

# THE MILITANT

INSIDE

Bosses deepen attack on coal miners' health fund

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## Los Angeles bus drivers keep system shut down

BY ELIZABETH LARISCY

LOS ANGELES—The bus system here, the country's second-largest, remained shut down as talks between the United Transportation Union and the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) collapsed September 26. Bus operators, joined by mechanics and clerks, maintain spirited around-the-clock picket lines at transit divisions across the metropolitan area.

On September 21, several thousand strikers and other unionists and supporters held a rally and march called by the Los Angeles County Federation of Labor. The protest filled the streets in front of the MTA headquarters, called the "Taj Mahal" by workers because of its opulence and nearly half-billion dollar price tag. The chant in Spanish *Si se puede* (Yes, we can) became popular as unionists began the march around the building.

The 4,400 bus drivers, members of the United Transportation Union (UTU), have been on strike since September 16. Some 2,400 mechanics, custodians, and clerks have been honoring the picket lines. The strikers are opposed to changes in work rules and schedules proposed by the MTA that would impose a four-day workweek of 12-15 hours a day for many drivers, a change that would cut overtime pay. The unionists explain that the MTA wants drivers to work five hours, take an unpaid gap of three to five hours in the workday, and then work five more hours in the evening.

They also oppose management's proposal

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## Workers rally against anti-immigrant assault

Defend rights against cops, racist thugs on Long Island

BY OLGA RODRÍGUEZ

NEWYORK—Demanding the arrest and prosecution of those who committed the savage beating of two Mexican workers in Long Island nine days earlier, hundreds of immigrant workers, mostly Mexican, held two demonstrations in Manhattan September 26, one in Union Square and another in El Barrio in East Harlem, home of a large Mexican community.

Israel Pérez and Magdaleno Escamilla are among the dozens of day laborers who gather every morning on street corners in the Long Island town of Farmingville hoping to be offered work by landscaping and construction contractors. On Sunday morning, September 17, the two youths were picked up by two white men pretending to hire them, taken to a deserted building, and then viciously assaulted with a shovel, knife, and crowbar. Both escaped and were hospitalized with serious injuries.

Over three nights, protests in Farmingville against the attempted murders drew more than 500 people, most of them *esquineros*, or corner men, as they are often called.

Oropeza González, a 27-year-old worker at the protest, commented, "The motive for this assault was clearly racist. What we want—and we are here to show it—is justice for our *compañeros*."

Capitalist politicians, rightists, cops

The assault on the Mexican workers and the protests against it are the latest development in a polarized situation that has sharp-

ened over the past several months. Local Republican and Democratic politicians in the Suffolk County legislature have been waging an anti-immigrant campaign. Last year county legislator Joseph Caracappa proposed a measure to prohibit contractors from stopping their trucks to hire workers, which was defeated, and an ordinance to limit the number of people who may occupy a rental house, which was passed. He and

his supporters branded the immigrants as "illegal aliens, criminals who are responsible for an increase of crime in the county."

In August, Caracappa sought to get the county legislature to sue the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) for supposedly failing to do its job of arresting and deporting workers. The proposal was narrowly defeated 9-8 at a hearing attended by an over-

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Hundreds demonstrated in Union Square (above) and El Barrio in Manhattan September 26 against racist assault on immigrant workers in Long Island, New York.

Militant/Laura Anderson

## Yale forum discusses Cuba and U.S. embargo

BY MARTÍN KOPPEL

NEW HAVEN, Connecticut—"Cuba's history has been the history of our struggle for independence," stated Fernando Remírez, chief of the Cuban Interests Section in Washington, at a September 23 regional community forum held at Yale University.

This struggle by the Cuban people, Remírez said, led to the triumph of the revolution in 1959 and "a social and political transformation of major proportions." Since then, Cuba has successfully stood up to four decades of Washington's hostility, which, he explained, began even before Cuba's working people carried out a socialist revolution. Nine U.S. administrations have come and gone. All have carried out a policy of economic warfare against the Caribbean nation, he noted.

The day-long forum, on "Ending the Cold War Against Cuba," attracted a diverse range of participants, 160 in all. It was hosted by the Council on Latin American and Iberian Studies as well as other groups at Yale. Sponsors included the Greater Hartford Coalition on Cuba, the Connecticut

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## Marchers demand: U.S. Navy out of Vieques

BY HILDA CUZCO

WASHINGTON—On September 23 nearly 2,000 people rallied and marched here to demand the U.S. Navy get out of the Puerto Rican island of Vieques. The mostly youthful marchers, in a festive and cheerful mood, came from more than 20 cities as part of a National Day in Solidarity with the People in Vieques. Joining the action were activists from Vieques who danced and

chanted as the *pleneros*, a group of men and women, sang and beat drums and hollow gourds, leading chants such as, "Vieques Sí, Marina No."

Washington has used the island for live-fire training of naval and marine forces, devastating large parts of the island and surrounding waters. About 70 percent of its territory has been occupied since 1941. In the face of sustained protests and growing in-

dignation by the people of Puerto Rico, the U.S. government has asserted its prerogatives, saying Vieques is a unique training ground for its air, land, and sea forces.

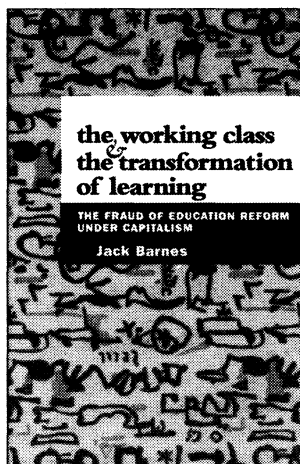
The participants in the march arrived at Lafayette Park across from the White House from Alabama, Connecticut, Illinois, New York, Massachusetts, Mississippi, Pennsylvania, and elsewhere. The number of high school students marked the action, with many coming from F.A. Edison, Hostos, Kensington, and Clemente high schools in Philadelphia. For many, this was their first time in a demonstration.

"Let them know that we are not alone with the problem of Vieques, and that we make this claim on an international level," said Ismael Guadalupe Ortiz, one of the featured speakers. "Let them know the fight for Vieques should never be sold out. We demand they give us Vieques back, that they meet their promises, and that they give us Vieques back clean" from effects of the decades-long occupation and use by U.S. military forces.

Puerto Ricans and supporters were angered when a bomb exploded off target killing a civilian security guard David Sanes in April of last year. The killing sparked a wave of sustained protests, including some of the largest political actions in Puerto Rico in some years. In order to diffuse the growing pressure demanding that the U.S. forces get out, U.S. president William Clinton, together with the Puerto Rican government, decided to hold a referendum in which Vieques residents can decide if the military should leave

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Washington's cold war on Cuba: a historical view — page 8

# UAW members protest cop killing of co-worker

BY IRENE HUTTON

DETROIT—Members of the United Auto Workers union spearheaded a protest of 200 people September 23 outside the main police station here to condemn the police killing of Dwight Turner, one of their co-workers. Turner, a 49-year-old worker at Ford Motor Company's parts depot, was on a week's vacation when he was killed by police while standing on his front porch.

Scores of hand-lettered picket signs included slogans such as "What happened to the right to remain alive?" "Unions must stand against cop murder—remember Dwight Turner, member of UAW Local 600," "Give Benny [Detroit police chief Benny Napoleon] the boot."

Callie Smith, who worked with Turner at the parts depot for 22 years, carried a sign that said, "UAW 600 is 30,000 strong! Dwight Turner was one of us! We can help stop killer cops!" "He was a kind and intelligent man," she said. "Co-workers loved him."

A short rally followed the picket line. One speaker after another voiced their determination to keep up the protests until the cop who killed Turner is charged with murder. "We have a voice," said Robert Morris, a co-worker of Dwight Turner for 20 years, and a board member of UAW Local 600. "We will exercise that voice until the violence stops. Now it's come to the light. We will never let up again."

Joining about 30 of Turner's co-workers were family and friends of others killed by the Detroit cops, along with members of the Detroit Coalition Against Police Brutality, and other activists.

Arnetta Grable, the mother of Lamar Grable, was one of the speakers. "After four years, they're still trying to say that they don't have enough evidence to convict his killer. If they get away with one, they will get away with all. We have to keep fighting," Lamar Grable, 20, was shot eight times in his chest, arms, and back in September 1996 by policeman Eugene Brown, who was awarded the Walter Scott Distinguished Service Award for bravery in 1997 as a result.

Other speakers included Adam Ortiz, deputy director of Amnesty International's Midwest regional office in Chicago; Reverend Leonard Young, director of the National Baptist Convention's civil rights commission; and Cardinal Aswad Walker, pastor of the Shrine of the Black Madonna.

About 30 members of the Detroit Fed-

eration of Motorcycle Clubs joined the picket line to protest the January 1999 fatal shooting of Darren "Krunch" Miller, a member of the Free Wheelers.

Family and friends of Errol Shaw Sr., 39, were also there. Shaw, a deaf man, was gunned down by cops on August 29 while standing in his driveway holding a rake.

## Killed on front porch

Turner was killed on his front porch September 8 shortly after midnight. He was wearing his pajamas. He had a gun because he had heard a marauding dog that had been harassing the neighborhood for two years. Turner had complained about the dog to Animal Control several times, but had gotten no response. A neighbor of his reported that he had "seen that dog chase people up on their porches. It had attacked a couple of postal workers."

Articles in the daily newspapers painted a picture of Turner as a drunk armed with a gun who was wildly searching the streets for a pesky dog. The police claim that he had been running through the neighborhood shooting at the dog before they confronted him.

Attorney Geoffrey Feiger, retained by Turner's family, challenged the validity of these slanderous stories. Speaking at a news conference, Feiger explained, "He was home alone. He was not drinking or doing drugs. He heard the dog and walked out on his front porch. Where are the witnesses to say that he was running up and down the street?" An independent autopsy showed the fatal bullet entered Turner's chest at a downward angle. Feiger said the evidence proves that Turner was bent over at the time he was shot. He said the facts corroborate the statements of neighbors who said they witnessed Turner bending over to put the gun down.

Turner was killed by Wayne Little, a 12-year veteran of the police department. Little was cleared in three earlier shootings. In April 1999, he shot 22-year-old Robert McGee in the chest during a traffic stop. Little claimed he was defending himself



Militant/Irene Hutton  
Some 200 people, including members of UAW Local 600, march in Detroit September 23 against cop killing of Dwight Turner.

against McGee, who he said was trying to run him down with his van. After spending nine months in jail awaiting trial, a Wayne County Circuit Court jury acquitted McGee.

Attorney Geoffrey Feiger called Detroit "the police murder capital of the country." At a news conference Feiger said, "This never-ending hail of bullets has got to cease."

## Rising polarization

There have been 47 police shootings since 1995, including seven killings so far this year, and three in the past month. This has created tension and polarization in Detroit, which has an overwhelmingly Black population. The newspapers carry daily news articles on the latest protests, revelations, and police actions.

Two days after Turner was killed, the Board of Police Commissioners called for a "town meeting" on the issue of police shootings. Five hundred people attended the polarized gathering. About half were cops, uniformed and plainclothed, along with their families and civilian associates. The rest were there to protest the mounting number of cop killings. Among them were 20 co-workers of Turner, along with family and friends of other victims of cop shootings. They put their stamp on the character of the meeting even though it was initiated and organized by the cops.

As one after another speaker applauded the cops, those opposed to police violence became angry. In the last 45 minutes several of Turner's co-workers, members of the Detroit Coalition Against Police Brutality, and other activists spoke.

Nicole Robinson, one of the auto workers who organized the picket line protest-

ing Turner's death, read a poem written by a co-worker that said in part, "It's time we all get mad and finally take a stand. Or will we wait and seal the fate of another innocent man?"

Robinson, who worked with Turner for four years, passed out leaflets at the hearing to publicize the September 23 picket line. "The day after Dwight was murdered," she said, "some of us got together and decided to organize a protest. We got a lot of support within the plant. We are demanding that the man who shot Dwight Turner be charged with first degree murder. This protest is not just for Dwight. It's for everybody."

Bobby Ramirez, a UAW grief counselor and 12-year co-worker of Turner's, also spoke. "As a UAW member," he said, "an injury to one is an injury to all."

Chris Hoepfner, Socialist Workers Party candidate for U.S. Senate, took issue with those who think the recently appointed police review board will end police violence. "This isn't a bad apple cop problem," said Hoepfner. "This is not a problem of rogue cops, insensitivity, or lack of proper training. This is an institutional problem, from New York City, to Dearborn, to Los Angeles, to Detroit. Cop violence is the problem."

"They are no different," Hoepfner said, "from the executives and owners of Ford Motor Co., who are getting away scot-free after six workers died as a result of the explosion at the Rouge Power Plant. They should all be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law for those deaths. What we need in this country is a revolution to end the capitalist system that breeds violence against working people, and a socialist society where human needs come before profits."

The police chief announced the establishment of the review board the day before the "town hall" meeting. Members of the board include Wendell Anthony, Detroit branch NAACP president; several individuals described as "community activists"; a public school administrator; and a lawyer. Ron Scott, a leader of the Detroit Coalition Against Police Brutality, declined an invitation to be on the review board.

The Detroit City Council and Mayor Dennis Archer have asked the U.S. Department of Justice to probe the killings.

A report released by the City Council details the skyrocketing cost of lawsuits directed against police brutality. The City of Detroit has paid out more than \$123 million between 1987 and 1999 to settle 1,109 lawsuits, according to the report. More than \$32 million was paid out just in the past three years. Lawsuits against police violence "continue to represent a serious problem for the City of Detroit," the report warns. "Huge sums of money will continue to be paid out for several years to come. The fiscal health of the city requires that they be drastically reduced as soon as possible."

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Editor: MARTIN KOPPEL

Business Manager: MAURICE WILLIAMS

Editorial Staff: Hilda Cuzco, Greg McCartan,

Brian Williams, and Maurice Williams.

Young Socialists column editor: ELENA TATE

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# Bosses deepen attacks on miners' health fund

BY FRANK FORRESTAL

PITTSBURGH—The financial crisis facing the United Mine Workers health fund, which administers health care to more than 60,000 union retirees and widows, has worsened, according to a new General Accounting Office (GAO) report.

"The GAO report affirms what the UMWA has contended for more than two years now," said UMWA president Cecil Roberts. "If something is not done soon to restore financial stability to the UMWA's Combined Benefit Fund, the beneficiaries of that fund—a majority of whom are more than 70 years old—are facing disastrous consequences with respect to their health care benefits." The union president added that the "report should make it clear to Congress that it needs to expedite finding a solution to this crisis."

In recent years, the union fund has experienced financial hardship due to rising medical costs and a series of court decisions that have allowed coal companies to stop paying into the fund. The fund covers about 60,000 people, the majority of whom live in the Appalachian states of Kentucky, Pennsylvania, and West Virginia. Based on audited reports and "actuary estimates," the union fund will run up a \$56 million deficit by the end of 2000 and a \$513 million deficit by the end of 2008, according to the GAO report.

The Coal Industry Retiree Health Benefit Act—otherwise known as the Coal Act—established the Combined Benefit Fund (CBF) in 1993 by merging two UMWA retiree health benefit trusts. In the years leading up to 1993, coal company after coal company was "dumping" UMWA retirees by pulling out of the fund. The line was drawn by the union in the 1989–90 strike against the Pittston Co. after the bosses announced they were terminating medical benefits to its retirees and their widows. The 11-month strike by UMWA miners fought off this attack and gained wide support from the labor movement and from coalfield residents.

In the wake of the strike, a Coal Commission, headed by then Secretary of Labor Elizabeth Dole, found that "retired miners are entitled to the health care benefits that were promised and guaranteed them and that such commitments must be honored." According to a union fact sheet, the government commission recommended that "Congress enact federal legislation that would place a statutory obligation on current and former signatories to the National Bituminous Coal Wage Agreement (NBCWA) [of 1978 and successor agreements] to pay for the health care of their former employees."

The CBF is financed by a per miner annual premium paid by coal companies that have retirees in the Fund. In addition, the so-called orphans—miners dumped from the fund—are financed through the use of interest on moneys held in the Abandoned Mine Land Reclamation Fund. The top five companies that pay into the fund include Consolidation Coal Co., Island Creek Coal Co., U.S. Steel Mining Co., LTV Steel Co., and BethEnergy Mines, Inc. Of these, Consol is the largest, paying a premium of \$13 million for 5,279 miners and their widows this year.

According to the GAO report, the union fund faces "extensive litigation," which they classify into several major categories. These include legal cases involving constitutional issues, coal company challenges to assessments and premiums, bankruptcy and successorship cases, and enforcement of obligations stemming from the Bituminous Coal Operators Association (BCOA) agreements since 1978.

*Eastern Enterprises v. Apfel* is the most important case that had a negative impact on the stability of the fund. In 1998 the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that companies that were not signatories to the 1974 or later BCOA agreements with the union did not have to pay into the fund. Following this decision some 132 coal companies used the decision of the highest court in the country to wiggle out of their financial obligations. As a result, 8,000 miners were reduced to "orphan" status. At the time of the ruling the coal bosses hailed the decision as a "tremendous victory" for their side. In making

this decision, the U.S. Supreme Court said the Coal Act violated the 5th Amendment's ban on "taking" private property for public use without just compensation.

Another potential blow to the union is in the offing. In the 1999 case *Dixie Fuel Company v. Social Security Administration* (SSA), the Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals challenged the right of the SSA "to make assignment of beneficiaries to coal companies after September 30, 1993, which was the date given in the Coal Act." The Circuit Court ruled that the assignments were invalid. The court decision is still subject to litigation and has not been implemented. If the ruling stands in its current form, it could potentially affect 247 coal companies with some 10,000 miners and their widows losing health coverage. In addition, the union may have to refund an estimated \$57 million in premiums.

The GAO report lists several other court challenges to the Coal Act. After the Eastern decision several coal companies were assigned retroactive premium increases to cover the increase in "orphans." In the case of *Apogee Coal Co. v. Holland*, several major coal companies have challenged these increases.

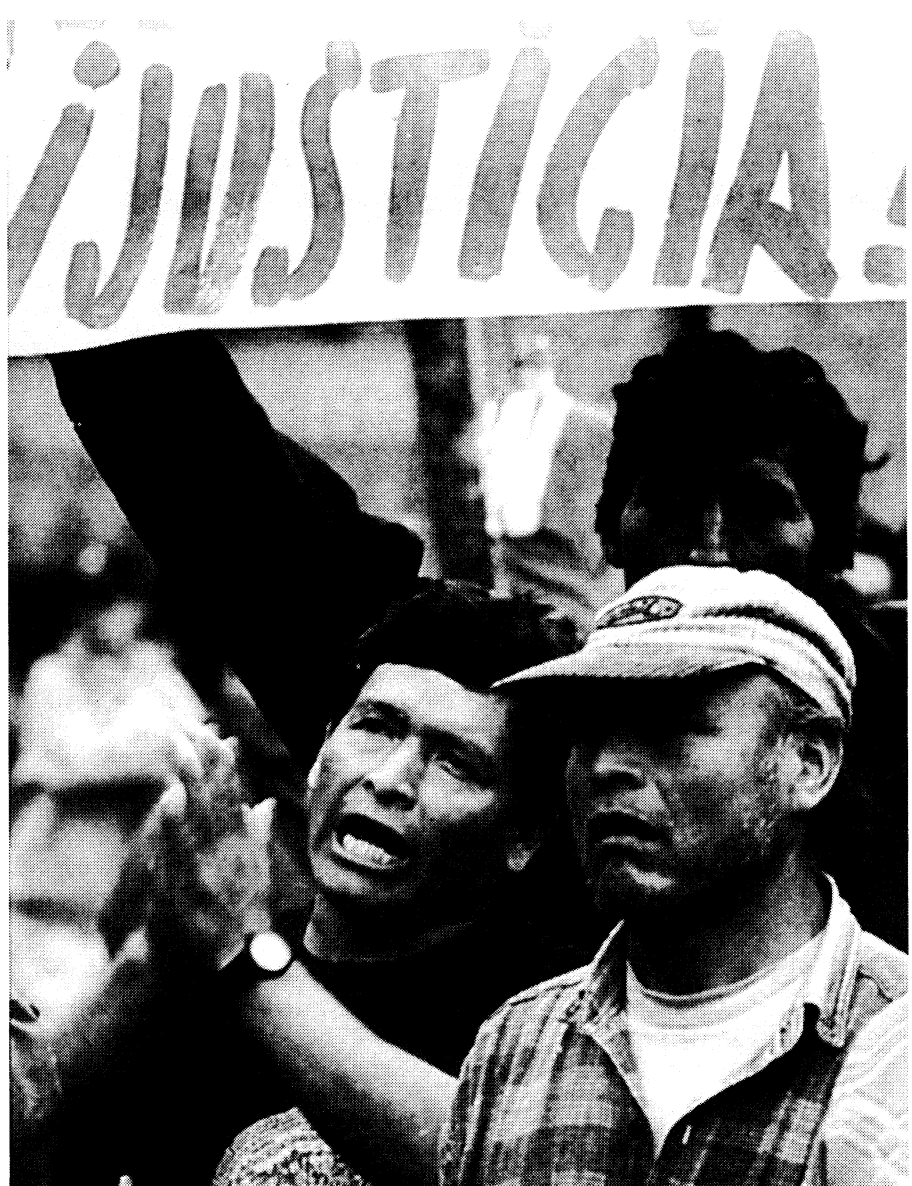
Four significant legal cases challenge the "per beneficiary" premium under the Coal Act. The premium is set by the SSA and is escalated each year by the medical component of the Consumer Price Index. In a 1995 decision in *National Coal Association v. Chater*, an Alabama court overturned the premium set by the SSA and reduced the payment by the employers by 10 percent. In 1999, the same court ordered the union fund to return \$40 million in premiums already paid out.

There are also four "successorship" cases stemming from coal companies that have changed ownership. In a recent split decision, the Fourth U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that the buyer of a unionized coal mine, Jericol Mining, was not responsible for UMWA Combined Funds for miners who retired before the company took over. This would mean that Jericol Mining would be free from paying health benefits to 86 miners who retired before the Kentucky coal company bought out the previous owner in 1973.

Two challenges are to the "evergreen clause," which refers to the enforcement of the continuing contribution obligation requirements that were included in the national BCOA wage agreements since 1978. Altogether the legal challenges add up to more than \$11 million in litigation costs. The union must also contend with another 271 individual collection lawsuits and 57 individual proofs of claims of bankruptcy, further depleting union resources.

On September 7, by a vote of 12-1, the Senate Finance Committee approved the

## Workers in Lima march against Fujimori



One thousand construction workers marched on the Palace of Justice in Lima, Peru's capital, to demand improved wages and working conditions. With the deepening social and economic crisis, Fujimori's anti-elite demagoguery has worn thin and his strong-arm methods increasingly unpopular. In face of corruption scandal involving secret police chief Vladimiro Montesinos, Fujimori announced September 16 his intention to step down and hold new elections. U.S. government arranged asylum for Montesinos in Panama, allowing him to avoid a trial. Washington, concerned about social instability, has been intervening more openly in region, including with military aid to Colombia and an air base in Ecuador.

transfer of \$57 million from the U.S. Treasury to the UMWA's CBF. Taking the form of an amendment, the stopgap measure, if approved by Congress, would maintain health benefits for retired miners and widows for one year. The Senate Finance Committee did not take up long-term solutions, or address overturning court decisions adverse to maintaining the flow of funds.

The UMWA is supporting the Coal Miners and Widows Health Protection Act of 2000. Introduced by Sen. Jay Rockefeller, the bill originally called for transferring \$346 million allocated by the Clinton Administration in its 2000 budget. After the release of the GAO report, the union is now proposing that the figure be increased to \$455 million.

The union is also supporting the Coal Accountability and Retired Employee Act

for the 21st Century—known as CARE-21. The proposed legislation would transfer \$96.8 million in Abandoned Mine Lands Reclamation Fund interest money to the UMWA's Combined Benefit Fund.

On May 17, some 8,000 UMWA miners and their families rallied in Washington, in defense of their right to lifelong health coverage. The July-August issue of the *United Mine Workers Journal* carries an article entitled, "Participants Vow To Rally Again." As one retired UMWA miner, Clyde McGregor from Kittanning, Pennsylvania, said at the May 17 rally, "I think saving our health benefits is the most important thing we can do. I would go back to another rally."

Frank Forrestal is a member of United Mine Workers of America Local 1248.

## Anthracite miners fight for health-care benefits

BY BETH FINEAS

HAZLETON, Pennsylvania—Passed by the U.S. Congress in 1992, the Coal Act shores up the responsibility of the federal government to provide lifetime medical care for retired miners and their surviving spouses and dependents. But today these benefits are guaranteed only to miners and families in the bituminous (soft coal) industry, not the anthracite (hard coal) mining region of eastern Pennsylvania.

The promise of lifetime health care was won in 1946, the product of a two-month strike by the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) against the Bituminous Coal Operators Association (BCOA), in which the federal government took over the mines to negotiate a settlement with the union. The settlement created for the first time the UMWA Health and Retirement Funds.

Northeastern Pennsylvania miners, numbering 76,000 in 1946, conducted separate negotiations with the anthracite coal operators. When their contract expired on May 30, one day after the agreement was reached in soft coal, miners immediately walked off the job. After an eight-day strike an agreement was reached with the operators patterned after the BCOA agreement. No government

takeover of the mines occurred in anthracite. The hard coal miners also won for the first time a health and welfare fund to be paid for by the companies through royalties per ton of coal mined. But anthracite miners never won the same government-backed guarantee of "cradle-to-grave" health care.

Pensions were set at \$100 per month, the first pensioners receiving checks in 1948. By early 1949 more than 15,000 miners and their families had received benefits from the Anthracite Health and Welfare Fund—3,138 were retirees. Health care in the entire region underwent drastic improvement under the impact of the miners' victory. Outpatient clinics were opened up throughout the area to treat silicosis and other occupational diseases.

Depressed conditions in the industry brought a dramatic decline in production of anthracite coal from the late 1940s until the early 1990s. Today there are between 1,500 and 2,000 anthracite miners. Once a bastion of union organization, less than 25 percent of miners here are members of the United Mine Workers of America. Pensions for retirees top out at \$90 per month and there is no provision for medical care for retired miners and their families. Wages for laborers in many of the nonunion mines in the

region start at \$7–8 per hour. Most coal is strip-mined, and many operations today reclaim coal from culm banks—refuse piles left over from old mining operations or bank mines. There are still several small underground mining operations of one to five people, mostly family owned.

Resistance to the operators' drive against wages, health, and safety continues today in the anthracite region. In 1998–99, UMWA miners struck against the Jeddo-Highland Coal Co., one of the four union mines in anthracite. The 13-month strike inspired solidarity from miners and other workers in the area as well as community residents who were protesting mine owner James Pagnotti's plan to fill a mined-out area with construction and demolition waste from seven surrounding counties. While strikers did not win all of their demands, which included improved health care and pensions, they did achieve wage parity with the other union mines in the region.

Thousands of retirees today live with inadequate pensions and health care. It will take renewed struggle in the anthracite mining communities and linking up with the developing social movement in the bituminous coalfields to win the right to a secure retirement for these workers who built the union.

# 'What Harris said needs to be heard,' says campus reporter

BY MAURICE WILLIAMS

"James Harris wants to build solidarity with workers and farmers nationwide and says he can accomplish this goal as the Socialist Workers Party candidate for U.S. president," said an article in the *Atlanta Daily World*. The article highlights the growing amount of media coverage that the Socialist Workers presidential ticket of James Harris and Margaret Trowe has received across the country, including in campus, community, and daily newspapers, and on radio and television.

"James Harris will never win the presidency, but much of what he said needs to be heard," wrote Ryan Sniatecki of *The University Times* at the University of North Carolina in Charlotte. "Bush and Gore pay lip service to the need of the working class, but both men come from upper class Beltway families.... [Harris] has actively campaigned to strengthen unions in Georgia, a 'right to work' state like North Carolina."

The reporter covered a talk given by the presidential candidate in the Cone University Center where he took up a range of political issues. Harris spoke about the drive by the capitalists to speed up production while driving down the living standards of the working class.

Sniatecki reports Harris said the average worker is "more likely to have a full-time job and be classified as poor," and "he supports a higher minimum wage and better protections for workers." Impressed by the working-class campaign of the socialist candidate, the reporter concluded, "Listen-

ing to Harris brings new issues to light and reveals a fresh perspective on more familiar ones."

"Harris' concern rests with more than just American workers. He opposes the 'War on Drugs in Colombia' on the grounds that the Colombian government violently oppresses its own people and our government's support there only entrenches an undemocratic regime," Sniatecki wrote.

The article says Harris "is the only candidate I've heard so far who brought up the AIDS pandemic in Africa. He pointed out that it will take more than reduced drug prices to end AIDS in Africa, when the people of that continent are shackled to what he called the 'imperialist' economic system run by the U.S. and its allies."

An interview with Harris appeared in the August 27-30 edition of the *Atlanta Daily World*, a newspaper oriented to the Black community in that city. "Harris' major concern is not to become the next president," the article stated. Instead, "he wants to use the power of the office to promote class-consciousness among workers and to lay the groundwork for a Socialist revolution that will forever change the American political landscape."

"African-Americans think the solution is in one party rather than the other, but we really have no alternative because both parties represent the ruling class that perpetuates racism," Harris stated. "We want to explain to workers that they should confront problems as a class as opposed to individuals. Our politics are independent from the Democratic and Republican parties that represent the ruling class and put profits before human needs."

Harris said that "African Americans think the solution is in one party rather than the other, but we really have no alternative because both parties represent the ruling class that perpetuates racism." Harris added that if elected, "I would advance the political power of working people against the ruling class. U.S. workers and farmers have more in common with international workers than the ruling class."



La Presse

Photo of James Harris that appeared in French-language newspaper *La Presse* in Montreal. The candidate was interviewed by the paper as he was leaving to join in a demonstration of Mohawks in solidarity with the struggles of Natives at Burnt Church. Harris also gave an interview to the paper produced by the Natives in the protest.

The Socialist Workers campaign was also picked up in *Twin Visions*, a weekly publication circulated in all five wards of Newark, New Jersey. This community newspaper featured a full length biography of the presidential candidate as a "guest column," with an announcement of his appearance in the city.

## 'Importance of unity'

"Socialist Workers Party candidate visits Houston," was the headline of *El Dia*, a Spanish-language newspaper in the city. "Our campaign is about the natural lines of resistance of the working class and when there are struggles, we participate with our fellow fighters in every city; every day we find workers who are conscious about the importance of unity," SWP vice-presidential candidate Margaret Trowe told Consuelo Alvarez, a reporter for the paper. Workers in the United States have begun to "break down the barriers of nationality, language, and religion and to see each other simply as workers," Trowe stated.

A feature story about Trowe's campaign also appeared in the Marshalltown, Iowa, *Times Republican*. Trowe had worked as a meat packer in that Iowa city. The socialist candidate "is calling for a moratorium on all farm foreclosures and wants a guaranteed floor on commodity prices which

would realistically ensure farmers can make ends meet. She also wants massive free loans and technical help for farmers to ensure that the family farmer can stay in business," the article in the paper said.

"After spending several years working in the packing plant industry, Trowe also believes that farmers and packinghouse workers are each being led to believe that the other group is responsible for low wages or poor working conditions.

"Where Trowe differs from her opponents is in her choice of enemies. She doesn't waste time pointing the finger at the other parties' candidates, she attacks a much larger group: capitalists. 'Capitalism is in crisis,' Trowe said. 'Workers and farmers produce all the wealth and all the produce, but get the least.'"

As an internationalist working-class fighter, Trowe, together with U.S. Senate candidate Jacob Perasso, took the campaign to New Zealand to meet with working-class militants, Maori rights fighters, and others. The campaign received coverage in the *New Zealand Herald* and *The Press*, a Christchurch newspaper.

Articles such as those mentioned here, along with other news and information about the socialist campaign, can be found at the socialist campaign section of: [themilitant.com](http://themilitant.com).

## Contribute to Militant and Perspectiva Mundial Fund

	Goal	Paid	%
<b>New Zealand</b>			
<b>Auckland</b>	<b>1170</b>	<b>\$374</b>	<b>32%</b>
Christchurch	520	\$128	25%
<b>NZ Total</b>	<b>1690</b>	<b>502</b>	<b>30%</b>
<b>United States</b>			
<b>Atlanta</b>	<b>\$4,600</b>	<b>\$2,495</b>	<b>54%</b>
<b>Brooklyn</b>	<b>\$3,200</b>	<b>\$1,510</b>	<b>47%</b>
<b>Newark</b>	<b>\$3,000</b>	<b>\$1,195</b>	<b>40%</b>
<b>NY Garment Dist.</b>	<b>\$5,000</b>	<b>\$1,865</b>	<b>37%</b>
<b>San Francisco</b>	<b>\$10,000</b>	<b>\$3,845</b>	<b>38%</b>
<b>Charlotte</b>	<b>\$2,800</b>	<b>\$900</b>	<b>32%</b>
<b>Pittsburgh</b>	<b>\$4,000</b>	<b>\$1,250</b>	<b>31%</b>
Boston	\$4,000	\$1,070	27%
Allentown	\$1,200	\$300	25%
NY Upper Manhattan	\$3,000	\$715	24%
St. Louis	\$1,800	\$425	24%
Houston	\$6,500	\$1,525	23%
Chicago	\$7,500	\$1,680	22%
Washington	\$3,000	\$600	20%
Seattle	\$9,000	\$1,650	18%
Chippewa Falls	\$600	\$100	17%
Twin Cities	\$3,500	\$545	16%
Miami	\$2,300	\$305	13%
Los Angeles	\$6,000	\$750	13%
Des Moines	\$1,800	\$215	12%
Birmingham	\$3,200	\$201	6%
Detroit	\$3,750	\$210	6%
Philadelphia	\$2,500	\$25	1%
Cleveland	\$1,600	\$13	1%
Fort Collins	\$1,400		0%
Fresno	\$200		0%
Other		\$175	
<b>U.S. Total</b>	<b>\$95,450</b>	<b>\$23,564</b>	<b>25%</b>
<b>Sweden</b>	<b>530</b>	<b>\$20</b>	<b>4%</b>
<b>United Kingdom</b>	<b>\$870</b>	<b>\$30</b>	<b>3%</b>
<b>Canada</b>	<b>\$5,000</b>	<b>\$101</b>	<b>2%</b>
<b>Australia</b>	<b>\$900</b>		
<b>France</b>		\$320	
<b>Iceland</b>		\$30	
<b>Int'l Total</b>	<b>\$104,440</b>	<b>\$24,567</b>	<b>24%</b>
<b>Int'l Goal/Should be</b>	<b>110,000</b>	<b>\$33,000</b>	<b>30%</b>

## Fund supporters plan special public forums

BY GREG McCARTAN

Bus drivers in Los Angeles are standing up to a deep assault on their union and working conditions, refusing to give in to massive pressure from the government and big-business media. Workers at Earthgrains set a sterling example of solidarity, shutting down growing numbers of the company's bakeries by honoring picket lines of striking union members. Immigrant workers in New York are showing their mettle in standing up to violence and threats by rightists, and winning support in defending their right to a job and dignity. And working people in Cuba are defending their revolution against the mightiest imperialist power on earth, showing the capacities, creativity, and selfless determination of workers and farmers.

These fighters, and tens of thousands more like them, need the *Militant* and *Perspectiva Mundial*. As the results in the subscription drive show, supporters of the paper are getting an excellent response to a socialist newsweekly that tells the truth and is published in the interests of working people.

In the third week of the drive to raise \$110,000, by November 13, supporters in Australia adopted a goal of \$900, bringing the total pledged up to \$104,440. *Militant* supporters in New Zealand are setting the pace, having collected 30 percent of their goal. With \$24,567 collected we are 6 percentage points

behind where we should stand at this point. Every reader of the *Militant* can help pick up the pace of collection of funds, as well as close the \$6,000 gap we currently have in pledges. Send in a contribution and join with others in your area to encourage others to do so the same.

Supporters of the *Militant* and *Perspectiva Mundial* in a number of cities are building Militant Labor Forums to discuss U.S. and world politics and raise funds for the two socialist publications. Building the meetings is one of the best ways to let more co-workers, *Militant* and *PM* subscribers, student youth, and working people involved in struggles know about and contribute to the fund.

Militant Labor Forums on the fund are now being organized in Birmingham, Alabama, and Atlanta, Georgia, over the October 7-8 weekend, as well as in the New York Garment District. A meeting will take place in the Bronx October 14. Three of the meetings will feature a talk by Martin Koppel, editor of the *Militant*, speaking on "Struggles for Dignity, Rights, and Solidarity: Working People Confront Growing Brutality and Political Polarization of Capitalist Society Today."

"The meeting will be an opportunity to talk about some of the challenges and opportunities facing working people here in the United States," said Koppel. "A growing number of workers and farmers are fighting back against the assaults by the employers and the government. They are also taking on the brutality of capitalism in other ways, such as the protest by co-workers in Detroit against the police killing of United Auto Workers member Dwight Turner.

The recent racist attack and beating of two Mexican workers in Long Island is another example of how the political polarization in politics has serious implications for working people."

In Des Moines, Joe Swanson reports supporters are building a September 30 panel discussion on the invaluable role played by the working-class press in struggles taking place today. The meeting will hear from Amy Roberts, a meat packer and member of the United Food and Commercial Workers Local 789 in South St. Paul, Minnesota; Larry Ginter, a hog farmer and activist in the Iowa Citizens for Community Improvement; and activists protesting the killing of Charles Lovelady by security people at a local nightclub.

"Meetings such as these are often a good way to introduce co-workers to the fund," said fund director Don Mackle in New York. "Calling the people who have already pledged, and encouraging them to make substantial contributions at the meeting can help the fund catch up or even go ahead. Then the consistent weekly work of making collections and sending in the money in a timely way is fundamental to finishing the drive on time and in full," said Mackle. "Reminding people that the regular operating expenses of the publications are paid for out of the fund, and that those monies are needed today, can help explain why it is better to pay some each week rather than wait to pay it all at the end."

He encouraged supporters to take photos and send them in to the *Militant* along with short articles on meetings held in their area. To make a contribution, write a check or money order to the *Militant* and send it to the paper at 410 West St., New York, NY. 10014.



Sales of pamphlet aid drive to sell 'Militant'

Partisans of the Militant and Perspectiva Mundial in Washington, D.C., have got a good start on the subscription drive and are well ahead of schedule. "This past weekend we sold seven subscriptions to the Militant and six to Perspectiva Mundial," wrote Janice Lynn. "We had a big display at the Baltimore Book Fair that featured a blown-up poster of the new Pathfinder pamphlet The Working Class and the Transformation of Learning: The Fraud of Education Reform under Capitalism. We also placed the newly reprinted version of Thomas Sankara Speaks on a bookstand."

Lynn said the display attracted many people, including a woman from Uganda who told her Sankara was one of the clearest thinkers she had ever heard. "She bought a subscription along with the special \$1 offer for the education pamphlet and another Pathfinder title, Fighting Racism in World War II."

Four people bought subscriptions to PM at a Latino Festival in Washington the same weekend. They were interested in the Spanish-language monthly's coverage of Vieques and Peru. "In all, some \$611 worth of Pathfinder books and pamphlets were purchased over the weekend's activities, with the most popular being those dealing with the Cuban revolution, including four copies of Che Guevara Talks to Young People, Lynn added. "The pamphlet Genocide Against the Indians was also popular, with five copies purchased."

As the chart shows sales of the new pamphlet are going very well. Supporters of the subscription effort in some places are already raising their goals. "We have now raised our goal after selling 22 copies of the new pamphlet over the weekend, reaching our previous goal of 50," said Janice Lynn. "We sold 19 at the Baltimore Book Fair. Most of the seven people who bought subs at the fair also purchased the pamphlet."

As we enter the target week of the circulation drive, from September 30 through October 8, the international subscription campaign is 5 percentage points behind schedule, with supporters in a number of cities getting off to a slow start. The target week offers an opportunity to get back on track, with special sales teams and daily sales activities reaching out to workers, farmers, and youth. It will take an all-out effort with careful planning to boost the drive ahead of schedule by October 9.

Supporters of the sales drive can take advantage of a number of labor actions that are taking place during the target week like the October 4 coordinated day of actions planned by port truck drivers who haul cargo to and from ports across the United States.

Many bus drivers in Los Angeles, who are striking against plans to lengthen their workday, will be interested in reading cov-

erage of their fight in the Militant, as will members of the United Transportation Union and bus drivers in many cities. The fight by transportation workers in Los Angeles to hold off steep concessions and institute a longer workday is one faced by tens of thousands across the country.

Supporters of the Militant will also be building actions planned for October 14 in New York, Chicago, Miami, Los Angeles, Seattle, and Austin, Texas, to demand amnesty for undocumented immigrants. Other events coming up include the World March of Women set for October 15 in Washington and an October 17 meeting to present demands for women's rights to the United Nations.

The sales campaign in San Francisco jumped on target after a sluggish start in the first week. Socialist workers there visited the picket line at Earthgrains bakery in Oakland among other political activities. Some 700 workers on strike at the company's facility in Alabama had dispatched strikers to picket at 27 other Earthgrains plants throughout the country. They brought the company to its knees when their 3,000 co-workers refused to cross the picket lines.

"We went to the picket line four times this past week and quickly made some lasting friends," said Bernie Senter. "We sold four subscriptions and more than a dozen copies of the Militant. The reception was great. Workers from Alabama and California really appreciated the previous article in the Militant about their strike and the broader coverage in the paper. One worker said he mailed in for a subscription the night after he bought an issue of the Militant."

Raising goals for pamphlet sales

In New York's Garment District, campaigners there are leading the drive in proletarian pamphleteering and subscription sales of the Militant and Perspectiva Mundial. With hardly an exception, new subscribers are taking advantage of getting The Working Class and the Transformation of Learning for an additional \$1. "We set up a table in the Lower East Side of the city, where we sold four subscriptions that all included the special \$1 offer for the new pamphlet," said Susan Annmuth, director of the circulation drive there. "One man who purchased the special deal was a Palestinian farmer who lived in upstate New York." Getting up literature tables in the Garment District has proven a great way to introduce garment workers to socialist literature and Pathfinder books.

Workers and young people purchased \$85 worth of books at a Sunday afternoon street table in the area, including a young woman who had just got off her job where she works as a sewing machine operator. After looking carefully at each title in Spanish, she purchased Capitalism's World Disorder by Jack Barnes in Spanish and a copy of Perspectiva Mundial.

The Socialist Workers presidential and vice-presidential candidates, James Harris and Margaret Trowe, are both promoting the pamphlet as part of their election campaign. Supporters in Boston got the sales drive on track this past week while campaigning with Trowe, selling four Militant subscriptions, including two at a Militant Labor Forum that featured the vice-presidential candidate. "The two young people who bought the subs also purchased the pamphlet," reported Ted Leonard.

Also in Boston, Sarah Ullman, a rail worker, sold an issue of the Militant to a co-worker a couple of weeks ago. The next time he saw her he said to her, "I saw a guy in my hometown who has a subscription. I am thinking about getting one too." He subsequently bought the subscription from Ullman.

Leonard said one of the Militant subscriptions supporters of the sub drive from Boston sold included one at Yale University where a conference on "Ending the Cold War Against Cuba" took place. A table of Pathfinder books and pamphlets was on display there that became a focus of political discussions about Washington's hostility to the Cuban revolution.

"There was wide interest in Pathfinder titles," said Mike Taber, "especially the book To Speak the Truth: Why Washington's 'Cold War' Against Cuba Doesn't End."



Militant/Elizabeth Lariscy

'Militant' sales to striking bus drivers on picket line in Los Angeles

Taber said issue no. 11 of the Marxist magazine New International, which featured the article "U.S. Imperialism Has the Cold War," was also an attractive title.

During the course of the day, people at the university purchased about \$375 worth of Pathfinder titles, including 3 copies of To Speak the Truth, 3 of New International

no. 11, 2 of The Second Declaration of Havana, 2 of Che Guevara Talks to Young People, 2 of Episodes of the Cuban Revolutionary War, 1 of Women's Liberation and the African Freedom Struggle, 1 of Cosmetics, Fashions, and the Exploitation of Women, and a range of other books and pamphlets.

Where we stand

Mil	PM	Pamphlet
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Week 9

Week 8

Week 7

Week 6

Week 5

Week 4

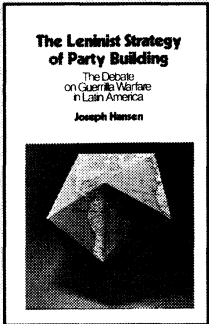
Week 3

Week 2

From Pathfinder

The Leninist Strategy of Party Building The Debate on Guerrilla Warfare in Latin America

Joe Hansen In the 1960s and '70s, revolutionists in the Americas and throughout the world debated how to apply the lessons of the Cuban revolution to struggles elsewhere. A living analysis by a participant in that debate \$26.95



Available from bookstores, including those listed on page 12, or write Pathfinder, 410 West St., New York, NY 10014. Tel: (212) 741-0690. Fax: (212) 727-0150. When ordering by mail, please include \$3 to cover shipping and handling.

Subscription campaign to win new readers: September 9-November 12							
Country	Militant			PM		Pamphlet	
	Goal	Sold	%	Goal	Sold	Goal	Sold
Iceland	8	3	38%	1		12	3
Sweden	12	3	25%	5		15	7
New Zealand							
Auckland	15	4	27%	1		20	7
Christchurch	8	1	13%	1		10	2
N.Z. total	23	5	22%	2		30	9
United States							
Atlanta	20	8	40%	8	7	20	18
Washington*	30	12	40%	10	6	70	50
N.Y. Garment Dist.*	65	21	32%	35	11	150	64
Charlotte	15	4	27%	5		30	15
Chippewa Falls	15	4	27%	10	5	20	4
Boston	25	6	24%	8		50	24
San Francisco	35	8	23%	20	6	75	12
Upper Manhattan*	67	14	21%	25	9	140	47
Newark	55	11	20%	25	3	85	38
Tucson	5	1	20%	3	1	8	6
Chicago	45	8	18%	15	1	50	20
Birmingham	35	6	17%	2		50	10
Allentown	18	3	17%	3		35	12
Seattle	30	5	17%	10	7	75	39
Cleveland	30	4	13%	6		50	13
Houston	50	6	12%	20	1	75	12
Brooklyn	60	7	12%	30	9	120	34
Twin Cities	55	6	11%	25	7	110	
Fresno	10	1	10%	6		6	2
Miami	30	3	10%	15	1	60	15
Des Moines	35	3	9%	20	1	50	12
Philadelphia	25	2	8%	5	1	50	
Los Angeles	40	3	8%	20	1	60	9
Pittsburgh	35	2	6%	2		50	15
Detroit	20	1	5%	5		35	5
St. Louis	25	1	4%	9		45	8
Fort Collins	20		0%	1		20	5
Other		1					
U.S. total	895	150	17%	343	77	1589	489
Canada							
Vancouver	30	4	13%	5		40	8
Toronto	25	2	8%	6		35	4
Montreal	15		0%	5		30	3
Canada total	70	6	9%	16		105	15
Australia	15	1	7%	3		25	6
United Kingdom							
London	30	2	7%	10	1	60	3
Manchester	18		0%	2		18	
UK total	48	2	4%	12	1	78	3
Int'l totals	1071	170	17%	382	78	1854	532
Goal/Should be	1000	220	22%	350	77	1500	330
In the unions							
Australia							
MUA	2	1	50%				
Australia total	2	1	50%				
United States							
UNITE	30	5	17%	25	2	60	20
UFCW	55			70		85	
UMWA	18					18	
U.S. total	103	5	5%	95	2	163	20
raised goal*							

# Bakery workers at Earthgrains win strike with solidarity

BY JEANNE DENNISON

FORT PAYNE, Alabama—After a nearly one-month strike that reached out in solidarity to thousands of other bakery workers around the country, workers at Earthgrains Co. voted 556 to 26 to ratify a new contract here September 22.

The workers, who are members of Local 42 of the Bakery, Confectionery, Tobacco Workers and Grain Millers International Union (BCTGM) won some important gains. The new three-year agreement includes an average annual wage increase of 3.9 percent, an added paid holiday, and increased pensions. The pact restores medical and dental insurance as if the strike never happened, provides workers the ability to honor picket lines, and increases the starting rate of pay and the night shift premium.

In addition, workers cannot be forced to work more than 12 hours in a 24-hour period, and if the bosses call someone back to work after their shift the worker has the choice of taking a 12-hour break. The union won amnesty, which means that a probationary employee the bosses at Fort Payne tried to fire will get his job back.

Shortly before casting his ballot on the contract, Ken Bearden, who has 18 years at the plant and works on the pan bread line explained, "We work 12 to 16 hours a day. The company was always short of workers. People quit over this overtime. A lot of people don't understand why we're out. We just want to spend time with our families like everyone else. We don't even get holidays off."

Rita Hairel, 22, who works on the bagel line, was among the strikers who traveled to California to picket bakeries in Bakersfield, Fresno, Sacramento, and other cities. She said that at the Fresno plant "the boss told us that there were nothing but 'rednecks and hillbillies' in Alabama and that they weren't going to shut his plant down. I told him that I was 'one mad redneck' and that we were too going to shut it down. Only about eight people there crossed out of about 150."

BY ANNE PARKER

DECATUR, Georgia—Union members turned the picket line here into a victory rally September 21 as carloads of strikers arrived from the union hall after hearing a report on the provisions in a tentative settlement of the walkout.

Members of the Bakery, Confectionery, Tobacco Workers and Grain Millers International Union (BCTGM) Local 42 here had been on strike for more than three weeks. "I didn't know the significance of a strike until now," explained Quinton Grant, with 27 years in the bakery. "Workers at our sister plant in Forest Park honored our picket lines. When I arrived, a couple of others were already there. The workers were pouring out of the plant. I mean pouring out. They were willing to help in our fight. They wanted to fight, too. When I see a strike, it will be different. I'll be different," he said.

Several union members said the expansion of the strike, with 27 of the 45 union bakeries out, was one of main reasons the company was driven to bargain with the union. "Real solidarity, like we had in this strike. Commitment to the union. These are very powerful things," added Otis McBurrow, with almost 28 years in the plant, and 22 as union steward. "Plus it is not true that the public won't support you. They do. It is the media that won't support you."

Strikers also pointed to a union press release reporting messages of support from the Food, Agricultural and Forestry Workers union of Portugal. Earthgrains has bakery operations in France, Portugal, and Spain.

"I'm feeling satisfied," said Dock Bullock. "Even though I don't have any money in my pocket. This is better than money. I stood up for something." Bullock, a truck loader with 13 years at Earthgrains, described conditions at the warehouse. "They want 18 hours work in eight hours. The speedup is something else."

With 32 years as a bakery worker, James Brown told the *Militant*, "We are the union. When the union is weak, it's because the

members are weak, although not everyone likes to see it precisely in those terms." Brown, like many workers at the Earthgrains plant in Decatur, worked at Flowers, an Atlanta bakery that closed in 1995. "They built a new plant out in Villa Rica, Georgia, and said we didn't have the experience for their new, 'high-tech' operation. But it was nothing but a union bust. Two years later they hired off the street for \$7.50 an hour. They also reopened the old Atlanta plant as a non-union operation."

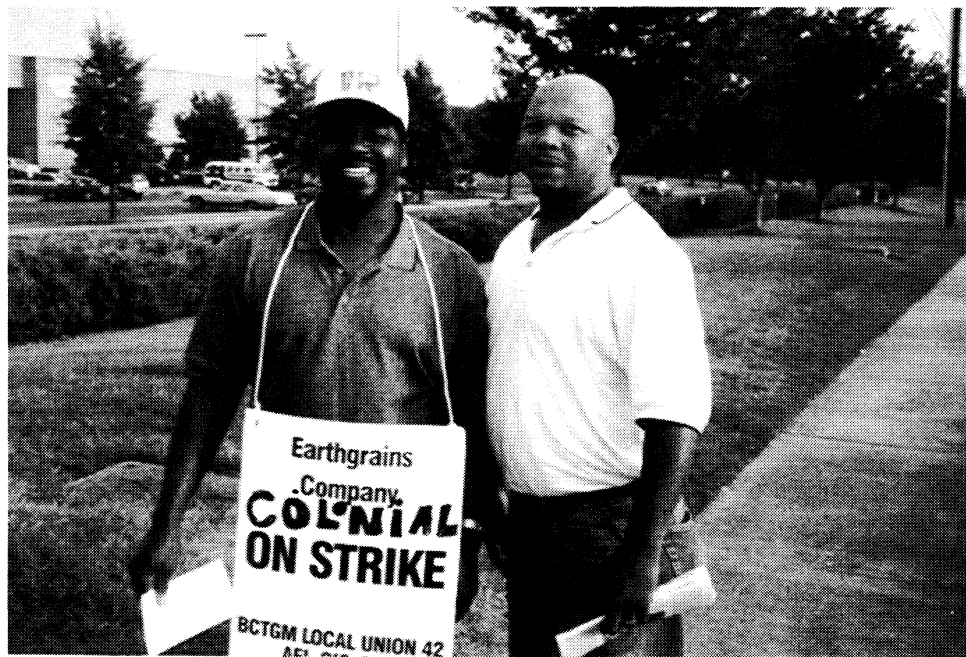
"The union did good for us in the present situation. It seems like I've noticed that more unions are fighting for their rights today."

The ratification of the contract at the Fort Payne, Alabama, plant establishes a "pattern agreement" for the Fourth Region of the BCTGM. Union members in Decatur returned to work September 24 and will negotiate a contract based on the pattern. "We still have work to do when we get back, but at least the heavy lifting is over for now," stated Dock Bullock. An important provision in the new contract is that union members can continue to honor each others' picket lines. "In the back of the company's mind now, there's always going to be a question. If they try to break us, will it snowball again?" he said.

BY BERNIE SENTER  
AND JIM ALTENBERG

OAKLAND, California—Two weeks into a strike against Earthgrains, the country's second largest bakery, the 700 workers at the Fort Payne, Alabama, facility took a chance. They dispatched strikers to picket out 3,000 co-workers at 27 other Earthgrains plants throughout the country.

From Alabama they traveled to California, Colorado, Georgia, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Missouri, Oklahoma, Mississippi, Texas, and Wisconsin. And everywhere they went fellow workers honored their picket line. They shut the company down tight. They also got word that workers at Earthgrains' European plants would join the walkout.



Militant/Dan Fein

Pickets at Earthgrains plant in Decatur, Georgia. Strikers won support nationwide.

Then the company caved in. On September 22, members of the Bakery, Confectionery, Tobacco Workers and Grain Millers International Union voted to accept a new, improved contract, ending the month-long strike.

"They didn't count on all the support we'd get," said Nathaniel Stanton, who traveled to California from Alabama. "I kind of had doubts we might be by ourselves. But we took a chance and it worked."

Charles Garmany, a baker with 24 years at the Fort Payne plant, explained, "I came 2,500 miles from home. I've never been to California before. I didn't expect to see such support. It's amazing. They took my heart. I can't believe the solidarity."

One of the central issues in the strike was forced overtime work. Bakery workers were among the first to win a 35-hour workweek in the 1930s, one baker said. But you'd never know this today. "In reality," one striker from Oakland said, "we often worked 12 hours a day, six days a week." Stanton pointed out they would sometimes work two months without a day off.

Billie Cook, from the Oakland Earthgrains plant, said, "The most important thing is we stuck together. The number one word is solidarity. Without that we have nothing."

At a victory rally of more than 100 workers at the Oakland plant the day of the vote, Alabama workers pointed to the exemplary role played by Salvador Martinez, who showed up to the picket line all day, every day. "And we did it after three hard weeks,"

Martinez said. He certainly wasn't alone.

Six different unions represent workers at the Earthgrains plant in Oakland. On September 16 the Teamsters agreed to a contract. Michael Fouch, president of BCTGM Local 119, explained, "On Monday morning, 75 out of 86 bakers that work here showed up and met the Teamsters at their 4:00 a.m. start time. It turned into a kind of rally. We convinced the 25 to 30 Teamsters not to cross."

Martin Espinoza noted, "We all stuck together and showed true solidarity. This is just round one." Espinoza was referring to the fact that the bakers' contract at the Oakland plant expires in six months.

Judith Goff, from the Central Labor Council of Alameda County, acknowledged other union members who came to the rally, including those from the Teamsters, United Food and Commercial Workers, Service Employees International Union, and Longshoremen's union. "Now we need support at See's Candies," she said, referring to the strike of 800 workers in San Francisco that started September 21.

Charles Garmany from Alabama was beaming with pride. "I have learned more about unions in the last two weeks than in the last 20 years. When we drop the 'I' and 'me' in an issue, and replace it with 'we,' then we've got power."

Deborah Liatos, a member of the United Food and Commercial Workers union, contributed to this article.

## Strike hits Patriot missile manufacturer

BY TED LEONARD

ANDOVER, Massachusetts—With the strike against Raytheon Co. by 2,700 members of International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) Local 1505 at the one-month mark, the entrance to the main plant here looks like a war zone. Each day dozens of strikers walk the picket line as city and private cops watch.

Two army green tents are set up inside the fence surrounding the company property for the private security force while the union has a tent in front of the fence with food, drinks, and shade available to picketers. Around the clock the street in front of the plant has orange barrels and a half a dozen cops in the middle of it directing traffic and ensuring that management personnel get through the picket line. On Interstate 93, which runs past the plant, state highway signs warn motorists to expect delays if they exit onto the highway that passes in front of the plant.

The unionists walked out August 28 after voting by an 88 percent margin to reject the offer by Raytheon, the third-largest military contractor in the United States. This was the first time in 34 years that the workers have picketed the company's 10 Massachusetts plants. Most of the IBEW members work at the plant here, which makes the Patriot missile.

According to Michael Zagami, the union's chief negotiator, there are four main issues in the strike—job security, protecting health benefits, upgrading the pension plan, and eliminating the two-tier wage system.

Cops attack picket line

On September 7 the police attacked the picket line, which had been joined by a contingent of members of the International

Brotherhood of Teamsters.

Roger Aziz Jr., a 20-year employee at Raytheon described what happened. "People were just holding hands and standing strong. The Raytheon company had a bunch of militia come down and beat on a bunch of middle-aged people," he said.

After the cops' first assault on the picket line, they called in riot police in full gear and made arrests. Nine picketers were arrested and face charges that include disorderly conduct, resisting arrest, and assault and battery on a police officer.

"To send a riot squad with full gear is ridiculous. All we're armed with are cardboard signs," asserted Stanley Lichwala, president of IBEW Local 1505, to the *Eagle-Tribune*, a local area newspaper.

More than 300 IBEW members and their supporters rallied September 18 in front of the plant here. Among those speaking was John Sweeney, president of the AFL-CIO.

Five members of Local S6 of the International Association of Machinists, who are on strike against Bath Iron Works in Bath, Maine, participated in the rally and walked the picket line. Also at the rally were workers from the Union of Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Employees, Service Employees International Union, Communication Workers of America, American Postal Workers Union, and the Teamsters.

Behind the podium at the rally hung an IBEW banner and a handmade sign that read, "We need health insurance. My son Jon needs his medicine." A couple days after the strike began Raytheon canceled all the striking workers' medical coverage.

The company wants to end its current health insurance plan that has kept workers' out-of-pocket costs low with a plan that would raise the costs for doctor visits, hospitalization, and prescriptions. The company

offered a one time \$1,500 bonus to cover the additional costs.

A number of workers fear their jobs are going to be transferred to Arizona. Since 1995 the Lexington, Massachusetts-based Raytheon Co.'s workforce has gone from 19,500 to 13,000, which included the elimination of nearly 2,000 union jobs.

In 1995 Raytheon lobbied for and received, with the backing of the union, an exemption from paying state taxes on out-of-state sales if it kept its payroll at the 1995 level. Responding to charges that Raytheon has violated that agreement, the company points out that its in-state payroll has risen since 1995 as it has hired more high paid engineers and other professionals. At the same time, however, it has cut union and white collar jobs.

In 1995 the IBEW agreed to a wage freeze, the introduction of a two-tier wage scale, and a sharp reduction in the number of job classifications in the plant. In the 1998 contract a wage increase was won, but the two tier remained.

Nearly 200 strikers and supporters participated in a rally September 25 entitled "Women on the Line, Sisters in Struggle," held at Raytheon's corporate headquarters in Lexington, Massachusetts. The leaflet building the rally invited women to "join your sisters in support of Local 1505's fight for a fair contract."

At the rally a flyer was distributed for a "Solidarity Rally" September 30 at the Andover plant. It is being sponsored by IBEW Local 1505, the Massachusetts AFL-CIO, and Jobs for Justice.

Ted Leonard is a member of the Union of Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Employees Local 311. Gary Cohen contributed to this article.



# Yale forum discusses Cuba, U.S. embargo

Continued from front page

Coalition on Cuba, American Friends Service Committee, the community group Mothers for Justice, the City of New Haven Peace Commission, and the Amistad Committee, among others.

About a third of those attending the gathering were students. They came from several New England campuses including Yale, University of Connecticut, Wesleyan, Brown, and Salem State. Some were participating to find out for the first time some facts about the Cuban revolution and Washington's policy of aggression against it. Several students, attracted to achievements of the Cuban revolution, such as eradicating institutionalized racism and achieving impressive levels of education and health care in Latin America, said they were preparing papers at school on these subjects. Others were already involved in political activity, including efforts to force changes in U.S. policy aimed at destroying the Cuban revolution. Young socialists from cities around the region participated in the discussion and organizing activity.

Activists who are part of local coalitions or organizations in solidarity with Cuba came from Boston, across Connecticut, New York, and Rhode Island. Also participating were a number of Cuban-Americans, who expressed differing political viewpoints. Some who took part in the discussion, while opposed to the U.S. embargo, were critical of various Cuban government policies and were interested in an exchange of views with others present.

In his presentation Remírez outlined the brutal economic and social impact of the U.S. economic war on Cuba, as well as the steps the revolutionary government has taken to confront and begin recovering from the economic crisis that resulted from the abrupt collapse in the early 1990s of aid and favorable trade relations with the Soviet regime.

He emphasized that Cuba's government is willing to negotiate to achieve an end to the U.S. embargo and normalize relations with Washington. "Our only condition is respect for our freedom, dignity, and independence," he said. The Cuban representative added, "We want to keep our social system, which benefits the majority of our population."

Joan Brown Campbell, former general secretary of the National Council of Churches, also gave a feature presentation.

She spoke about her participation in the events earlier this year surrounding Cuba's eventually successful fight to gain the return of six-year-old Elián González.

Mary-Alice Waters, president of Pathfinder Press, spoke on "The Historical Perspective: The U.S. Cold War on Cuba" (see text of presentation on page 8).

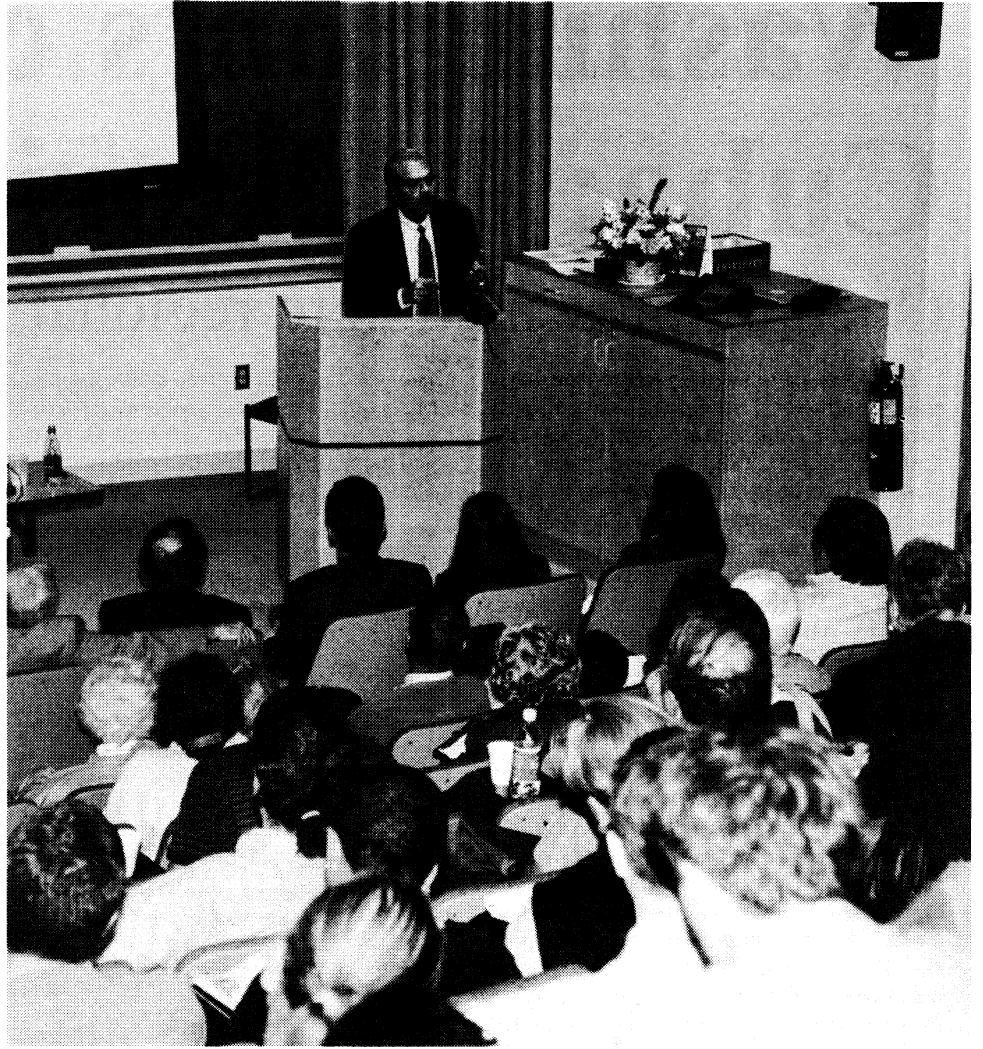
All three presentations were followed by lively discussion periods, marked by the expression of counterposed views, an interest in untangling Washington's decades-long rationalizations for its aggression against Cuba, and a desire to gain some understanding of the Cuban revolution from the Cuban and other speakers present.

Two panel discussions featured presentations or statements by a diverse range of participants. Gabriel Camacho, president of the Massachusetts chapter of the Labor Council for Latin American Advancement (LCLAA), spoke about his visit to Cuba as part of a fact-finding trip sponsored by several LCLAA chapters.

Democratic senator Christopher Dodd of Connecticut sent a statement, excerpts of which were read to the meeting. Dodd argued for amending the U.S. embargo against Cuba to allow sales of food and medicine, and travel by U.S. residents to visit the island. He also called for pressing Cuba to open its people and resources to direct exploitation by U.S. capital again by authorizing U.S. corporations to invest in Cuba if the revolutionary government allows "U.S. companies to hire workers directly and operate the workplace consistent with American practices."

John Olson, president of the Connecticut AFL-CIO Council, was the speaker who expressed the strongest support of U.S. government attempts to overturn the revolutionary regime. He read from the AFL-CIO's official statement favoring an end to the embargo on the sale of food and medical supplies to Cuba. Olson charged the revolutionary government with creating "two classes of workers in Cuba," those who have access to U.S. dollars and those who do not. Like Dodd, he objected to the fact that foreign capitalist corporations investing in businesses on the island cannot hire Cuban workers directly and pay them in dollars.

An afternoon panel included Gisela Arandia, a research associate at the University of Havana, who spoke on "Race, Gender, and Culture in Cuba." Steven Thornton, an organizer for New England Health Care



Militant/Angel Lariscy

**Fernando Remírez, chief of Cuban Interests Section in Washington, addresses regional community forum at Yale University on "Ending the Cold War against Cuba."**

Employees Union Local 1199, described the health-care system created by the revolution. Canadian writer Arnold August, author of *Democracy in Cuba*, described the 1997 elections in Cuba. Aviva Chomsky, a professor at Salem State College in Massachusetts, spoke on "Education Exchanges and Freedom to Travel."

Central to the goals of the sponsors of the event was discussing and planning for future activities to educate and organize opposition to U.S. policies. The Hartford Coalition on Cuba initiated discussion on an action plan during two conference sessions. The World Meeting of Friendship and Solidarity, to be held in Havana November

10-14, and a possible speaking tour next spring of Cuban youth leaders on U.S. campuses both received special attention. The conference offered one of the largest recent gatherings in the region to meet others interested in organizing such activities, and discussions on these and other activities continued during breaks.

Participants browsed through several literature displays, including Pathfinder books and pamphlets, newspapers and handouts of the Communist Party USA, and informational literature of the July 26 Coalition in Boston. Nearly \$400 in Pathfinder literature was sold during the day, as participants came and went, with titles on the Cuban revolution the most popular.

The political discussions at the conference continued well into the evening, as close to 100 participants joined in several cultural events that concluded with a showing of two films, *Strawberry and Chocolate* and *I Am Cuba*. Musical performances included folk singers Charlie King and Karen Brandow, as well as Baba David Coleman, who mixed a performance of Afro-Cuban drumming with an explanation of the roots and contributions of the music from Cuba. A master at audience participation, he culminated his performance by getting nearly the entire audience up clapping, singing, and playing conga drums, cowbells, shakers, gourds, and other percussion instruments. It was a fitting end to the day's events.

## Havana rally condemns U.S. provocation

BY PATRICK O'NEILL

Under the slogan "*Seguimos en Combate* (we are still in combat)" tens of thousands of people rallied in the Cuban capital of Havana September 25 in protest at Washington's latest affront to Cuban sovereignty. Earlier that week U.S. officials had conferred legal immigration status on nine people picked up 50 miles from Cuban shores in the Gulf of Mexico after a failed attempt to fly a stolen aircraft across the Florida Straits.

On September 19 crop-dusting pilot Lenin Iglesias Hernandez seized the government plane used in his work, took his wife, two sons, and six other people on board, then took off from a small airstrip in Pinar del Rio. Cuban authorities say Hernandez radioed the control tower claiming that he was being hijacked. After running low on fuel and losing his way, he ditched the aircraft in the Gulf of Mexico 285 miles from Key West. One person died on impact.

U.S. Coast Guard officials lifted the survivors from the Panamanian-registered ship that had rescued them, and flew them to Florida.

In an interview conducted on September 22 in New York, the president of the Cuban National Assembly of Peoples Power, Ricardo Alarcón, said, "We have nothing against those who were shipwrecked." He called for the return of the pilot, who "stole an aircraft and is responsible for the fatality."

Alarcón referred to claims by Coast Guard officers that the survivors had to be taken to Florida for medical evaluation. "Why did they not take them to a hospital in Mexico or Cuba, which are closer than those in Florida?" he asked.

With their transfer to Florida by U.S. au-

thorities, they were brought under coverage of the Cuban Adjustment Act. Under that law, Cuban citizens who leave Cuba illegally and reach the United States are permitted to apply for residency after one year. Normally Cuban citizens picked up at sea are repatriated to Cuba.

The Immigration and Naturalization Service terms this approach—with revealingly casual brutality—the "wet-foot, dry-foot" policy.

In the wake of the Elián González case, the government and working people of Cuba have stepped up their efforts to expose and

oppose Washington's use of its immigration policy in its cold war against Cuba. In July delegates to the National Assembly issued a proclamation opposing the Cuban Adjustment Act.

This legislation, they stated, was designed from its enactment in 1966 to "encourage Cuban citizens to attempt to emigrate clandestinely and with all the risks of a sea crossing." It constitutes a "permanent violation" of a 1994 agreement to allow a minimum of 20,000 Cuban citizens to migrate legally to the United States each year, the delegates explained.

## Marchers demand: U.S. Navy out of Vieques

Continued from front page

by the year 2003. Another option being considered is for Washington to resume live-fire maneuvers for a longer time period in exchange for \$50 million for "development" on the island.

"A big march and rally is being prepared to take place in Vieques on October 1," said Miriam Sobá, one of the speakers from the Alliance of Women from Vieques, in an interview. "A fleet of motorboats will depart from the main island of Puerto Rico toward Vieques. The action will include civil disobedience with the participation of 1,000 people."

Sobá, a teacher and member of the Teachers Federation, said that her group organizes women who are professionals, students, and housewives to contribute their experiences in the fight for Vieques, not only in Puerto Rico but by traveling to other countries as well. Members of the organization have been invited to Japan, she said. In her speech to the rally, Sobá said that the U.S. Navy

personnel stationed on the island are showing the same negative attitudes they did in the 1970s toward women.

The Washington action was one of several that will lead up to the October 1 demonstration. Others are scheduled for Philadelphia, New York, and in various cities in Puerto Rico.

Carlos Zenón, a leader of the Association of Fishermen in Vieques, also reported in an interview on the preparations for the October 1 action in Vieques. "Today we feel more committed to continue the fight for Vieques. This demonstration has been the biggest of its kind in Washington," he said. "Puerto Rico is not for sale," Zenón told the crowd.

Other speakers included city council Member José Rivera from New York, congressman Luis Gutiérrez from Illinois, and Mun Jung Kyun, a Catholic priest from the Coalition Against Bombing and Shooting in Korea. Kyun demanded: "Stop the bombing and shooting in Puerto Rico and South Korea! U.S. troops out of Puerto Rico and

Korea!"

Around 78 participants were arrested after engaging in a civil disobedience protest at the White House, organized to dramatize the demand for the U.S. Navy to leave Vieques. They were charged with a federal misdemeanor, which carries a fine of \$50, and were escorted to a bus in plastic handcuffs.

David Díaz, the president of CHIMEXLA, a youth group at Northeastern Illinois University in Chicago, also marched holding a huge Mexican flag. "This is an injustice," he said. "The U.S. Navy is stealing everything from the Puerto Rican people." Díaz's organization is also involved in actions demanding amnesty for immigrants. The youth leader said that his group works with the Union for Puerto Rican Students at Northeastern, which is how he became involved in the fight around Vieques.

Betsey Stone in Chicago contributed to this article.

# Washington's cold war against Cuba: a historical perspective

## Opening presentation to regional community forum at Yale University

Below is the opening presentation to the September 23 regional community forum on "Ending the Cold War with Cuba," held at Yale University in New Haven, Connecticut. A news article on the conference appears elsewhere in this issue. The topic of the opening session was, "The Historical Perspective: The U.S. Cold War on Cuba."

Mary-Alice Waters is president of Pathfinder Press and editor of the magazine *New Internationalist*. She has edited and written introductions to numerous books on the Cuban revolution, including *Che Guevara Talks to Young People*; *In Defense of Socialism* by Fidel Castro; *To Speak the Truth: Why Washington's 'Cold War' against Cuba Doesn't End* by Castro and Guevara; and *Making History: Interviews with Four Generals of Cuba's Revolutionary Armed Forces*. Waters is also a contributor to *The Changing Face of U.S. Politics: Working-Class Politics and the Trade Unions*, and the author of the introduction to *Capitalism's World Disorder: Working-Class Politics at the Millennium*.

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BY MARY-ALICE WATERS

Speaking in New York City's Riverside Church two weeks ago to a meeting of more than 2,500 opponents of Washington's policy towards Cuba, Cuban President Fidel Castro remarked that he did not share the "pretended optimism" about the future presented by many "experts" who simply close their eyes to the reality of what is happening in the world today.

"Humanity is beginning the 21st century in extremely harsh and disquieting conditions," he noted.

He went on to detail the economic and social devastation facing the vast majority of the world's population and the widening divide between them and the tiny handful of families at the top of the capitalist heap.

As if the point needed to be emphasized, this week *Forbes* magazine published its list of the 400 wealthiest men and women in the United States. The top two alone, Microsoft's Bill Gates and Oracle's Larry Ellison, were reported to hold combined assets valued at \$121 billion. That's more

than the combined gross domestic product of 31 countries in sub-Saharan Africa, with a total population of 380 million people.

The reality of this truly devastating divide—a gap that can only continue to in-

Cuban working people to stand down Washington year after year for more than four decades.

How has this been possible? That is the single biggest question before us this morn-

them we constitute the great fraud of the century; we stated the truth in an attempt to deceive."

The small handful of incorruptible revolutionaries hadn't set out to change the



Left, Associated Press; right, Granma

Right, militia members mobilize during the 1962 October missile crisis. "What stayed President Kennedy's hand and forced him to abandon invasion plans was the preparedness of the Cuban people and their determination to defend their revolution at all costs." Top Pentagon officials told Kennedy U.S. forces would suffer 18,000 casualties in first 10 days of an invasion. After their invasion plans were stymied, U.S. rulers launched cold war against Cuba, bringing sustained use of economic, diplomatic, and political weapons to bear for decades to try to weaken and corrupt the proletarian foundations of the revolution. Organization and combativity of working people in Cuba still stay Washington's hand today. Above, tens of thousands mobilize in Havana September 25, 2000, to condemn Washington's refusal this month to abide by international conventions and return pilot who hijacked plane to Cuba. Rally was organized in plaza, built for such demonstrations earlier this year, outside U.S. Interests Section building (at center rear of picture).

crease so long as capitalism dominates the planet—is the only place to begin if we want to place the U.S. government's cold war against Cuba in historical perspective. We have to begin with the sweep of the epoch in which we are living, the epoch of imperialist war and socialist revolution that began at the opening of the 20th century.

We have to be able to live not moment-to-moment, but to see and live the present as history. And we must find the courage and imagination to affect that history.

Cuba's socialist revolution, and the more than 40 years of ceaseless bipartisan efforts by the U.S. government to destroy it, is not a story of the past, however rich it may be in historical lessons.

It is about the present and the future, about the unfolding, sharpening social struggles that Fidel Castro pointed to, and about the example of Cuba's revolution, its communist leadership, and the ability of

ing as we place the Cuban revolution in historical perspective. How and why are the people of Cuba able to do this—to counter assault after assault, provocation after provocation—and not only survive but emerge victorious, despite seemingly insurmountable odds.

### A popular revolutionary government

On January 1, 1959, as the new year dawned, one of the bloodiest tyrannies yet seen in Latin America crumbled under the combined blows of the advancing Rebel Army commanded by Fidel Castro from the heights of the eastern Sierra Maestra mountains, and a spreading popular insurrection in the cities and countryside. Batista, the hated dictator, fled.

The men and women of Cuba in their millions had ceased being simply the objects of history; they became its makers as well. They were ordinary working people—factory hands and agricultural workers, small farmers and landless peasants, students and shopkeepers. Most were young, still in their teens and twenties.

To Washington and the wealthy of Cuba these were men and women from nowhere. Nobodies. Bearded rabble. A mob. Easily to be disposed of, bypassed, or if necessary bought off, as the propertied rulers had successfully done so many times in the past when the interests and prerogatives of capital were threatened in Cuba and throughout the Americas.

As the Argentine-born Cuban revolutionary leader Ernesto Che Guevara wrote a few years later, however, "It never entered their heads that what Fidel Castro and our Movement were saying so candidly and sharply was what we actually intended to do. For

world. They wanted "merely" to bring down the hated dictatorship backed by the military might of Washington and introduce a larger element of social justice in Cuba. But in that process they transformed themselves. As they fought together with the rural poor to transform the intolerable conditions of life that surrounded them, these fighters themselves became different human beings.

They changed the course of history in our hemisphere, opening the door to the first socialist revolution in the Americas. The first free territory of the Americas, as they so accurately and proudly proclaimed.

Their initial measures were modest: to implement a thoroughgoing land reform, as mandated by the 1940 constitution of Cuba but never carried out; to reduce the rates charged for electricity and telephone service; to establish rent controls; to outlaw racial discrimination in hiring; to desegregate the beaches and other public facilities; to establish and expand a system of public education.

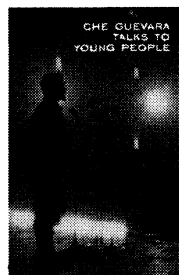
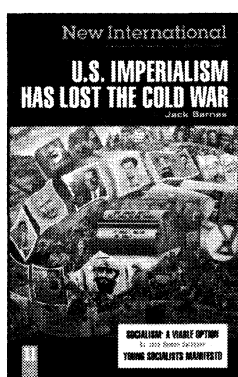
But carrying out even such limited democratic and immediate economic measures brought down the fury of Washington and the propertied interests it represents.

Well over a quarter of the best agricultural land in Cuba was owned by Americans or American-owned corporations, who controlled 40 percent of all sugar production. Seven hundred thousand peasants and other rural toilers were landless—700,000! Ninety percent of the island's mineral wealth was U.S.-controlled, as were 80 percent of the public utilities. One hundred percent of all oil reserves were U.S.- and British-owned. What happened? Fidel Castro, then Cuban prime minister de-

FROM *Pathfinder*

### U.S. Imperialism Has Lost the Cold War

That's what the Socialist Workers Party concluded a decade ago, in the wake of the collapse of regimes and parties across East Europe and the USSR that claimed to be communist. Contrary to imperialism's hopes, the transmission belt of their pressure into the working class in those countries had snapped, but the working class itself had not been crushed. These toilers remain an intractable obstacle to imposing and stabilizing capitalist relations, one the exploiters will have to confront in direct conflict. In *New Internationalist* no. 11. \$14.00



### Che Guevara Talks to Young People

"If this revolution is Marxist, it is because it discovered by its own methods, the road pointed out by Marx." Che Guevara, 1960.

Eight speeches from 1960 to 1964 by the legendary Argentine-born leader of the Cuban revolution. \$14.95

Available from bookstores, including those listed on page 12.



scribed it eloquently to the United Nations General Assembly in September 1960. The conflicts with Washington began in the first months of the revolution, he explained: "Notes from the U.S. State Department began to rain down on Cuba." Castro continued:

They never asked us about our problems.... They never asked us how many died of starvation in our country, how many were suffering from tuberculosis, how many were unemployed. No.... Every conversation we had with the representatives of the U.S. government centered around the telephone company, the electricity company, the problem of the land owned by U.S. companies. The question they asked was how we were going to pay.... They demanded three things: "prompt, adequate, and effective compensation." Do you understand that language?... That means "Pay this instant, in dollars, and whatever we ask." [Applause] We were not 150 percent communists at that time, [Laughter] we just appeared slightly pink. We were not confiscating land. We simply proposed to pay for it in 20 years, and in the only way we could—by bonds that would mature in 20 years, at 4.5 percent interest amortized annually.

Castro noted that the U.S. government had warned the Cuban people that the agrarian reform was ruining the country. "It is possible [Washington] imagined that without the all-powerful monopolies we Cubans were incapable of producing sugar," he said.

But clearly "if the revolution had ruined the country, the United States would have had no need to attack us," he pointed out. "They would have left us alone and the U.S. government would have appeared as a very noble and honorable government while we ruined the nation, proving that you cannot make a revolution because revolutions ruin countries."

History, and the policies pursued by the U.S. government, proved the opposite, however.

---"Cuba had not been ruined and it therefore had to be ruined," Castro explained.

That was the origin of the course that Washington has pursued for more than 40 years.

#### From hot war to 'cold war'

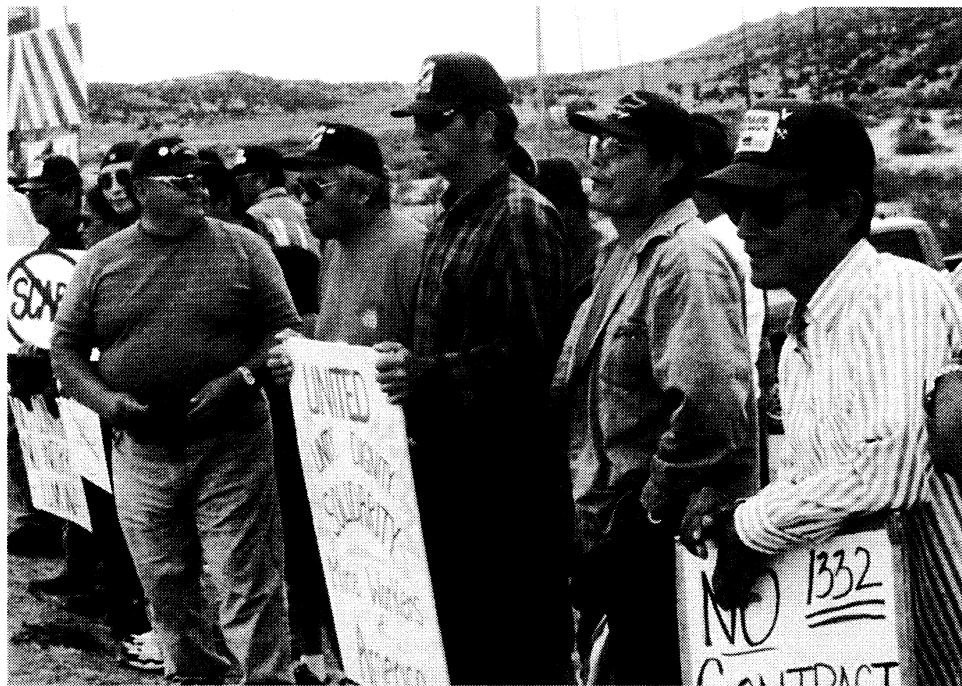
Washington's bipartisan war against the people of Cuba, to punish them for their audacity at refusing to back down before Yankee ultimatums and interests, did not begin as a cold war. It began as a hot war. Very hot.

Starting within months of the revolutionary victory in 1959, sugar mills were bombed by planes based in Florida. Cane fields were set on fire. The Belgian ship La Coubre in Havana's harbor, carrying small arms purchased by the Cuban people, "mysteriously" blew up, killing more than 80 people. Terrorist bands were infiltrated into the cities and countryside. Factories were sabotaged. Volunteer student teachers in the mountains were murdered. Leaders were targeted with multiple assassination attempts.

In April 1961, at the Bay of Pigs, an invading force of some 1,500 U.S.-organized and -financed Cuban counterrevolutionary mercenaries were crushed in 72 hours by the combined operations of the popular militias and fledgling Revolutionary Armed Forces. The army was so new that its revolutionary motto was, "What you learn in the morning, you teach in the afternoon."

The humiliating defeat of the U.S.-backed forces at what Cubans call the battle of Playa Girón led the Kennedy administration to set in motion military and intelligence operations preparing for a direct invasion by U.S. forces. That plan was well advanced by October 1962 when the Soviet missiles that Cuba had agreed to station on the island to defend against the coming invasion were detected, and Washington took the world to the brink of nuclear war.

What stayed Kennedy's hand and forced him to abandon invasion plans at that moment, a military action that would almost certainly have ended in the use of nuclear weapons, was not cool heads in Washington and Moscow, as many pretend. It was the preparedness of the Cuban people and



United Mine Workers members picket P&M McKinley mine in New Mexico in June. "In the ranks of millions who are not suffering victims but become fighters, who say 'Enough!' and begin to march, are those in the U.S. who are part of the growing resistance in the mines, the packing houses, garment shops, mills, and factories and fields."

their determination to defend their revolution at all costs. Kennedy, with his politician's instincts, knew that the U.S. people were unwilling to accept the stunning level of casualties the Pentagon gauged would result from any attempted invasion of Cuba.

There would be 18,000 casualties in the first 10 days alone, the Pentagon assured Kennedy—to his great surprise. The first 10 days alone! That was more than U.S. forces were to face during the first several years of the Vietnam war, still to come.

It was the selfless courage of the Cuban people and their armed forces that saved the world from nuclear annihilation.

The origins of the U.S. cold war against Cuba are rooted in that history. They are rooted in Washington's fiasco at the hands of Cuba's armed people at the Bay of Pigs and in Kennedy's cold-blooded political calculations—the result of Cuba's preparedness—that led to the settlement of the October crisis, negotiated between Moscow and Washington behind the backs of the Cuban leadership.

The cost to the American rulers of an invasion was rejected by them as too great. From that point on, Washington set out to try to overturn the Cuban revolution through economic, diplomatic, and political warfare. The violent acts of cowards—terrorist operations, assassination schemes, and biological agents—were used as opportunity presented itself. They were baked in the bread.

The origins are important. Very important. Because Washington's cold war against Cuba is not and never was an extension of the cold war against the USSR.

The cold war we're discussing here today has always been about the strength of the revolution in Cuba, not Moscow or anyplace else. It is about the strength and steadfastness of Cuban working people, the caliber of the Cuban revolutionary leadership, its revolutionary and incorruptible character, its openly-proclaimed internationalist and proletarian course. Nothing else.

Even U.S. Senator Jesse Helms—sponsor of the most recent brutal bill signed into law in 1996 by President Clinton to punish the audacity of the people of Cuba—paid a backhanded tribute to the revolution three months ago, in an opinion piece published by the *New York Times*. Responding to those who argued that if "trade will promote democratic change in China, then why not adopt the same policy for Cuba?" Helms' answer was simply, "Cuba is not China."

Using the only economic yardstick that matters to the imperialist masters, Helms complained that "foreign investors in Cuba cannot do business with private citizens.... Foreign investors cannot hire or pay workers directly."

In short, unlike China, Cuba will not open its people, land, and resources to exploitation by capital. Even more importantly, it will not make foreign policy decisions calculated to win favorable diplomatic or economic consideration from Washington, the European Union, or any other power, if doing so entails harm to the sovereignty or defense of the people of

Cuba or any other peoples or oppressed nations.

Yet such are the minimum "concessions" demanded by Washington for changing its policies of 40-plus years standing—policies needed by the U.S. rulers to try to blacken the image of Cuba's revolutionary example and warn the peoples of Latin America, especially, of what will happen if they emulate that example.

In short, Cuba's socialist revolution has not and will not be negotiated away.

#### U.S. imperialism has lost the cold war

It is worth reminding ourselves that Washington's cold war against the Soviet Union was not the U.S. rulers' policy of choice there either. It was adopted only because World War II ended with the workers and peasants of the Soviet Union still undefeated, despite the 20 million dead and physical destruction inflicted by German imperialism.

What prevented the U.S. government from using its military might then was the immediate postwar labor upsurge in Europe and the United States, together with the mass demonstrations and "going-home" movement among U.S. GIs in the Pacific and Europe, and the accelerating demands

for civil rights for Black Americans. Washington was unable to move against the socialist foundations and working people of a weakened Soviet Union, or to block the victory of the Chinese revolution, or to slow the sweeping advances of the colonial revolution from Indonesia, to Vietnam, to India, and eventually to Africa.

That is how the U.S. rulers "lost China." And it marked the beginning of the cold war.

U.S. imperialism had to try to accomplish by other means—"cold" means—what Washington and its allies were too weak to accomplish militarily at the end of World War II and immediately following it.

The brutal bureaucratic regime that had dominated all Soviet life and politics since the late 1920s, and that crumbled of its own internal contradictions some 60 years later, was—despite the labels it appropriated—not socialist but the negation of socialism.

The U.S. rulers set out to intensify economic, military, diplomatic, and political pressure on this regime to act as a transmission belt for imperialist interests against the workers and farmers of the USSR and the world, to prevent them from acting in defense of their own class interests. The U.S. rulers' hope was that this counterrevolutionary course would so demoralize the Soviet toilers as to deliver the country back into the world capitalist system without having to try to defeat the working class there in battle.

The policy failed. The U.S. lost the cold war. What broke was the transmission belt, not the toilers. Their resistance to capitalist forms of exploitation and its social relations remains a powerful impediment to integration into the capitalist world. The imperialist powers will now have to take on the workers and farmers throughout Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union directly—and sooner or later militarily—in order to impose a capitalist order on them.

That is what the spreading war in the Balkans, NATO's assault on Yugoslavia, is all about, no matter how masked it may seem today. That is what Washington's determination to establish the Star Wars missile shield is about. The wars of the 21st century have begun.

#### Not a tropical variant of Stalinism

The cold war against Cuba is a different matter.

When the Soviet bureaucracy and its siblings imploded at the opening of the 1990s,

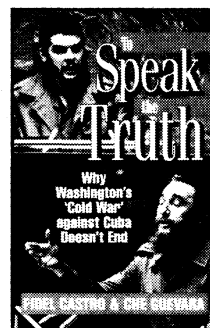
Continued on page 10

#### To Speak the Truth

Why Washington's 'Cold War' against Cuba Doesn't End

Fidel Castro and Che Guevara

"The revolutionary government clashed with the interests of the electricity trust, the telephone trust, the mining trusts, the United Fruit Company, in short, with the most powerful interests of the United States," Fidel Castro explained in 1960. "So the Cuban revolution had to be punished." In historic speeches before the United Nations and UN bodies, Castro and Guevara explain to the workers of the world why the U.S. government hates the example set by the socialist revolution in Cuba, and why Washington's efforts to destroy it will fail. \$16.95.

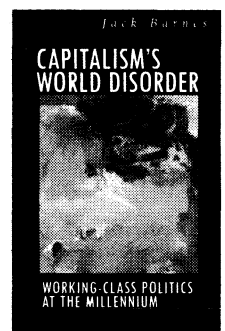


#### Capitalism's World Disorder

Working-Class Politics at the Millennium

Jack Barnes

The social devastation and financial panics, the coarsening of politics and politics of resentment, the cop brutality and acts of imperialist aggression accelerating around us—all are the product of lawful forces unleashed by capitalism. But the future the proletariat classes have in store for us can be changed by the united struggle and selfless action of workers and farmers conscious of their power to transform the world. \$23.95



#### Episodes of the Cuban Revolutionary War, 1956-58

Ernesto Che Guevara

"It never entered their heads that what Fidel Castro and our Movement were saying so candidly and sharply was what we actually intended to do."

— Che Guevara, 1960

A firsthand account of the military campaigns and political events that culminated in the January 1959 popular insurrection that overthrew the U.S.-backed dictatorship in Cuba and opened the socialist revolution in the Americas. \$23.95

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Continued from Page 9

and Cuba's primary world trade connections were suddenly shattered, the U.S. government hoped the revolution would be easy pickings. A few in Washington genuinely believed that the sudden, brutal decline in living standards in Cuba would lead to popular discontent and a collapse of support among Cuban working people for their revolutionary government. Many thought the Cuban government and its leadership were at bottom another transmission belt with a Spanish accent. But they missed the beat.

The U.S. rulers failed to understand, as they have from the beginning, that the leadership of the Cuban revolution is not some tropical variant of a Stalinist type, but its antithesis—a truly popular, internationalist, and communist worker and peasant leadership. Far from collapsing, the revolution has emerged stronger today, more self-confident, despite the enormous problems Cubans face and concessions they have been obliged to make to survive, as well as the dangers these concessions entail.

The question most frequently posed in meetings and discussions about Cuba that I have been involved in is simply: How has the Cuban revolution survived more than 40 years of relentless determination by the world's most powerful empire to destroy it? And especially, how has it managed to come through the last 10 years?



**Striking miner in Romania with teargas grenade launcher seized as workers defended themselves against cop attacks on march to Bucharest in January 1998. Having "lost transmission belt of Stalinist regimes, the imperialists have to take on the workers and farmers throughout Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union directly in order to impose capitalism."**

Suddenly, at the beginning of the 1990s, Cuba was deprived of 75 percent of its foreign trade. The economic dislocation was then compounded by an intensification of the U.S. economic war. Over night, an underdeveloped country was brutally thrust into the world market with all the devastating consequences that entailed.

As the Cuban leadership has pointed out on more than one occasion, no other government anywhere in world could have survived such a test of popular support.

Is this an exaggeration by the leaders of the revolution? I don't think so. It is not bragging. It is a statement of fact.

It registers the depth of popular support among the Cuban people for their socialist revolution. For the transformation of social relations they've achieved, as social solidarity replaces the dog-eat-dog reality of life under capitalism. For their commitment to international solidarity from Latin America to Africa to the people of the United States.

#### Irreconcilable class systems

Several months ago a group of working farmers from the United States visited Cuba. They were curious to see with their own eyes a country where men and women like themselves sit in the highest councils of government, a country where no working farmer can lose his or her land to a bank or debt collector. They wanted to find out how such a society had been established and why the U.S. government is so hostile to it.

When they returned, one of the participants in that trip, a dairy farmer from Wisconsin, described an experience that made an enormous impact on him.

Among the many farms the American

visitors went to was an urban cooperative that raises fresh vegetables to supply the needs of Havana's residents. These cooperatives, some of them quite large, have sprung up on plots of unused land all over the city in the last years, making a qualitative difference in the availability of fresh vegetables there. The members of the cooperative who work the land share in the produce and the proceeds from sales. At this one, income was greater than expenses and everyone was quite proud of and happy with their work.

The farmer from the United States knew from his own experience what happens to profitable cooperatives under capitalism, as wealthier farmers buy out their struggling brothers and sisters and the whole operation is progressively taken over by bigger and bigger monopolies, remaining a cooperative in name only. He asked the woman who was the head of the cooperative in Havana, "How do you stop someone from just moving in and taking this over?"

The director, he said, just looked at him in utter bewilderment and responded, "But why would anyone want to do that?"

Nothing could better capture the difference in social attitudes between two antithetical class systems. In that exchange you see crystallized the change in social relations that takes root when private property in the means of production is eliminated, along with the cash nexus of all human interaction under capitalism.

#### Deep historical roots

To understand the staying power of the Cuba revolution today, you also have to appreciate the reach of its roots. The struggle that culminated in the victory of January 1, 1959, and the trajectory it accelerated, is the product of a long historical struggle, whose continuity has occasionally been frayed but never broken.

Last year, when hundreds of thousands of Cubans poured into the streets, week after week, demanding the U.S. government return Elián González to his homeland, those mobilizations were the expression of a deep popular sentiment and determination. They were organized and led. That's what Cubans expect of their leadership. But the outpourings were not staged. Anyone who was in Cuba during those months can attest to that fact.

Next Monday, there will be another mobilization in Havana, demanding the U.S. government surrender the pilot who hijacked a crop-dusting plane a few days ago. They will denounce the infamous 1966 Cuban Adjustment Act that has enticed hundreds, and probably thousands, of Cubans to their deaths these last 35 years, including the one who died when that small aircraft ditched in the Gulf of Mexico.

At every opportunity, the revolution strives for the moral high ground, refusing to acquiesce, banishing resignation.

Wave after wave of massive resistance for more than 40 years is incomprehensible if you don't trace the roots of struggle back to the last century. You have to see the 400 years of Spanish colonial domination. The intertwining of the struggle to abolish slavery and the plantation system with the struggle to win independence from the Spanish crown. A war for independence that took decades to triumph and cost the lives of one third of the Cuban population. A struggle that culminated in victory in 1898—only to have that achievement snatched away as the adolescent imperialist power to the north moved in to claim the spoils of the Spanish-American-Cuban War, establishing a Yankee protectorate in Havana.

Imposing a U.S. military occupation of the island.

Forcing the new "Cuban" government in 1901 to incorporate into its constitution the infamous Platt Amendment ceding Washington the right to militarily intervene in Cuban affairs when it deemed it necessary to do so "for the preservation of Cuban independence," that is, the preservation of U.S. interests—a clause eliminated from the constitution only some 30 years later, in the wake of the 1933-34 revolutionary upsurge.

Exacting tribute in the form of a per-



Militant/Hilda Cuzco

**"There is nothing in the existing economic order that can serve the interests of humanity," said Cuban President Fidel Castro, condemning world capitalism at United Nations in September. Above, May Day march in Quito, Ecuador, where working people have staged massive protests against capitalist austerity and capitulation to imperialist pressure.**

petual lease granted Washington for the Guantánamo Bay Naval Station.

Providing support for decades of rampant corruption, crime, degradation of women and children, and brutal dictatorships.

All the while, buying up the land, minerals, railroads, and factories of Cuba as a Yankee fiefdom, and turning the country into a degrading, gangster-ridden playpen for the rich and arrogant of North America.

This century of struggle, under the leadership of political and moral giants the likes of José Martí, Antonio Maceo, Máximo Gómez, and Manuel de Céspedes, is what formed and nourished the leaders of the struggle to overthrow the Batista dictatorship. The determination of the combatants in the mountains of the Sierra Maestra to fight for genuine independence from Washington, their knowledge of the stakes and difficulties involved, and their understanding of the consequences of surrender was steeped in the bloody lessons of this entire history.

As Ernesto Che Guevara told the first Latin American Youth Congress in July 1960 in Havana, "If this revolution is Marxist, it is because it discovered, by its own methods, the road pointed out by Marx."

#### Why the cold war has failed

Washington's cold war against Cuba continues because, as Fidel put it in a recent interview with Federico Mayor Zaragoza, the former director general of UNESCO, "Cuba will neither negotiate nor sell out its revolution, which has cost the blood and the sacrifice of many of its sons and daughters."

The cold war against Cuba is a policy that has failed in its ultimate goals. Utterly. And that is what leads many today to question why Washington does not abandon it. But it remains the bedrock of U.S. policy because Washington has nothing more effective, no more "intelligent" policy from the standpoint of finance capital, to put in its place.

The problem for the bipartisan rulers re-

mains that the Cuban people refuse to cry uncle, refuse to surrender. The leadership remains as one with the Cuban toilers, the transformers of nature into the wealth and culture that underpin a truly human future. The revolutionary government has refused to trade Cuban sovereignty and human dignity for a mess of pottage. The problem is not the "intelligence" or lack thereof exhibited by the U.S. rulers. Their problem is the Cuban revolution's irreconcilable antagonism to the needs and prerogatives of capital. Cuba's problem—and ours—is U.S. capitalism.

As Fidel Castro explained at the United Nations two weeks ago, the Cuban people in their majority really don't think capitalism has anything to offer the future of humanity. "There is nothing in the existing economic and political order that can serve the interests of Humankind," he told the assembled heads of state. Nothing.

That is why the Cuban revolution remains an example to the oppressed and exploited the world over, including right here, showing that yes, it is possible to stand against the mightiest power on earth and win.

Sí se puede.

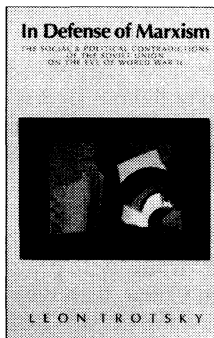
#### The world of the 21st century

To end, we have to return to the world Fidel Castro described at the United Nations and at Riverside Church during his recent trip, which many of you here today saw, heard, or read about. That is the world of growing capitalist disorder, of intensified interimperialist competition and conflict, of third world devastation.

The conditions Castro described, however, are giving birth not only to millions of suffering victims—truly the slaughter of the innocents—but to millions who become fighters and who more and more loudly say "Enough!" and have begun to march.

In their ranks are those here in the United States who are part of the growing resistance in the mines, the packinghouses,

Continued on Page 12



#### In Defense of Marxism The Social and Political Contradictions of the Soviet Union

Leon Trotsky

Writing in 1939-40, Trotsky replies to those in the revolutionary workers movement who were beating a retreat from defense of the Soviet Union in face of looming imperialist assault. "We must not lose sight for a single moment of the fact that the question of overthrowing the Soviet bureaucracy is for us subordinate to the question of preserving state property in the means of production in the USSR, he writes, and "that the question of preserving state property

in the means of production in the USSR is subordinate for us to the question of the world proletarian revolution." \$24.95

#### The Struggle for a Proletarian Party

James P. Cannon

In this companion to Trotsky's *In Defense of Marxism*, Cannon and other leaders of the Socialist Workers Party explain why only a party that fights to bring growing numbers of workers into its ranks and leadership can steer a steady communist course on the eve of World War II. \$21.95

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# Socialist meat packers discuss participation in growing struggles of workers and farmers

BY ANNE PARKER  
AND JOHN STIVERS

MINNEAPOLIS—“We are integrating ourselves into and working with a growing vanguard of workers who are attempting to withstand the employers’ attacks in meatpacking and processing plants across North America,” said John Benson, reporting to a meeting of socialist meat packers held here September 16–17.

“Over the last few months we have been part of a United Food and Commercial Workers union (UFCW) organizing drive and a contract fight at Dakota Premium Foods in South St. Paul, Minnesota; a union organizing effort at a processing plant in Boston; a fight to defend the union against an employer lockout of workers at Fletcher’s Fine Foods in Vancouver, British Columbia; and many other skirmishes. These are all part of the mounting battles between the employers and workers in this industry,” added Benson, a slaughterhouse worker and UFCW member from Fresno, California.

“The conditions of intense line speed, increasing on-the-job injuries, lack of training, and daily harassment by the bosses that affronts our dignity is what is fueling the resistance in meatpacking plants on both sides of the U.S.-Canada border, whether in Toronto, Vancouver, the Canadian prairies, New York, Boston, Miami, Omaha, or Des Moines,” Benson said.

The meeting of socialist meat packers here was attended by 54 participants who were either members of the Socialist Workers Party in the United States, the Communist League in Canada, or the Young Socialists from both countries. Ten YS members working in packing plants and who are deeply involved in these struggles participated in the meeting.

Norton Sandler, organizer of the SWP’s Trade Union Committee, welcomed all the participants and pointed out the meat packers’ meeting followed by a few weeks meetings of socialist workers in the International Association of Machinists, the United Steelworkers of America, and the United Transportation Union.

These gatherings took a close look at their particular industries and reaffirmed the

party’s course of having its members work at the center of production, with two or more of them employed in the same workplace, and in the same union and with common co-workers. These meetings helped lay the foundation for this gathering of North American socialist packinghouse workers. (See August 28 and September 11 issues of the *Militant*.)

Benson explained that the bosses’ attacks and the resulting resistance has created a situation where the kind of explosions and leadership development that has taken place at Dakota Premium Foods can be expected to occur elsewhere. He noted the special place in these fights of immigrant workers, who are drawing on their class-struggle experience to begin to forge, along with other workers, a new fighting vanguard in packinghouses across North America.

On June 1, workers in that South St. Paul plant, the majority of whom are immigrants from Mexico, organized a seven-hour sit-down strike to protest the increase in production line speed, mounting injuries, and the company’s policy of forcing injured workers to return to the line. On July 21, the workers voted by a 112-71 margin to be represented by UFCW Local 789. The company is challenging the results of the election and a ruling on that challenge from the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) is expected soon.

Benson also cited other recent examples of the ways packinghouse workers are resisting the meatpacking bosses.

At a plant in Marshalltown, Iowa, six workers on the kill floor walked off the job and forced the company to add two more workers to their crew, after the bosses initially refused to maintain the previous workforce of eight workers on that particular job.

In a Chicago plant, workers forced the company to back off from its demand that they work the Saturday following Labor Day with no overtime pay. In Toronto, 85 workers at Quality Meats, members of UFCW Local 175/633, signed a solidarity message to the workers fighting to unionize at Dakota Premium Foods.

## Unionization struggle in New York

In the discussion, Don Miller described the struggle at the Hunts Point meatpacking industrial park on city-owned property in the Bronx in New York City. There, UFCW and Teamsters union organizers are fighting attempts by the bosses and New York mayor Rudolph Giuliani to use the courts and the cops to prevent union organizers from going onto the property to sign up unorganized workers. Workers at the Nebraska Land packing plant located at Hunts Point recently lost a union representation vote for the Teamsters by a narrow margin. On the day of the vote there was a big cop presence designed to intimidate workers near where the ballots were cast. At the plant where he works, Miller said, more than a dozen workers have been involved in efforts to organize a union.

Mike Bowen, who works at a Massachusetts meat processing plant, reported that as a new hire he ran into an effort by co-workers to sign up workers for the UFCW. “There have been previous efforts to organize the plant,” he said. “They all failed. But the conditions are forcing workers to try again. Basic issues like the need for washroom breaks, lack of vacation pay, different and arbitrary pay rates, and injuries are behind this.”

Beverly Brown, a member of UFCW Local 1518 in Vancouver, one of 400 workers locked out by Fletcher’s Fine Foods, described the solidarity growing up between the Fletcher’s workers and 225 strikers at Superior Poultry in nearby Coquitlam who are members of the same UFCW local. “They are threatening to close down Fletcher’s if we don’t take a 40 percent wage cut and other concessions,” Brown explained. “The Superior Poultry workers, who are mostly immigrants, are fighting for their first contract. Some 25 workers from the Fletcher’s picket line have gone down to the Superior Poultry line to give their support.”

Karen Reeves reported that just last week a young worker at the Farmland processing



Militant/Paul Kouri

**UFCW members on picket line at Superior Poultry, defending strike that began in July in dispute over wages and working conditions.**

plant in Albert Lea, Minnesota, was killed when he fell into a tumbler. “The government investigators concluded it was ‘human error,’” she said, “but it comes from the speedup and drive for profits.”

Sam Small from Washington, D.C., reported on the continuing struggle for unionization at the Smithfield Foods plant in Tar Heel, North Carolina. With some 4,500 workers, this plant is the biggest hog cut and kill operation in North America. UFCW organizing drives have been unsuccessful there thus far and union organizers have been subject to widespread harassment and even physical attacks. In August, the UFCW filed a federal lawsuit charging Smithfield and the Bladen County Sheriff’s Department with civil rights violations for beatings that union organizers were subjected to by company thugs deputized by the county Sheriff’s department.

## Job safety is key union question

Many meeting participants described the necessity for the union to fight for adequate training and safety on the job. Vancouver meat packer and Young Socialist Vince Johnson reported that recent new hires like himself were put on jobs that require the use of boning knives without receiving steel mesh gloves or other protective equipment. “I cut myself on the first day,” he reported. “Nobody in my department has adequate safety equipment,” he said. “These fights to increase safety on the job and training will help strengthen the union.”

Benson pointed out that “your safety on the job is ultimately not just how you hold the knife, as important as that is, but also how the workers stand up to the boss, and organize to defend themselves through the union.”

Jim Williams, a UFCW member at the American Meat Packing Company in Chicago, explained that one result of the weakening of the union through the defeat of a 56-week strike in 1985–86 was the pressure on workers not to use the full three weeks they are allotted with a knife trainer. “Workers should fight to use the full three weeks,” he said. “The union won this and we shouldn’t give it up.”

## Build UFCW Local 789

Pablo Lomeli, a worker at Dakota Premium Foods, described how new workers like himself are recruited to the union by other fighters. “On my second day I asked a worker who was injured pushing cattle, ‘How did you get hurt?’ He explained to me that it wasn’t only him, but others had also gotten hurt,” Lomeli said, “and that was why the workers were trying to form a union. He then told me about the sit-down strike, the election, the NLRB hearings, and how the mood was different since workers took these actions.”

Experiences like those Lomeli described take place every day in the plant, “where teams of union builders seek out new people and recruit them to the union, and teach

them the union’s history,” stated Rudy Camino, who also is a union supporter at Dakota Premium.

In reintroducing the discussion on the second day of the meeting, Benson said that with the union representation election victory last July at Dakota Premium Foods, union supporters are “shifting from focusing on an in-plant organizing effort to building UFCW Local 789. We are partisans of this effort to build the union.” The challenge, said Benson, is to work with others in the plant and with Local 789 officials to build the structures of this new union bargaining unit. This can only come out of fighting to defend the gains already won and standing up to the company’s stalling tactics aimed at delaying contract negotiations. The involvement of an expanding number of workers who collaborate closely with Local 789 officials will be key to putting these new union structures together. Benson said what workers are doing to help prepare and circulate union material in the plant, including Local 789’s publication the *Workers’ Voice*, are an example of this kind of work.

## Strategic alliance with working farmers

A Militant Labor Forum in South St. Paul on Saturday evening featured speakers Jack Ward, a coal miner and organizer of the steering committee of socialist workers in the United Mine Workers of America, and Jorge González, a union activist involved in the struggle at Dakota Premium Foods.

An important part of the meeting was a message received by the Militant Labor Forum from farmers Don and Ilene Moos. “We also wish to thank those who attended the milk strike in Bloomer, Wisconsin, on September 4,” the message read. Two Dakota workers had traveled there to participate in a milk dump protest organized by Wisconsin farmers to protest milk prices that are below their cost of production. “It truly brought the labor worker and farmer a little closer in understanding how very similar we are in many ways.” Dairy farmers are getting the lowest price for sale of their milk in 20 years, the Moos explained, and farmers are demanding the government grant a \$14.50 floor price per 100 pounds of milk produced with a 3 percent cap on government purchases.

“We have a responsibility to explain to our co-workers how small farmers are exploited,” said Benson in his report. “Unlike workers, they own their tools and the product of their labor. They fight to get the highest price for their products on the market to make a profit. But they become debt slaves to the banks and agribusiness. The value they create is stolen through social relations on the land under capitalism,” Benson said.

“When workers and small farmers understand how each of the producing classes is exploited, the necessity of an alliance between workers in the factories and producers on the land to carry out a revolutionary struggle for a workers and farmers govern-

**Continued on Page 14**

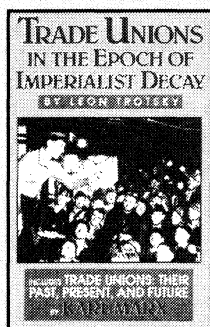
## Trade Unions in the Epoch of Imperialist Decay

Leon Trotsky

Featuring “Trade Unions: Their Past, Present, and future”  
By Karl Marx

“Apart from their original purposes, the trades unions must now learn to act deliberately as organizing centers of the working class in the broad interest of its complete emancipation.... They must convince the world at large that their efforts, far from being narrow and selfish, aim at the emancipation of the downtrodden millions.”

—Karl Marx, 1866



In this book, two central leaders of the modern communist workers movement outline the fight for this revolutionary perspective. \$14.95

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# Workers rally against anti-immigrant attack

Continued from Front Page

flow crowd, both dozens of immigrant workers and their supporters opposing the reactionary measure, and supporters of the bill, including members of an ultrarightist outfit called Sachem Quality of Life.

Sachem Quality of Life thugs have organized weekly picket lines to try to intimidate the esquineros. They have picketed the home of a county legislator who voted against suing the INS. Among the signs they carried was one accusing him of being a "papist." Some of them were present at the three nights of immigrant rights protests, attempting to provoke demonstrators with racist taunts and getting directly in the faces of Mexican workers. The outfit's web site has links to a number of other ultraright groups, from supporters of Patrick Buchanan to American Patrol.

Meanwhile, local cops harass the esquineros and contractors who stop to pick them up daily. One worker, Rogelio Sánchez, told the *Militant* that "the biggest problem we have is with the cops. They harass the contractors, ticketing them for supposed traffic violations. This is taking away our right to work, since the contractors won't stop here as much." Juan Carlos,

## Washington's cold war against Cuba

Continued from Page 10

garment shops, mills and factories and fields. Alongside the descendants of slaves, native Americans, and previous generations of immigrants, today the largest wave of Hispanic immigration ever in history is swelling the ranks of the U.S. working class, bringing new confidence and traditions of struggle into battles taking shape across the country. The employers' arrogance, colonial-master mentality, and brutality is becoming the spark that sets off the resistance.

As this world of the 21st century comes into being, the Cuban revolution will be there with its internationalist strengths, fighting alongside us as it has alongside others these last 40 years.

The theme of this forum today—a goal we all share—is "ending the U.S. cold war against Cuba." Throughout the day we will be discussing not only the origins, history, and character of that war, but how to join forces with those who want to work to force changes in that policy, to make its practitioners here at home who insist on maintaining it pay a growing price.

Our goal is not to find some more effective way to try to destroy the Cuban revolution but to uphold the right of the Cuban people to themselves decide their historical course and social values, and to live in a world where their dignity and sovereignty, like that of all other peoples, is respected.

The vast majority of the people of the United States have no reason to impose anything on the people of Cuba but the offer of an extended hand of human solidarity, as we fight together to change the policies of the government of this country that pretends to speak in our name.

## — CALENDAR —

### National Day of Action to Demand Unconditional General Amnesty Now!

#### NEW YORK CITY

Sat., Oct. 14, 10:00 a.m.  
Assemble at Columbus Circle (59th St.) and march to United Nations. *For more information: (212) 633-7108 or (212) 473-3936.*

#### HOMESTEAD, FLORIDA

Sat., Oct. 14, 3:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.  
Harris Field Park, located at Campbell Drive and US1.

*Both events sponsored by National Coalition for Dignity and Amnesty for Undocumented Immigrants. Similar actions to take place in Los Angeles, Chicago, Seattle, and Austin, Texas.*

### World March of Women WASHINGTON, D.C.

Sun. Oct. 15, 11:00 a.m. at the Ellipse. *Sponsored by National Organization for Women. Tel: (202) 628-8669.*

a worker in his early twenties, added, "Sometimes they have as many as six patrol cars around the corner."

On September 19, the night of the first protest, the fire station across from the empty lot where the demonstration assembled let loose its siren, and later, as the march stepped off, a fire truck pulled out to cut off one section of the march from the rest. Nadia Marin-Molina from the Workplace Project, an immigrant advocacy group in Hempstead, Long Island, noted that the firehouse serves as a meeting hall for Sachem Quality of Life.

#### Workers win broader support

Many of the workers have not let themselves be intimidated, however, organizing a range of protests to assert their rights. Some have also picketed the homes of unscrupulous contractors who try to get away

## Chicago rally for immigrant rights draws 8,000

BY LISA POTASH

CHICAGO—Some 8,000 working people joined the March and Rally for a New Amnesty here September 23. "Si se puede" was the chant of the day at the rally for the millions of immigrant workers in the United States. Janitors, home health care workers, garment workers, and meat packers were among those at the action.

The confidence, unity, and working-class composition evident at the march were reflected in the banners and signs throughout the demonstration: "It's Time For Amnesty!" "Living Wage For All Workers," "Union Organizing Is A Human Right!" and "Amnesty Means Workers' Rights."

The demonstration was sponsored by the Grassroots Collaborative, the Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights, Service Employees International Union (SEIU) Local 880, ACORN, American Friends Service Committee, Chicago Coalition for the Homeless, the Interfaith Leadership Project, and others.

Many groups brought banners and signs such as United Food and Commercial Workers Local 881, the Chinese American Service League, and the Midwest Asian American Center, which is made up of Indian and Pakistani immigrants. The Korean American Cultural and Resources Center provided a lively drum band, bringing a celebratory feeling to the march. Supporters of the

with not paying them.

By standing up to these attacks and harassment, the esquineros have won respect and support from some other residents in Farmingville and other nearby communities. At a September 21 protest, people came from all over Long Island to join with the immigrant workers.

A new organization, Brookhaven Citizens for a Peaceful Solution, is sponsoring, along with a number of Long Island immigrant rights groups, a March for Tolerance and Peaceful Solutions on Sunday, October 15, at noon.

The September 26 demonstration at Union Square was called by the church-linked Tepeyac Association. It drew Mexican workers, young and old, waving the Mexican flag and portraits of the Virgin of Guadalupe, the patron saint of Mexico. They chanted "We're here and we're not leaving!

Harkin Legal Defense Fund carried a banner in support of freedom for all Irish political prisoners held in U.S. jails and those fighting deportations. Several signs in Polish were evident. Some students, particularly from local colleges, also participated.

Among the workers who participated were about 160 on buses organized by the SEIU, as well as a dozen from an unorganized plastics factory in a Chicago suburb, and four garment workers employed at a large men's suit factory who are members of the Union of Needletrades, Industrial, and

## — MILITANT LABOR FORUMS —

### TEXAS

#### Houston

**Report Back from Socialist Workers Recent Campaign Tour of Australia and New Zealand.** Speaker: Tom Leonard, Socialist Workers Party, participated in tour of Australia and New Zealand by SWP candidate Margaret Trowe. Sun. Oct. 8, 6:00 p.m. *619 W. 8th Street. Dinner \$5, Program \$4. Tel: (713) 869-6650.*

### BRITAIN

#### London

**Miners Lead Workers Resistance in the United States Today: an eyewitness report**

And if we're thrown out, we'll be back!" "No Justice, no peace!" and "The workers' struggle has no border."

Among the speakers was a representative of the Mexican consulate. When he attempted to speak, many began to chant, "We want deeds, not promises!" Several workers present told the press that the Mexican government has not done much to back Mexican immigrants under attack here.

Guillermo, a young Mexican who helped lead the chanting, said many in his community had wanted to attend the protests in Long Island but were unable to do so because of the distance. "There's a lot of Mexicans here," he said, "and if we unite, we have a great deal of power."

Speakers urged a big turnout for the October 14 immigrant rights march in New York. For information on the demonstration, call Tepeyac Association at (212) 633-7108.

Textile Employees (UNITE). Hundreds of home health care workers and janitors participated, including a noticeable number of Black workers.

The march was also aimed at building a nationally coordinated day of actions around the country on October 14, which includes a demonstration in Washington.

*Lisa Potash is a sewing machine operator and member of UNITE in Chicago and the Socialist Workers candidate for U.S. Congress in the 5th District.*

from the U.S. coalfields. Speaker: Jim Spaul, Communist League. Fri., Oct. 6, 7:00 p.m. *47 The Cut. Donation £2. Tel: 020-7928-7993.*

### NEW ZEALAND

#### Auckland

**Amnesty for All 'Overstayers' and Refugees!** Speak out against unjust immigration laws. Panel includes: Mua strickson-Pua, chaplain of Tagata Pasifika Resource Centre, Tafa Mulitalo of Pacific Island Coalition Action Group, Terry Coggan, Communist League. Fri., Oct. 6, 7:00 p.m. *La Gonda Arcade, 203 Karangahape Rd. Donation: \$3. Tel: (09)379-3075.*

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**Auckland:** La Gonda Arcade, 203 Karangahape Road. Postal address: P.O. Box 3025. Tel: (9) 379-3075. E-mail: milpath.auckland@actrix.gen.nz

**Christchurch:** Gloucester Arcade, 129 Gloucester St. Postal address: P.O. Box 13-969. Tel: (3) 365-6055. E-mail: pathfinder.militant@paradise.net.nz

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**Hurry**—Only a few vacant apartments remain in Sterling In-



Harry Ring

ternational Towers in Los Angeles. So, if you need a pad, check it out. They're "the pinnacle of elegance." One, two, and three bedrooms from \$10,000 a month to \$30,000.

**The something-for-everyone**

**system**—West Bloomfield Township, a wealthy suburb of Detroit, now enjoys the distinction of having the state's first Ferrari dealership. You can't afford a \$140,000 Ferrari? No problem. This dealership is also offering Ferrari T-shirts, baseball caps, and toy replicas.

**Fare hikes? Perish the thought**—"Airline industry megamergers: How would consumers fare?—Some analysts say three giant carriers would mean lower prices, more destinations. Others foresee labor, service problems." *Los Angeles Times* news analysis headline.

**Meanwhile**—Ninety-three construction workers were killed on the job in California last year, the highest industrial toll in the state and nation.

**Safety**—"After 25 years of research and internal debate, NHTSA [Nat'l Highway Traffic Safety Administration] has yet to take effective action on vehicle rollovers which killed an estimated 10,133 people on U.S. roads last year, the greatest toll in at least a decade." *Los Angeles Times*.

**Wait, there's more**—"NHTSA has not substantially revised its standard for fuel tank safety in more than

25 years despite the agency's finding that thousands of deaths and injuries occur annually in fire-related crashes and that the standard is ineffective." *Los Angeles Times*.

**The hard-to-beat system**—In San Francisco, where runaway housing costs are the norm, and parking as scarce as the proverbial hen's teeth, Peter Overmire, 71, paid \$100,000 to add a garage to his modest-size home. Back in the '70s he paid \$69,000 for the house.

**The greatest**—"In America, you are not required to offer food to the hungry. Or shelter to the homeless. Or to visit the lonely. In fact, one of

the nicest things about living in America is that you don't have to do anything for anybody."—That's from an ad by a fund-raising agency that says people do give time and money, but more can be done. The ad was sent to us by a prison inmate, with a terse comment, "Is this a great country, or what?"

**Keep up the good work**—While we haven't maintained this column on a regular weekly basis, we continue to receive—and appreciate—clippings from readers. Help increase the flow. Send items to Great Society, c/o Pathfinder Books, 2546 W. Pico Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90006. Fax to (213) 380-1268.

# 'We reaffirm that socialism is a necessity'

Printed below are excerpts from "Socialism: A Viable Option," a speech by José Ramón Balaguer, a member of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Cuba, at an international workshop on "Socialism on the Threshold of the Twenty-First Century," held in Havana October 21-23, 1997. The entire speech is available in *New International No. 11*. Copyright ©1998 by 408 Printing and Publishing Corp., reprinted by permission. Subheadings are by the *Militant*.

BY JOSÉ RAMÓN BALAGUER

We are witnessing a crisis in the world capitalist system. This is expressed in the long-term tendency toward lower rates of economic growth, as well as in sharpening business cycles that have included steep slumps in the mid-1970s and at the opening of the 1980s and of the 1990s. Low rates of

only between the developed and underdeveloped countries, but also in niches of the Third World that are growing up inside all the economically developed countries, niches that are enlarged, among other things, by a migration of the poor. Efforts are being made to check this migration by means of racism, xenophobia, and repression, in other words by throwing gasoline on the flames.

In 1960 the richest 20 percent of the world's population had an income thirty times greater than the poorest 20 percent. Today the richest 20 percent have an income sixty times higher. This comparison measures the distribution of income between developed and underdeveloped countries, but if one considers the unequal distribution within the various countries, then the richest 20 percent have an income at least one hundred fifty times greater than the poorest 20 percent.

Another way of expressing this tragedy is that the richest 20 percent receive 82.7 percent of the world's total income, while the poorest 20 percent receive 1.4 percent.

In Latin America, which is the laboratory of choice for neoliberal policy, 84 million people are indigent, a degree of poverty difficult to overcome. In other words, one out of every five persons in Latin America is statistically classified as indigent—even after some fifteen years of sustained application of neoliberalism, which, it was claimed, would eliminate the inefficiency of the state and advance development by unleashing the uncontrolled market and private initiative.

In the present international conditions, we reaffirm that socialism is a necessity. Not only is it the logical result of the development of the productive forces on an international scale; it is the only alternative to guarantee the survival of humanity. The continual sharpening of global problems today provides more and greater proof than any other argument of the historic limitations of capitalism.

## Conflict between capital and labor

It is already clear that these global problems, along with domestic class contradictions, are weighty factors on a world scale pushing forward the struggle for a new social order. The contradiction between capital and labor is increasingly being internationalized, requiring even more that socialism, as well, broaden its scope beyond national borders and contradictions, and confirming the relevance of that classical slogan of Marxism: "Workers of all countries, unite!" Far from being outdated, that slogan could be extended, drawing in other social sectors and movements that are subjected to the barbarity of capital.

For us, socialism is the only possible, the only valid option for placing social relations on a moral footing. We cannot relax our efforts to demonstrate—on a theoretical level, and on a practical level—its clear superiority in shaping the highest of human values: justice, equality, fairness, freedom, democracy, respect for human rights, national sovereignty, solidarity.

This socialist society continues to be a clear alternative not only to capitalism, but also to the failed experiences of Eastern Europe and the USSR. The errors, deviations, and excesses that took place there under the name of "actually existing socialism," together with the exaggerations of them by the transnational media, have debased, in an extreme way, the image of socialism in the consciousness of workers and the oppressed of the world.



Bohemia

Havana rally in August 1960 to support nationalization of imperialist-owned properties in Cuba. "Socialism must broaden its scope beyond national borders."

It is necessary to project a new, fresh image of socialism, based on a society full of justice and freedom. Taking into consideration the specifics of each situation, such a society entails an appropriate relation between plan and market, equality and efficiency, centralism and democracy, instilling in workers a true sense of ownership and respect for the means of production. It respects differences and takes them into account; it pays attention to the natural environment; and it is the genuine expression of popular will.

In sum, it should be what Comrade Fidel

emphasized when he declared: "For me socialism is a total change in the lives of the people, the establishment of new values, of a new culture. This change has to be based fundamentally on solidarity between human beings, and not selfishness and individualism."

Socialism will not appear on the historical scene through a modernization of present society, but through a revolutionary transformation of its dominant structures. In this sense, the question of the seizure of power remains a basic requirement, although it may take on different forms under the conditions of each country or region of the world.

## —25 AND 50 YEARS AGO—



October 10, 1975

WASHINGTON—Buried somewhere at FBI headquarters is a division where agents study "locks and picks," or more popularly, "black-bag jobs"—the government's term for burglaries.

The vast extent of the FBI's illegal break-ins was revealed September 25 by the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence. The committee announced that by the agency's own figures the FBI carried out 238 burglaries from 1942 to 1968 against "domestic security targets."

Fourteen organizations—none of them identified by the Senate committee—were the victims of these illegal entries. Another three U.S. dissident groups were also burglarized "numerous" times from 1952 to 1966, over and above the 238 figure.

This is the first time the FBI has publicly admitted that the methods that became famous with the Watergate break-in have been used on a massive scale for decades against opponents of government policy.

The revelations came as the Senate committee heard testimony from Charles Brennan, former head of the FBI's Domestic Intelligence Division.

Brennan was the final witness in three days of testimony on the 1970 Huston spy plan, the government program to intensify illegal surveillance against antiwar, Black,

and student groups.



October 9, 1950

The Korean people reeled from staggering blows last week in their struggle for independence. The world's mightiest military power, equipped with every fiendish instrument of destruction, poured sufficient troops against the North Korean forces to break through to the 38th parallel; and the United Nations placed its rubber-stamp approval on invasion of the peninsula by MacArthur up to the border of Manchuria.

At the same time, the swift advance of MacArthur's armies toward the armed forces of the USSR and China visibly heightened world tension.

Thus Truman's "police action," undertaken with the solemn promise it would halt when the North Koreans were pushed out of South Korea, has once again confirmed the charge that this is a war of brazen colonial conquest. The new promise is that American troops will be kept in Korea only as long as "necessary."

The aim clearly is to convert Korea into a beach head from which in time an invasion can be mounted into the Asiatic continent in accordance with Wall Street's grandiose schemes of world conquest. This was the route followed by imperial Japan when it set out to conquer empire.

# Oil crisis: capitalist anarchy

The astronomical rise in the cost of gasoline, diesel fuel, home heating oil, natural gas, and other energy sources, which has sparked protests throughout Europe and is hitting other countries around the world, is a graphic illustration of how capitalism works at this late stage of its development, which is monopoly capitalism.

This crisis, which is already devastating the livelihoods of working farmers, fishermen, and independent truckers—those who have led the protests—is also starting to pose a threat to tens of millions that will not be able to afford heat this winter.

The skyrocketing price of oil is not a case of something going awry with capitalism. It's what capitalism is all about. And it shows the anarchic and irrational character of this system—from the point of view of working people.

Rather than harness and distribute in an equitable manner the resources of the earth through the creative application of highly productive human labor that is possible at this stage of development of human society, the blind laws of monopoly capitalism and the profit drive of the employers act as a brake on the progress of humanity. At times of deeper crisis they lead toward destruction—through war and economic aggression—of entire countries, tens of millions of human beings, and productive forces.

When workers demand wage increases to meet their needs, bosses often cry, "You'll cause inflation and push prices up!" To demands to raise the minimum wage, even just to a bare "living wage," the capitalists and their politicians protest that businesses will be driven under by "high labor costs." These are, of course, untruths designed to justify the employers' efforts to expand their profits on the backs of working people.

Today, the politicians of the Democratic and Republican parties in the United States, and their cohorts in Europe, delicately avoid directing a simple question to the energy giants: Why the sudden price rise? Did you just sign a contract with oil workers raising their wages five-fold? (We thought you have been trying to break the unions and enforce speedup!) Why, mighty barons of Exxon-Mobil, have your profits soared to \$4.5 billion in the second quarter of 2000 alone? (A nice jump from \$1.9 billion in the second quarter of 1999.) No, the question is never asked! They dare not challenge the prerogatives of big capital.

The answer, of course, is no mystery. There is plenty of oil and natural gas reserves in the world. But the capitalist monopolies in the imperialist countries control a big percentage of the production, processing, and transportation of oil, gas, and coal, either directly or through their broader control of industry and banking. Nations with vast oil reserves that do not do the bidding of the imperialist masters often face sanctions, blockades, or war, such as the U.S.-led aggression unleashed against the peoples of Iran, Iraq, and Libya over the past two decades.

With the current expansion in the world economy, the oil giants are using their monopoly position to reap

superprofits as fuel demand increases. The effects of the fuel price hikes on the lives of the vast majority of humanity are of no concern to them. Even big-business dailies such as the *Financial Times* of London have begun to worry about the broad impact of the huge price increases on economic growth in a number of European capitalist countries. Actions of unprecedented scope by thousands of independent truckers, small farmers, fishermen, and other working people across the continent have demanded immediate relief from steep government taxes. Many of the social-democratic governments there were caught unaware and have been shaken, especially the Labour Party administration of Anthony Blair in the United Kingdom.

The oil magnates offer no apologies or explanation for this desperate situation. Instead, they promote scapegoating of Mideast nations in the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries, which the capitalist media falsely portrays as the culprits. This is a blatant lie—especially for the United States, where a majority of imports are from non-OPEC countries, never mind the huge production of crude oil and vast refining capacities in the United States itself.

Through mergers and acquisitions, three large private companies alone—Exxon-Mobil, BP-Amoco-Arco, and Royal Dutch/Shell—control at least 10 percent of the world crude oil production. After the big three, the next 15 largest publicly traded capitalist oil companies control another 9 percent of production.

One energy source that is not purchased much directly by individual working people is coal. But there is growing demand for coal as well, especially for electrical generation. The United States has vast coal reserves, but, again, the profit drive means this resource is underutilized. First, the bosses face the United Mine Workers of America union, which is a thorn in their side in carrying through a full-scale assault to intensify labor, gut hard-won health and safety measures, and cut wages. Secondly, the energy giants don't want to pay for "scrubbers" on electrical generation plants that make it possible to burn coal cleanly, without harmful emissions. A revival of coal production—done by UMWA members under safe working conditions and turned into electricity through environmentally sound methods—would provide both jobs and low-cost energy to millions.

The labor movement can join with truck drivers in their protests at U.S. ports October 4 to demand relief from exorbitant prices. Unions should demand the government expand the tapping of its strategic oil reserves and provide fuel, heating oil, natural gas, electricity, to any working person who faces hardship due to the greed of the oil companies. Every tax on fuel and other sales taxes—regressive measures that hit working people disproportionately—should be eliminated now. As a fight for these measures is mounted, more far-reaching actions to put the needs of working people before the profits and prerogatives of the capitalists can be pressed on the government.

## L.A. bus strikers keep system shut down

**Continued from front page**

to cut hourly pay for drivers in half when they must wait for repairs while on duty or when driving an empty bus to the beginning of a route. Other concessions demanded by the MTA include a proposal to contract out more public bus lines to private companies, attempts to cut pensions and other benefits, and increase the percentage of part-time workers.

City officials and the big-business media have been waging an intense propaganda campaign portraying the drivers as greedy, middle-class individuals who are unconcerned about the suffering of the 450,000 commuters. Mayor Richard Riordan declared, "The UTU is holding the public hostage."

The strikers, however, have won support from many working people. Aaron, 29, told the *Militant* he has joined the picket line every day because "I'm here to give my support to the drivers. The MTA is not being fair with them. I like people who stand up for their rights." He added, "This is not new for me. I went to many strikes when I lived in Mexico."

The big-business media constantly repeats the claim that the average bus driver makes \$50,000 a year. The *Associated Press* even claimed September 23 that "some [are] earning \$85,000 with overtime." Strikers explain that the top hourly wage for a bus driver with several years of seniority is \$20.72.

New hires start at \$10.57. Because of a multi-tier system established by the MTA, many are part-time work-

ers, while others work for contracted-out lines without benefits.

Mike Santillan, a driver for 11 years, said, "Next time it will be worse. We'll get lower and lower if we don't stop it now."

Mayor Riordan and County Supervisor Yvonne Brathwaite-Burke, head of the MTA, claim that cuts in labor costs are needed to maintain public transportation. Riordan was on his second European vacation in a month, cycling in France during the first week of the strike. He told the *Los Angeles Times* in a phone interview, "I think we've asked for too little," arguing that the MTA should be asking for bigger concessions from workers.

Lawana Huffman, a bus operator for 17 years, pointed out that "Mayor Riordan and three city council members have votes on the MTA board. That means we're fighting the government and the government is trying to lower the standard of living for the people of Los Angeles."

"We want to work but the MTA obligated us to strike. We will not work until we have a fair contract," said Manuel Garcia, who has been driving for a year and a half. "The company was trying to divide us by keeping us misinformed, but we are not ignorant any longer. We are united."

Antonieta Zuniga, an operator for 11 years, said, "We are not here because we want to be. They force us to act like this."

A second solidarity rally has been called for September 29 at City Hall.

# Socialist packinghouse workers meet

**Continued from Page 11**

ment becomes clearer. Farmers cannot be recruited to the communist movement simply on the basis of agreement on the need for workers and farmers to fight together. They will join if they understand the need for this alliance to make a socialist revolution," he said.

John Stivers, who works at Quality Meats in Toronto, reported on the participation of socialist meat packers from Detroit and Toronto in an August conference of 60 farmers in St. Mary's, Ontario, sponsored by Catholic Rural Life.

"The participants were trying to figure out the root cause of the crisis facing farmers and farm communities and what to do about it," said Stivers. One participant noted that she had had difficulty selling her hogs during the strike at Quality Meats in Toronto in 1998 while another farmer asked her what she had done to aid the strike.

SWP leader Norton Sandler said it is a life and death question for packing workers to become adept in explaining to their co-workers how small hog and cattle producers are being exploited by the meatpacking companies and to forge alliances with small producers on the land. He said meat packers tend to see the exploitation of other workers more easily than they do that of a small farmer.

Sandler said the bosses try to pit the small farmers against the workers, who they claim are depriving farmers of the opportunity to sell their livestock when they go on strike.

"One quarter of all jobs in Minnesota are connected to agriculture," said Tim Fisher. "As meat packers, we need to know how the cattle get from the farm to the kill floor. We need to know how the beef feedlot system works. We can't understand what the farmer is facing without knowledge of the food industry as a whole. We face speedup on the job in the factories at the expense of our health and safety," said Fisher. "Something similar is happening to farmers. Last year in Minnesota 24 farmers were killed while working."

### Recruitment to the communist movement

At a recent event organized by UFCW Local 789, one worker announced that he had a "secret weapon." He pulled out a campaign leaflet for Margaret Trowe, the SWP candidate for vice president in the November election.

This story, reported by Benson in his report, was an illustration of the possibilities opening up for a regroupment of workers and fighting youth today in a revolutionary workers party.

Benson noted the significance of having 10 YS members attending the fraction meeting with equal decision-making votes on reports and for election of the fraction leadership. He stressed the importance of having different generations working together in the plants and the increasing possibilities for building the party and the Young Socialists.

As the socialist workers participate in these struggles, Benson said, they organize to introduce and sell Pathfinder books, the *Militant*, *Perspectiva Mundial*, and *New International* to fighting workers, farmers, and youth. Gaining a broader view of the world and a scientific understanding of the class struggle is crucial in forging a leadership of the working class. Benson raised the importance of a steady flow of party members of several generations, including those that are also YS members, who leave their job in industry and volunteer for several years to work in Pathfinder's printshop in New York. This is how the communist movement is able to make the books and pamphlets Pathfinder publishes available to working people and youth around the world.

The Socialist Workers Party, in collaboration with Communist Leagues in other countries and the Young Socialists, has launched a campaign sell 1,000 introductory subscriptions to the *Militant*, 350 subscriptions to *Perspectiva Mundial*, and 1,500 copies of the new Pathfinder pamphlet, *The Working Class & the Transformation of Learning—The Fraud of Education Reform under Capitalism* by Jack Barnes. The pamphlet is a basic explanation of the need for a socialist revolution. The campaign runs from September 9 through November 12.

Members of the SWP national UFCW fraction took a goal of selling 35 *Militant* and 35 *Perspectiva Mundial* introductory subscriptions, and 50 copies of the new Pathfinder pamphlet to co-workers and an additional 20 *Militant* and 35 *PM* subscriptions and 25 new pamphlets to other meat packers. The members of the UFCW fraction of the Communist League in Canada adopted a goal of 12 *Militant* and three *Perspectiva Mundial* subscriptions and 15 pamphlets.

At the conclusion of the meeting members from the national UFCW fractions in both countries met separately to elect national fraction steering committees.

*Chris Hoepfner, a member of the UFCW in Detroit, and Norton Sandler contributed to this article.*



# Profit drive to blame for Firestone tire deaths

BY ERICA BRANDT

DETROIT—In the auto parts plant where I work, co-workers often relate stories of being told to inspect their parts for defects on the one hand, and then being told by their supervisor every time they find one to “let it go.” To anyone who has ever worked in a factory, mine, or mill, this is probably a familiar scenario. One co-worker commented to me that “this is just like Firestone” when the bosses refused to address some problems she raised concerning a rework process she was asked to do. In an informal survey in the break room, I asked three co-workers who they thought was to blame for the Ford/Firestone tire recall. One said Firestone and the other two said both Ford and Firestone.

The Ford Explorer has been involved in 16,000 rollover accidents that caused 600 deaths. Sport utility vehicles (SUVs) are

## UNION TALK

more prone to roll over than other vehicles because of their high center of gravity. Therefore, a tire failure that causes an accident can have more serious consequences in an SUV. These vehicles are involved in the bulk of rollover fatalities, which account for nearly 25 percent of the nation’s annual traffic deaths.

These are appalling statistics. But the officials of my union, the United Auto Workers, which represents the workers who build these vehicles, have been silent during these revelations. This is an opportunity to explain and fight against what auto workers, steelworkers, tire workers, and others face in industry after industry: the brutal intensification of labor by the bosses. This speedup, cutting out quality control checks, the increase in unsafe conditions on the job, is the cause of this disaster. It is a chance for the unions to stand up and say, “We refuse to build any more unsafe vehicles or tires!”

At the latest count, approximately 103 deaths and 400 serious injuries in the United States—and more abroad—have been attributed to faulty tires produced by the Bridgestone/Firestone Tire giant and supplied mostly to the Ford Motor Company’s Explorer. The tread has a tendency to separate from the body of the tire, causing rollovers and other tragic crashes at highway speed. In August, Bridgestone/Firestone issued a recall of 6.5 million Firestone tires.

Although representatives of these companies pontificate about their concerns for our safety, their primary concern is profits. Each corporation has been pointing the finger of blame at the other for the problem. Firestone officials have said the problem is that Ford recommended under-inflating the tires. Ford places the blame squarely on the tires, not the vehicle.

Even though the manufacturer’s specifications for the Wilderness ATX tires was 30 psi, Ford recommended inflating the tires to 26 psi on the Explorer in order to create a smoother ride. Running under-inflated tires at high speeds generates higher temperatures that can contribute to the breakdown of the tires.

Ford first tried to put the blame on replacement workers at Bridgestone’s plant in Decatur, Illinois, who worked there during a 1994–95 strike by the United Rubber Workers, which later merged into the United Steelworkers of America (USWA).

The USWA leadership echoed this view. But this is dead wrong. The blame for the

faulty tires, and any other dangerous products that leave the factory floor, must be placed squarely on the corporation and its greedy profit drive. These deadly tires are not an aberration caused by the breakdown of an otherwise safe system. They are the inevitable result of the conditions created by the bosses under the lash of capitalist competition in the factories, mills, and mines—conditions that sacrifice the health and safety of workers and consumers alike, all for the sake of profits.

It is not true, as workers on strike often say, that strikebreakers can’t do their jobs because they aren’t qualified. Capitalism has been set up to make workers totally replaceable. The whole idea of a factory under capitalism is to continually simplify the work so that any pair of hands can be hired to perform the necessary functions. What we have going for us as workers is not our so-called skills, but our solidarity. This is the only thing we can count on to fight against the bosses.

Once a strike is over union workers sometimes work side by side with those who crossed their picket line. Then the challenge is to win these workers over to the union. That way the next time there’s a struggle they’ll be on the side of the union, on the side of solidarity. Ignoring them, isolating them, or harassing them only leads them further into the bosses’ arms. Many of these workers will learn from their own experience on the job why they need to support the union.

One example is Tony Miller, a Bridgestone/Firestone worker who was hired by the company as a replacement worker about five years ago. He told the local Decatur newspaper that when he first started with Bridgestone/Firestone, he didn’t think a union was needed. Now, however, he thinks differently.

“One thing I learned is you definitely



Safety and production of unsafe products is pressing moral challenge to labor. Above: crashed Ford Explorer.

need a union in here,” he said. “This is the type of place where you need protection to prevent them from walking over you for profits. We’ve been educated through experience and the actions of the company.” Miller and other replacement workers joined in a rally of about 250 workers to show support for the union when a recent strike authorization vote was taken.

One of the biggest problems we have as workers today is that our union leadership encourages us to identify with the company. After an agreement was reached recently that averted a possible strike at the tire company, John Sellers, a lead union negotiator for the USWA, said, “We’re going to do everything we can to restore the public’s faith in the company” so “everybody will be focused on the business of making tires.”

But this is exactly the opposite of the attitude that’s needed by the workers. We can’t be drawn in by the false premise that “what’s good for the company is good for the union.” We have no common interests with the bosses. They are always trying to figure out how to augment capital by squeezing the most production from the fewest workers at the lowest wages possible. The working class needs to fight for decent working conditions at living wages, and eventually to end the wages system as a whole. These two class interests are always contradictory, which is why there can be no common ground.

## Striking Washington nurses: ‘Treat us with respect’

BY JANICE LYNN

WASHINGTON—A sea of picket signs reading “RN’s on Strike,” filled the streets here outside the Washington Hospital Center September 20, as more than 1,200 nurses walked out. Some held handmade signs saying, “We have a life, no more mandatory overtime.” A number of passing cars and trucks honked their horns in support.

“The issue is not money, but working conditions and quality of care for patients,” explained Sharon Clark, who works in emergency surgery and has 23 years at the hospital. Clark is local president of the D.C. Nurses Association. “Our members can be told at the end of the shift, without prior notice, that they will have to stay another two to four hours. They don’t care how that affects your family or that you need to be home for your kids after school,” Clark said.

“They need to adjust the staffing,” declared Greg Pelletier who works in the cardiovascular recovery room. “We’re tired of working 12-hour shifts every day. And we want to be treated with some dignity and respect,” he added. “There are times when you don’t even get a lunch break.” This was the first walkout since 1978 when nurses struck for 31 days for union recognition.



On third day of strike, nurses mounted a fire engine to publicize their struggle. “Issue is not money but working conditions and quality of care,” explained one nurse.

Kiveyette Nelson, 21, just started working at Washington Hospital’s Intensive Care Unit in August after graduating from Delaware State University. “I came here in the midst of this, but I feel the nurse-patient ratio is very important for giving people safe care,” Nelson said. “If you’re overloaded, stress and burnout sets in.” On the picket line, many young nurses said this was their first job and their first strike.

Jeanette Walker works in neonatal care, and has 28 years at the hospital. “Sometimes nurses have as many as eight patients to care for. This means you’re making rounds from one patient to the next the entire shift, increasing the odds that something serious can happen to one of the patients while you’re trying to complete the round,” she said. Walker explained the turnover was very high because of the mandatory overtime and the lack of a decent benefits package, where not everyone has full medical coverage.

Linda Pope, a nurse at D.C. General Hospital, came to show her support for the

By sticking with the need to advance the interests of all working people, and not what is needed by the company “family,” we can take the moral high ground on every social question, including health and safety on the job. We can mobilize union power to stop production when the bosses are pushing us to produce unsafe products that can bring harm to people. Speedup, pushing to cut corners, or use of faulty materials are not the fault of union members or other workers. The bosses create these conditions. They are responsible for the problems with health and safety, both for the workers on the job, and in the products they make.

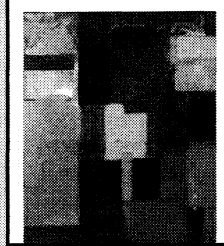
Workers at Firestone’s Decatur plant said they were told by supervisors to puncture bubbles on tires to cover up flaws on products that should have been scrapped. They point out conditions such as high humidity in the plant make it more likely for corrosion to occur. Inspectors had a quota of 100 tires an hour, which made it almost impossible to scrutinize tires before they left the plant.

Workers who were paid on a piecework basis protested to the company that quality was being sacrificed for quantity. According to Clarence Wood, who worked in the plant until 1996, “When inspectors complained about the tires not being right, the response from management would be, ‘You don’t understand the tire business.’ We knew the tires were bad,” said Wood.

Taking up job safety and the production of unsafe products is a pressing moral challenge to the labor movement, and is why the struggle to strengthen the unions in face of company assaults is needed to defend the lives and limbs of working people. Instead of bowing to the company’s profit drive and attempts to foster divisions in the working class, we can build a fighting union movement that reaches out for solidarity to other workers and farmers to wage a successful struggle to enforce safety and quality control on the job.

Erica Brandt works in an auto parts plant in Detroit and is a member of the United Auto Workers union.

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## Meat, poultry workers battle for union rights in British Columbia

BY BEVERLY BERNARDO

VANCOUVER, British Columbia—Members of United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) Local 1518 in British Columbia's lower mainland are waging two important fights against Superior Poultry and Fletcher's Fine Foods.

On July 23 some 225 unionists at Superior Poultry in Coquitlam went on strike to back their demands for a first contract. A month later the bosses at Fletcher's Fine Foods in Vancouver locked out 400 UFCW members after they voted 345 to 13 against the company's demands to cut base wages to \$10.00 from \$16.50, and for other major concessions. Both groups of workers remain determined to win their fights against the two companies, which are major employers in the food industry.

Superior Poultry is part of the Pollon group, the largest poultry producer in the province, which has four plants and only one with a union contract. Fletcher's Fine Foods, which has changed its corporate name to Premium Brands Inc., had a record first quarter this year, with sales of Can\$100.3 million (Can\$1=US 67 cents). It has 12 other manufacturing plants in Canada and the United States.

On June 11, unionists at Superior, all of them immigrant workers and 80 percent women, voted 98.5 percent to strike, demanding improvements in wages and working conditions. Workers are hired on at Can\$7.15 an hour, the minimum wage in the province of British Columbia. They have no medical, dental, or pension benefits. Overtime is mandatory, with 12-hour days six days a week the norm.

Ending harassment by the bosses and asserting their right to be treated with dignity are themes stressed by workers on the picket line. Adela Isley, who works in the evisceration department, said in an interview, "The company cares more about the chickens than they do about the people here, because they only care about the profits they make."

Superior Poultry continues production with about 50 workers who crossed the picket line at the start of the strike. The scabs are driven into the plant in buses with covered windows. UFCW Local 1518 estimates that Superior Poultry is spending between \$10,000 to \$15,000 per day on the squad of security goons who have harassed and tried to provoke the strikers and their supporters. This has included 24-hour video surveillance, following strikers home, and ripping "on strike" signs off strikers' bodies, including tearing up the signs and throwing it back at them.

The provincial Supreme Court is scheduled to rule in late September on a union petition seeking an injunction against the company for "attempting to incite violence on the picket line." UFCW business agent Jim Wells said charges laid by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police that strikers were uttering death threats and causing mischief were thrown out by the attorney general's office for lack of evidence September 23.

UFCW members at Fletcher's Fine Foods are staffing their picket lines 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Many locked-out workers have added their own slogans to the picket signs. Several read "No to 40 percent wage cuts." Another popular slogan is "Workers to pay \$30 an hour to use the washroom—no way!"

### Fletcher's lockout

Fletcher's insulting contract proposal included a clause that would have workers pay for any time they use the washroom during their work time; if they use it for more than 20 minutes during the week they would pay double time, and if they use it for more than 20 minutes 12 weeks in a row they would be obliged to pay triple time. A sign posted on the fence in front of the entrance used by the workers reads, "Work-

ers make the company rich, the company makes the workers poor." No production is taking place at the plant.

Two years prior to the August 19 lockout, Fletcher's had imposed 40 percent wage cuts on UFCW members at its Red Deer slaughterhouse. Management then demanded that UFCW Local 1518 members reopen their contract—which expired on May 31, 2000—otherwise the Vancouver plant would shut down. Workers soundly rejected the company's ultimatum at the time and remain unmoved by Fletcher's continuing threats to close the plant. "I'd rather this company shut down permanently than accept their ridiculous concessions," stated Chandra, an electrician with six years in the plant. "The bosses never understood how willing we are to fight."

Many workers at Fletcher's see their fight as part of a more general effort by working

people to resist concession demands by the employers. "If we don't fight here, the bosses will roll back wages all over B.C. [British Columbia]," explained Mangal Purewal, who has worked on the cut line for 11 years.

Many Fletcher's workers have been to the Superior Poultry picket line to express their solidarity with that fight. About a dozen Fletcher's workers attended the 400-strong August 22 rally in front of the Superior Poultry plant. When Derrick O'Keefe, a member of UFCW Local 2000 at Grimm's Sausages—a company owned by Fletcher's—came to the line, locked-out workers immediately handed him a pile of leaflets explaining the issues in the strike. "If Fletcher's succeeds with us, they'll be coming after you guys next," they said.

As well, Local 1518 members at Fletcher's are encouraged by Superior Poul-

try strikers leafleting at Costco, one of Superior Poultry's biggest customers for its products marketed under the Valley Farms label. After a legal wrangle over their right to distribute literature, strikers report Costco has stopped stocking Superior Poultry products. They are now targeting the Church's Chicken restaurant chain that is supplied by Superior Poultry.

Many Fletcher's workers are eager to begin similar efforts to reach out to build support for their fight. On September 14 UFCW 1518 placed an ad in the Vancouver daily, *The Province*, urging people not to buy Fletcher's Fine Food products.

*Beverly Bernardo is a member of United Food and Commercial Workers Local 1518, and is locked out by Fletcher's Fine Foods. Ned Dmytryshyn and Derrick O'Keefe contributed to this article.*

## Washington apple workers win pay raise

BY DEAN PEOPLES

PASCO, Washington—After five weeks on strike, farm workers and their supporters cheered and applauded an announcement by Guadalupe Gamboa, state director of the United Farm Workers, that orchard owner Borden & Sons had agreed to increase pay and bring all striking workers back on the job. The announcement was made at a strike support rally here September 17.

A month earlier the apple pickers had called the union for help in their strike at Borden. The walkout spread from the Flat Top Ranch to four other Borden ranches and included about 80 percent of the pickers.

Speaking in Spanish and summarizing in English, Gamboa explained that the strike at Borden is one of several successful strikes at orchards this year where apple pickers have been forced to take action against pay cuts. Instead of paying a set rate per bin of apples, Borden and other growers began paying only the hourly minimum wage of \$6.50, which meant a pay reduction of up to 50 percent for experienced pickers.

"Borden claimed they could not afford to increase pay, but many smaller companies have abandoned the minimum wage and are even paying more per bin this year. Borden is a large company. They own their own packinghouse and a golf course with a restaurant," he added.

"Leading up to this wave of strikes were two mass marches of farm workers, families, and supporters," Gamboa said, "one in Pasco in May, and one in Mattawa in August." The main themes at both marches were amnesty for undocumented workers, the right to unionize, and payment of living wages. Washington State law does not extend full collective bargaining rights to farm labor.

Daniel Varga, who has worked one year at Borden, said, "On behalf of all the other workers who could not be here today, you have contributed to an important struggle. Together we showed the growers that 'Yes we can!' or should we say 'Yes we could!' They have the laws, the courts, and the cops. But our weapons are our flags, signs, bodies, and hearts, and we showed them we could beat them."

Another striker stepped up to the microphone and said, "We need to get organized so the company will stop stepping on us. Only through winning the union can we prevent this abuse. We need to remain

united. We need to raise wages to pay for our food, our rent, and to keep our kids in school. *Viva la huelga! Viva la unión!*"

"About half of the packinghouse workers walked out in sympathy when the orchard workers struck," said Rita Sanchez, a worker at the Borden packinghouse in Yakima. "The packinghouse workers face many of the same problems as the pickers," she said. "We get no respect from Borden. They don't listen to us, the wages are low, there is no retirement or medical plan, and seniority is not honored. So they play favorites for jobs and time off. I'm glad the pickers are returning to the orchard. I'm very happy they have won!"

The Sunday rally also concluded a three-day hunger strike by a number of strikers and supporters who took the action to dramatize the starvation wages paid to apple pickers and farm workers in general. Also speaking at the rally were support committee activist Elva Ramos; Tomás Villanueva; Jeffrey Johnson, from the Washington State Labor Council; Dolores Huerta, representing the California United Farm Workers; and others.

The union pickers had resolved not to go back until they had a written agreement from Borden on pay rates. So, before the crack of dawn, they held an expanded picket line the next morning at the Flat Top Ranch. The following day the agreement was put in writing and the pickers returned to work.

This part of the extensive land holdings of Borden & Sons lies along the banks of the Snake River about 20 miles East of Pasco. The addition by the growers of thousands of acres of irrigated fields and orchards over the past 25 years has meant a big increase in demand for agricultural labor in Washington State. Deflated prices for apples over the past few years has put the squeeze on many smaller growers. However, apple prices have rebounded this year.

As part of a national day of Amnesty and Dignity for Workers, a march to support the farm workers' struggle will assemble at Seattle Central Community College at 1:00 p.m. on October 14.

*Dean Peoples is a member of the International Association of Machinists.*

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Rally in Yakima, Washington, to support apple pickers' strike at Borden & Sons. Workers, backed by the United Farm Workers, went on strike against pay cuts and won.

Militant/Dean Peoples