,800 people. "They told us you could eat this stuff and it wouldn't hurt you," said Puckett in an interview published in the *Cincinnati Enquirer*. Supervisors would "salt" their bread with green uranium dust to drive the point home, he said. Puckett was employed during the period of Union Carbide's management.

Contamination spread through work areas, locker rooms, and cafeterias. From drainage ditches it seeped into creeks, private wells, and a nearby wildlife area. For the plant's employees, safety clothing comprised cotton gloves and coveralls, with respiratory protection optional and of dubious effectiveness. This, it was claimed, provided protection against uranium dust. But unknown to workers, the uranium the plant processed for reactors and bombs was also laced with the more radioactive plutonium, which can cause cancer if ingested in quantities as small as a millionth of an ounce.

"I never heard the word plutonium used in my 31 years at the plant," said David Fuller, a plant employee and president of Local 5-550 of the Paper, Allied-Industrial, Chemical and Energy Workers union (PACE) to the Associated Press.

On August 18 a team of *Militant* supporters stopped by the Paducah plant to introduce the paper to workers driving out, and to hear their thoughts on the unfolding controversy. Many were reluctant to comment. One worker said he "didn't think [the radioactive material] was enough to cause these kinds of problems."

One veteran worker who escorts visitors to the plant said that "during the '40s, '50s, and '60s they didn't monitor anything. Although it's better now," he said, "the company tells us nothing." This worker, who did not give his name, said he and other escorts voted recently to join PACE, which was formed from a merger of the OCAW and Paperworkers union.

Danny Beeler pulled over in his car and told the *Militant* sellers he had worked on the site for several years in the 1990s. "They told us there was no bomb-grade uranium or plutonium in this plant," he said. "They're trying to shove it under the carpet."

Puckett told the *Militant* of his friend Joe Harding who, before his own death, assembled a list of 50 cancers among 200 people who began working with him at the plant in the early 1950s.

The *Washington Post* reported that in 1979, one year before his death from cancer, Harding recorded conditions in the in-

dustrial, noting, "Brainwashing started in training school: 'Don't talk to anyone. Never mention radiation.'" Inside the plant, he wrote, "You could taste [the uranium dust] coated on your teeth and in your throat and lungs."

After his discharge from the plant in 1971, Harding was denied a disability pension and lost his medical insurance. Attempts by his widow, Clare Harding, to reclaim the pension were opposed by Union Carbide and the DOE. The case was settled out of court for \$12,000.

A 1981 DOE study "attributed Harding's death to a combination of smoking and eating country ham," reported the *Post*. Clare Harding arranged the exhumation of her husband's body in 1983. The results of tests on his bones indicated uranium levels as much as 133 times higher than normal.

DOE officials have responded to the charges around the Paducah facility by claiming that workers' exposure was minimal, contamination is being cleaned up, and there is no data pointing to a "health concern." One official put the secret introduction of plutonium into the plant down to a "communication problem."

Under pressure from the exposures, Energy Secretary William Richardson called Harding a "hero of the Cold War" and said August 10 that the government owed him and others who had worked in the plant an investigation. The DOE has now sanctioned a survey of the health of former Paducah workers, as well as former workers at another active plant at Portsmouth in Ohio, and at a closed plant in Oak Ridge, Tennessee.

Other reports indicate that gold, nickel, and other valuable metals were recycled from nuclear warheads in a long-lasting DOE program. "It is my belief that these recycled metals were injected into commerce in a contaminated form," one Paducah technician stated in a court document.

Nor is the contamination at the Paducah Gaseous Diffusion Plant a thing of the past. James Miller, the executive vice president of U.S. Enrichment Corp., the operator that assumed management of the plant this year, said, "It was acknowledged by all sides that contaminated conditions existed ... but USEC wasn't responsible for them." Richardson said that a preliminary examination of the plant in June had reportedly found no imminent hazards at the site.

But hundreds of "hot spots" are cordoned off around the 750-acre site. Al Puckett and others point out the large amounts of radioactive waste still stored there. "They stuck tailings in a pit," Puckett told the *Militant*; "When they started digging it up there were barrels over the area of a football field three stories deep."

from Pathfinder

What Working People Should Know about the Dangers of Nuclear Power

BY FRED HALSTEAD

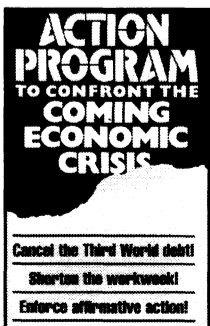
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Detroit teachers strike

Continued from front page

Karaim found most objectionable was one that would give the school board the authority to close down schools in which students' scores on standardized tests fall below par for two consecutive years.

Teachers at such schools would lose their jobs if they are unable to find another school that wanted them.

Another teacher, who asked to remain anonymous, stated that the demands for improvements on test scores don't take into account the conditions that have existed in Detroit for years.

Many students at these schools are homeless, undernourished, or face other problems that make it difficult for them to devote themselves to their studies.

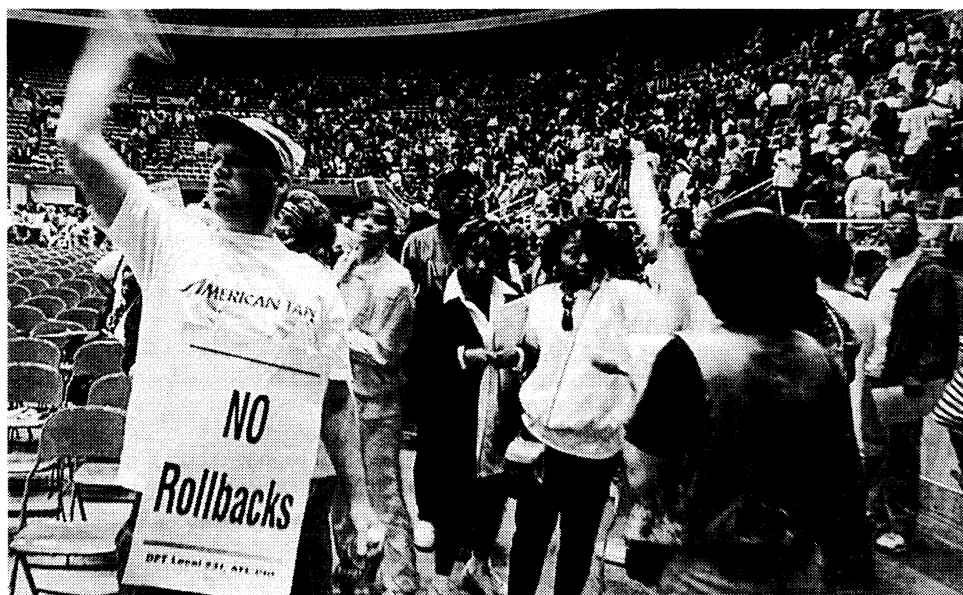
The schools are underfunded and poorly

supplied. Many teachers pay for supplies for their students out of their own pockets. The school board only proposes to set up a committee to look into the question of reducing class size, one of the big concerns of the teachers.

Detroit teachers are taking to the picket lines in face of a Michigan law passed in 1994 that imposes sharp financial penalties on public school employees who go on strike: losing a day's pay plus being fined a day's pay for every day missed.

As of the end of the first day of picketing, the authorities had not yet invoked this law.

Chuck Guerra is a member of United Steelworkers of America Local 1299 in Ecorse, Michigan.



Teachers meeting in Detroit August 30 where they voted to strike

Airline 'drug bust' is used against workers' rights

BY ROLLANDE GIRARD

MIAMI — On August 25, 58 employees at American Airlines and Lufthansa Sky Chef caterers were arrested here on charges of drug, hand grenade, and gun smuggling. Around the country news headlines claimed that a smuggling ring had been busted and

that the main reason for its existence was the lack of security at the Miami International Airport.

The next day, the *Miami Herald* made clear that what really happened was that the federal authorities organized a two-and-a-half-year operation to entrap airline work-

ers. The Drug Enforcement Agency [DEA] spent hundreds of thousands of dollars to set up "Operation Ramp Rat and Sky Chef." They manufactured 283 kilograms of sham cocaine in the operation.

The agents also claim they were able to get three hand grenades and one handgun

onto the planes by paying \$7,000 to American Airlines ramp employees. They say that the weapons were taken off the plane before departure.

The big-business press and government have used these arrests to call for greater security measures at the airport and to attack the rights of airline workers.

With complete disregard for the presumption of innocence, the August 26 *Miami Herald* editorial aimed its fire on the airlines employees who "use their jobs at the Miami International Airport by evading security to smuggle everything from cocaine to guns." It continued that the 58 persons arrested used subterfuges to smuggle, but "none required a degree in rocket science, just a little cunning abetted by watchdogs' haphazard methods."

The *Herald* then directed its attack at the airline unions. The alleged smugglers "got a lot of help from the unions which fought successfully to prevent guards from checking employees' backpacks. So into the packs went the drugs and cash."

"Many people were outraged that the names and addresses of every person indicted were listed in the press," stated Rick Walker, a ramp worker at American Airlines in Miami. "The entrapment and arrests are being used to take away more of our democratic rights including union rights," he said.

Rollande Girard is a member of the International Association of Machinists Local 1126 in Miami.

'Militant' website will be on line soon

BY NAOMI CRAINE

Participants in the August 5-7 Active Workers Conference in Oberlin, Ohio, got a sneak preview of www.themilitant.com.

A preliminary version of the *Militant's* website will be on line by September 17. Readers are encouraged to check it out and make suggestions as the construction of the site is completed over the following weeks.

Since 1994, the text of all *Militant* articles has been available on line via a "gopher" site on the Internet. Many readers have made use of the site to get an early preview of the paper and to search for articles by "keywords," going back as far as the paper has been available electronically. But technology moves on, and so does the *Militant*.

The new website will be a substantial improvement visually over this plain-text format. And the on line paper will be much more accessible, including through web search engines.

The *Militant's* home page will feature headlines for the front page and feature articles in the current issue, along with the front-page photo. A click on each headline will take you to the full text of the article. Other links will take you to the editorials, other news articles, and regular columns in the current issue.

Other features of the site to be added over the following weeks include a graphic image of the front page, the ability to browse recent back issues, and text-searching all *Militant* articles back to 1994. Visitors to the site can get information on how to subscribe to the *Militant*, where to find local distributors of

the socialist paper. Eventually they will be able to subscribe on-line.

Once *Perspectiva Mundial*, the Spanish-language sister magazine to the *Militant*, is on-line, a link will take readers who read Spanish to that site.

Peter Link, a supporter of the Socialist Workers Party in Detroit who has ably maintained the *Militant* gopher site on time every week for the last five years, has volunteered to take the main responsibility for the technical work of putting up the website.

"Our aim is to have a page that looks attractive and professional, but doesn't have a lot of extra bells and whistles that would slow down a user who has an older computer or a slow modem," he said.

Suggestions and collaboration, both technical and esthetic, from readers will be a help in making the site as useful as possible. A few notes have already come in and been incorporated, including changes in the color scheme.

"It looks to be a useful tool for fighters looking to get information on struggles past and present," wrote Jake Perasso, a Young Socialist in Chicago, after viewing the initial work on the site at the Active Workers Conference. "Perhaps one day the *Militant* will be digitized all the way back to its first issue."

"I did notice one thing in the display that I don't think I agree with. The display made a point that the website would not use 'frames.' It seemed as if this would be a principle of the

website. Frames can make a website more professional-looking and increase ease of use and navigation for the user. Some of the most professional and attractive and effective websites that I have seen make use of frames, and I could imagine some good uses on the *Militant* site."

Link clarified that tables are used in the design of the front page. They aren't used for the articles, however, so that they can be more easily used with a text-only browser. "I think Jake's statements are correct, insofar as it is not a religious question or a class principle, but right now, with our priority being simplicity and ease of use, we should not use frames," was his opinion.

Any recommendations of how to make better use of tables, frames, and other tools are welcome, as are volunteers to help maintain the site once it's up and running.

Suggestions and offers from supporters to help can be sent to the *Militant* by e-mail at themilitant@compuserve.com, or by mail to 410 West St., New York, NY 10014.

Pathfinder Fund supporters in Twin Cities, France lead the way in drive

BY SUSANANMUTH

Pathfinder Fund supporters in Twin Cities, Minnesota, are leading the way in the drive to raise \$125,000. In just two weeks, they collected and sent in \$1,759. At the same time, and illustrating the international scope of the campaign, a supporter in France has contributed \$250. These examples show the pace fund backers elsewhere need to emulate to help put the campaign on schedule.

At the end of the third week, funds received—which should add up to \$31,250—total only \$4,621.

At a recent meeting in Atlanta, socialist workers who are members of the United Auto Workers (UAW) took a goal of winning 45 co-workers to contribute to the fund. This effort complements ongoing collaboration with fellow workers, and with farmers and others, to find venues for broader distribution of Pathfinder books.

One worker at a truck plant in New Jersey kicked in \$20 after a discussion about the breadth and purpose of Pathfinder, and the way volunteers produce these books. He is also interested in touring the Pathfinder building, where the books and the *Militant* newspaper are edited and printed.

With the campaign running until November 15, supporters have the opportunity to organize a couple of fund-raising events in each area. The fund is helping finance the production of Pathfinder upcoming new titles, and the ongoing program to convert into digital form its entire backlist of nearly 350 titles.

Focusing on Pathfinder books as indispensable tools for today's fighters, these events can attract workers, farmers and youth who are searching for explanations of—and a way forward to combat—the horrors capitalism offers humanity.

Beginning with the next issue, the *Militant* will publish a chart of each area's pledges and payments. The weekly chart will include monies received in the offices of Pathfinder as of noon on Tuesdays.

To contribute to the fund or to help reach out to other potential supporters, visit the Pathfinder bookstore nearest you. Please make checks or money orders payable to Pathfinder, and send to **Pathfinder, 410 West Street, New York, NY 10014.**

Susan Anmuth is a member of UAW Local 980 in Edison, New Jersey.

FROM PATHFINDER

Lessons from the labor battles of the 1930s

BY FARRELL DOBBS

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San Juan protest

Continued from front page

flared since Vieques resident David Sanes was killed April 19 by a bomb dropped by a U.S. warplane conducting target practice.

Plans for the August 29 march had begun months ago, but efforts to build it got a big boost after a controversy erupted over U.S. president William Clinton's August 11 offer of a conditional "pardon" for some of the political prisoners. The debate has brought the issue of the Puerto Rican prisoners into the center of politics on the island and given it a higher profile in U.S. politics.

Clinton has said he will decree a pardon for 11 of the 17 prisoners if they accept a list of onerous conditions — they must personally request presidential "clemency," renounce "violence," and submit to parole conditions such as a ban on speaking to other former political prisoners without government permission, travel restrictions, regularly reporting to U.S. parole authorities, and drug tests on demand. They would in effect have to accept the U.S. government's smear that they are "criminals."

Outrage over Clinton's demands

As knowledge of the actual conditions demanded by the White House for releasing the prisoners became known, it sparked outrage here as well as in Puerto Rican communities in the United States. In response to Clinton, the slogan "Unconditional release" was emblazoned on countless signs and banners carried by demonstrators.

"This is the Puerto Rican people's reply to President Clinton," declared Luis Nieves Falcón, the coordinator of the Committee for Human Rights in Puerto Rico and central organizer of the march. Many of those interviewed said it was the largest demonstration on behalf of the political prisoners since the first arrests in 1980.

People came from across the island to join the march, which wound its way from Barrio Obrero, a working-class neighborhood in downtown San Juan, to a rally in front of the U.S. government building here. Along the march route, many residents and local merchants came out of their homes and stores to wave at marchers.

Heading the march was a group of youth carrying a 22-foot-long key symbolizing the

key that will open the prisoners' cells. They were followed by 15 youths with Puerto Rican flags and another 15 young people carrying large portraits of each of the political prisoners.

Since it was launched several years ago, the campaign has focused on winning amnesty for 15 prisoners. In addition there are two other jailed independentistas: Haydée Beltrán, who has pursued a separate legal effort to win parole, and José Solís, who was convicted and sentenced on frame-up "terrorism" charges earlier this year.

Banners and signs of all kinds raised slogans such as "Free all our patriots now," "U.S. Navy out of Vieques," "Fighting for the homeland is not a crime," "Free our 15 Nelson Mandelas," and "Southern Command out!" referring to the recent transfer of the U.S. Southern Command from Panama to Puerto Rico.

A range of organizations took part in the demonstration, whose theme was "It's time to bring them home." They included groups such as the Committee for Human Rights in Puerto Rico, organizations protesting U.S. military radar facilities on the island, a Vietnam veterans group, the Committee in Solidarity with Cuba, and organizations defending the rights of Dominican immigrants.

There were large numbers of youth at the march from the University of Puerto Rico, high schools, and other campuses. A few junior high school students took part as well. Many were at their first political action.

"Clinton's offer of conditional release is unjust. The prisoners are fighting for an ideal, for their country," said Tania Torres, a 16-year-old student at Colegio La Piedad, a Catholic high school. Others noted that real criminals, including anti-abortion rights bombers and Klansmen guilty of racist murders, have served much shorter sentences than the Puerto Rican independence fighters, most of whom have already been jailed for 19 years.

"The unity of our people is growing. We are becoming united around the political prisoners and around the fight for Vieques," said Amaury Cintrón Ramos, a student at the University of Puerto Rico and member of the Federation of Pro-Independence University Students (FUPI). "I think we will get the pris-



Militant/Martin Koppel

Large numbers of unionists and other working people took part in August 29 demonstration. Above, banner of the Puerto Rican Workers Federation reads: "Freedom with no conditions! It's time to bring them home!"

oners out, but it's not going to be easy."

A well-received contingent of 50 came from the island of Vieques. Among them were members of the Association of Fishermen, including its president, Carlos Ventura, as well as the Committee for the Rescue and Development of Vieques. These organizations have spearheaded the decades-long fight to get the U.S. Navy out of their island.

Pro-independence organizations were prominent in the demonstration, with contingents marching behind banners of the Puerto Rican Independence Party (PIP), New Puerto Rican Independence Movement (NMIP), Socialist Front, Hostos National Congress, and FUPI, among others.

Impact of labor struggles

At least 10 unions endorsed the march and rally, including the unions of teachers, water workers, health-care workers, Teamsters, airport workers, and university employees, as well as the General Workers Council (CGT) and Puerto Rican Workers Federation (CPT).

Among the demonstrators were other unionists who have gone through battles and skirmishes against the employers — from the telephone workers, who waged a hard-fought 41-day strike against the sell-off of

the state-owned telephone company last year, to the electrical workers union UTIER, to the Teamsters who last year struck RIMCO, which distributes Caterpillar heavy equipment in Puerto Rico.

The telephone strike galvanized the working class here in what became popularly viewed as a battle for national rights and dignity, one that culminated in a two-day general strike by half a million workers in July 1998. While the pro-statehood administration of Gov. Pedro Rosselló succeeded in selling the phone company to U.S.-based GTE, many working people came out of this battle with a greater class consciousness and sense of their potential power.

The current battles for Vieques and the release of the political prisoners are the most recent expression of this combined rise in labor and nationalist resistance on the island, which has given the pro-independence movement its widest hearing in a long time.

Rafael Berrios, a 57-year-old worker at the Water and Sewer Authority, explained in an interview that he was marching because "the prisoners are not criminals. To the contrary. We have former prisoners, like Rafael Cancel Miranda and Lolita Lebrón, who are respected by the people because of their unimpeachable conduct as patriots." Cancel Miranda and Lebrón, who took part in the march, were among five Nationalist political prisoners who spent a quarter century in U.S. prisons until their release in 1979.

Another member of the UIA water workers union, Angel Luis Martínez from the town of Humacao, explained that the Puerto Rican government has been on a drive to sell off state-owned companies. The water company, he pointed out, is now administered by a private French-owned company. "We've been without a contract for a year and a half and they're eliminating jobs and trying to take away our benefits. Yesterday we took a strike authorization vote to prepare for the next step in our fight," he said. Martínez added with pride that he and hundreds of other UIA members had been part of shutting down San Juan's international airport during last year's general strike.

Luis Epardo, a member of the health-care workers union UNTS in the town of Aguadilla, was wearing a button from the 1998 telephone workers strike. He said the government had sold the hospital he works at to a private company for \$10 million, less than half its original cost. "It was a giveaway," he declared. The new bosses have already eliminated a quarter of the 600 jobs and are cutting back wages. To Epardo, the resistance by working people against these attacks and the struggles to release the prisoners and kick the U.S. Navy out of Vieques were part of the same battle "for Puerto Rico's sovereignty."

An international campaign

Guests from 28 countries were featured on the stage, underscoring the growing international breadth of the campaign to release the Puerto Rican prisoners. The crowd applauded the announcement of each country, with Cuba receiving the loudest cheers.

On the two days before the march, political activists from many of these countries attended a conference sponsored by the Committee for Human Rights in Puerto Rico and held at the Sacred Heart University in San Juan. Among these were human rights activists from Chile, northern Ireland, Ha-

Continued on Page 9

Actions across U.S. demand prisoners' release

BY JIM ROGERS

CHICAGO — Chanting, "All the prisoners, freedom" and "Grand jury/FBI, U.S. justice is a lie," more than 350 people marched here August 29 to demand the release of the 17 Puerto Rican political prisoners held in U.S. jails. Actions were held in several cities across the United States that day, in support of the large demonstration in San Juan, Puerto Rico.

The Chicago demonstrators marched about five miles, from a gathering point in one of the Puerto Rican neighborhoods to the Metropolitan Correctional Center where José Solís is being held. Solís is the latest supporter of independence for Puerto Rico to be jailed by the U.S. government.

Solís was convicted March 12 on fabricated charges of setting a bomb outside a military recruitment center in Chicago in 1992, based on the testimony of an FBI pro-

vocateur and three FBI agents. He was sentenced July 7 to 51 months in prison.

At a rally in front of the prison, representatives from three families of the prisoners spoke, all demanding that President Clinton drop the conditions from his offer of clemency. "I would like to see these people out now, with no conditions," said Luis Galarza of the National Committee to Free the Puerto Rican Prisoners of War and Political Prisoners. "The whole Puerto Rican community supports their release."

Mervyn Méndez, representing the Committee in Solidarity with José Solís Jordán urged the crowd to keep up the pressure on Clinton and the government to drop the conditions in the clemency offer by Clinton.



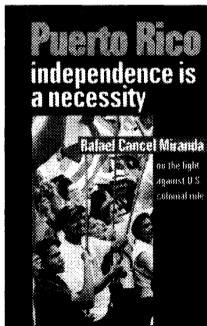
BY WALTER BLADES
AND ELLEN HAYWOOD

SAN FRANCISCO — "I've been following the case of the naval base in Puerto Rico," said Ruairi MacTiarnian at the August 29 rally here to demand the immediate, unconditional release of the Puerto Rican political prisoners and the total withdrawal of the U.S. Navy from the island of Vieques. "Not only is the issue comparable to the British occupation of Northern Ireland, but Puerto Rico is a microcosm of the whole bigger picture in the world today," MacTiarnian, 21, is from Northern Ireland. He was walking through the Mission District in San Francisco when he saw the Puerto Rican flag at the march assembly area and decided to join in.

The demonstration was called by Comité '98 por un Puerto Rico Libre. A short rally at the assembly point heard greetings from Carmen Valentín, one of the Puerto Rican political prisoners held in nearby Dublin, California. "We are not criminals—We are freedom fighters," she said.

Representatives of a number of organizations brought greetings of solidarity, including the Leonard Peltier Defense Commit-

From Pathfinder



Two interviews with Rafael Cancel Miranda

Cancel Miranda — one of the five Puerto Rican Nationalists imprisoned by Washington for more than 25 years until 1979 — speaks out on the brutal reality of U.S.

colonial domination, the campaign needed to free 16 Puerto Rican political prisoners, the example of Cuba's socialist revolution, and the resurgence of the independence movement today. In English and Spanish. \$3.00

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Responding to struggles of workers, farmers

Continued from front page

relations with toilers in the countryside; and to transform the day-to-day functioning of the party in order to respond to the rising proletarian movement in a timely and revolutionary centralist manner.

A four-month campaign to sell the Pathfinder Press title *Capitalism's World Disorder: Working-Class Politics at the Millennium* to bookstores, libraries, and other outlets where workers and farmers buy books is helping to advance this effort.

In her report to the conference, SWP Trade Union Committee organizer Nan Bailey from Seattle explained that there are the beginnings of a proletarian movement in U.S. cities and rural areas. This includes groups of workers and farmers who increasingly sense they share a common future and face a common exploiter — the wealthy handful of ruling-class families. Acting on this fact, the SWP and the Young Socialists have launched the campaign to sell *Capitalism's World Disorder* to bookstores and libraries.

The book is a collection of five speeches by SWP national secretary Jack Barnes that presents a working-class explanation of the evolution of world politics over the last decade. It serves to clarify that the mounting chaos and devastation is a product of the inevitable workings of the capitalist system, which is increasingly being resisted by workers and farmers who reach out to each other for solidarity.

Selling 'Capitalism's World Disorder'

The campaign to sell the book is centered in the areas where the resistance of workers and farmers is taking place, as well as near the plants where socialist workers and Young Socialists are organized into factory and union-based units known as fractions, Bailey explained. Socialist workers are seeking the assistance of fellow fighters and co-workers in getting *Capitalism's World Disorder* placed in the bookstores, libraries, and the other outlets where workers and farmers get their books.

"Don't just go down the old list" of bookstores that have carried Pathfinder books in the past, stressed Joel Britton in his report to the conference. A Trade Union Committee member from Chicago, Britton reported on discussions with coal miners in southern Illinois about the book campaign. Such discussions need to be at the center of the effort to distribute *Capitalism's World Disorder*.

Following the conference of socialist workers in the unions, Bailey headed up a two-day team to North Carolina that included a Young Socialist and a couple of rail workers who had attended the meeting. They sold two copies of *Capitalism's World Disorder* to a bookstore in Charlotte, where strikers at Continental General Tire will be leading the first Labor Day parade in many years September 6.

They then traveled to the eastern part of the state to sell the book and the *Militant* at a textile mill, a poultry plant, and park-and-ride areas where workers meet for the two-hour commute to the Newport News shipyard in Virginia. They visited several bookstores and libraries, laying the groundwork for possible sales in the future, and met several workers at the Center for Women's Economic Alternatives in Aahoskie, North Carolina.

Another team through North Carolina is planned following the Charlotte Labor Day parade.

Chicago packinghouse worker Harvey MacArthur described an experience he had the previous week with a co-worker who joined him in a visit to a local library near the plant to meet with the librarian there about the book.

The book campaign is also another step toward transforming the Socialist Workers Party. Its aim is to advance the functioning of the SWP as a party whose members and local units carry out centralized and directed initiatives to reach fighting workers and farmers. Properly led, the campaign will integrate every member of the party into the new proletarian movement and involve all members in the placement of the book in stores and libraries, along with participation in mass work, picket lines, and farm actions.

Struggles by coal miners — both union and nonunion — will converge as they are forced to take on the mine owners, stated Jack Willey in a report by the Trade Union Committee that detailed the effort to get socialist workers hired in coal mines. The industry has changed a great deal since the late 1970s, noted Willey. The percentage of coal mined by members of the



Militant/Nan Bailey

Socialist worker Ned Measel (left) talks to shipyard workers in Newport News, Virginia, who recently waged a four-month strike. Socialist workers are seeking the assistance of fellow fighters and co-workers in getting *Capitalism's World Disorder* placed in the bookstores, libraries, and other outlets where workers and farmers get their books.

United Mine Workers of America continues to shrink, a legacy of the union tops' class collaboration and the companies' schemes to get around union contracts. More coal is being mined than ever, and with fewer miners. The coal bosses are hiring today in the most productive mines, many of which are nonunion. He cited the experience of a socialist worker in Appalachia who just got hired in a nonunion underground mine but is working side-by-side with miners who previously worked in UMW-organized mines. These miners, said Willey, bring with them the tradition of the UMW in working safely underground.

Jeff Powers, a member of the United Transportation Union in Seattle, spoke in the discussion about a team that recently visited Colorado coal fields where a significant number of young workers are being hired in the mines, including women. On the picket line at the Deserado mine in Colorado, Powers met a miner who had been on strike recently. This worker bought a copy of *Capitalism's World Disorder* and a subscription to the *Militant*, Powers explained, because "he liked our coverage of Kosova. His father was a socialist, and stood up for years to red-baiting. He had been stationed in Japan in the Navy, and had been to Hiroshima [where Washington dropped the atomic bomb], which deeply affected him." This miner liked talking with the young socialists he met when teams came out to the picket line over the past couple of months.

Willey noted that the changes in the working class are not limited to those presently organized in unions. Struggles over safety and conditions in the mines will inevitably break out, and the young miners will find their way to rebuilding the union. Conference participants voted to concur with the Trade Union Committee's proposal that where a factory committee has been established in a nonunion coal mine, or in a nonunion garment shop, textile mill, or meatpacking plant, those socialist workers will be part of the party's national fractions that are based on the unions.

Competence as struggles break out

Carrying out communist work under these conditions and learning to how to be competent in nonunion situations requires advancing to a higher level of centralization and discipline, Willey emphasized.

The importance of competence in the trade union struggles and skirmishes breaking out on the job already was taken up in a report on "Structuring Branches and Fractions through Mass Work: Experience of a Detroit Factory Fraction," by Jean-Luc Duval. A UAW member, Duval detailed a fight by workers at the large auto parts plant where he works in Detroit against moves by the bosses there to drastically speed up production and gut hard-won rights, to the point of refusing to allow workers to use the bathroom while the assembly line is running. Several workers, including Duval, were suspended when they demanded union representation to protest moves to implement the new conditions. Workers organized themselves on the shop floor and successfully pushed the company back, including on the suspensions.

Socialist workers' participation in other struggles on the job were also taken up during the conference at meetings of each of the

SWP's national trade union fractions: in the United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW); Union of Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Employees (UNITE); United Auto Workers (UAW); United Transportation Union (UTU); International Association of Machinists (IAM); and United Steelworkers of America (USWA). Members of the Paperworkers, Allied-Industrial, Chemical and Energy Union in Houston also met. The fractions elected new steering committees to direct their work over the next several months.

A few days prior to the conference, more than 50 airline workers were arrested at the airport in Miami and charged with being part of a drug and gun smuggling scheme. Ernie Mailhot, a member of the IAM in Miami, explained that the government and American Airlines had worked for two years to set up an elaborate entrapment operation, targeting workers at American and Lufthansa Sky Chefs. A massive news media campaign has been whipped up against airport workers. Mailhot pointed out that similar moves were carried out at Eastern Airlines in 1986, when workers and some Eastern bosses were arrested. None were ever convicted. This has nothing to do with preventing drug smuggling. The aim is to chip away at airport workers' democratic rights.

Forging links with farmers, rural poor

Holly Wilson, organizer of the Minnesota State Committee of the SWP, described the deep crisis facing farmers today in a report on "Following the Natural Lines of Resistance by Workers and Farmers in the Upper Midwest." The price of commodities is lower than the price of production, and farmers are losing land they have had in their families for generations. It has become difficult in the Midwest for farmers to even rent land. Many farmers, Wilson said, "are losing the illusion that politicians and bankers promote that they can make it and get rich, and that they have no connection to the working class." No revolutionary workers party can be built in the United States, Wilson emphasized, "that is not deeply part of this broad proletarian movement. Among all the toilers, revolutionaries campaign for a fighting alliance of workers and farmers. Ongoing work among farmers and those toilers associated with them is an essential aspect of the party's third campaign for the turn." Books such as *Capitalism's World Disorder*, Wilson said, help fighters in the countryside and the city draw far-reaching conclusions.

Wilson emphasized that the orientation toward impoverished toilers in the countryside is not limited to one part of the country. It is as important for the party in Minnesota as it is in Georgia.

Ultrarightist outfits operate in the farm movement promoting "radical" schemes. But there is big interest among farmers about working-class struggles. "Farmers have more confidence that they can figure out what is going on," said Tom Fiske, an airline worker in the Twin Cities. At a recent rally of 1,200 farmers in Waconia, Minnesota, "you could have serious political discussions" even as a parade of politicians spoke from the stage. Wilson added that farmers at the Waconia rally were particularly interested in the *Militant's* coverage of strikes in the labor movement like the one re-

cently concluded in Newport News, Virginia.

Arlene Rubinstein spoke of two Georgia farmers who have been using *Capitalism's World Disorder* and other Pathfinder books to help understand demagogues such as Minnesota governor Jesse Ventura. They have become supporters of the campaign to place the book where other farmers can obtain it.

Kathie Fitzgerald, a member of the UTU in Newark, New Jersey, said farmers she met at a fair in Warren County, New Jersey, rejected government plans to give them more loans in the face of the drought that hit much of the eastern region of the country this summer. They are demanding cash relief. Fitzgerald also met farmers at a livestock auction in Hackettstown, New Jersey, where farmers have been forced to sell their animals because they cannot afford to feed them.

Socialists from Philadelphia recently visited Lancaster County, Pennsylvania to meet with dairy farmers hit hard by falling milk prices and the drought.

Although socialists in the upper Midwest have long participated in farm protests, forums, and rallies, Wilson said that the party there was only at the beginning of doing the work among farmers that was necessary. This means getting to know the younger, fresh forces today leading farm actions. "We have to have our eyes on the ranks in the countryside, just like we do in the labor movement," Wilson emphasized.

The Young Socialists will also place promotion of *Capitalism's World Disorder* at the center of their work this fall, said YS National Executive Committee member Samantha Kern in a report on "Advancing the Proletarianization of the Young Socialists." This summer was a real success for the YS, Kern said. YS members "got a chance to work together": in a summer class series, in factories alongside SWP members, on regional teams to mining and meatpacking towns, plantgate sales, strike picket lines, and working-class communities.

The summer program was capped with the Active Workers Conference in early August and a "Red Week," where dozens of young socialists and others worked together on maintenance projects in the Pathfinder Building in New York. Young Socialists plan to join in regional teams, at Labor Day weekend regional socialist education conferences, and the upcoming book fair in Guadalajara, Mexico, Kern reported.

Jason Alessio, a Young Socialist and student at the University of California-Santa Cruz, worked as a meatpacker this summer. He also joined strikers on their picket lines at the Deserado mine in Colorado, and more recently among Teamsters vegetable packers in King City, California. For a young person to visit these struggles had a big impact on the strikers, he said, and on himself. Looking back on the summer perspectives the YS carried out, Alessio said, "It really politically sharpened us."

■ MARX/LENIN/STALIN/MAO ■

Upcoming Labor and Farm Actions

Mon., September 6

Labor Day Parade

Charlotte, North Carolina — Sponsored by United Steelworkers (USWA) Local 850 on strike against Continental General Tire and other area unions. For more information call Local 850, (803) 548-7272.

Sat., September 11

One Year of Struggle at Titan Tire

Natchez, Mississippi — Join the Titan Tire strike rally. For more information, contact USWA, Local 303L, Fax: (601) 445-5175.

Sat., October 16

Rally and March for Justice for Max Antoine

Irvington, New Jersey — Join protest at noon to demand justice for Max Antoine, brutally beaten by cops. At Irvington Police Station, 1 Civic Plaza. For more information call: (201) 487-1531.

New Jersey cop admits man killed in custody

BY BROCK SATTER
AND MAURICE WILLIAMS

ORANGE, New Jersey — "Cop: Suspect beaten in cuffs before he died," read the headline of the August 18 New Jersey *Star Ledger*. The article reported that an unnamed Orange cop recanted previous testimony and told a grand jury that Earl Faison, a 27-year-old Black man, died at the police station on April 11, less than an hour after he was arrested.

"If what they reported is true, it just confirms what we have suspected all along," Earl Williams, the father of Earl Faison, told a rally of around 70 people August 19 in front of the police headquarters here. Williams has spoken at several protest actions asserting that his son was beaten to death by the cops.

The testifying cop said two police beat Faison while he was handcuffed in a patrol car. They then took him into a stairwell at the police station, robbed him, and sprayed pepper spray into his mouth and nose. Faison, an asthmatic according to his relatives, immediately had a respiratory attack and stopped breathing, the *Star Ledger* reported.

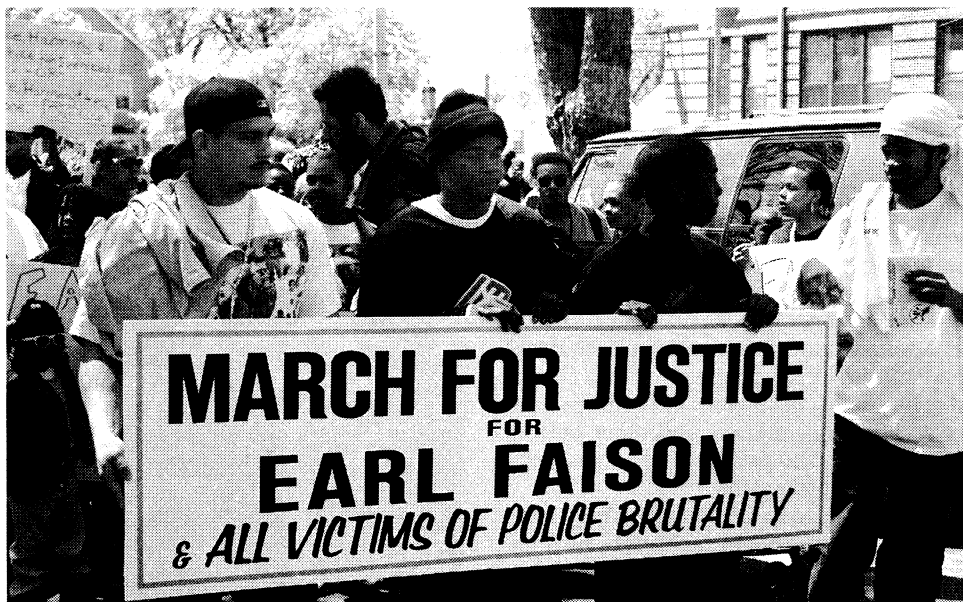
Police officials have identified just three cops involved in Faison's arrest; the testifying cop said up to nine were involved.

Faison's family hired an independent medical examiner who has conducted an autopsy. They said they would not disclose the results until the State Attorney General's office and the FBI, who are also involved in the case, release the results of their autopsies.

The revelations around Faison's death come as the administration of New Jersey governor Christine Whitman has sought to stymie outrage and protests against police brutality and racism. Faison was among four Black men snatched up in a police rampage after cop Joyce Carnegie was killed April 8.

Essex County Prosecutor Patricia Hurt, who handled the investigation of Carnegie's death, was forced to resign after being stripped of her powers by Whitman. Hurt had been under fire ever since the media reported how masked cops armed with semiautomatic rifles stormed the home of Terrance Everett on April 10 and charged him with killing Carnegie. The 24-year-old Black warehouse worker was beaten and held for six days in the county jail, despite a proven alibi.

"They started kicking, spitting on me, punching me, and yelling at my family," Everett told a news conference one week after his arrest. He said one cop struck him in the eye



Militant/Megan Arney

May 1 march in Orange, New Jersey, demanding justice in Earl Faison's death.

with a rifle butt and another cop kicked him in the face, chipping a tooth.

In another case involving police brutality in New Jersey, a grand jury is still deciding whether to file criminal charges against two state troopers who fired 11 shots into a van of Black and Latino youths on the New Jersey Turnpike in 1998. The cops were indicted April 19 on charges of lying on public documents and conducting illegal searches.

Meanwhile, a demonstration is planned on October 16 in Irvington, New Jersey, to pro-

test charges filed against Max Antoine, a 30-year old Haitian man who was paralyzed from the waist down after being beaten by police in 1996. The cops accused Antoine of assaulting the police who arrested and beat him. A picket line is also being organized October 18, when a hearing on the charges is scheduled.

Brock Satter is a member of the United Food and Commercial Workers and is the Socialist Workers candidate for New Jersey General Assembly, 29th district.

7,000 USAirways workers prepare for strike action

BY REBECCA ARENSEN
AND NANCY COLE

PHILADELPHIA — USAirways mechanics and cleaners — who rejected a proposed contract last month with 75 percent opposed — have been released by a federal mediator to start a 30-day "cooling off period." If there is no tentative agreement at the end of that period, union negotiators say, a strike of the 7,000 members of the International Association of Machinists (IAM) will begin at 12:01 a.m. on September 26. The "cooling off period" is mandated by the Railway Labor Act.

The main issues in the contract rejected in July centered around the introduction of part-time cleaners for the first time, mandatory overtime for mechanics assigned to de-ice aircraft, and a scheme tying future wage increases to a pay parity formula that would be dependent on the wages of competing airlines, in particular on USAirways' biggest competitor, nonunion Delta Airlines.

Since July, union negotiators report the company has proposed even more takebacks, including that fleet service workers be allowed to perform all of the jobs cleaners now do and some mechanics' tasks, elimination of paid lunch, of "protected" stations where union

maintenance is required, and of pension benefit increases.

The Pittsburgh *Post-Gazette* reported August 27 that the strike deadline is "the most difficult labor problem" confronting USAirways bosses, "but it is by no means the only one." The airline's flight attendants have been fighting for a contract for several years and have now launched a campaign to mark their 1,000 days without a contract with pickets and other actions. That 1,000-day anniversary is September 27, one day after the IAM's 30-day cooling-off period ends.

The Communications Workers of America (CWA) announced August 20 that customer service workers at USAirways had again voted to be represented by the CWA. An appeals court had thrown out their previous union victory in May of this year, saying that the company's right to free speech was restrained when federal mediators overturned the first election, citing company interference.

USAirways moved rapidly to grant the workers wage increases at the same time as it opposed the CWA's bid for an expedited union election. But workers pushed this transparent antiunion move aside, transforming the 54 per-

cent victory in 1997 into a 67 percent vote for the union August 20. The bargaining unit has 10,600 workers and is among the biggest private sector union organizing victories in decades.

Among cleaners and mechanics, discussions are nonstop about what will happen September 26: will the company really stick to its unacceptable demands and force a strike, how will the union prepare for the showdown, and what kind of support can we expect from coworkers in other departments, as well as from other workers at the airport and elsewhere?

Fleet service workers — ramp and catering workers — are also members of the IAM. They approved a first contract earlier this year, five years after voting in the union in 1994. "We all work for

one company, and we have to stick together," says Joel Alfaro, a part-time ramp worker in Philadelphia, referring to the possible strike by mechanics and cleaners. "It might be us out there tomorrow."

Rebecca Arenson and Nancy Cole are members of IAM Local 1776 at US Airways.

MILITANT LABOR FORUMS

NEW ZEALAND

Christchurch

Self-Determination for Kashmir! A discussion on the conflict between Indian and Pakistani governments and the national question in Kashmir. Sat., Sept. 11, 7 p.m. 199 High St. Donation: \$5. Tel: (9) 379-3075.

CALENDAR

NEW YORK

Manhattan

Hear Leader of Fight against Rightist Parades in Northern Ireland. Irish freedom struggle activist Michael Goodman of the Lower Ormeau Concerned Community (LOCC) will speak on the latest developments in Belfast. Sat., Sept. 11, 129 Lexington Avenue (between 28th and 29th streets). Suggested donation: \$10. Tel: (718) 857-4607.

CORRECTION

The article "Victory spurs union drive by Seattle port truckers" in the September 6 *Militant* misidentified port driver Eugene Pindes as "Russian-born." Pindes was born in Czechoslovakia.

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Capitalist schools vs. lifetime education for all

The excerpts below are from the question and answer period following an April 1993 talk by Socialist Workers Party national secretary Jack Barnes in Greensboro, North Carolina. The presentation, titled "Capitalism's Deadly World Disorder" was part of a regional socialist educational conference. It is published in full in *Capitalism's World Disorder: Working-Class Politics at the Millennium*. The book is copyright © 1999 by Pathfinder Press, reprinted by permission. Subheadings are by the *Militant*.

BY JACK BARNES

Capitalist society promotes the myth that education is a youth question. But any society that sees education as a question just for young people can never have education that is meaningful for human beings, including youth. So-

from the pages of Capitalism's World Disorder

cial solidarity will never exist in such a society.

The working class cannot begin with how to change things so that *youth* get a better education. We have to begin with how to transform the values of society, not just the economics; it cannot be reduced simply to an economic problem. To be meaningful, education has to create the possibilities for society as a whole to advance, instead of reinforcing the exploitation of the majority by the few. Until then, the only "liberal education" available to any fighter who wants one is political education within the workers movement.

What is taught in most schools today is largely worthless. There are a handful of skills that provide some preparation for life — learning to read, learning to write, learning to compute, practicing to increase our attention spans, learning the discipline necessary to study and use our minds. Reading and studying are extremely hard. It takes discipline to sit still for three hours, two hours, even one hour — not moving, not jumping up — and to work through ideas. Working through ideas is hard; we all have to learn how to do it. But it is part of taking ourselves seriously. It is part of taking humanity seriously. We have to learn how to read and study by coming to better understand how other people live and work, whether they are older or younger than we are.

Capitalist education won't be reformed

But most everything else we are taught in school, especially in the so-called social sciences and related "disciplines," are things we need to unlearn. Civics courses, social studies courses — these are all obfuscation....

Don't underestimate young people's moral yearnings, their openness, human solidarity, and sensitivity. Perhaps they cannot put what they see into words. Perhaps they cannot theorize it. But they *know* a lot about what's going on. What does this kind of education have to do with the human race?

To really discuss education is not to discuss how to reform the seventh grade in Canarsie. The seventh grade in Canarsie is *not going to be reformed*. Or in Louisville. Or anywhere else. I guarantee it, because the rulers have no need, and thus no desire, for workers to be educated in this society. It is not true that the capitalist class needs for workers to be educated; it is a lie. They need for us to be obedient, not to be educated. They need for us to have to work hard to make a living, not to be critical. They need for us to consume all we make each week buying their products. Above all, they need for us to lose any desire over time to broaden our scope and become citizens of the world.

But the employing class does not need for us to be disciplined. In fact, indiscipline in life puts us more in their grasp. Obedience on the job, yes; discipline in life, no. That is what the employers want from the working class.

Most of you in the audience here tonight are workers. Do you have to be literate to do your job — not intelligent, but literate? Think about it. Do you have to be literate to work on the railroad? In an auto plant? Do you have to be literate to be a worker in an oil refinery? I don't think so; everything is color-coded, or number-coded. You don't need to be literate. Let alone be *educated*. Let alone have pride, self-respect, and initiative. Let alone to work together with fellow human beings to do things collectively, and to derive pleasure from it. That kind of education would be a danger for the rulers. Can you imagine people like *that* — fifteen, sixteen, seventeen, eighteen years old — coming into the workforce? They would take not only to union solidarity, but also to historical materialism and its revelatory and liberating character, like fish to water.

Only by looking at education this way can we understand the depth of the crisis. There is no meaningful education in this country under capitalism's school system, and *there won't be*. There will be some elementary reading, writing, and arithmetic. Certain people will be steered into technical specializations and a few will be drawn over time into the lower ranks of better-off social layers, in order to demonstrate to all other workers that we don't "merit" being rewarded.

A thin layer of young people — most from economically privileged backgrounds, plus a handful of lucky individuals from the working class — will even be given a chance to find their way to more creative work. That is a very thin layer, however, one that everyone would love to be a part of....

What do workers have to know for what



Students in Florida, forced to submit to metal detector search before entering school. "The rulers have no need, and thus no desire, for workers to be educated in this society. They need for us to be obedient, not educated."

they do on the job? It does not make any difference, does it? But in a society that is worth a damn, it *would* make a difference. There would be *continual* education. There would be a continual connection between work and education, between work and creativity. Work would not be organized around competition to sell the labor power of our muscle and brains for eight hours a day to one of the highest bidders. And the greatest reward from work would be increased human solidarity, the pleasure and celebration that come from what we have accomplished together.

That is why the working class has such a stake in getting rid of the notion that education is a children's question instead of a *social* question. The former is a petty-bourgeois, sentimental cover-up for the true crisis of education. There will be no real education, including above all for children, in a society where working people who are supposedly being educated know that a day will come when their education simply stops. Under those conditions, young people grind away until that day comes — whether at age sixteen, seventeen, eighteen, or twenty-one. And then their "education" ends.

Work must become an activity through which a human being's desire to continually widen his or her scope — the desire to *educate* ourselves — can be realized. Professors and certain other professionals have something called a "sabbatical." It is a very good practice, even if it is often not used very well (that's another story that is not our concern). Every seven years, they take some time off — some-

times a half year at full pay, sometimes a full year at half pay. They go somewhere and study something new, broaden their experiences, improve their knowledge, meet people in other countries. That's the idea. Go to Italy, go to Japan, go to Mexico. Go to Asia, go to Nigeria, go to South Africa. It is a wonderful concept. Workers should have the same opportunity. Every worker should have a sabbatical every three years — get half the year off with pay to go to another country, or to another part of this country; to study something, to make further strides in another language, to broaden our scope. This should be a lifetime perspective.

Work should be the way Che Guevara talked and wrote about it. Read his talks to factory workers during the early years of the Cuban revolution; read "A New Attitude toward Work" and other writings and speeches in Pathfinder's collection, *Che Guevara and the Cuban Revolution*. Factories and other workplaces should be organized to promote continual requalification and ongoing education, Che said. The goal of communist workers in the factories, he wrote, is "to assure that productive labor, training, and participation in economic matters of the [production] unit become integral parts of the workers' lives, gradually becoming an irreplaceable habit."¹

¹ "Planning and Consciousness in the Transition to Socialism (On the Budgetary Finance System)," in *Che Guevara and the Cuban Revolution*, pp. 217-18.

'Free Puerto Rican prisoners!'

Continued from Page 6

waii, Canada, India, the United Kingdom, and the United States. José Ramos Horta, a leading figure in the East Timor independence movement, sent a videotaped message of solidarity.

The participation of relatives of the political prisoners was a major aspect of both the conference and the August 29 rally. They unanimously condemned the insulting conditions demanded by the U.S. government for the release of the jailed fighters.

Josefina Rodríguez, mother of two imprisoned sisters, Ida Luz and Alicia Rodríguez, and a long-time independentist herself, explained that her daughters would be prohibited from visiting her together or seeing each other without permission from Washington. In that sense, "they would be even more restricted outside prison than inside [because] they have been sharing the same cell for the past two years, and on their release they would not be able to remain together," she stated.

Clarissa López, daughter of imprisoned independence fighter Oscar López; Guillermo Morales, son of Dylcia Pagán; and Ramón Segarra, son of Juan Segarra Palmer, all demanded the unconditional release of all the prisoners.

Several of the prisoners sent messages to the rally that were received with cheers and applause. "I hope we can soon be together to celebrate the U.S. Navy's departure from Vieques and our departure from Yankee prisons," stated Elizam Escobar in his message.

Both victories will be part of the fight to end U.S. colonial rule in Puerto Rico, he said.

In addition to pro-independence forces, leaders of the pro-Commonwealth Popular Democratic Party (PPD) joined the march for the release of the political prisoners, reflecting the public pressure on big-business politicians. This included PPD vice-president Aníbal Acevedo and the mayors of Ponce and Caguas.

The keynote speaker at the rally was U.S. congressman Luis Gutiérrez, Democrat from Chicago. He called for the unconditional release of the political prisoners.

Also speaking were Rev. Eunice Santana and religious leaders from the Franciscan and Dominican orders. Roberto González, archbishop of San Juan, was applauded as he marched with a contingent of priests.

Absent from the march were leaders of the ruling New Progressive Party (PNP). Gov. Roselló has expressed support for the release of the prisoners, but under the conditions demanded by Clinton.

Cops launch countercampaign

In response to the broadening campaign pressing the U.S. government to release the Puerto Rican political prisoners, cop agencies and capitalist politicians in the United States have recently launched a high-profile countercampaign.

In a front-page article in its August 27 issue, the *New York Times* reported that the FBI, U.S. Bureau of Prisons, and U.S. attorneys in

Continued on Page 10

—25 AND 50 YEARS AGO—

25 CENTS
THE MILITANT
A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY/PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF THE WORKING PEOPLE
September 13, 1974

Striking miners in Brookside, Ky., won their 13-month battle against the Duke Power Company, Aug. 29, capping a nationwide walkout by the United Mine Workers (UMW) in protest of unsafe working conditions.

The Brookside victory not only means a contract for the 180 workers at Duke Power's Brookside mine, but it marks an important breakthrough for the thousands of other unorganized miners in eastern Kentucky. In addition, the settlement enhances the position of the UMW in its national contract talks, scheduled to begin Sept. 3.

When the Brookside strikers walked out in July 1973, it was over Duke Power's refusal to honor the UMW national contract terms. The miners had voted to be represented by the UMW, rejecting their previous bargaining agent, the Southern Labor Union, a notorious company union.

Duke refused to accept such demands as the right to strike, increased royalties for the welfare fund, decent pensions, and the right of the miners to an elected safety committee.

The UMW contract allows for 10 "memorial days" each year, traditionally used to commemorate miners killed on the job. Since the beginning of the century, more than 100,000 miners have been killed.

Seventy-three have already died in the

mines this year.

THE MILITANT
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September 12, 1949

After "deliberating" for two hours last week, a lily-white jury in Florida condemned two Negroes to the electric chair and a third to life imprisonment on charges of "rape." The trial itself was a rushed-up mockery of justice, lasting less than two days, and climaxed the anti-Negro pogrom which broke out early this summer at Groveland, Fla.

The three victims of lynch-law were Samuel Sheperd and Walter Irvin, 22-year-old veterans who were sentenced to die, and Charles Greenlee, 16. They were accused of raping Mrs. Norma Lee Padgett on a country road near Groveland on the night of July 16.

The cry of "rape" was just what the Ku Klux Klan elements in the area had been waiting for. It served as the signal for an immediate mob assault on the Negro community in Groveland in which their homes were shot up and burned and 400 Negroes were forced to flee for their lives, hiding in the woods and swamps. All this, like the frame-up trial that followed, was part of the white supremacist campaign to terrorize back "into their place" the Negroes who had begun to complain about the peonage conditions they were forced to live under.

Stop all farm foreclosures now!

Below are excerpts of a statement issued by Amy Roberts and Doug Jenness, Socialist Workers candidates for City Council in St. Paul, Minnesota.

As report after report from the countryside in this state and throughout the country clearly show, working farm families are in the midst of a worsening crisis that is even deeper than in the 1980s. The biggest overriding problem is that farmers receive less for selling their commodities on the market than is needed to meet the costs of production and make an adequate living for their families.

Farmers need both immediate emergency relief and longer-run protective measures. Many politicians resist with the argument: why subsidize “unproductive” farmers? But this is not the issue. Farmers aren’t in crisis because they aren’t productive. Even the smallest ones produce enough food for scores of people and are thus making a valuable contribution to society. Though many farmers can’t make a living off of what they produce, in fact, bank lenders and food processors and marketers profit handsomely off this same produce.

We’re trade unionists — one of us a factory worker and the other a cleaner at Northwest Airlines. We’re also socialists and are running for city council in St. Paul. Most of our opponents won’t address the farm crisis because they don’t consider it an immediate issue in their ward or in the city. We disagree. The fate of our brothers and sisters on the farm, and the possibility of joining them in common action, is of utmost concern for city workers. Only through collective action against our common enemy and exploiters, can we win.

To help forge this alliance, we urge the labor movement to campaign for the following measures that should be adopted immediately to help protect farmers from the ravages of the disasters that are engulfing them.

- First, the federal government should declare a moratorium on all farm foreclosures. No bank, finance com-

pany, or federal agency should be permitted to involuntarily take a farm family’s livelihood away from them.

- Second, all working farmers should be guaranteed disaster relief sufficient to compensate for the full loss of crops, livestock, land, or buildings. This should also include farmers, whose contracts with processors are arbitrarily torn up.

- Third, farmers’ costs could be sharply reduced if the government provided low-interest credit, with preference given to those with greatest need. Moreover, farmers should not be forced to mortgage their land in order to obtain loans.

- Fourth, reducing taxes farmers pay could further slash costs. The only tax should be a sharply graduated income tax on the wealthy.

- Fifth, the government should guarantee farmers a market and income for the products of their labor to meet their production costs and have a decent living.

- Sixth, watch-dog committees of farmers, unionists, and consumers groups should be established to counter the attempt by big business to drive a wedge between farmers and wage workers by asserting that farmers’ demands for a living income will drive up grocery store prices.

Through solidarity and united action among working farmers — those with contracts and those without, those from the Northeast and those from the Midwest, those from Canada and Mexico and those from the United States, those who are native-born and those who are immigrants, those who grow soy beans and those who produce tobacco — a powerful movement to fight for farmers can be built. And when collaboration between fighting farmers and militant workers who are beginning to resist worsening conditions grows, the foundations will begin to be laid, both in this country and internationally, for those who toil on the land and in the factories, who produce the country’s vast wealth, to conduct a revolutionary struggle to replace big-business rule with a government of workers and farmers.

No imperialist force in E. Timor!

Below are excerpts of a statement issued August 17 by the Communist League in Australia.

After nearly 24 years of Indonesian military occupation the people of East Timor have, by their own determined struggle, placed their right to self-determination firmly on the agenda.

Working people should oppose the sending of Australian and New Zealand forces as part of the United Nations contingent of 250 police, 50 military officers, and 600 civilian officials currently in East Timor to “oversee” the UN-sponsored referendum on independence. These forces are part of stepped-up intervention by the imperialist powers in the affairs of the people of East Timor.

The toilers of East Timor, far from being helpless victims needing protection, have shown themselves over the years to be steadfast fighters, capable of taking their destiny into their own hands.

Governments in the United States, Australia, New Zealand and elsewhere backed Indonesia’s brutal 1975 takeover of East Timor from the beginning—just as they backed Suharto’s military coup and the massacre of up to 1 million people by the armed forces and rightist militias in Indonesia in 1965–66. Today, as they seek to maintain a stable capitalist regime in Jakarta, these imperialist powers have been forced to concede that there is mass support in East Timor for independence, the better to try and control the emerging nation.

No matter what the outcome of the referendum, we need to keep our eyes on those whose actions have brought

nation-time closer: the workers, peasants and young people of East Timor.

Many supporters of the East Timorese struggle have been calling for imperialist forces to intervene in East Timor under the banner of the United Nations. This sets back the fight for independence and makes it easier for Canberra, Wellington, and others to dispatch their cops and politically prepare working people for the military to follow.

Jakarta’s brutal occupation is often pointed at to justify calls for imperialist intervention. This view not only ignores the true bloody history of military interventions by Canberra and Wellington, it also ignores their opposition to the Timorese struggle and their real aims today.

Australian and New Zealand forces will be at the center of any broader imperialist intervention in East Timor. The Australian government has doubled the size of its rapid deployment force to 5,000 troops, ready to land in East Timor within hours. This is Australia’s largest preparation for military action since the Vietnam War. The New Zealand government is reported to have 800 troops ready to send to East Timor. This would be the largest New Zealand troop deployment since the Korean War.

Working people must oppose intervention by Canberra and Wellington in East Timor or anywhere else. We should champion the struggle of the East Timorese for self-determination. We should demand:

- Withdraw the UN police and military officers!
- No Australian or New Zealand troops or cops to East Timor!
- Independence for East Timor now!

Demonstration in Puerto Rico

Continued from Page 9

Illinois and Connecticut have denounced Clinton’s pardon offer, arguing that the independentistas were jailed as part of “a worldwide battle against terrorism” and that they should not be released.

Joining the campaign to pressure Clinton to reverse his proposal are Republican mayor Rudolph Giuliani and Democratic senator Daniel Moynihan of New York, police chief Howard Safir and other New York cops, and House of Representatives majority leader Richard Armey. Democratic mayor Richard Daley of Chicago has also criticized Clinton. Some of them have argued that Clinton’s offer is designed to help win “the Latino vote” for Hillary Clinton’s senatorial race in New York state.

In an escalation of this “antiterrorist” propaganda campaign, *Newsweek* quoted an unnamed official who said the U.S. Bureau of Prisons had secretly taped some of the imprisoned Puerto Rican fighters as saying that “as soon as they got out of there, they were going to return to violence.” The *New York Post*, *Wall Street Journal*, and Chicago *Sun-Times* have all editorialized against Clinton’s proposed pardons.

Nieves Falcón responded that he was not surprised by

the counterattack. “It’s the same people who in 1979 opposed the release of the five Nationalists,” he said. Those five political prisoners had rejected all conditions demanded by U.S. president James Carter, who eventually freed them unconditionally.

In an interview, Rafael Cancel Miranda remarked, “The FBI and those others — they’re the real criminals, the real terrorists who carry out violence.” He added that Clinton’s demands on the prisoners “don’t surprise me either. The Clintons and the Bushes are warmongers. They have no scruples. They will only act out of their own interests, not out of humanitarianism.

“We must continue the battle to win the release of all the prisoners with no conditions,” Cancel Miranda stressed.

Meanwhile, Nieves Falcón and defense attorney Jan Susler announced they will be meeting with each of the prisoners to discuss the White House offer, a process that could take several weeks. None of the prisoners have yet announced their decision. Nieves Falcón said that after initial refusals by the White House, most of the prisoners had finally been allowed to have an initial telephone conference among themselves to discuss what course to take.

Strikes explode in Colombia

BY HILDA CUZCO

Workers in Colombia, as in much of Latin America, have been hard hit by recession, with high unemployment and government austerity programs. Under these conditions many joined in a national strike that began August 31, paralyzing some sectors of the economy. The government of Andrés Pastrana, which responded with an outpouring of police and troops, has meanwhile received Washington’s assurance of more military aid, supposedly for its “antidrug programs.”

The strike, called by the main labor federations, halted 90 percent of public transportation in the cities and countryside. Schools were closed, and hospitals opened only for emergency cases. Leaders of the Central Union of Workers (CUT), along with the Democratic General Confederation of Labor (CGTD) and the Confederation of Colombian Workers (CTC) said the strike would continue until negotiations with the government resumed. Members of the Colombian Teachers Federation (FECODE), state bank employees, and workers of the Colombian Petroleum Enterprise (ECOPETROL) joined the work stoppage.

Strikes oppose antilabor laws, austerity

The major demands of the action include rejection of new antiunion laws, austerity measures, and the sell-off of state-owned companies; calls for a moratorium of the foreign and domestic debt; and for agrarian reform. The new minister of labor responded that these demands were political and nonnegotiable.

Military and police forces took control of all highways and roads in the country. Several airplanes and a fleet of helicopters were deployed, along with special highway cops in full riot gear. Residents were banned from using motorcycles and carrying arms.

In Bogotá, the capital city, 14,000 police were patrolling the city by the early hours. In working-class neighborhoods south of Bogotá, police tried to quell protests throwing tear gas at demonstrators, who responded with rocks. *El Espectador* of Bogotá reported 18 civilians and seven police were injured and at least 187 people were arrested.

On the eve of the strike, 1,000 teachers in the state of Santander marched in the capital city, Bucaramanga, denouncing the government for yielding to the demands of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank “to increase the country’s debt and place the burden of its payment on the workers and the people of Colombia.”

Peasants in Ipiales, near the border with Ecuador, blocked highways in protest for not receiving a response promised by the government in 1996 to their demands for land, supplies, easy credit, technical assistance, housing construction, education, health care, and recognition as indigenous peoples.

Colombia, a country of 37 million people, has seen its currency, the peso, devalued twice in 10 months. Unemployment is 19.5 percent, compared to 8 percent in 1994. The economy shrank 5.85 percent the first quarter of this year. Agriculture, in particular the export crop coffee, has been hurt by low prices and also an earthquake in January.

Seeking a way out of the economic crisis and to make the country attractive to capitalist investors, Pastrana presented a tough austerity budget in July that Finance Minister Juan Camilo Restrepo has described as “draconian.” The package, dubbed the Truth Budget, proposed cutting funding for state governments and pension funds, along with rigid antiunion labor laws. The budget projects cutting the fiscal deficit to 2.5 percent of gross domestic product (GDP) by next year instead of 5 percent at the start of this year. Pastrana’s government has requested \$3 billion to the IMF in emergency funds.

Washington gives military aid to Pastrana gov’t

Meanwhile, retired U.S. Gen. Barry McCaffrey, the Clinton administration’s “drug czar,” paid a visit to Pastrana July 26 to assure the Colombian president of \$289 million for the Colombian police and military — a three-fold increase — supposedly to fight drugs.

The package includes six Blackhawk helicopters; arming 34 Huey helicopters, some with high-power machine guns for long distance firing; equipment for aerial fumigation of coca plantations; patrol boats; and other weapons and ammunition. Last year it was reported that U.S. special forces were training troops in Colombia.

In addition to McCaffrey’s visit, U.S. undersecretary of state Thomas Pickering met with Pastrana in August to pressure his government to move on with the necessary measures to restore “security and stability” in the country.

Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, in an op-ed column in the *New York Times* of August 10, sought to justify deeper U.S. military involvement in the country, including the death of five U.S. troops and two Colombians in a plane crash during a “counternarcotics mission” in July. “Colombia’s problems extend beyond its borders and have implications for regional security and stability,” she wrote. “To turn the tide, President Pastrana... needs — and deserves — international support that focuses on more than drug interdiction and eradication.”

Peasants forced to grow coca to make a living and the capitalists who control the drug trade aren’t the only targets of the Colombian army. Bogotá has recently intensified its military and police actions against the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and other antigovernment guerrilla groups that have battled the Colombian army for years or decades.

Saskatchewan meatpackers resist concessions

This column is devoted to reporting the resistance by working people to the employers' assault on their living standards, working conditions, and unions.

We invite you to contribute short items to this column as a way for other fighting workers around the world to read about and learn from these important struggles. Jot down a few lines about what is happening in your

ing government relief. Several strikers told us they supported the farmers' fight.

Quebec: Bell Actimedia workers locked out

MONTREAL, Quebec — The 350 members of the Office and Professional Employees Union at Bell Actimedia, whose collective agreement expired Sept. 30, 1998, have

Actimedia in Toronto where the workers accepted the contract. In Toronto, the workers belong to an association, instead of a union.

Anheuser-Busch workers accept national contract, local fights continue

CARTERSVILLE, Georgia — Teamsters who work at Anheuser-Busch — maker of Budweiser, Michelob, and other beers — approved a new five-year national contract. The results of the month-long mail balloting, announced August 7, were 3,164 for and 2,171 against. Workers at the company's 12 U.S. breweries had been without a contract since early last year and were working under the company's imposed "final offer" since last September.

Union members at the flagship plant in St. Louis staged a two-day strike last October. Eight thousand workers are covered by the new contract. Each worker would get raises of 50 cents an hour in each of its first two years, and 55 cents an hour in the third, fourth, and fifth years.

Teamsters at six locations — Newark, New Jersey; St. Louis; Fort Collins, Colorado; Los Angeles; Jacksonville, Florida; and Cartersville, Georgia — rejected their local contracts. This puts a question mark on implementing the new national agreement.

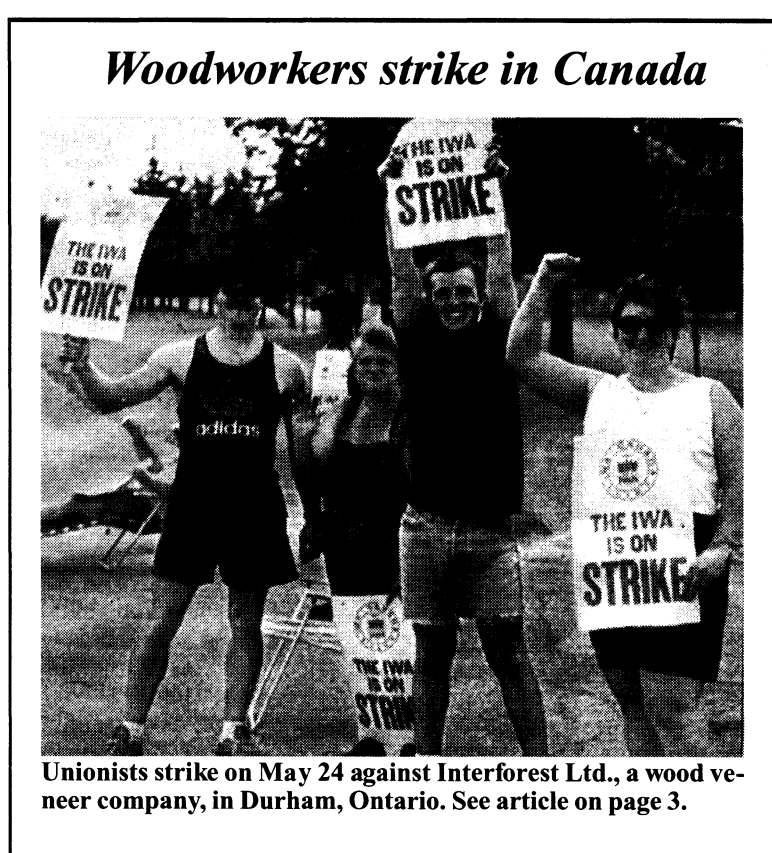
Dave Passarelli, a maintenance worker at the Cartersville plant, said workers here rejected the local contract because it violated seniority rights in regard to work shift schedules and because it contained a two-year "look back." This clause, Passarelli said, would allow the company to punish a worker for things that happened up to two years ago.

"The company wants to work the line with fewer and fewer people," Passarelli added. Teamsters Local 1129 "has filed charges against the company with the NLRB [National Labor Relations Board] and has also sent a letter to the company asking for local negotiations to begin."

Auto workers demand union rights in Kentucky

HENDERSON, Kentucky — "We've been out this long — we're not going back for nothing," said Greg Joyner, one of four workers staffing the picket line at Accuride, during a visit here August 19. The plant manufactures truck wheels.

Four hundred members of United Auto Workers (UAW) Local 2036 struck the plant in February of last year in a contract fight. One month



Unionists strike on May 24 against Interforest Ltd., a wood veneer company, in Durham, Ontario. See article on page 3.

ON THE PICKET LINE

union, at your workplace, or other workplaces in your area, including interesting political discussions.

MOOSE JAW, Saskatchewan — "United we bargain, divided we beg," reads the banner in front of Tai Wan Pork, Inc., where 191 members of the Retail Wholesale and Department Store Workers Union Local 455 have been locked out since the first week of August.

A couple of dozen strikers were picketing the plant when *Militant* correspondents visited August 18.

They reported that a truck drove through the picket line August 13, injuring five workers. Striker Richard Savoie described how he was hit in the wrist by the truck and had to go to the hospital.

Strikers Dennis Campbell and Damon Cavan were also on the picket line when the truck drove through and had to jump out of the way. "The cops came and warned us that next time they'll charge us with mischief!" added Campbell.

Sheila Nixon, the first woman to be hired on the kill floor three years ago, said, "We have no choice but to fight. They want too many takebacks."

Striker Monique Berger added, "The company wants to take away 1.5 percent from the RRSP [retirement] contributions, undermine our seniority, limit our ability to bid on other jobs out of our category."

The company wanted to allow four weeks of vacation only after 10 years instead of the current five, cut wages on the kill floor, and freeze other wages, according to strikers Marty Kinch and Mike Andrews. "The company gave us these proposals and said if we didn't accept them we would be locked out. Despite this, we voted to reject this offer unanimously," added Kinch. Base rate for a laborer job is Can\$8.50 an hour (US\$5.70).

Andrews explained that he comes from a farm family and supports the farmers in this region, who have held several protests demand-

been locked out since March 10 after they refused the company's offer by 61 percent. Bell Actimedia produces the Yellow Pages.

Martine Jean, one of those locked out, told the *Militant*, "They wanted to cut our SDOs while we would continue to work 37.5 hours and be paid for 35.5 hours." SDOs are days off that can be taken every five weeks based on the fact that the workers put in two hours a week more than what they are paid for. Eliminating these days off amounts to a 4.4 percent cut in their hourly pay.

Other issues in the conflict are the posting of positions and training. Jean continued, "I could no longer apply for my position" because the company demands more and more specialization while not offering any chance for training. "They have lowered workers' levels. Ninety percent of us are women. The company has a long-term view. They want to cut our benefits as much as possible."

Although they are locked out, the workers picket five days a week. They have organized several activities to make their fight known. On March 30 a group of 20 of these workers joined with 1,000 other workers to protest the jailing of two city workers. They also participated in an April 24 demonstration of 300 organized by the Bell operators and technicians who were at that time also on strike against the company. They have demonstrated several times before the head office of the company and distributed leaflets denouncing the attitude of the company bosses at the entrances to subway stations and in the neighborhoods where some of the company officials live.

Since the beginning of the lock-out, there have been no negotiations. The company has also gotten several injunctions aiming to limit the right of the workers to demonstrate elsewhere than at the office of Actimedia and to distribute leaflets in the neighborhoods. The work normally done in Montreal is now being done in the office of

LETTERS

On 'national socialism'

I'm writing in response to the letter from Jim Miller in the August 30, 1999, issue of the *Militant*. Jim disagrees with the use of the term "national socialist" to characterize the rhetoric of Patrick Buchanan, because Buchanan "uses populist rhetoric but avoids specifically 'socialist' rhetoric."

I don't see much difference between Buchanan's rhetoric and that actually used by the Nazis. There were a few demands about nationalization of trusts, the confiscation of war profits, and "the abolition of incomes unearned by work" in the Nazi party's 1920 program. But the party was not built on this platform.

If you read *Mein Kampf*, you find a total and explicit rejection of class struggle and an expressed desire to win the working class to the "national community." If capitalists are attacked, it is for failing to see themselves as part of this national community.

In a private discussion with the

supposedly left-wing Nazi Otto Strasser in 1930, Hitler explained his own idea of socialism: "I am a Socialist. I was once an ordinary working-man. The mass of the working classes want nothing but bread and games. They will never understand the meaning of an ideal. What we have to do is to select from a new master-class men who will not allow themselves to be guided by the morality of pity." Asked if he would nationalize the Krupp trust, he replied: "Of course I should leave it alone. Do you think me so crazy as to want to ruin Germany's great industry?" He continued: "I have never said that all industries should be socialised. On the contrary, I have maintained that we might socialise enterprises prejudicial to the interests of the nation. Our National Socialist state, like the Fascist state, will safeguard both employers' and workers' interests while reserving the right of arbitration in case of dispute." (See J. Noakes and G. Pridham, *Nazism*,

Volume I [New York, Schocken Books, 1984], pages 66-67. In the 1936 labor code, the employer was called "leader" and workers "his retinue"; the retinue had no rights.)

National socialism is not a set of ideas, but the use of demagoguery to mobilize the resentments of the plebeian (mostly petty-bourgeois and lumpen proletarian) masses against bourgeois democracy in order to crush the organizations of the working class.

Hitler's socialist "ideas" are derived from the various petty-bourgeois, anti-Semitic utopian socialisms of the nineteenth century: Proudhon's, Bakunin's, and Dühring's, for example; a few original crank notions are added to the mix. The Nazi utopia is a "national community," where employers and workers would have separate roles to play but owed each other duties as fellow "Germans." This is not very different from the rhetoric Buchanan now uses as he attacks corporations who do not respect

their supposed duties to "American" workers.

Tom O'Brien
St. Paul, Minnesota

Right to view eclipse

I work at Electrium in Manchester, an engineering factory producing fuse boxes and switchgears. On the day of the solar eclipse, the bosses told us that they would not allow us to go outside to watch it. We were told that if we had wanted to see it we should have booked a day's holiday.

Most of the workers in the part of the factory where I work had by this stage stopped to discuss what to do next. The managing director came into the building and as he entered, workers vented their anger by booing and banging anything close to hand till he left. The supervisor then told us that we could view the eclipse but would have to clock out. All of us did this for 11 minutes.

fighters have found other work to tide them over, and some are getting by on their savings and on union strike pay. "By now everybody's made adjustments," said Damin.

In the first eight months of the fight, unionists held monthly marches to the plant from the nearby union hall. The pickets also described two rallies held in the area. At one, the Accuride UAW fighters joined a rally of 2,000 in solidarity with striking workers at National Standard wire, who have since reached a "tentative settlement," said Damin. Also present were UAW workers employed by Caterpillar, workers at aluminum plants, garment workers from Carhart, and members of the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA). Another rally in solidarity with the Accuride workers was organized in Henderson.

On August 28 the president of Local 2036 reported to a meeting of 250 locked-out workers that the UAW international officials had decided to end strike pay after September. The workers responded by deciding, 142 to 114 in a secret ballot, against even voting on the company's latest contract proposal.

Ned Dmytryshyn, a member of the International Association of Machinists Local 11 in Delta, British Columbia; Alexandre Geoffroy and Joe Young, members of the United Food and Commercial Workers in Montreal; Dan Fein, a member of the UAW in Atlanta; and Frank Evans contributed to this column.

When we came back in we were told we would be docked half an hours pay. After protests by workers this was reduced to 15 minutes. Protests continued and there was some coverage on local radio and newspapers, and the bosses climbed down and announced that no pay would be docked.

This came during negotiations for a substantial pay rise and improvements to the company sick-pay scheme, and has boosted workers confidence to take part in this fight. The current offer from the bosses is for a 2 percent pay rise. Bernadette Campbell
Manchester, England

The letters column is an open forum for all viewpoints on subjects of general interest to our readers. 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.

Workers in S. Africa strike for raise

BY T.J. FIGUEROA

PRETORIA, South Africa — In the largest protest action since the end of apartheid rule in 1994, hundreds of thousands of government workers and other employees took to the streets nationwide in a one-day strike August 24 to press their demands for a wage increase. The militant demonstrations involved large numbers of women and, for the first time, thousands of whites.

The largest demonstrations took place in Bisho, Bloemfontein, Cape Town, Durban, Mafikeng, Nelspruit, Pietersburg, and Pretoria. The Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) said more than half a million people took part in all.

Following a series of negotiations over the past year and union protests that began in July, the African National Congress (ANC) government said it did not have the money to meet union demands for a 10 percent wage increase. It said it would unilaterally implement an average increase of 6.3 percent. This offer was increased slightly after tens of thousands marched in a July 23 protest.

Leaders of 12 public sector trade unions and staff associations subsequently lowered their demand to a 7.3 percent increase. Consumer inflation in South Africa hovers around 6 percent, economic growth is flat, and thousands of jobs are being cut by bosses in a range of industries.

Marchers included nurses, teachers, laborers, and office workers. Some cops also marched. Schools across the country were shut, and many government departments and courts were empty. Nurses organized to provide essential hospital services.

The August 24 strike marked the first joint action by unions affiliated to the ANC-aligned COSATU and the Federation of South African Trade Unions. As a result, thousands of teachers, nurses, and other government employees who are white marched alongside workers who are black in the demonstration. For many, if not most, of the white employees it was the first time they had ever marched.

Following the demonstrations the government said it would not budge from its stance and union leaders promised more mass action would follow.

The ANC-aligned Congress of South African Students, which organizes primarily in the high schools, did not give support to the strike. Instead it held a march of several thousand in Johannesburg calling for an end to the wage deadlock.

Miners strikes

Meanwhile, tens of thousands of workers in other sectors of the economy have struck as the annual wage negotiation season gets into full swing.

The National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) reached agreement with the Chamber of Mines August 16 on a two-year wage deal at most gold mines that includes a 9 percent increase in the second year of the contract. The miners also won agreement for the companies to implement meal breaks in line with the new Basic Conditions of Employment Act.

Thousands of gold miners downed tools at about half a dozen mines where specific agreements had not been reached.

About 11,000 coal miners represented by the NUM struck Ingwe and Anglo American mines August 20 to demand a 9 percent increase. Ingwe miners reached a tentative agreement on August 24.

Tens of thousands of members of the Communication Workers Union struck Telkom, the telephone utility, and the post office the week of August 16 to press their wage demands. Postal workers won a wage increase ranging between 7.5 percent and 11.4 percent on August 30. At press time, telephone workers remained on strike.

COSATU congress

About 2,400 union delegates assembled for a special COSATU congress in Midrand near Johannesburg August 18-20 to elect new officers and discuss the unemployment crisis and public sector wage dispute. John Gomo, the former president of the federation, and Mbhazima Shilowa, the former general secretary, have taken government posts. The alliance between the ANC, COSATU, and South African Communist Party also came under discussion at the meeting.

The congress elected Willie Madisha, president of the South African Democratic



South African miners rally August 27. Hundreds of thousands of workers joined a nationwide strike August 24 demanding a wage increase.

Teachers Union, COSATU president and Zwelinzima Vavi general secretary.

ANC chairperson Patrick Lekota, who is also South Africa's defense minister, addressed delegates on behalf of the ANC. He took issue with statements of some COSATU leaders on the ANC's economic policy: "The recent trend, on the part of some highly

placed comrades, of ascending platforms or by other ways criticizing or agitating against policies and actions of the movement, inside and outside government, smacks of a lack of revolutionary discipline.... This undisciplined approach has a number of negative consequences."

In response to these remarks, delegates passed a resolution stating, in part, "This special congress notes that: It is becoming a trend that we are rebuked in our congresses; In the process we get projected as the party that is ill-disciplined within the alliance; We are told to raise issues within the structures while we are rebuked in front of media cameras; We believe that this should be ended."

Some COSATU leaders, in particular officers of the South African Clothing and Textile Workers Union, have urged a "buy South African" protectionist campaign in response to layoffs and competition between South African bosses and their counterparts abroad. The partial consequences of this course were evident at the congress

when Vavi, opening the proceedings, said there had been a "huge mishap" in ordering caps handed out to delegates. "If you look inside some of your caps you will see they have a sticker saying 'made in China,'" he said, according to South African Press Association reports. Hundreds of delegates reportedly tossed their caps on the floor.

Australia actions denounce anti-union law

BY DOUG COOPER
AND LINDA HARRIS

SYDNEY, Australia — Tens of thousands of workers across Australia took to the streets during August to protest the Liberal-National coalition government's proposed "second wave" package of draconian anti-union legislation. Marches and rallies called by the Australian Council of Trade Unions were held in all states and territories.

The conservative government's proposed changes to its 1996 Workplace Relations Act would deepen the bosses' attacks on the right to strike and have union representation, make challenges by bosses to "illegal" strikes easier in the courts, strengthen the use of antiunion individual contracts, and prohibit the closed shop.

In the case of strikes, secret ballots overseen by the government's industrial tribunal would be required instead of the longstanding practice of a show of hands. The 1996 law made strikes illegal except during a bargaining period. Five days' notice, instead of the current three, would be required before taking strike action. Strike votes in pursuit of coordinated demands between workers in different enterprises would not be allowed. Wildcat strikes would be criminalized, with bosses automatically obtaining back-to-work orders.

Union organizers would only have the right to enter a workplace by written invitation signed by a member who had named the specific issue or grievance and would have to give 24 hours' written notice to the boss. The invitation would have a 28-day life.

The 1996 law sharply altered the federal "award system." The nearly 100-year-old system codifies minimum wages and a wide range of working conditions on an industry-by-industry basis. The awards, or contracts, are arbitrated by a supposedly neutral government-appointed tribunal, the Australian Industrial Relations Commission. The process of dismantling the awards began in the 1980s with Labor governments legislating for decentralized "enterprise bargaining" agreements.

The 1999 amendments will gut the award

system. Existing awards would be further stripped down to a bare minimum, with workers having to bargain to get back existing entitlements such as job classification structures, long service leave, public holidays other than those decided by state governments, notice of termination, accident make-up pay, superannuation (pensions), and union representation for workers during the resolution of grievances.

While collective agreements remain possible, there would be no requirement that they cover all workers in an enterprise or a distinct section of a particular workforce. Nor would the commission review enterprise bargaining agreements to see if workers have become worse off as a result.

Workers take to streets

More than 10,000 union members marched August 11 in Adelaide, South Australia, the biggest demonstration there in six years. The Mitsubishi and Holden car plants were closed down as 5,000 auto workers joined maritime workers, drivers, and others on the rally.

The biggest turnout was in Melbourne, Victoria, where an estimated 80,000 workers marched through the center of the city. Maritime, metal, and construction workers, storemen (warehouse workers), teachers, and nurses downed tools in protest. Six other regional rallies drew thousands more workers from across Victoria.

The Melbourne rally was led off by a truck with a banner supporting the Oakdale coal miners. Some 125 miners from the Oakdale colliery southwest of Sydney were sacked May 25 when the company announced the pit was to be closed almost immediately. They were owed \$6.3 million in redundancy or severance pay, which the company claimed there was no money to pay.

Some 20,000 coal miners, members of the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union, held a 24-hour national strike August 13 in protest against the government's inaction over the Oakdale miners. Four days later a rescue package for the miners to cover their entitlements was announced.

Up to 10,000 workers rallied in Sydney on August 24. From immigrant women electronic assemblers to construction workers, retail shop employees, textile, and clothing workers, it was a broad cross-section of the workforce. Many sites closed for a day or a half-day as workers walked off in support of the campaign.

Paperworkers from Visy Industries, who had just waged a successful two-week strike and are still in negotiations, sent a delegation of about 20 to the rally.

At Southcorp Water Heaters, workers voted to strike and meet to travel together to the rally. Joe Farrugia, a shop-floor delegate, encouraged unionists to attend. "You have to go to really see what union power is," he said. Twenty workers, members of the Australian Manufacturing Workers' Union and the Australian Workers Union, marched together with a handmade placard saying, "Hands off our awards!"

Members of the Maritime Union of Australia shut down all the docks in Sydney by walking off the job for four hours. Hundreds joined the rally. Tony Wilson, a wharfie at Patrick at Port Botany, said, "I'm proud to be here. It's a great feeling of solidarity."

Rallies were also held in Perth, Brisbane, Hobart, Darwin, Newcastle, and Canberra.

In a related development, the opposition Australian Labor Party and the government reached a deal August 24 to indefinitely maintain lower wages for workers under the age of 21. Top union officials initially complained of not being consulted. Joe de Bruyn, head of the Shop, Distributive and Allied Employees Union, threatened to review its relationship with the Labor Party, including financial support. About 100,000 of the union's 230,000 members are under 21.

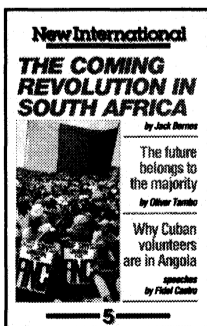
The youth wage was inherited by the conservative government when it took office in 1996 after 13 years of Labor governments. Until now, specific pay rates for young workers were temporary and were reviewable on a case-by-case basis.

Doug Cooper is a member of the Maritime Union of Australia.

Further reading

New International no. 5

- The Coming Revolution in South Africa
JACK BARNES
- The Future Belongs to the Majority
OLIVER TAMBO
- Why Cuban Volunteers Are in Angola, two speeches
FIDEL CASTRO 9.00



Available from bookstores, including those listed on page 8.