

# THE MILITANT

INSIDE

New book: 'Fertile Ground—  
Che Guevara and Bolivia'

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A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

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## Omaha meat packers win union at ConAgra

### After INS raid, union stands up at Nebraska Beef

BY EDWIN FRUIT

DES MOINES, Iowa—In a victory for working people, workers at the ConAgra sausage processing plant in Omaha, Nebraska, voted 90-65 to join the United Food and Commercial Workers union (UFCW) December 15. This is the second union victory in a drive to organize some 4,000 workers in the city's meatpacking industry.

Donna McDonald, president of UFCW Local 271, told the Omaha *World-Herald*, "We feel great. It's on to the rest." Jeff Smith, manager of the ConAgra Armour-Swift Eckrich plant, said, "We plan to bargain in good faith to negotiate a contract with the UFCW."

The UFCW and Omaha Together, One Community (OTOC), a coalition of churches and community groups, started the organizing campaign among the largely Latino workforce last June. In November, production workers at the ConAgra Northern States Beef plant voted down the union while maintenance voted for the union.

In a phone interview, an OTOC staff person said the composition of the workforce at the ConAgra Armour plant includes a higher percentage of U.S.-born workers than at other plants involved in the organizing drive. He estimated that 25 percent are immigrant workers from Latin America, 45 percent are U.S.-born, and the rest are of other nationalities, including Filipinos and Yugoslavs, mostly from Bosnia.

The union victory came 10 days after a highly publicized raid in Omaha at Nebraska Beef by the Immigration and Naturalization

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Workers at ConAgra in Omaha, Nebraska, rally as part of their fight for a union last September. Organizing drive seeks to unionize 4,000 meat packers in the city.

Militant/Joe Swanson

## Socialists plan school in Atlanta on Marxist politics

BY CONNIE PETERSON

CHARLOTTE, North Carolina—Working people and youth from several cities across the South will meet in Atlanta over the Martin Luther King holiday weekend for a three-day special school that will take up basic aspects of Marxist theory and strategy.

Unionists working in garment plants, textile mills, coal mines, and packinghouses in a number of southeastern cities will be joined by other workers, farmers, revolutionary-minded young people, and supporters of the communist movement. They will come together to deepen their understanding of the workings of the capitalist system by reading, studying, and discussing basic works of the communist movement and their application to the class struggle in the United States today.

The conference will feature presentations by leaders of the Socialist Workers Party on three topics at the center of politics: "Factionalism and Polarization in U.S. Politics:

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## Socialist school

Three days of study and discussion  
January 13—15, Atlanta, Georgia

### Factionalism and Polarization in U.S. Politics: The Changing Struggle for a Proletarian Party

The political roots of the factional dispute among the U.S. rulers that broke out around the close 2000 elections, how the Bush administration will continue the bipartisan antilabor course of the Clinton White House and Republican-controlled Congress, and the opportunities for building a revolutionary workers party based in the working-class resistance today.

### The Jewish Question

The structure and character of an oppressed people on a world scale, and the concrete character of the oppressor nation in Israel; assimilationist illusions during periods of extended imperialist economic expansion and working-class retreat; and the weight and place of the proletarian struggle against Jew-hatred in the coming American revolution.

The school will consist of organized study of basic works of Marxism, including special presentations. There will be Pathfinder book tables, informal events to learn about the communist movement, and social events.

### The Historic Change in the Family Structure & Coming Social Battles

The sharp rise in households headed by "single women" in the imperialist world and the radical implications of this process for the character of the political conflicts that will mark the class struggle—especially through battles over the social wage, the fight for women's liberation, and the cultural war.

Sponsored by Socialist Workers Party and Young Socialists in Atlanta, Birmingham, Charlotte, Houston, Miami, and Tampa. For more information, contact the Pathfinder bookstore in your area (see page 12).

## Palestinians balk at U.S. concession demands

BY PATRICK O'NEILL

Nearly two weeks of intense diplomatic activity in Washington, involving representatives of the Israeli and U.S. governments and Palestinian negotiators, have to date failed to bring about a face-to-face meeting of Israeli prime minister Ehud Barak and Palestinian leader Yasir Arafat, let alone an agreement between the contending sides. Deep differences at the heart of any steps toward Palestinian self-determination—over the status of Jerusalem, Zionist settlements, and the fate of Palestinian refugees—remain unresolved.

As of January 2 negotiations were proceeding behind the scenes, but the focus of politics in the West Bank and Gaza Strip was fixed once again on the brutal Israeli occupation and the Palestinian resistance.

Time is now running short for the current Israeli and U.S. governments, who seek to impose an agreement on the Palestinians and bring to an end the unrest in the occupied territories. U.S. president William Clinton, who has played an active part in the preliminary negotiations, will hand over the presidency to Republican George W. Bush on January 20. Bush has indicated support for the attempt to conclude an agreement.

Barak faces a prime ministerial election himself on February 6. In the leadup to that vote, voices from the right of Israeli politics have grown more strident, underlining divisions among the Zionist ruling class.

A series of points put forward by Clinton near the end of December have formed the

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## Latino farmers file discrimination lawsuit against USDA

BY JOHN BENSON  
AND ROLLANDE GIRARD

FRESNO, California—A class-action lawsuit charging the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) with discrimination against Hispanic farmers was filed in Washington, D.C., October 13. The suit, on behalf of 20,000 Hispanic farmers across the country, seeks \$20 billion in compensation for damages over the last 20 years.

"Loans were denied, provided late, or provided with less money than needed to adequately farm," the class-action complaint says. "The failure to properly and timely investigate the discrimination complaints deprived Hispanic farmers of equal and fair access to farm programs, and due process, resulting in substantial damages to them."

While the number of farmers in the United States continues to decline, the Latino farmers are the fastest-growing layer. A 1997 Census of Agriculture reported

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# U.S. Navy refuses to return land promised to gov't of Vieques

BY GREG MCCARTAN

U.S. Navy secretary Richard Danzig halted a transfer of 8,000 acres of land due to be turned over to the local government in Vieques, Puerto Rico, on December 31. According to the Associated Press, Danzig warned that the transfer would not happen until the U.S. colony's new governor, Sila Calderón, agrees to stand by an agreement signed between her predecessor and U.S. president William Clinton.

In her January 2 inaugural address Calderón said, "The people of Puerto Rico want an immediate halt to the naval exercises. Sixty years of a menace to the health and security of our countrymen is unacceptable for any civilized and peaceful society."

The U.S. Navy has occupied most of the small Puerto Rican island of Vieques since World War II, using it as an ammunition depot and live-fire training ground for naval battle groups. Sustained protests by Puerto Ricans demanding an end to the U.S. naval presence, led by fishermen and other residents of Vieques, erupted after April 1999, when a Navy warplane dropped a 500-pound bomb on the island during target practice, killing Vieques resident David Sanes. In face of these protests, the Navy initially suspended bombings there.

Former Puerto Rican governor Pedro Rosselló, a leader of the pro-statehood New Progressive Party (PNP), signed a pact with Clinton in January 2000 to allow continued use of the island for U.S. naval exercises until at least 2003. The agreement calls for a local referendum—with the date to be set by the U.S. military—by Vieques residents on whether to allow the Navy to stay until then, or to stay indefinitely. In a concession to protesters, the plan limited Navy target practice to 90 days a year and to the use of "inert" rather than live ammunition. It also included the offer of returning some Navy-occupied land to local residents.

The Clinton-Rosselló agreement sparked widespread opposition among working people in Puerto Rico. Nonetheless, in May 2000 Washington sent the Marines and other

U.S. forces onto Vieques to evict protesters camping out on Navy-occupied territory.

The Popular Democratic Party (PPD), which favors the existing colonial Commonwealth status, has sought to cash in on popular opposition to the U.S. military presence on Vieques, making it a central issue in its election campaign. PPD leaders have sought to divert protesters off the streets and into electoral support to their party.

Calderón stated she will ask for a meeting with the U.S. president to ask for a "better deal" than the Clinton-Rosselló agreement, and says her government will call a referendum if the Navy doesn't call one soon. These statements sparked an indignant response from Pentagon officials, including Danzig's threat that the Navy will renege on its land transfer commitment unless Calderón adheres to the January 2000 pact.

PPD leader Calderón, a business executive and former vice president of Citibank in Puerto Rico, was previously the mayor of the capital city of San Juan.



Militant/Martin Koppel  
Protesters in San Juan demand U.S. Navy get out of Vieques in August 1999. Puerto Ricans have fought to force Navy out of that island since it was occupied in World War II.

## School on Marxist politics planned in Atlanta

Continued from front page

The Changing Struggle for a Proletarian Party," "The Jewish Question," and "The Historic Change in the Family Structure and Its Implications for Coming Social Battles."

The three-day event will allow participants to step back from day-to-day activity and engage in some intense study as they think through and discuss important challenges to revolutionary workers and farmers today. Many participants will be reading and holding discussions in their home towns over the next week and a half to prepare to delve into these political questions.

The talk on the Jewish question will deal with the structure of the Jews as an oppressed people on a world scale and the concrete nature of Israel as an oppressor nation. It will address the deadly danger of the assimilationist illusions that wide layers in

the Jewish population adopted in the 1920s and 1930s in Germany, and which are also prevalent in the United States today. The class will also cover the weight and place of combating Jew-hatred in the proletarian struggle for socialist revolution in the United States.

One important book that will be studied and discussed during the socialist school is *The Jewish Question: A Marxist Interpretation* by Abram Leon. Volunteers in the Pathfinder Reprint Project have prepared this title in digital form and the Pathfinder printshop's volunteers are rushing to ensure this book is reprinted in time and available to all participants.

Those taking part in the school will also take time to focus on the political consequences of the historic changes in the family structure in the imperialist world, particularly in recent decades. They will draw on a Marxist understanding of the character and role of the family in class society as explained in classics such as *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State* by Frederick Engels. Participants will discuss how changes in the nuclear family affect the fight by the working class for a social wage to protect its most vulnerable and marginalized layers. The vast amount of unpaid labor by women has been integral to social relations and the capitalist economy.

Right-wing and fascist forces have historically seized on the issue of the family in their ideological battles to try to confuse and divide working people and keep them from acting as a social force capable of moving

humanity forward. Today they are demagogically focusing on the "dangers" of divorce, which is resulting in a growing number of households headed by "single women."

These historic changes will have substantial implications for the coming battles over workers' social wage and as part of the so-called culture war. The construction of revolutionary parties in all the imperialist countries will be shaped by the evolution of this change.

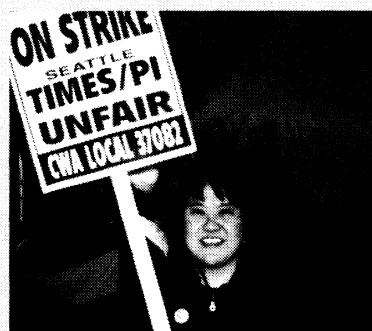
The opening presentation to the conference will be on "Factionalism and Polarization in U.S. Politics." It will explain how an accidental occurrence in bourgeois politics, such as the narrow outcome of the 2000 presidential vote, followed by the attempt by the Democratic Party to steal the election, led to the most intense factional struggle between the two major ruling-class parties since the events leading up to the impeachment proceedings against President William Clinton two years ago. The talk will take up how the U.S. capitalist rulers under the Bush administration will continue the bipartisan antilabor course of the Clinton White House and Republican-controlled Congress, and the opportunities for building a revolutionary workers party rooted in the working-class resistance today. Some reading for this class can be found in the Pathfinder title *Capitalism's World Disorder: Working-Class Politics at the Millennium* by Jack Barnes.

For more information on this event, contact the Socialist Workers Party or the Young Socialists in your area (see ad on front page).

## THE MILITANT

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# HMOs cut off 1 million Medicare recipients

BY GREG McCARTAN

Nearly a million elderly and disabled people who receive Medicare were dropped from coverage by health maintenance organizations (HMOs) at the start of the new year. Many are working people and live in rural areas where there are no other medical plans to turn to.

The most devastating blow comes because a large number of those stricken from the rolls by the HMOs, which are capitalist companies that make their profits from health care, will lose prescription drug coverage. Many workers and farmers on Medicare have joined HMOs to receive outpatient drug benefits, something not usually available from other plans.

In addition to those denied coverage starting in 2001, another 734,000 Medicare recipients were barred from HMOs over the previous two years.

An official for the Ohio Senior Health Insurance Program, a state-run agency, told the *New York Times* that they were receiving 800 to 1,000 calls a week from elderly and disabled people asking for advice on what to do, faced with loss of their coverage.

The federal government was informed of these moves last summer. Companies that have contracts with the government for Medicare beneficiaries were required to inform federal officials last July if they intended not to continue coverage the following year. A survey conducted by the American Association of Health Plans, an industry group, found last June that 18 large HMOs had reported to the government their decision not to renew contracts. In the end, 65 HMOs did not renew contracts and 53 other health plans withdrew from selected counties. Some 16 percent of the 39 million people covered by Medicare belonged to an HMO last year.

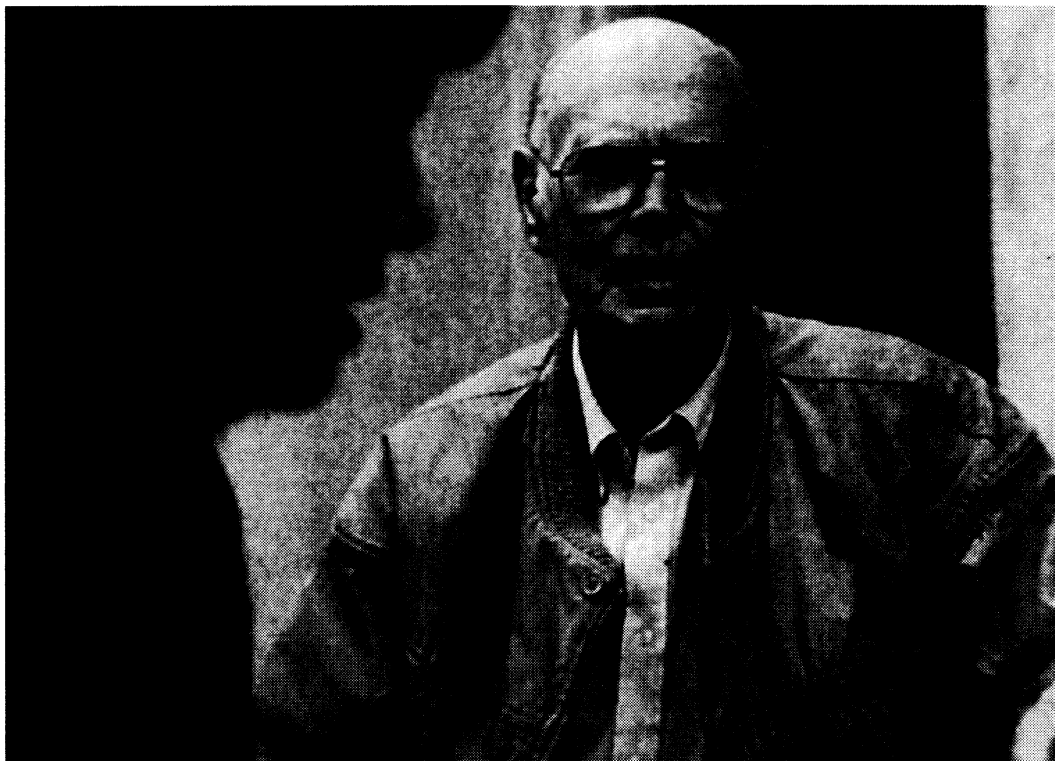
Karen Ignagni, president of the American Association of Health Plans, said the companies were pulling out of numerous counties in states across the country because they had been "overregulated and underpaid." William Donaldson, chairman of insurance giant Aetna, Inc., said the company decided to "exit certain Medicare markets" because "inadequate government reimbursements have made operating a number of our Medicare HMOs no longer viable."

Another industry official said that government payments to the companies have "gone up 2 percent a year while expenses have gone up 10 percent a year" and that an additional \$15 billion needed to be paid to the companies over the next five years to cover claimed Medicare shortfalls.

An additional \$10 billion spread over five years was approved by Congress in the final appropriations bill signed by U.S. president William Clinton in mid-December. A White House press statement said the legislation "addresses the needs of health care providers" who were affected "by the disproportionate cuts of the Balanced Budget Act of 1997 by increasing Medicare and Medicaid reimbursements to hospitals, home health agencies, skilled nursing facilities, managed care plans, and other health care providers."

## Loss of drug coverage

Losing HMO coverage will leave tens of thousands of people without prescription drugs they need to live. Drug benefits covered 68 percent of people on Medicare en-



Working people bear brunt of cutbacks in health services by capitalist corporations and government. Above, James Castle, retired factory worker in Ohio, has been dropped by health maintenance organization (HMO) he joined after facing benefit cuts and exclusion by previous HMOs. "I think it's a dirty trick," he said.

rolled in HMOs. A person dropped from a plan can return to "fee-for-service" Medicare, but without drug coverage. Supplemental plans known as the "Medigap" plans do not cover drugs either and costs can run

high—up to \$418 a month in Ohio, for instance. News reports cite examples of workers being denied supplemental drug coverage under these plans because they have a history of regular prescription drug use.

Just finding and affording coverage is increasingly hard for workers on Medicare. For example, as recently as two years ago 70 percent of HMOs charged no monthly fee for Medicare plans. Today, that number stands at 42 percent. Aetna U.S. Healthcare in southern Ohio is now charging between \$91 and \$107 for monthly premiums, after charging nothing when it started offering plans in 1998. Company officials cited demands for higher reimbursements by a large hospital chain in the region as the reason for instituting the charges.

The growing trend by HMOs to drop Medicare adds to the already worsening health care conditions in rural areas. Some 31 percent of those across the country dropped by HMOs have no other health maintenance plan offered in the area. And in rural areas, 94 percent of those now without a plan have no HMO they can join.

A large percentage of the worst-paid sections of the working class are without any health coverage. A U.S. Census Bureau report says that one-fifth of all children officially living in poverty lacked health coverage as do one-third of all workers in poverty. According to the report, half of all workers holding a regular job and living in poverty lack health insurance. The number of people without insurance rose by nearly one million a year since 1987, hitting a record 16.3 percent in 1998. That number declined slightly in 1999 to 15.5 percent, largely due to an increase of people with health insurance through their employers.

## Cuba will not complete nuclear plant

BY BILL MALONEY

Cuban officials have announced they have decided against moving ahead to complete construction of a nuclear power plant in the country, begun with assistance from the Soviet Union in the early 1980s. Despite widespread speculation in the U.S. big-business media that the Cuban government would seek aid to renew work on the plant from Russian president Vladimir Putin during his mid-December visit to the island, the *Washington Post* reported that "local [Cuban] officials told the Moscow delegation they were not interested."

Work on the nuclear power station ground to a halt in 1992 with the collapse of the Soviet Union. The foundations for the plant, located at Juraguá in the central province of Cienfuegos, were 90 percent complete and about 40 percent of the heavy machinery had been installed at the time. It was estimated that an additional \$600-\$800 million was needed to complete the facility.

Putin told the press in Cuba at the end of his visit, "Our Cuban friends are not showing any interest in continuing the construction of this plant."

Cuban president Fidel Castro said the government was pursuing more efficient means of producing electrical power, including building gas-fired power plants using gas from Cuban oil wells.

Cuban and Russian officials signed an economic accord during Putin's visit, the first for a Russian president since 1989, and issued a joint statement condemning the U.S. embargo of the country.

"Russia is right to be paying more and

more attention now to the Latin American aspect of its foreign policy," Putin said. "Cuba's role has been great and extremely important for us because it always had an independent position...favoring the development of democratic principles in international relations."

But the Russian leader also pressed the Cuban government over payments on what his government asserts is a \$20 billion debt. The Cuban leadership stood firm on its position that Cuba sustained billions of dollars in damage because of the unilateral ending of bilateral long-term agreements by Russia in the early 1990s and that it owes the Russian government nothing.

The abrupt end in 1990-91 of aid from and preferential trade agreements with the Soviet Union and Eastern European workers states resulted in a sudden, brutal slashing of the standard of living in Cuba. Trade with the Soviet bloc countries had accounted for 85 percent of Cuba's foreign trade.

Because of the trade embargo and other aggressive policies imposed by Washington in the early 1960s as Cuba's socialist revolution deepened, much of the country's economic infrastructure in manufacturing and agriculture was built up through trade and aid with the Soviet Union. The disruption of these favorable relations caused wide-

spread hardship and difficulties from which the Caribbean nation is slowly struggling its way out.

According to the *New York Times*, Putin pressed the Cuban government to recognize 30 percent of the debt claimed by Moscow and to agree to a schedule of payments under the system dictated by the imperialist-dominated "Paris Club" of creditor governments. The Russian delegation reportedly sought to secure stock positions in Cuban enterprises to "recover past investments."

Putin went out of his way to dispel any notion that his visit marked the renewal of a special alliance between the two countries. "Unfortunately, you have been looking at the wrong kind of information," he told reporters at a press conference at the end of the visit. "We have no union with Cuba against third countries, including the United States if you were talking about that country."

Putin called president-elect George W. Bush from Cuba, reportedly congratulating him on his electoral victory. He also pardoned as a "goodwill gesture" Edmond Pope, a former U.S. naval intelligence officer convicted in a Moscow court in December of espionage, ending what was to have been a 20-year sentence. From Cuba, Putin flew to Canada to pursue talks with the government there.

## New FM rules aid big radio companies

BY GREG McCARTAN

One of the golden nuggets for big business tucked in the appropriations bill signed by U.S. president William Clinton in November was a provision stripping the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) of its authority to set technical standards for low-power FM radio stations. The measure also allows National Public Radio affiliates to deny airwave access to political candidates.

Congress, acting on behalf of companies that dominate FM radio—led, according to the *New York Times*, by National Public Radio (NPR)—passed the Radio Broadcasting Preservation Act of 2000 in December. The measure shifts to Congress the FCC's policy-making authority to set standards for low-power FM stations. The FCC has been pursuing a plan to grant licenses to more than 1,000 organizations, including schools, churches, and others, for broadcasting rights for 100-watt stations that can reach about 3.5 miles. FCC chairman William Kennard said the move was needed to counter a huge consolidation in the industry, leading to a sharp decline in the diversity of voices on the air waves.

Large broadcasters claimed the move

would interfere with their broadcasts. Kennard countered that the government "can't allow people who have the spectrum to use their political clout to shut out voices that don't have the same clout.... Companies that have the spectrum guard it jealously, and they can use Congress to prevent new voices from having access to the airwaves."

The tougher restrictions set by Congress mean new low-power licenses will tend to be granted only in rural areas. The FCC issued 255 licenses under the new rules December 21, mostly to schools, churches, or groups such as the Duct Tape Radio and Humanities Forum of New Tok, Arkansas. Several Native American reservations were also granted licenses.

The measure released NPR from offering free radio time to political candidates. A little-noticed 1996 law gave candidates free access. The *Times* noted: "National Public Radio executives had feared that more candidates would demand air time, particularly because radio stations that had denied air time could have their licenses revoked." The act ensures no penalty can be imposed for denial of air time to a candidate.

## From Pathfinder

### Che Guevara Talks to Young People



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"We are attacked a great deal because of what we are. But we are attacked much, much more because we show to every nation of the Americas what it's possible to be. What's important for imperialism — much more than Cuba's nickel mines or sugar mills, or Venezuela's oil, or Mexico's cotton, or Chile's copper, or Argentina's cattle, or Paraguay's grasslands, or Brazil's coffee — is the totality of these raw materials upon which the monopolies feed."

—Che Guevara, July 28, 1960  
(from *Che Guevara Talks to Young People*)

Available from bookstores, including those listed on page 12.

# Solidarity rally backs IAM strike against Olin Corp.

BY ALYSON KENNEDY  
AND MARTHA RESSLER

EAST ALTON, Illinois—More than 2,000 people braved frigid temperatures here December 23 to march in solidarity with members of the International Association of Machinists (IAM) on strike against the Olin Corporation. After a rally at Van Preter Park here, strikers and their supporters marched in front of the Olin corporate headquarters in a determined show of strength for the walkout which began December 3.

"We have been getting a lot of support from the community for this strike. A lot of unions are marching with us," said Craig Kelly, a 23-year-old mill slitter from Olin's brass plant.

Among them were IAM members who work at Boeing in St. Louis, and members of the auto workers, Teamsters, electrical workers, and other unions. "I've worked at Olin two years and this is my first strike. Olin was hoping that the newer workers would vote for the contract. That's why they offered a signing bonus. But this didn't happen. Sixty percent of Olin's work force will be retiring soon. I started as a table packer making 70 percent of regular wage, or \$10 an hour. Now they are hiring scabs making \$17.00 an hour."

During the march many people came out of stores and houses to show their support as strikers chanted, "Brass and bullets is what we make, why won't Olin negotiate." Following the rally, hundreds gathered at the strike headquarters for food and solidarity.

Union officials announced the local region of the United Auto Workers (UAW) donated \$13,000 to the strike fund in addition to contributions from unions and local businesses. At the rally, several representatives from the IAM and the UAW spoke. The local NAACP chapter was visible in its support at the march, as were area politicians, including the mayor of East Alton.

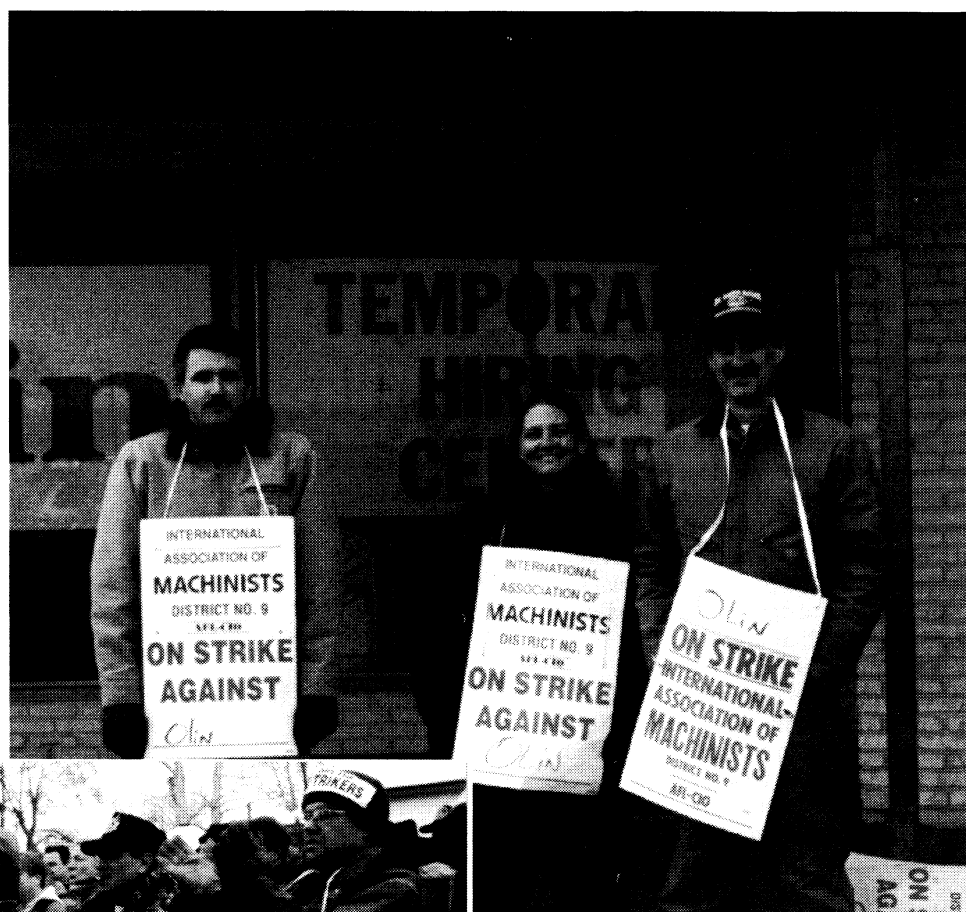
Barbara Baird, a cap operator in the Winchester Division, said "Olin has been walking all over us. I've been here 27 years. When I started, the daily product quota for plates in the primer department in the Winchester Division was 540 and now it is up to 1,500 a day. The biggest issue for me is the medical insurance. They would only guarantee the premium for one year of medical insurance, the rest was at their discretion."

In a visit to the strike headquarters December 30, *Militant* reporters spoke to Carole Frederick and Kathy Harvey, mem-

bers of the Olin Strike Supporters. "A lot of family members, teenagers off from school, and other workers come by and say, 'I just want to show support for the union. Where do you need me?'" Frederick said. "We check our picket roster and find a spot for them to take a shift. Someone just came in yesterday and donated \$20. A local restaurant, the Golden Corral, took hot food to the picket lines last night. Several restaurants have, including Kentucky Fried Chicken."

Frederick showed a list of eight places the pickets cover. Half of one of the long walls of the strike headquarters is covered with picket schedules and rosters. There is also a "Wall of Shame," which has photos and names of the few workers who have crossed the picket line, including union members who are working inside as "temporary foremen."

Striker Elvis Wiseman and his wife Ginny looked over the donated food on a table in the hall. "This table was completely full of loaves of bread donated by Bunny Bread yesterday," Elvis remarked. Ginny added, "I work as a teacher, so we aren't as bad off as some strikers—although I've lost pay



Militant/Ellic Garcia  
Above, Machinists picket Olin Corp. Left, labor solidarity march on December 23. Workers are striking over wages, medical benefits, and against speedup.

paid for the whole month."

The strikers proudly pointed out their new web site for their strike: <http://olin-strike.com>. The first negotiations since the beginning of the strike have been set for January 9.

Alyson Kennedy and Martha Ressler are sewing machine operators and members of UNITE in St. Louis.

## Working farmers hit by StarLink corn recall

BY PAUL SILER

DES MOINES, Iowa—A government and corporate effort to contain the spread of StarLink corn in the food supply is having an impact on farmers in Iowa. Some 40 percent of the nationwide crop was planted in the state. Cross-pollination in adjacent fields multiplied the amount of the crop affected. Farmers, some who did not plant StarLink, are now left holding crops declared contaminated with the seed.

StarLink, a product of the Aventis Crop Science corporation, is genetically modified to resist the corn borer, a pest that destroys ears of corn. The corn contains a protein that may potentially create an allergic reaction in humans, according to several studies commissioned by the government. It is approved for use only in animal feed and nonfood products and is barred from sale for human

consumption by the Environmental Protection Agency.

The recall began in September after traces of StarLink were found in taco shells under several different brand names. The December 30 *Omaha World Herald* reported: "What followed was what one agriculture leader described as a 'blitzkrieg' with the entire grain and food industry trying to stop any further spread of StarLink into the food supply."

The scare around the corn led Japan to stop accepting most shipments. The country accounts for 30 percent of total U.S. corn exports, making it the biggest importer from the United States. This and other effects of the contamination of the crop have forced the price of corn down on commodity markets.

Big grain companies and millers, grain elevator owners, and other agribusinesses stopped trucks and rail cars for testing. Omaha-based ConAgra shut down a Kansas milling plant for weeks to clean out all of its corn bins.

A *New York Times* reporter in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, described an inspection process at the ArcherDaniels corn processing plant there. In addition to the regular checks for quality, moisture, and weight, two inspectors grind the corn, shake the sample in water, and test it to see if contains any sign of the Cry9C protein, a signature of StarLink corn. Of 213 trucks, each filled with 950 bushels of corn, 9 were turned away for StarLink contamination. This nearly 5 percent rate far exceeds the percentage of acreage planted with the seed. Farmers and truckers point out that as little as one kernel of the corn getting in the sample can cause rejection of the entire truckload.

### Farmers not informed

Some farmers say they were either not notified of the marketing restrictions on the corn or of the need to maintain a 660 foot barrier around fields planted with StarLink. This not only led to cross-fertilization, but some farmers commingled their crops, contaminating a much larger percentage of their corn. To back up their point, many point to the tag on the seed bags, which reads: "You are licensed upon purchase of this product only to produce forage or grain for food, feed or grain processing."

StarLink offered its seed at a discount to farmers. Several here report that Iowa's Garst Seed Company, which sold some 90

percent of the seed in the state, sold StarLink for around \$60 a bag, as opposed to the \$100 per bag for other varieties. Farmers also agreed to purchase herbicide designed to be used with the corn.

Several law firms have joined two class action suits against Aventis for damages on behalf of farmers. One claims negligence by Aventis for failing to adequately warn of required safety precautions with the crop, complaining that "the confidence in the integrity and safety of America's corn supply has evaporated in export markets, particularly Japan, South Korea, and Europe."

Aventis claims it will cover all industry costs, whether to farmers, elevators, or food processors. The company has guaranteed farmers a 25-cent premium on any bushel of StarLink corn.

### 9 million bushels unaccounted for

Aventis says it received less than \$1 million in licensing fees for its part in producing StarLink. An Aventis vice president now estimates the company's costs at several hundred million dollars. The company claims it either tracked down or recovered corn planted on some 90 percent of the 350,000 acres planted last year, leaving at least 9 million bushels unaccounted for. And it has no track on the smaller 1998 and 1999 harvests nor on neighboring crop lands that may have been contaminated.

To limit their damages, the company asked the EPA to approve StarLink for human consumption for 4 years until crops already harvested work their way through the food chain. In response to this request, a 15-member panel recommended the EPA investigate reports of illnesses due to StarLink and said that there is a "low probability" of allergic reactions because of the small amount of the corn mixed in the total supply.

Gene Grabowski, of the Grocery Manufacturers of America, said the report should encourage the government to recognize "the low risk to public health" from the corn and to "come to an expeditious and appropriate resolution of this matter so that consumers can once again be reassured that the food supply is safe."

Dr. Jane Rissler, of the Union of Concerned Scientists, told the *Des Moines Register* the EPA "should take no action but refer the report to the Food and Drug Administration, which is the appropriate agency for dealing with an illegal contaminant in the food supply."

### FROM PATHFINDER

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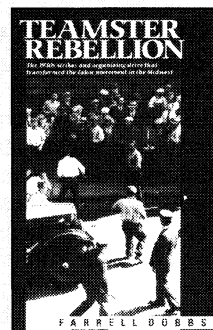
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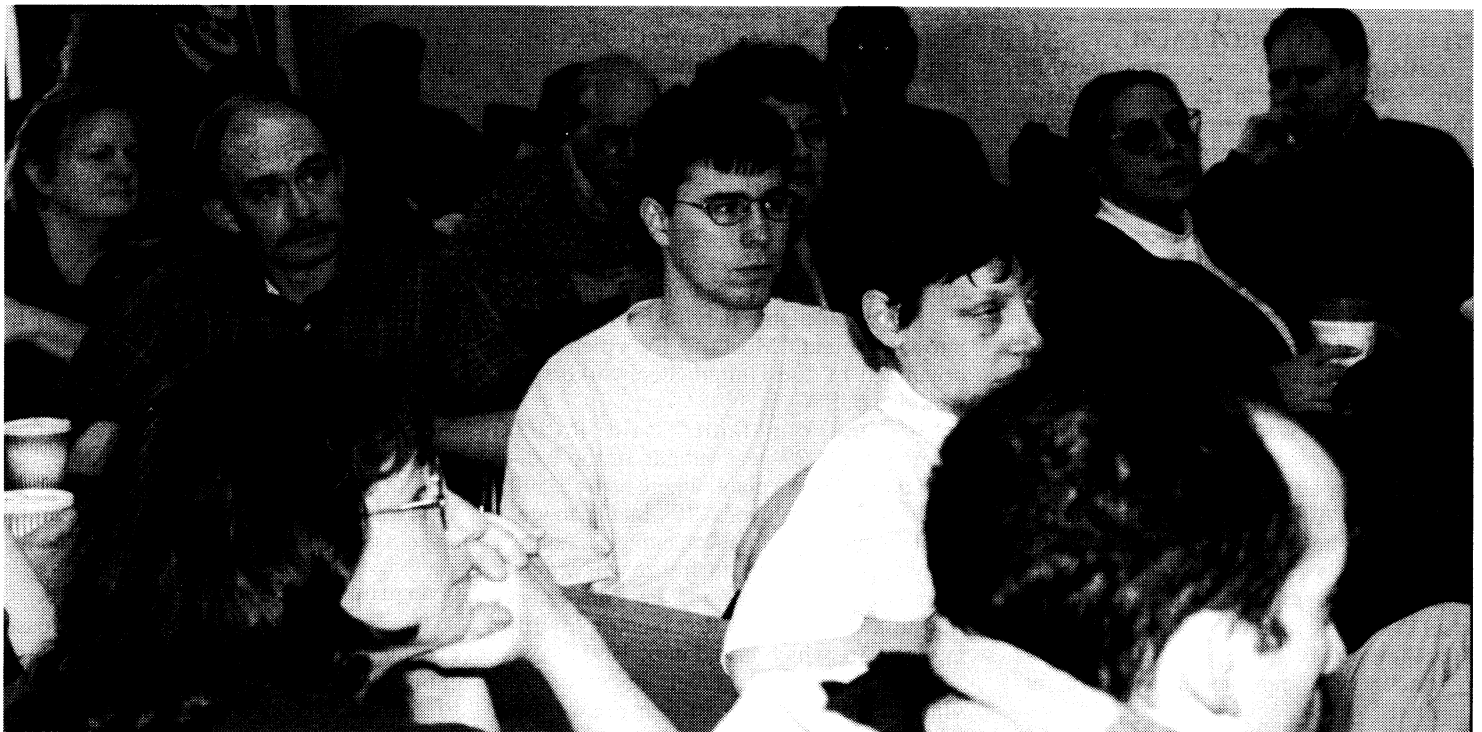
# Volunteers advance Pathfinder distribution

BY ANGEL LARISCY

NEW YORK—On December 24, supporters of Pathfinder Press completed a project to transfer all inventory and financial records of the publishing house onto an Internet-based accounting program—one day ahead of schedule. They celebrated their accomplishment during the 11-day project with a big holiday dinner and windup party.

The international volunteer project, which began December 14, will strengthen and streamline the distribution and record-keeping for sales of Pathfinder books around the world. The timing of this project was important, as supporters of Pathfinder are stepping up efforts to expand sales of Pathfinder titles on street corners in workers districts, and to commercial outlets and libraries where working people go to find books.

More than 120 volunteers came from 19 U.S. cities as well as Australia, Canada, France, Iceland, and New Zealand to participate in the Pathfinder volunteer project. Many had taken off work from their jobs to be part of the effort. Other volunteers from the New York City area, including a number who work in the Pathfinder printshop, joined the project after work, often for three hours in the evenings. The project was hosted by the three New York branches of the Socialist Workers Party, which also organized housing for those who came from out of town, classes on Marxism, and several public forums. The forum topics included the fight against anti-Semitism, what



Participants joined classes, public forums, street tables to sell the *Militant* and Pathfinder books, and social events during the project. Above, meeting at Pathfinder Building on final weekend of the project to plan the volunteer work.

the results of the 2000 presidential elections revealed about the factionalism within the U.S. ruling class, and struggles in the meatpacking industry.

Everyone who joined the project had the

opportunity to participate in sales teams to distribute Pathfinder books along with the *Militant* and *Perspectiva Mundial* in either the Manhattan Garment District, Washington Heights in Upper Manhattan, or Brooklyn's Sunset Park.

"The efforts of volunteers from out of town boosted our work in the workers districts where the New York branches are located," explained Ruth Robinett, organizer of the Garment District branch of the SWP. Volunteers attended a class hosted by that branch on *Wage Labor and Capital* by Karl Marx. Others participated in classes hosted by socialists in Upper Manhattan on V.I. Lenin's *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*.

Those volunteering would gather early in the morning each day at the Garment District headquarters of the SWP to discuss the progress made so far and the plan for the work that day, including goals for what they intended to complete.

The transfer of thousands of items of data from an old software program to the

Internet-based accounting software system saves both time and money. Volunteers entered lists of all Pathfinder customers and an up-to-date inventory of the more than 700 titles distributed by Pathfinder. All told 6,420 entries were made in 1,913 volunteer hours. The volunteers worked in teams and double-checked their work, which resulted in very few errors being made.

Rafik Benali, a laid-off worker from France, was able to participate in the project from beginning to end. He along with other supporters of Pathfinder in France recently had success in selling some of these books to a number of bookstores in that country.

"The fact that we were able to finish ahead of schedule and have so few errors is something to be proud of," Benali said.

"I'm explaining to everyone in Houston how the effort was inspiring because everyone was driving together to complete the project—not because we felt the whip, but because we were motivated," said Dean Cook, a laid-off meat packer from Houston.

"The project put Pathfinder in a better position to respond to workers in struggle who are looking for the kind of literature we have," Cook noted. "As more struggles unfold, Pathfinder will be able to respond faster."

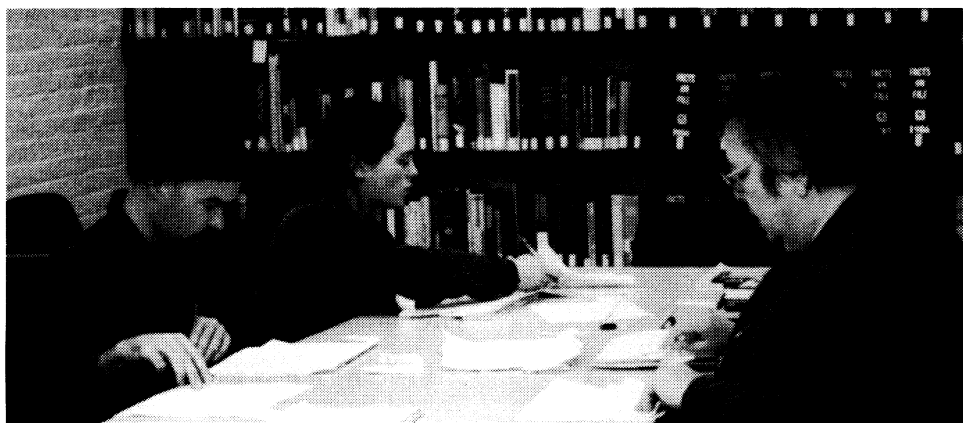
The Pathfinder project was part of a number of advances by the publishing house and its supporters, which includes efforts to increase sales of these books in cities throughout the country and worldwide by expanding the number of bookstores, libraries, and other outlets that carry them.

## Books to be completed for Havana fair

As the project was taking place, editors at Pathfinder Press were driving to complete two new books. They will go on the presses and be ready in time for the February 2–10 International Havana Book Fair, where an international team of Pathfinder supporters will be staffing a literature table. The first title is *Haciendo historia*, the Spanish-language version of *Making History*, which contains interviews with four generals of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Cuba. This book was produced through a collaborative effort between Pathfinder and Editora Política in Cuba, which printed a Spanish-language edition of the title in 1999 that has sold out.

The second is *Fertile Ground: Che Guevara and Bolivia*, a firsthand account by Bolivian revolutionary Rodolfo Saldaña of his experiences helping to organize support for the 1966–67 guerrilla campaign led in that South American country by communist leader Ernesto Che Guevara. Guevara was killed by U.S.-backed Bolivian troops in October 1967. *Fertile Ground* explains why Bolivia was ripe for revolution in the 1960s, and how the revolutionary front led by Guevara was part of the class struggle unfolding in that country and the region.

Those who work in the printshop that produces Pathfinder books have also made advances in dedicating certain hours of time to printing these books and pamphlets. On December 31, workers in the printshop completed production on three Pathfinder titles: *The Bolivian Diary of Ernesto Che Guevara*, *Continued on Page 14*



Volunteers proofreading on project to put the inventory and financial records of Pathfinder Press on an Internet-based program. The 11-day project involved more than 120 volunteers from the United States and five other countries

## Reprint publishing project surpasses 2000 goal

BY PEGGY BRUNDY

SAN FRANCISCO—Supporters of Pathfinder Press scored a big victory December 28 when they mailed to the publisher the compact disk with the electronic files for the pamphlet *50 años de guerra encubierta*, the Spanish-language version of "Washington's 50-year Domestic Contra Operation." Since August 1, they have been on a campaign to convert 30 of Pathfinder's books to digital form by Jan. 1, 2001—the 42nd anniversary of the Cuban Revolution.

They went over their goal, turning in 32 CDs by the end of December.

This success represents the joint efforts of the supporters organized by the Pathfinder Reprint Project—more than 200 volunteers in nine countries—and the editors of Pathfinder Press. Unlike many book publishers, Pathfinder strives to keep most of its titles permanently in print. These titles contain the history, lessons, and line of march of the world working-class movement. The Pathfinder Reprint Project was started in 1998 to digitize these titles, to convert them from the old system based on paper galleys and photo negatives to a completely computer-based system.

Of Pathfinder's roughly 350 titles, around 41 percent are now in digital form. This greatly simplifies—and internationalizes—the process of keeping the books and pamphlets in print and available to today's working-class militants. All that is necessary is to mail a CD to a printing company with computer-to-plate equipment, in any country, and the desired title can be produced in the quantity needed.

This gain is all the more substantial because at the same time the Reprint Project volunteers were preparing the 32 books, they took on greatly expanded responsibilities for the production of Pathfinder's new books. In this sense it could be said that the Reprint Project is now slightly misnamed—it's volunteers now also handle the text formatting and proofreading of new books as

well as other tasks involved in keeping books in print. This has meant putting in place additional quality checks to make sure Pathfinder's high standards of quality are not compromised.

One of the project's new responsibilities is preparing books on CDs that are complete and ready to print from. Janice Prescott, who now heads up this new team, commented on the fact that this was the first month the project had burned 10 CDs in one month.

"Believe it or not, this was the easiest month so far for me, because at last we have a CD-burning team," said Prescott. Referring to other volunteers in different cities, she added, "Bob Braxton learned the ropes of the assignment this month, and we began collaborating with Barb Graham, who burns CDs that involve only graphics. Having a team means the person who burns the CD is not the person who checks it, so we can feel confident that we are giving Pathfinder a better product." The project volunteers' long-term goal is to turn in 10 completed CDs each month.

## Increased work in several languages

The Reprint Project has also become increasingly international in the languages it works in. Volunteers are currently preparing books in Spanish, French, and Icelandic, as well as English. Because of the substantial number of working people in the United States who are Spanish-speaking, titles in Spanish have been a part of Pathfinder's arsenal for many years and a part of the Project's work from the beginning.

The French-language titles are a newer component of the Reprint Project's work. Their production has been spurred in part by a step-up of sales in France. Volunteers are currently digitizing the text for a new edition of the French-language version of *Che Guevara: Economics and Politics in the Transition to Socialism* by Carlos Tablada and a reprint of the French-language *Capitalism's*

*World Disorder* by Jack Barnes.

Through a recent sales effort, Pathfinder supporters in France placed more than 200 books in Paris bookshops. Five supporters of the publishing house worked together with Michel Prairie, Pathfinder's French-language publications editor in Montreal, who spent the week of the sales campaign in Paris. The retail value of the orders placed in that sales effort totaled \$2,900.

Among the 83 titles sold in French were 33 copies of the French-language edition of *Capitalism's World Disorder*. In addition, three copies of the English edition of this book were sold along with one in Spanish. Along with anticipated sales, these placements so depleted the French-language stock on hand of this title that it has moved to the number one spot on the Reprint Project's priority list. The volunteers plan to have the title ready to reprint in one month.

An Icelandic title being prepared is *The Working Class and the Transformation of Learning: The Fraud of Education Reform under Capitalism* by Jack Barnes. Working in Icelandic has presented special challenges in hyphenation and proofreading.

The bulk of the work by the volunteers, however, remains digitizing Pathfinder's books that have been in print. The successful production campaign significantly increased the rate of converting Pathfinder's books into digital form. *Understanding History* by George Novack was the 32nd book turned in, representing a rate increase from 4.25 digitized books per month—in the months leading up to August 1—to 6.4 per month. At the Active Workers Conference, where the goal of 30 by January 1 was set, Reprint Project volunteers also decided on a goal beginning with the new year: more than 50 percent in print by May Day. That's the next challenge.

For more information about the Reprint Project or to volunteer to work on it, contact Ruth Cheney at ruthchen@pacbell.net.

# LTV in bankruptcy, seeks labor concessions

BY LISA-MARIE ROTTACH

CHICAGO—LTV corporation, the third largest steelmaker in the United States, threatened to immediately fire its 18,000 workers when filing for bankruptcy protection December 29. Hours later though, company chairman William Bricker reported the steelmaker had secured financing to continue operations and “develop a restructuring plan.”

After laying off 500 workers at a blast furnace earlier in the month in Cleveland, its home base, the company is now putting a question mark over wages and benefits of its workforce as well as pensions of 70,000 retirees.

In a company press release Bricker claimed that “LTV and its employees across the nation have been betrayed by the government’s reluctance to take action against the ‘dumping’ of unfairly priced steel in the U.S. market by foreign competitors. America is in danger of becoming as dependent on foreign steel as we are on foreign oil.”

He then took aim at the company’s workforce and retirees: “Every integrated steel company in America carries an enormous burden for our country by providing health care and benefit programs for millions of Americans and their families.... The high fixed cost of these programs places LTV at a severe competitive disadvantage

in the new global steel market.” The company says it pays \$200 million annually into these programs.

A 25-year-old worker at the Indiana Harbor Works plant in East Chicago, who did not want to give his name, said LTV “is always wanting more concessions from us workers and then they try to blame us for their problems. They even say [the bankruptcy] is because we’re union. Well, there are nonunion plants they’re mismanaging into the ground.” Most of LTV’s plants are organized by the United Steelworkers of America (USWA).

“It’s not our fault,” said Rafael Dominguez, a 29-year veteran of the Indiana Harbor Works plant, where some 3,500 workers are employed. “It’s bad management coupled with this worsening economy. They’ll probably try to freeze our wages coming out of this round,” he said, referring to the company’s first bankruptcy filing in 1986, which lasted until 1993.

“Nobody in the plant feels any security,” said Lucille Robbins, a 50-year-old woman who has worked at the Indiana plant for seven years.

The *Cleveland Plain Dealer* added uncertainty for workers when it reported they “should continue getting paychecks without incident” but “the bankruptcy court could put limits on past wages or accrued vacation or sick time.” The paper wrote that

LTV’s pension plan is underfunded by \$600 million, meaning “workers would be guaranteed a certain percentage of their benefits.”

One option Bricker said the company is exploring is “alternative ways to maintain health-care benefit programs for employees and retirees.” Christopher Panos, a bankruptcy attorney in Boston, told the *Plain Dealer*, “There are a lot of protections built into the code for retirees. There is reason to be concerned, but there is protection.”

With \$4 billion in sales in 1999, LTV claims it currently has \$5.81 billion in assets and \$4.73 billion in liabilities plus \$1 billion in long-term debt. The company has not made a profit since 1997. Stock shares, which in 1994 traded at \$16, peaked at \$4.31 in 2000, and closed at the end of this year at 34 cents.

## Overproduction and competition

The steel industry is facing a classic case of capitalist overproduction, which is sharpening competition and driving prices down. Eight other U.S. steel companies have filed for bankruptcy court protection in the last two years, including Wheeling-Pittsburgh in November. As worldwide consumption of steel has grown over the past several years, production has grown even faster. In the United States, hot-rolled steel band is selling for about \$250 a ton, down from \$380 a ton last April.

London’s *Financial Times* noted, “Poor conditions for the sector have nothing to do with low demand. Just the opposite: steel consumption worldwide is likely to rise 5.5 percent this year, the highest figure since 1997.” The industry is producing 60 million tons more steel than is being purchased, the paper reports. With a strong dollar, U.S. exports face a competitive disadvantage on the world market.

In an attempt to protect the enormous U.S. market, steel companies have launched antidumping cases against 11 countries, charging that hot-rolled steel is being sold in the United States at less than production costs. Some 100 U.S. steel companies urged the Clinton administration to implement protectionist measures, including curbing imports, exacting higher duties, and giving direct assistance to steel companies.

The Clinton administration is already urging banks, such as the Export Import Bank, to stop all loans that might increase world steel output. U.S. commerce secretary Norman Mineta, for example, pressed the bank’s president to stop a loan to China’s Benxi Iron and Steel Company last month on the basis it would help add 1.5 million metric tons of new hot-rolled steel capacity.

This line is being echoed by USWA officials, such as Ohio district director David McCall. At a Cleveland meeting of USWA Local 185, he exonerated LTV management of any responsibility for the company’s current economic crisis, stating that “dumping” of foreign steel is to blame. “LTV has been forced into bankruptcy because of our government’s failure to enforce trade laws in this country,” he said.

David Phelps, head of the American Institute of International Steel, a business organization representing steel importers, chided mini-mill steel producer Nucor, which has been making a tidy profit, charging the company with “the use of trade laws to manipulate the U.S. market” in order to drive up domestic prices, increasing its profits.

LTV says it may pursue loans from the federal Emergency Steel Loan Guarantee Program, in which the government secures 85 percent of the credit extended by a commercial lender. LTV also notified the Indiana city of East Chicago that it will not pay its 2001 property tax, which amounts to roughly \$20 million dollars. In Cleveland, councilman Bill Patman said that the city is willing to give LTV more tax abatements on top of the \$800 million the city has forgiven since 1988.

Another top employer for 128 years, Chicago-based Montgomery Ward, said it will also file for bankruptcy and close its 250 stores and 10 distribution centers in 30 states. Some 30,000 workers will lose their jobs.

*Lisa-Marie Rottach is a garment worker and member of the Union of Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Employees in Chicago. Henry Hillenbrand, a former member of USWA Local 185 at LTV’s Cleveland Works, contributed to this article.*

## Vancouver packers keep up union fight

BY DERRICK O’KEEFE

VANCOUVER, British Columbia—More than 600 meat and poultry workers, members of United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) Local 1518 in the Vancouver area, continue to press their fight for union rights and dignity.

At Fletcher’s Fine Foods, 400 UFCW members have been locked out for more than four months after refusing to accept the company’s demands for deep concessions, including a wage cut of nearly 40 percent. At Christmas, pickets organized parties on the line.

Members of UFCW Local 2000 at Grimm’s Fine Foods, a plant owned by the same company as Fletcher’s, presented pickets with an oversized Christmas card to give holiday greetings of solidarity.

A large sign at the Fletcher’s picket line reads, “We want, we need our holiday pay!” The company is withholding the holiday pay that it owes from the past year. Workers explained that the company has offered to pay up on condition that the unionists stop their leafletting campaign at grocery stores. The leaflets, which members have distributed at all major stores, ask consumers to boycott the company’s products.

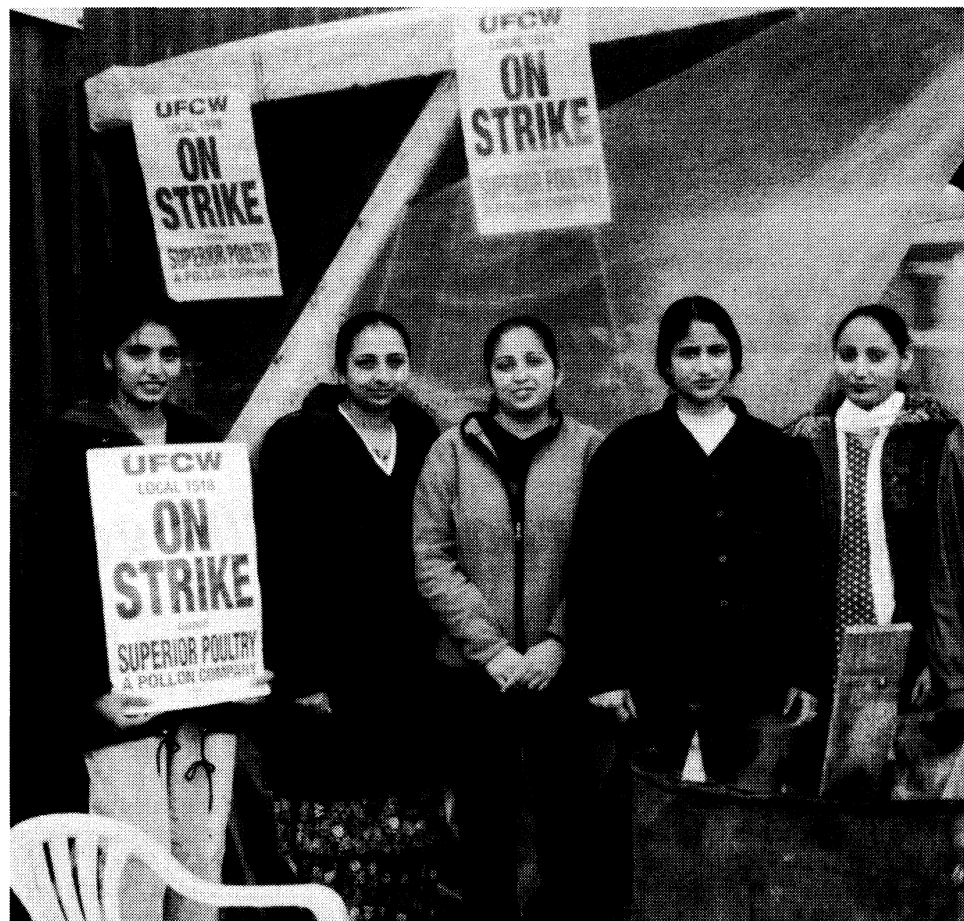
“It’s another threat,” said a worker from the packaging department. Referring to company claims that the leafletting campaign is having no affect, he added, “Why would they try to get us to stop if it wasn’t hurting them?” A number of picketers said they are willing to carry their struggle well into the new year, and that they would “never go back in there for \$10.” The company is seeking to cut the current basic pay rate of \$16.50 down to \$10.

Strikers at Superior Poultry also remain determined in their battle for improved wages. The 225 workers voted overwhelmingly to join the UFCW last year, and are fighting for their first contract. They have been on strike since July 23. Wages at the plant start at the province’s minimum of \$7.15.

On November 30 at a conference of the British Columbia Federation of Labour, a “hot edict” was declared on Superior Poultry products.

The edict gives union members the right to refuse to handle the company’s products. No “hot edict” was declared on Fletcher’s products.

*Derrick O’Keefe is a member of United Food and Commercial Workers Local 2000.*



Militant/John Steele

Striking UFCW members at Superior Poultry on the picket line October 28

## Ontario Steelworkers strike to close wage gap

BY JOHN STEELE

TORONTO—Workers at KIK Industries, who recently joined the United Steelworkers of America (USWA), are into the fifth week of a strike over wages.

The 120 workers at the plant, located a few kilometers north of Toronto, produce plastic bottles and household cleaning fluids of one kind or another. The Toronto facility also serves as the headquarters for the company, which operates 12 plants in North America—two or three in Canada, and the rest in the United States.

The strikers’ main demand is for an across-the-board \$1 an hour wage increase in the first year of a three-year contract. This, they explain, would close the gap between the majority of the workers who are classified as laborers, and workers in higher-paying classifications such as maintenance or quality control jobs. The strikers are also demanding an increase of 50 cents an hour in the second and third year of the contract.

Currently the laborers earn \$8.66 per hour and in many cases have done so for years. “The laborers need \$10 an hour to catch up,” said one striker.

The plant operates on three shifts. No premium is paid for the afternoon and mid-

night shifts.

Almost the entire workforce is from the Punjab in India. Many of the men wear the Sikh religious turban. About 40 percent of them are women, who produce the bottles on one side of the plant. The men fill the bottles with the bleach and other cleaning fluids. “I have to operate two machines,” said one woman striker, describing the brutal working conditions. Much of the work involves heavy lifting, and the bosses continually demand greater speed. Back injuries and sickness from noxious and toxic chemical fumes are a growing problem for the workforce. The only “protection” for the fumes are gauze masks.

Several months ago the workers switched their membership to the Steelworkers from the International Laborers’ Union. “That union was too close to the boss,” said one striker, “so we changed the union.” The workers are still operating under the old contract, which expired on July 30.

Before the strike vote, the company offered a three-year contract with a wage increase of 50 cents in the first year and 25 cents in the second and third years. Faced with the workers’ resolve to strike, the company raised the first-year offer to 70 cents.

Then the owners threatened to close the plant.

The workers opposed a percentage wage increase, arguing that it would widen the gap between the laborers and more highly paid workers like the machine setup people who earn \$14.50 an hour. With the previous union, the higher-paid workers were classified as part of management and received a salary that amounted to about \$20 an hour. Now they are wage workers in the union.

Despite the threat by the bosses to close the plant, the workers voted 71 to 27 to strike beginning December 1. Strikers explained that most of the small number of Spanish-speaking workers in the plant, swayed by a Spanish-speaking supervisor, did not vote for the strike. “A few participate in picket duty,” they noted.

Currently there are no negotiations taking place between the union and the company. “This is hard out here in the snow,” said one striker. “We don’t know if the company will try to start production again. We’ll see in the new year.”

*John Steele is a meat packer and member of the United Food and Commercial Workers union.*

THE MILITANT

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# 'Seattle Times' workers vote to reject contract and to continue strike

BY ERNEST MAILHOT

SEATTLE—Strikers at the *Seattle Times* greeted union official Ron Judd with loud applause and shouts as he announced the unionists' overwhelming vote to continue their strike. By a vote of 348 to 87, members of the Pacific Northwest Newspaper Guild who work in the news, advertising, and circulation departments of the *Times* rejected the company's latest contract offer.

Their 80 percent margin of rejection was matched by composition room strikers from the Communications Workers of America (CWA), who turned down a similar contract by 51 to 6. The CWA is also the parent union of the Guild.

Following the press conference outside strike headquarters, the strikers marched to the main entrance of the *Seattle Times*, where they joined pickets in an impromptu rally. The boisterous crowd of 50 strikers and their supporters shouted to management inside the building, "Union busting—that's disgusting" and "We're still here, Frank," referring to the paper's owner, Frank Blethen.

The Guild's chief negotiator, Bruce Meachum, stood on a chair and declared, "I see you standing tall. When they take on one of us, they take on all of us." The celebratory crowd shouted to the company's strikebreaking security guards, who are constantly videoing the strikers, "Film this!"

The latest contract offer by the *Times* included a few changes from the original prestrike proposal. It would increase the company's payments to the workers' medical plan and eliminate, over a three-year period, a two-tier wage scale for journalists in suburban areas.

On the central issue of wages, the offer of no more than \$3.30 an hour in raises over a six-year contract remained unchanged. The offer also included incentives for early retirement.

Strikers explained, however, that the main reason for voting down the contract proposal was the company's demand that workers who crossed the picket line and others hired to replace the strikers would be given seniority rights over strikers during layoffs.

*Times* bosses have warned they will lay off 10 percent of the workforce due to millions of dollars in losses from the strike, which now has lasted almost a month and a half.

They state that those laid off will have recall rights for one year but their callback will depend on how many people take early retirement. The *Times* has hired 68 replacement workers so far.

Yoko Kuramoto-Eidsmoe, a features copy

editor at the *Times* for four years, explained her support for the strikers who would be replaced and added, "It seems like a totally union-busting contract to me. The new contract [says that] one month out of the year people can opt out of union membership, encouraging people to be agency fee payers instead."

Before the contract vote, Guild member and striker Michael Upchurch, who is the main book critic at the *Times*, explained, "They gave us a little sweetener with the medical coverage. [They would pay] 75 percent of medical instead of 66 percent. This made some people think about accepting. But if they give preference to scabs and permanent hires, then that's unacceptable. It'll be voted down."

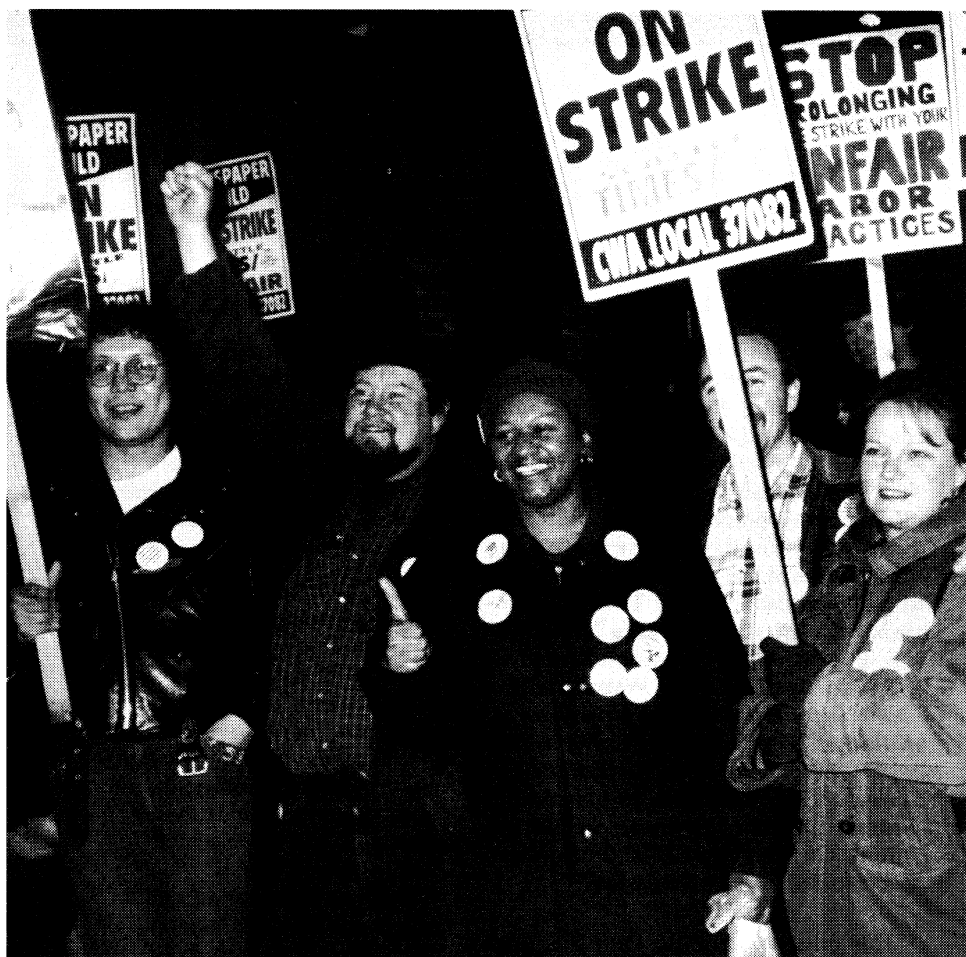
## Employees at 'P-I' accept a contract

Two days before the strike vote at the *Times*, the Guild, which represents about 130 newsroom workers at the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* voted 88 to 29 to accept a contract offer and return to work. The offer was similar to that from the *Times* except that management did not hire replacement workers during the 38 days of the *P-I* strike and had no demands in its contract proposal to replace and not call back strikers. The *Times* and *P-I* management have a joint operating agreement that includes separate newsrooms, while the *Times* handles the publishing and circulation of both papers. Almost all the replacement workers hired by the *Times* have been in the advertising and circulation departments.

Many strikers from the *Times* and others who had been on strike at the *P-I* express support for the decision to go back to work at the *Post-Intelligencer*, explaining that the bosses there are taking everyone back and that this move puts Frank Blethen, owner of the *Times*, in an even more indefensible position.

Some, on the other hand, said in interviews that they aren't sure splitting off a section of the strikers was the best thing for the union. They cited the fact that the joint operating agreement between the papers means that any profits brought in by the *P-I* would be shared with the *Times*. Drivers belonging to Teamsters Local 174 noted that the *P-I* will be delivered by replacement workers.

At the same time, the Guild unit at the *P-I* has pledged to support the *Times* strikers in other ways, including by launching a \$10,000 strike fund. A number of the *P-I* workers have joined the picket line since they voted to go back to work, and about 15 organized a show of support outside one of the *Times*'s contract vote meetings.



Militant/Cecelia Moriarity

**Unionists on strike against 'Seattle Times' gather at strike headquarters December 30 after voting down latest contract proposal from bosses.**

One of these unionists, Kimberly Wilson, a reporter for four years at the *P-I*, talked of their situation. The contract "wasn't what we hoped for. I think it shows slightly more willingness to negotiate than Blethen," she said. "I think people will help the *Times* strikers. I'd be ashamed if we didn't. I don't think people should be punished for striking."

## Support from Teamsters

Strikers are also watching closely the developments with the Teamsters. Local 174, which organizes drivers at the *Times*, has honored the strike from the beginning. Their contract expires at the end of February.

Like many other Teamsters, Dan Gaines, who has been driving for the paper for six months, is firmly behind the strike. He has an assigned shift on three days of the week and is on call for the other four. He makes \$12 an hour and averages only 28 hours a week.

"My faith has changed," Gaines said while picketing one evening just before New Year's. "I would have never thought before that 94 drivers could ever get support from 900 Guild members. But after this strike, I think they'll be with us."

Teamsters Local 763, which organizes almost 600 workers at the *Times*, mostly mailers and others who insert the advertising supplements in the paper, has not supported the strike. Jon Rabine, head of the local and also an international vice president of the Teamsters, is seen by many workers as the main force holding back solidarity from Local 763.

In a development many unionists consider

related to the *Times* strike, Rabine was recently defeated in the Local 763 elections by Dave Reynolds. Reynolds has expressed support for the Guild strike but has yet to make any public commitment to help organize Local 763 members to solidarize with the strikers.

At the urging of U.S. Senator Patricia Murray, talks between union and company negotiators with federal mediator C. Richard Barnes have been set for Washington, D.C.

These talks come, however, as the *Times* owners continue to employ permanent replacement workers and threaten to hire more if the mediation doesn't give them what they want. They are also keeping the Vance Security firm's strikebreaking goons on their property. And they have repeated their contract demand that replacement workers remain on the job ahead of strikers.

In face of the company's attacks, the resolve of the strikers and their supporters remains strong. Carol Marshall, a press operator at the *Times* for six years and a member of the Graphics Communications International Union (GCIU), explained that, while her union is not sanctioning the strike, she and 14 other members of the GCIU are honoring the picket lines. "We get together once or twice a week at church," she said, "and pray and talk about the strike and how we'll all go back in together. When people see unity like this it motivates the community to support us."

*Ernest Mailhot is a meat packer and a member of United Food and Commercial Workers Local 81. Cecelia Moriarity contributed to this article.*

## Teachers' assistants gain in fight for union recognition at U. of Washington

BY BRENDAN WEINHOLD

SEATTLE—A planned December 4 strike by the Graduate Student Employee Action Coalition (GSEAC) at the University of Washington here was postponed when they won a partial victory, gaining union recognition and bargaining rights, pending legislation from the state legislature.

On December 5, what had been planned as a solidarity rally became a victory rally for the GSEAC, which is part of the United Auto Workers union.

Throughout the planning process of the strike, the graduate student employees won wide support. Unionized drivers of the Metro Transit System forced the rerouting of buses when they announced that they expected to respect the picket lines of the teachers' assistants (TAs), graders, and readers. Members of the GSEAC supported the newspaper workers on strike here, and in turn won support from the Pacific Northwest Newspaper Guild.

The Faculty Senate, as well as the Associated Students of the University of Washington, voted to support the strike. The un-

dergraduate students organized the victory rally. Even some state legislators criticized administration arguments against recognizing the union.

Steve Williamson of the King County Labor Council remarked that the TAs won because "this university knew that this would not be a limited strike. This university knew that each union would walk with the TAs."

Several students representing organizations in the school spoke at the rally in support of GSEAC/UAW. GSEAC member Alyssa Karl told undergraduate students at the rally, "Your support has been integral in our struggle."

A number of students interviewed stated that, while a strike was averted when they gained official union recognition, further protests can be expected in the coming months if the administration does not respond to the needs of the graduate student employees.

*Brendan Weinhold is an undergraduate student at the University of Washington.*

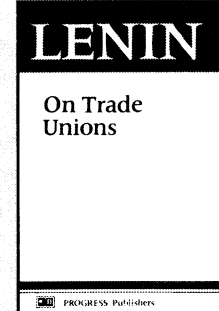
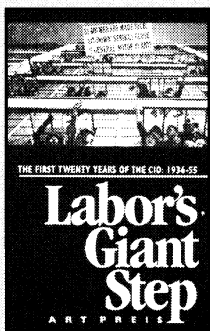
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# 'Fertile Ground: Che Guevara a

## Introduction and excerpts from new Pathfinder book, a firsthand account b

Reprinted below is the introduction by Mary-Alice Waters to *Fertile Ground: Che Guevara and Bolivia—A Firsthand Account* by Rodolfo Saldaña. The introduction is followed by excerpts from the book, which consists of an interview with Bolivian revolutionary Rodolfo Saldaña.

Saldaña joined with Ernesto Che Guevara, one of the central leaders of the Cuban revolution, in the 1966-67 revolutionary front that Guevara led in Bolivia. The interview was conducted in Havana in April 1997 by Waters, editor of *New Internationalist* and president of Pathfinder Press, and Pathfinder editor Michael Taber. The book is scheduled to be released by Pathfinder in February.

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"This great mass of humanity has said, 'Enough!' and has begun to march."

February 4, 1962  
Second Declaration of Havana

BY MARY-ALICE WATERS

The triumph of the Cuban Revolution was not an isolated event. It was part of a rising wave of anti-imperialist struggles throughout the Americas, struggles that in turn drew new strength from the example set by the workers and farmers of Cuba. The upheavals that marked the class struggle in Bolivia from the 1950s to the 1970s provide striking confirmation of this reality.

On January 1, 1959, U.S.-backed dictator Fulgencio Batista fled Cuba in face of an advancing Rebel Army and of a spreading popular insurrection. The two-year-long revolutionary war waged by the Rebel Army under the command of Fidel Castro from its base in the Sierra Maestra mountains was over. The working people of Cuba in their millions took their future in hand. The first Free Territory of the Americas was born.

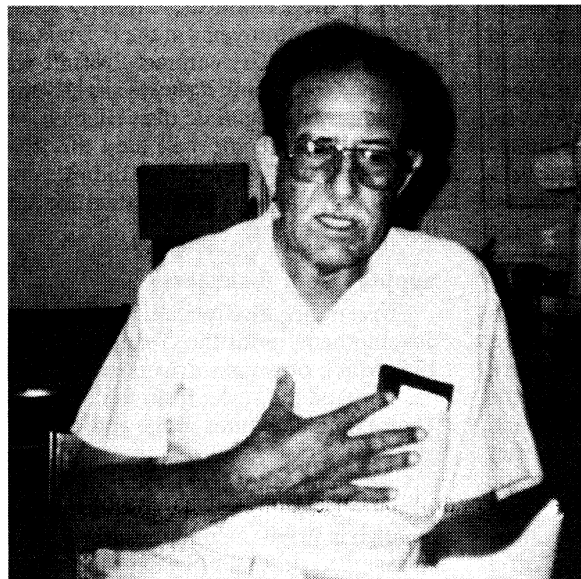
The popular victory over the dictatorship and the accelerating revolutionary transformation of Cuban society sounded a clarion call that echoed from Tierra del Fuego to the Río Bravo and beyond. Ordinary men and women of Cuba tenaciously and successfully resisted the fury of U.S. imperialism's reaction, demonstrating in practice, as the Second Declaration of Havana proclaimed, "that revolution is possible." Their actions won new generations of youth, determined to emulate what the Cuban people had done, and gave impetus to already deepening battles across the length and breadth of South America for land, national sovereignty, and against the brutalization of labor.

As Fidel Castro told a July 26, 1960,

rally—held in the cradle of the revolution in the mountains of eastern Cuba—the revolution was making that country an "example that will convert the Andes into the Sierra Maestra of the American continent."

The Cuban Revolution, its staying power, and its weight in world politics can only be understood in the broad sweep of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, astride which Cuba stands as the most forward position established and held in the broadening national liberation struggles that accelerated following World War II.

Profound economic and social changes on the land and in the size and structure of the working class internationally were brought about by the global crisis of the Great Depres-



sion. International finance capital emerged from that crisis only with the help of the expansion of war-fueled production for the imperialist slaughter and the postwar reconstruction bonanza. These depression- and war-wrought changes in countryside and city the world over gave powerful impetus to anti-imperialist movements throughout colonial and semicolonial countries, from Indonesia, Vietnam, India, and Ireland, to the Mideast and virtually the entire continent of Africa, to the Americas.

This worldwide advance of national liberation battles found expression within the United States as well. A mass proletarian upsurge of Black Americans brought down the institutional racism of "Jim Crow" segregation, which had dominated the South since the defeat of the post-Civil War Radical Reconstruction and had reinforced dis-



Left: Militant/Mary-Alice Waters  
Above: Rodolfo Saldaña, right, with Ernesto Che Guevara at the Ñancahuazú camp in Bolivia. Left: Saldaña during 1997 interview.

crimination and segregation throughout the country.

In Latin America, as Rodolfo Saldaña here describes, a 1952 revolutionary explosion in Bolivia was the high point of popular struggle in the years between the end of World War II and the victory in Cuba. With Bolivia's powerful tin miners in the front ranks, working people won sweeping concessions from imperialist interests and the country's ruling capitalist families. The upheaval resulted in nationalization of the largest mines, legalization of the trade unions, initiation of land reform, and elimination of the literacy requirement that had effectively disenfranchised the majority of Bolivia's people, the Aymara- and Quechua-speaking indigenous population. But Bolivia remained one of the poorest countries in the Americas; only Paraguay and Haiti had lower per capita incomes.

On July 26, 1953, little more than a year after the popular upsurge in Bolivia, the opening deed in the revolutionary struggle to overthrow the Batista dictatorship in Cuba was carried out. Some 160 youth under the leadership of Fidel Castro assaulted the Moncada garrison in Santiago de Cuba and another in nearby Bayamo.

Simultaneously, the young Argentine doctor Ernesto Guevara—later to become Che, one of the central leaders of the Cuban revolution and commander of the 1966-67 revolutionary front in Bolivia discussed in this interview—was setting off on a political journey through the countries of Latin America. Drawn to Guatemala in 1954 as imperialism was organizing to overthrow the Jacobo Arbenz regime there, Guevara escaped to Mexico where he soon met the leaders of Cuba's newly formed July 26 Movement, recently released from Batista's prisons following a nationwide amnesty campaign. Guevara signed on as the troops' doctor and joined the *Granma* expedition that landed on the shores of eastern Cuba in December 1956 to launch the revolutionary war that culminated two years later in the overthrow of the U.S.-backed tyranny.

In Bolivia, Rodolfo Saldaña had dropped out of school and was starting work at Bolivia's largest tin mine, Siglo XX (Twentieth Century) to build the Communist Party of Bolivia among the miners.

These interconnected threads are indispensable for understanding the events at the center of this book. By the mid-1960s, as Saldaña emphasizes, the class struggle in

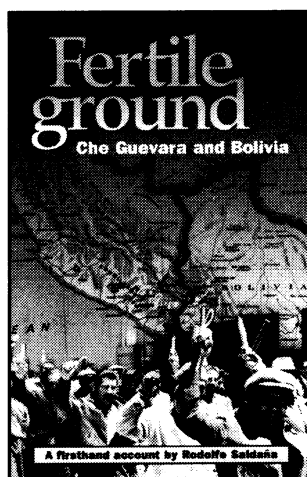
Bolivia, which had accelerated coming out of World War II, was once again reaching explosive dimensions. Political polarization was sharpening throughout the Southern Cone of Latin America. World politics was more and more dominated by U.S. imperialism's rapidly escalating war to crush the national liberation struggle of the Vietnamese people and the growing mass resistance to Washington's war within the United States and worldwide.

When Che Guevara, backed by Cuba's leadership, concluded that conditions were favorable to launch a revolutionary front in Bolivia, there was nothing casual or uninformed about the decision. Guevara's course was to establish a guerrilla front of internationalist volunteers that could regroup revolutionary forces throughout the region. Their goal was to forge a fighting anti-imperialist movement of workers, peasants, and youth that would overturn the military dictatorship in Bolivia that defended the landed, mining, and other capitalist interests in that country. In the process, they aimed to open the road to socialist revolution on the South American continent.

By October 1967, through the combined efforts of special U.S.-trained Bolivian army units and intelligence operations directed from Washington, Che's diminished troops had been cornered. The defeat of the revolutionary front was sealed by the annihilation of all but a handful of its remaining forces on October 8, including the wounding, capture, and execution of Guevara himself.

In the months and years that followed, a political debate raged among revolutionary-minded forces not only in Bolivia and Latin America, but around the world, assessing the reasons for the defeat. Many political forces who had opposed the revolutionary course of Cuba's leadership from the days of Moncada onward argued that the defeat of Che's *guerrilla* stemmed from a political misestimation by Guevara and the Cuban leadership. According to these voices, the workers and peasants of Bolivia were indifferent at best to the *guerrilla* initiative; conditions for a revolutionary course of struggle were lacking in Bolivia. Others claimed even more provocatively that Cuba's revolutionary leadership had abandoned Che and his forces, and failed to take measures that could have reestablished contact with the guerrilla unit, rescuing the combatants from encirclement.

Rodolfo Saldaña's account, published here for the first time, makes a unique contribution. It comes from a Bolivian revolutionary who joined with Che Guevara in the 1966-68 campaign, and throughout a lifetime of political work remained true to the same course. Only *My Campaign with Che*, by the central Bolivian leader Inti Peredo, offers a similar firsthand account of the struggle from the perspectives of the Bolivian revolutionaries involved. Peredo's



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CHE GUEVARA AND BOLIVIA

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Rodolfo Saldaña was one of the Bolivians who joined ranks in 1966-67 with Ernesto Che Guevara to forge a revolutionary movement of workers, peasants, and young people to overturn the military dictatorship in Bolivia and open the road to socialist revolution in South America. Here, Saldaña talks about the unresolved battles of the tin miners, peasants, and indigenous peoples of his country that created "fertile ground" for Guevara's revolutionary course and mark out the future of Bolivia and the Americas.

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# nd Bolivia'

## revolutionary Rodolfo Saldaña

book, written shortly before he was killed in 1969 by the military dictatorship in La Paz, circulated in several countries of Latin America in the 1970s. It was translated and published for the first time in English in 1994 by Pathfinder Press together with a new translation of Guevara's *Bolivian Diary*.

Rodolfo Saldaña was a founding member of the ELN (the National Liberation Army) of Bolivia, the name taken by the forces under Che Guevara's command following their first military engagement with the armed forces of the Bolivian dictatorship in March 1967. A Central Committee member of the Communist Party of Bolivia, he broke with the party in 1966 over the refusal of the leadership under general secretary Mario Monje to collaborate with Che's effort.

Saldaña was slated to join Che's *guerrilla* as a combatant, but his responsibilities, and the course of the guerrilla struggle itself, kept him at the head of the ELN's clandestine network in the cities and tin mining regions. He carried out the difficult and dangerous assignments of recruiting fighters among working people and youth, especially from the miners, and of providing logistical support for the guerrilla front. In his *Bolivian Diary*, Guevara noted that Saldaña "made a very good impression on me" when he visited the guerrilla camp at the beginning of the campaign.

Following the death of Guevara and most of the combatants, Saldaña helped organize the rescue and escape of the five survivors, three of them Cuban and two Bolivian. In the heat of the political battles that ensued, he worked to consolidate new forces in Bolivia and to relaunch the revolutionary struggle.

Of particular value in the account Saldaña gives here is the concrete, historical perspective he offers on the character of the class struggle in Bolivia and the long-gestating social, political, and economic realities that created the "fertile ground" for revolutionary struggle in the 1960s and '70s. In the process, he gives the lie to those who have argued that Che's *guerrilla* failed because it was a political adventure, ignorant of and alien to the conditions of Bolivia, and drew only an indifferent or hostile response from the country's workers, peasants, and youth.

Of value also is the picture he provides of the political and class trajectory of cadres of the Bolivian Communist Party such as himself and Rosendo García Maismán, the leader of the mine workers federation at Siglo XX. It comes as no surprise that they were among the small handful who broke with the party to chart a course, together with Che, towards the revolutionary struggle for power.

In passing, Saldaña also answers those who tried to use the defeat of the Bolivian front to slander the Cuban leadership for supposedly failing to provide necessary logistical support for Che and his comrades. He dismisses as simply uninformed—or nefarious—those who have sought to drive a wedge between Che and the revolution in Cuba he helped to lead, the revolution that made him the person he became.

In subsequent years Saldaña spoke little about his political experiences as part of the Bolivian vanguard that fought alongside Che. Of modest demeanor, he gave virtually no interviews. On the thirtieth anniversary of Che's death, while living and working in Havana he provided invaluable help in the preparation, first in Spanish and then in English, of *Pombo: A Man of Che's Guerrilla*. That firsthand account by Harry Villegas (*Pombo*), a member of Che's general staff in Bolivia, was published by Editora Política in 1996 and by Pathfinder Press in 1997. In the course of this work, Saldaña agreed to talk with Pathfinder editors Mary-Alice Waters and Michael Taber about Bolivia and the revolutionary campaign led by Guevara. The interview took place in Havana on April 26, 1997.

It was originally slated for publication in the fall of 1997 as part of the commemoration of the thirtieth anniversary of

Guevara's death in combat. But Saldaña's health prevented him from reviewing the interview at the time. He completed his editorial work shortly before his death in June 2000.

*Fertile Ground* is being published simultaneously in Spanish by Editora Política and in English by Pathfinder Press. Iraida Aguirrechu, editor-in-chief of the current affairs department of Editora Política, the publishing house of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Cuba, deserves special appreciation. Without her determined efforts the preparation of the interview for publication might never have been brought to completion. The support and encouragement of Brigadier General Harry Villegas was also decisive.

The extensive interview was transcribed by Mirta Vidal and translated by Michael Taber.

A number of photos of events in Bolivia and of Saldaña himself are published courtesy of Gladys Brizuela, Saldaña's companion of many years. Pedro Glasinovic, editor-in-chief of the daily *Presencia* in Bolivia, and Delfin Xiqués of *Granma* in Cuba also provided invaluable aid in searching for and providing photos of the class struggle in Bolivia.

Mary-Alice Waters  
December 2000



Photos :  
Courtesy of Prensa Latina  
Above: Students are confronted by police after leading a protest against the government in downtown La Paz, Bolivia, on Aug. 6, 1967. Left: Workers march beneath the banner of the Bolivian Workers Federation (COB) in defense of the Cuban Revolution, early 1960s.

## Saldaña: Conditions were ripe for revolutionary struggle

**Question:** Many who disagree with the revolutionary perspectives Che Guevara fought for argue that he and his fellow combatants were mistaken in going to Bolivia in 1966. Can you give us some background on the class struggle in Bolivia that shaped this decision?

**Saldaña:** The Bolivian people have a long history of struggle. There have been moments of really violent confrontations between the people and the repressive forces, though the two sides were not equal. More than once in the history of the country there have been true popular insurrections that toppled governments. There have also been massacres of miners, peasants, factory workers, and other working people in the cities, mainly La Paz.

Perhaps the defining moment of popular struggle was 1952. At that time a military junta ruled the country. As head of the police force, the minister of the interior conspired and launched a coup, but popular participation began changing the character of events, giving rise to a popular insurrection. For several days there were armed confrontations in the streets of La Paz, Oruro, and other cities, and the popular forces came out on top.

That's how the revolutionary process of April 1952 began, with the fall of the military junta that was governing the country and the rise of the Revolutionary Nationalist Movement (MNR). Wherever there was a confrontation, the popular masses defeated the military forces. For all intents and purposes, in those cities where there were confrontations the army came apart.

**Question:** Why did workers, peasants, and others take to the streets in 1952? What led up to it?

**Saldaña:** Three issues were central: nationalization of the mines, land reform, and universal suffrage.

Nationalization of the tin mines was a demand the people had embraced for many years, and as a consequence of the revolutionary upheaval, the great mining companies were nationalized. There were three tin mining consortiums: Hochschild, Patiño, and Aramayo.<sup>1</sup> These were taken

over to form the state mining sector.

Mining was the foundation of the economy because Bolivia was one of the largest producers of tin in the world. At certain times it has been the main producer, and at other times, it was second, but it has always been among the leading producers....

Agrarian reform was also a measure demanded by the majority. Prior to 1952, peasants struggling for a parcel of land were murdered or imprisoned by the large landowners for defending their rights against landlord oppression and exploitation.<sup>2</sup>

Because of this whole situation, the 1952

to imperialist interests. Each had also located its headquarters outside Bolivia: Patiño in the United States. Aramayo in Switzerland, and Hochschild in Chile. U.S. and British capital had substantial minority shareholdings in Patiño, which accounted for 43 percent of Bolivia's tin production.

<sup>2</sup> In the Bolivian countryside before 1952, some 92 percent of all cultivated land was owned by 6 percent of landowners. Most peasants lived in virtual bondage to the landlords.

events culminated in these two fundamental measures: agrarian reform and nationalization of the large mining companies.

The third important measure was universal suffrage. The right to vote, was previously restricted to persons who knew how to read and write. The majority of the Bolivian people were illiterate, and continue to be today. Clearly at that time there was greater illiteracy than now. But even today it is true. It is not enough to go to school for a year or two, the little rural or urban schoolhouse. It's true they may have learned to read and write a little, but owing to lack of use they again sink into illiteracy. The poorest sectors do not have access to the daily press. They are unable to buy a newspaper, a book, a magazine.

Steps to meet the popular demands around these three issues really filled the population with enthusiasm. They opened up perspectives for the development of the country, for the economic and social development of Bolivia.

Within Latin America as a whole the

Continued on Page 10

## Books to be launched at Havana Fair

Simultaneous with Pathfinder's publication in February of *Fertile Ground: Che Guevara and Bolivia—A Firsthand Account by Rodolfo Saldaña*, the Cuban publishing house Editora Política is publishing a Spanish-language edition. They will be launched together at a special event during the Havana International Book Fair, which will be held February 2-10.

Since the Third International Havana Book Fair in 1986, Pathfinder supporters have had a booth displaying books and pamphlets at the biannual event, which in 2001 is becoming yearly. During the fairs, requests for Pathfinder titles have been made by students, workers, soldiers, librarians, teachers, and others.

In response to the political interest in these titles, donations of books have been made to libraries and other cultural institutions in Cuba.

To make these and other book donations possible, the *Militant* for a number of years has organized a Books for Cuba Fund, to which working people in the United States and elsewhere have contributed thousands of dollars.

To help prepare for book donations during the 2001 Havana book fair, you can contribute to this international effort. Checks or money orders earmarked "Books for Cuba Fund" can be sent to the *Militant* at 410 West Street, New York, NY 10014.

## Contribute to Books For Cuba Fund!

Continued from Page 9

revolutionary process of 1952 awakened great hope. People thought that a new type of society would be built in Bolivia, a more just society, with a better distribution of wealth, with possibilities for human development. But things didn't work out that way.

#### Revolutionary process stalled and reversed

Very early on, pressures to limit and reverse these revolutionary measures in Bolivia began to be felt. These came from the United States government primarily, from the large corporations, from international bodies. These forces brought great pressures to bear on the government and on the governing party.<sup>3</sup>

Measures necessary for deepening the revolutionary process were not taken by those in power. So, shortly after 1952, the people began fighting to advance these measures, and later still, to defend them....

In its first few years, the MNR government headed by Victor Paz Estenssoro had the support of the mass of peasants and workers—miners, factory workers, railroad workers, and so on. But in the final years of the 1950s, and at the beginning of the 1960s, these sectors of the population began to see that things were not going as they should.

Many conquests won through constant battles by the workers were taken away. The elimination of the inexpensive grocery stores in the mines, which supplied basic products for working families at subsidized prices, meant a significant decrease in workers' purchasing power. Wages suffered a continual decline through inflation. Massive layoffs in the mines and other sectors began. These facts meant that confrontations with the government became more and more violent. After 1952

various governments succeeded each other belonging to the same ruling party, the MNR. Between 1960 and 1964, there were steadily deepening conflicts. The government's repression of the trade union movement, the workers movement, also became more and more violent. The year 1964 marked the high point of these confrontations.

In October 1964, on the plains of Sora Sora, near the city of Oruro, the largest armed conflict took place between the army and miners of Siglo XX<sup>4</sup> and Huanuni.

#### Revolutionary crisis in Southern Cone

*Question:* Did the miners have their own militias?

*Saldaña:* Right after 1952 there were workers and peasants militias,



Above: Bolivian miners protest military coup led by Hugo Banzer in 1971. Left: Peasants in Peru demonstrate for "land or death" in early 1960s. Mass working-class and peasant struggles erupted not only in Bolivia but in other South American countries.

<sup>3</sup> During this period, Washington was also leading an effort to topple the government of Guatemala and crush political and social struggles there accompanying a limited land reform initiated by the regime of Jacobo Arbenz. The Arbenz regime was overthrown in a CIA-backed operation in June 1954. Dictators throughout Latin America were being armed and supported by Washington—from Fulgencio Batista in Cuba and Alfredo Stroessner in Paraguay to Anastasio Somoza in Nicaragua.

which were armed. But over the years, in various ways, they were disarmed. If workers militias still existed, it was more or less in name only. But some workers, both in the cities and in the mining areas, kept their weapons. In the first years, after 1952, the peasants also purchased weapons, but little by little these were taken away.

At the end of October 1964, after the events of Sora Sora, there was a massive wave of arrests in La Paz, of workers and students. I don't remember exactly, but it

<sup>4</sup> Siglo XX was the largest tin mine in Bolivia.

must have been much more than a thousand persons. This occurred at the end of October. But the struggle continued.

René Barrientos, general of the Bolivian air force and vice president of the republic at that time, organized a coup d'état on November 4, 1964. President Victor Paz Estenssoro, the MNR leader who in 1952 had decreed the nationalization of the mines, the agrarian reform, and universal suffrage, was deposed. In the course of the coup there were armed confrontations with workers and others, in the streets of La Paz, for example. And there were even popular confrontations with the army itself, although the army adopted the stance that it was placing itself on the side of the people in carrying out the coup.

On November 4, 1964, workers seized a series of places, including the Panóptico jail in downtown La Paz. All the political prisoners there were set free, many of whom had been arrested at the end of October. There were also union leaders who had been in jail for months. All these people went out into the streets.

A few days before, the government of Paz Estenssoro had closed the workers' radio stations. There were a number of these—certainly more than twenty—run by unions of miners, factory workers, railroad workers, construction workers, and others. All these radio stations were closed down. The union locals were closed. Their bank accounts, that is, the money the unions had in banks, or in company vaults, were frozen. The unions could not touch their money nor could they use their offices and meeting halls.

After November 4, Barrientos opened things up a little. The especially repressive measures against the workers were lifted. The workers' radio stations were permitted to resume. The union locals were reopened. But Barrientos soon faced growing working-class resistance to the dictatorial measures of his regime.

In May 1965 the government decreed a lowering of wages in the mines and ordered a massive wave of arrests of workers leaders. They were immediately deported, sending large numbers into exile in Argentina, Chile, and Paraguay. They were taken as

far as possible from the Bolivian border—to the south of Argentina, to the south of Chile. Soon, little by little, they began to return to the country secretly.

In October 1965, the same year as the large-scale arrests, there were massive strikes by workers demanding freedom of their union leaders and the restoration of wage levels. The political movement was again heating up. There were armed confrontations in the main cities and mining centers.

In October, once again armed confrontations took place, and the military occupied the Central-Southern Council, which are a series of mines located in the south of the Department of Potosí, an area in which nothing had ever happened, that is, there had been no violent confrontations. The workers occupied other mines, too. So these armed confrontations in the cities themselves presented a new situation to us, to revolutionaries in Bolivia.

This was more or less the situation in the country at that time. We can thus answer the question of whether or not Bolivia was fertile ground for initiating the kind of revolutionary struggle Che envisioned.

*Question:* What do you think?

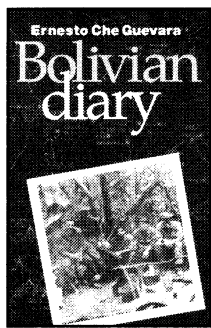
*Saldaña:* I believe it was. The conditions existed.<sup>5</sup> There was repression; there were aspirations of the population that had not been satisfied and urgently required a solution; and the people could not fulfill their aspirations in the existing situation. There were solid reasons for the people to fight,

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#### From Pathfinder

#### The Bolivian Diary of Ernesto Che Guevara

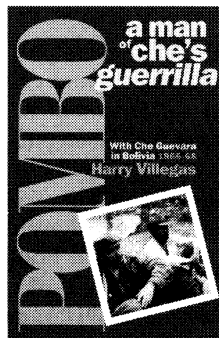
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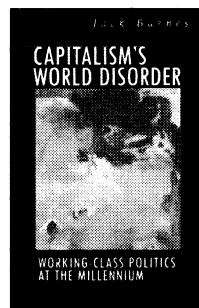
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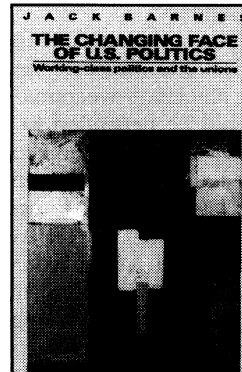
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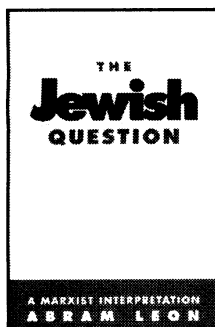
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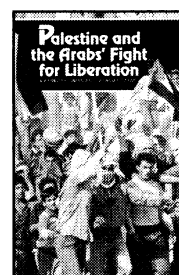
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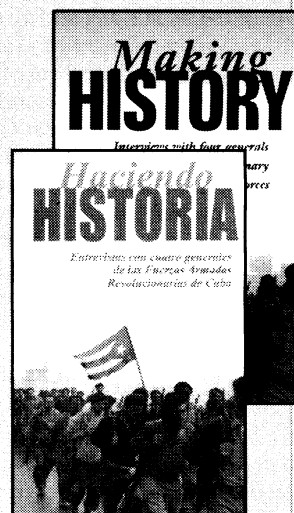
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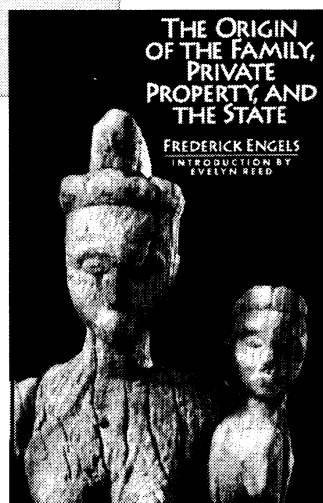
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# Palestinians balk at U.S. concession demands

Continued from front page

basis for the attempts to restart negotiations.

The U.S. president has proposed a patchwork solution to disputes over territory in East Jerusalem, which lies in the West Bank and which the Israeli military seized from Jordan in the 1967 "six-day" war. Arab neighborhoods would purportedly be under Palestinian sovereignty and Jewish neighborhoods under Israeli sovereignty, while the Palestinian Authority, the elected body headed by Arafat that exercises limited jurisdiction over a part of the occupied territories, would have control over the Muslim holy site Dome of the Rock and partial control of the Temple Mount.

This would leave the great majority of Jerusalem in Tel Aviv's hands. Clinton has reportedly promised Barak that he will push for international recognition of the city as Israel's capital and will himself lay the cornerstone for a new U.S. embassy there later in January.

The U.S. president also proposed that the Palestinian Authority be banned from keeping any heavy weapons. The Israeli military would be permitted to maintain troops in the Jordan Valley adjacent to the West Bank for six years, and beyond that would retain the right to send forces in the event of a threat judged by Tel Aviv to be "immediate." Israeli troops would also join an international force along the Jordan River to monitor border crossings into the Palestinian state.

Clinton's proposals include the rejection of the demand by Palestinian refugees to be allowed to return to their family homes and properties in Israel. Instead they will be offered the right to return to the cobbled-together Palestinian state. The territory covered by the latter would be increased to 95 percent of the West Bank and all of the Gaza Strip. Tel Aviv would annex clusters of Zionist settlements on 5 percent of West Bank territory in exchange for a corresponding area in the Negev desert, near Gaza.

According to a summary published in the Israeli on-line edition of the *Jerusalem Report*, "The parties [would] agree that, with the signing of the accord, their conflict is over, and that all Palestinian claims against Israel will be waived after all the provisions are implemented within three to six years."

## Palestinian leaders withhold approval

While Barak said he accepted the proposals as a basis for negotiation, spokespeople for Yasir Arafat withheld approval and called for clarification on a number of points. The team of Palestinian negotiators spelled out their reservations in a paper released on January 1, one day before meetings between Clinton and Arafat.

"The United States proposal seems to respond to Israeli demands while neglecting the basic Palestinian need: a viable state," reads the document. In particular, write the Palestinian representatives, Washington's rejection of the right of return to Israel "reflects a wholesale adoption of the Israeli position."

"Palestinians should be given the option to choose where they wish to settle, including return to the homes from which they were driven," explains the paper, adding that "recognition of [this] right...is a prerequisite for the closure of the conflict."

The proposals to annex clusters of Zionist settlements in the West Bank would give Tel Aviv control of "large swaths of land, rendering the Palestinian state unviable and

lacking direct access to international borders.... The use of settlement blocs as the guiding principle subordinates Palestinian interests in the contiguity of their state, and control over their natural resources, to Israeli interests. In addition, the Palestinian side needs to know exactly which settlements Israel intends to annex," states the document.

The negotiators say that under Clinton's proposals territory in the West Bank under Palestinian Authority jurisdiction would be cut three ways by highways that would be off limits to citizens of the new state.

The paper also rejects Clinton's proposals for Jerusalem, explaining that in relation to the religious sites it implies Tel Aviv's sovereignty. Arab neighborhoods in the rest of the city would be isolated from each other under the proposals, it says, emphasizing that any basis for negotiation "must guarantee the contiguity of Palestinian areas within the city, as well as the contiguity of Jerusalem with the rest of Palestine."

In the January 2 talks between Clinton and Arafat, the U.S. president pressed the Palestinian leader to accept the proposed negotiating terms. Hani al-Hassan, an adviser to Arafat, reported that Clinton "got very angry" when the Palestinians outlined their reservations, and "threatened to blame Arafat for the breakdown in talks."

The Palestinian assertion of the right of the refugees to return has proved a particularly controversial point. In an earlier statement, the cabinet of the Palestinian Authority stated that "the Palestinian leadership confirms its commitment to the full right of refugees to return to their lands and homes in accordance with Resolution 194," a resolution passed in the United Nations in 1948 in the wake of terrorist campaigns by Zionist armed units and the first Arab-Israeli war, which forced hundreds of thousands of Palestinians to flee into neighboring territories.

Today there are more than 3.7 million Palestinian refugees officially registered with the United Nations Relief and Work Agency, living in the West Bank, Gaza Strip, Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Iraq, and elsewhere in the Middle East. Many more Palestinians who were dispersed by the Zionist violence are no longer registered as refugees.

On January 1 Israel Katz, a Likud Party representative in the Knesset, or parliament, introduced a bill designed to ban any mass Palestinian immigration. If passed, the legislation would require the approval of at least 61 of the 120 members in the Knesset for any concessions by Barak on this issue. "The

bill will make clear to Yasir Arafat that the right of return of Palestinian refugees is not a negotiable issue in peace talks," said Katz.

Barak himself has stated that "the government under my authority will not accept any agreement in any form that will recognize the right of return, period."

## Divisions among Israeli rulers

The prime minister's initial approval of Clinton's terms came under fire from the chief of the Israeli army, Lt. Gen. Shaul Mofaz, who told the prime minister's fractured coalition cabinet that he opposed any division of Jerusalem and the proposed eventual withdrawal from the Jordan Valley.

Parties and organizations to the right of Likud spoke strongly against the proposals, including the Shas party and a spokesperson for the Zionist "Women in Green" organization, who accused Barak of "treason against the people of Israel."

Barak's opponent in the contest for the prime ministership, Ariel Sharon of the Likud Party, has been more restrained in his criticism. The Likud has alternated leadership of the country with Barak's Labor Party through much of the country's 50-year history. While attacking the prime minister for accepting Clinton's terms, he stated on December 27 that "Barak is not a traitor."

Sharon is a clear favorite to win the February 6 election. He says he will form a "broad-based government of national unity," according to the *Ha'aretz* daily newspaper.

The Labor prime minister is working overtime to try to heap the blame on the Palestinian leadership for the lack of motion in the talks. He stated on December 31 that if the Palestinian leadership does not accept the terms for negotiation, "Israel will take a time-out and prepare for unilateral separation."

"We must part from the Palestinians," he continued. "It is one of our highest priorities to do so in an agreement, but we will have to prepare to do so without an agreement if it becomes clear that the Palestinians are not interested." The January 2 *Wall Street Journal* reported that "Israel has started building a 45-mile fence between its territory and the West Bank."

Clinton has buttonholed Arafat to try to persuade him to begin negotiations on the proposed terms, and has also enlisted the help of the heads of government in Egypt, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia. But the chorus of voices advocating rejection has been louder, including not only political opponents of

Arafat like the leaders of Hamas and Islamic Holy War organizations but also his own organization, Fatah.

## Israeli siege, 'pinpoint' killings

The Israeli armed forces have maintained their siege of the West Bank and Gaza and their strategy of "pinpoint" killings, to use *Ha'aretz's* term. Palestinians in the West Bank town of Tul Karm reported seeing special Israeli forces assassinate Thabet Thabet, director general of the Palestinian health ministry and a veteran activist in Fatah on December 31. Thabet was reportedly hit 14 times in the chest from a distance of about 200 meters (219 yards) as he was backing his car out of his driveway. That day, Israeli soldiers also killed two Palestinian policemen in Tul Karm.

Barak commented during a visit to the Beit El army base in the West Bank that the military "has the right to operate against those who operate against us."

Two other Palestinians, including a 10-year-old boy, died on January 1. Zionist settlers fired on a crowd in Hebron, killing a 22-year-old man, and blocked the entrances of several Palestinian towns, vowing to "take back the roads."

The settlers, who function with the backing of the Israeli military, were enraged by the killing of a leader of the Kahane Chai organization, Binyamin Kahane, and his wife on December 31. The rightist outfit took its name from Kahane's father, Meir Kahane, who customarily referred to Palestinians as "dogs" and called for their expulsion from "greater" Israel.

As of January 1 the death toll in the unrest that has dominated politics in the Middle East since the end of September stood at more than 350, the vast majority of them Palestinian victims of Tel Aviv's brutality.

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**The U.S. Election Result: Factionalism, Polarization, and Revolutionary Politics Today.** Speaker: Tony Hunt, Communist League. Fri., Jan. 12, 7:00 p.m. 47 The Cut. Tel: 020 7401 2409.



**What's the hurry?**—A California judge told state officials to enforce a law requiring physical and mental health care for the 7,500 in-



Harry Ring

mates in 11 state youth prisons. Authorities were given two years to meet the requirements of a health care law enacted in 1987.

**Sock it to 'em**—In the Los An-

geles area Compton school district, two high school seniors are mapping court action, charging that the rotten conditions constitute a violation of their civil rights. They cite the run-down facilities, a grossly inadequate teaching staff, lack of English language courses for Spanish speakers, and more. The mainly Latino and Black students are wearing ribbons of various colors. Each color voices a major grievance. One student said he'd be wearing a ribbon but they ran out too quickly.

**An opinion**—The disgraceful conditions in the schools generally, and most particularly where the students are nonwhite, surely need to

be fought against. But, we think, there's a core issue to be recognized—the fact that the existing education system is structured to condition young people for exploitation by employers, and to barrage students with the humongous lie that capitalism is forever, and nothing could be better.

**Does sound that way**—Banco Santander, which owns banks in 12 Latin American countries, successfully bid for control of Brazil's state-owned Banco do Estado de Sao Paulo.

A spokesman for Banco Santander said, "The success we had here represents our confidence in Brazil...and in the solidity of the

financial system." Employees shut the state bank chain in protest against the privatization. At the stock exchange, 1,300 cops were mobilized to ensure a peaceful transfer of the shares.

**What's a puny little gov't do?**—American Red Cross blood processing centers repeatedly have failed federal inspections over the last 15 years and continue to have problems that present a 'potential for harm' to patients, federal officials say. "One official bleated, 'increasingly tough actions have failed to correct the problems.'"—News item.

**Taxing came before tithing?**—

"The [Russian] Orthodox Church has named St. Matthew, the apostle, as patron saint of the tax police, the newspaper *Sevodnya* reported. The tax police, who are known for storming buildings in black ski masks to conduct an audit, have had a public relations problem as did the tax collectors of ancient Rome, of which St. Matthew was a member."—Wire dispatch.

**Obviously couldn't be the work**—London researchers say that by the time manual laborers reach their 30s, they're twice as likely as other folks to experience hardening of the arteries. The researchers speculated the cause may lie in childhood, or in the womb.

## Unions and the need to overturn the wages system

Printed below is the second part of an article entitled "Trades Unions" by Frederick Engels. It appears in the pamphlet *The Wages System*, which is made up of 12 articles that Engels wrote between May and August 1881 for *The Labour Standard*, a weekly trade union newspaper published in London. The item below was first published on June 4, 1881. The pamphlet, published by Progress Publishers, is available from Pathfinder for \$2. This is the last of four items from the pamphlet reprinted by the *Militant*. Subtitles are by the *Militant*.

BY FREDERICK ENGELS

So far we have considered the functions of Trades Unions as far only as they contribute to the regulation of the rate of wages and ensure to the labourer, in his struggle against capital, at least some means of resistance. But that aspect does not exhaust our subject.

### from the pages of *The Wages System*

The struggle of the labourer against capital, we said. That struggle does exist, whatever the apologists of capital may say to the contrary. It will exist so long as a reduction of wages remains the safest and readiest means of raising profits; nay, so long as the wages system itself shall exist. The very existence of Trades Unions is proof sufficient of the fact; if they are not made to fight against the encroachments of capital what are they made for? There is no use in mincing matters.

No milksop words can hide the ugly fact that present society is mainly divided into two great antagonistic classes—into capitalists, the owners of all the means for the employment of labour, on one side; and working men, the owners of nothing but their own working power, on the other. The produce of the labour of the latter class has to be divided between both classes, and it is this division about which the struggle is constantly going on. Each class tries to get as large a share as possible; and it is the most curious aspect of this struggle that the working class, while fighting to obtain a share only of its own produce, is often enough accused of actually robbing the capitalist!

But a struggle between two great classes of society necessarily becomes a political struggle. So did the long battle between the middle or capitalist class and the landed aristocracy; so also does the fight between the working class and these same capitalists. In every struggle of class against class, the next end fought for is political power; the ruling class defends its political supremacy, that is to say its safe majority in the Legislature; the inferior class fights for, first a share, then the whole of that power, in order to become enabled to change existing laws in conformity with their own interests and requirements.

Thus the working class of Great Britain for years fought ardently and even violently for the People's Charter,<sup>1</sup> which was to give it that political power; it was defeated, but the struggle had made such an impression

upon the victorious middle class that this class, since then, was only too glad to buy a prolonged armistice at the price of ever-repeated concessions to the working people.

#### Political struggle of class against class

Now, in a political struggle of class against class, organisation is the most important weapon. And in the same measure as the merely political or Chartist Organisation fell to pieces, in the same measure the Trades Unions Organisation grew stronger and stronger, until at present it has reached a degree of strength unequalled by any working-class organisation abroad. A few large Trades Unions, comprising between one and two millions of working men, and backed by the smaller or local Unions, represent a power which has to be taken into account by any Government of the ruling class, be it Whig or Tory.

According to the traditions of their origin and development in this country, these powerful organisations have hitherto limited themselves almost strictly to their function of sharing in the regulation of wages and working hours, and of enforcing the repeal of laws openly hostile to the workmen. As stated before, they have done so with quite as much effect as they had a right to expect. But they have attained more than that—the ruling class, which knows their strength better than they themselves do, has volunteered to them concessions beyond that.

Disraeli's Household Suffrage gave the vote to at least the greater portion of the organised working class. Would he have proposed it unless he supposed that these new voters would show a will of their own—would cease to be led by middle-class Liberal politicians? Would he have been able to carry it if the working people, in the management of their colossal Trade Societies, had not proved themselves fit for administrative and political work?

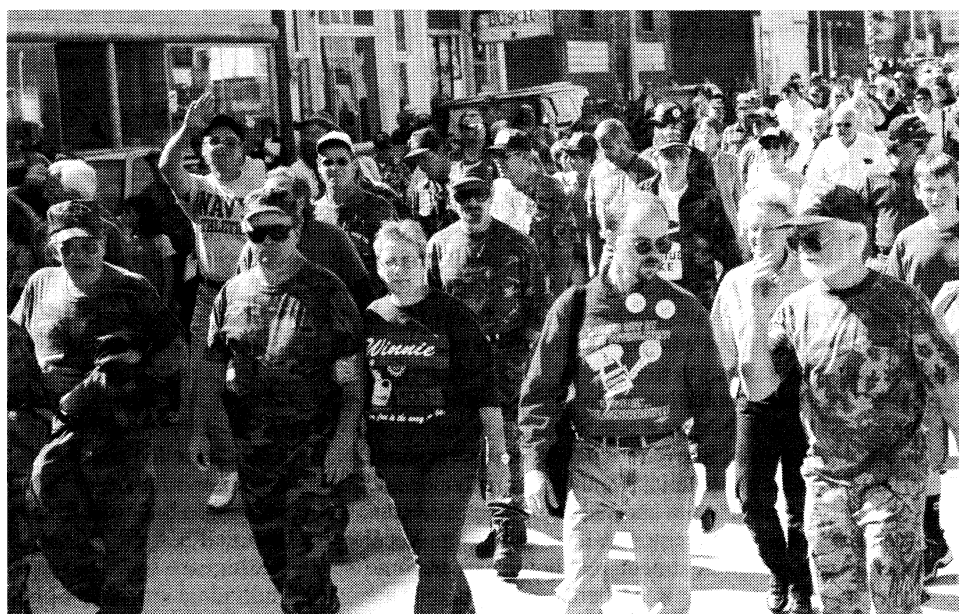
That very measure opened out a new prospect to the working class. It gave them the majority in London and in all manufacturing towns, and thus enabled them to enter into the struggle against capital with new weapons, by sending men of their own class to Parliament. And here, we are sorry to say, the Trades Unions forgot their duty as the advanced guard of the working class.

The new weapon has been in their hands for more than ten years, but they scarcely ever unsheathed it. They ought not to forget that they cannot continue to hold the position they now occupy unless they really march in the van of the working class. It is not in the nature of things that the working class of England should possess the power of sending forty or fifty working men to Parliament and yet be satisfied for ever to be represented by capitalists or their clerks, such as lawyers, editors, etc.

#### The problem is the wages system itself

More than this, there are plenty of symptoms that the working class of this country is awakening to the consciousness that it has

<sup>1</sup> The People's Charter, from which the Chartist Movement took its name, was published on May 8, 1838, in the form of a parliamentary bill; it contained six points—universal suffrage (for men over 21), annual parliamentary elections, secret ballot, equal constituencies, the abolition of property qualifications for parliamentary candidates, salaries for M.P.s. Chartist petitions demanding the acceptance of the Charter were rejected by Parliament in 1839, 1842, and 1849.



Militant/Jim Garrison

**March in Virden, Illinois, in solidarity with striking coal miners, October 1998. Social movement in coalfields underscores "political struggle of class against class."**

for some time been moving in the wrong groove; that the present movements for higher wages and shorter hours exclusively, keep it in a vicious circle out of which there is no issue; that it is not the lowness of wages which forms the fundamental evil, but the wages system itself. This knowledge once

generally spread amongst the working class, the position of Trades Unions must change considerably. They will no longer enjoy the privilege of being the only organisations of the working class. At the side of, or above, the Unions of special trades there must

**Continued on Page 14**

## —25 AND 50 YEARS AGO—



January 16, 1976

RALEIGH, N.C.—The six-month-old rebellion of prisoners at the North Carolina Correctional Center for Women has entered a new stage with a lawsuit seeking \$25 million in damages.

The plaintiffs are thirty-six of the women who last June staged a peaceful demonstration on the prison grounds in protest of harassment and inhumane conditions of confinement. The protest was brutally quelled.

The lawsuit, prepared with the help of the National Conference of Black Lawyers and the Prisoners Rights Organized Defense, names as defendants North Carolina Gov. James Holshouser, Secretary of Corrections David Jones, and unnamed "John Does" and "Richard Coes." Jones, in turn, has threatened to charge the plaintiffs with "assaulting" his officers.

After the women began their protest on June 15, 450 male guards—armed with billy clubs, tear gas, pepper gas, dogs, and riot gear—were called in from Raleigh's prison for men. This force was supplemented with 150 state highway patrolmen and 50 city policemen. An undetermined number of national guardsmen were placed on standby.

Five days later, this army managed to subdue the women prisoners. Three small women were selected out of a group of chanting and singing prisoners to be carried to "security" isolation. Despite their attempts to walk peacefully, the male guards grabbed and jerked them by the arms, dislocating the shoulder of eighty-nine-pound Anne Willett.

Some of the demonstrators were confined to Dorm C (the "punishment cottage"), while thirty-four others were transferred to the Western Correctional Center at

Morganton, an all-male facility.

One of the major issues of the rebellion is inadequate medical care.



January 15, 1951

With brutal contempt for the will of the American people, Truman's "State of the Union" message to Congress ignored the great popular demand that overshadows every other today: Stop the war now and withdraw the U.S. troops from Korea!

He did not offer even the courtesy of a reference to the flood of letters to the White House, Congress, and the press voicing overwhelming public sentiment to "save our boys" from the disastrous consequences of his "police action"—his undeclared Korean war. Instead, he made it clear he intends to risk utter disaster for the GIs in Korea.

He evaded entirely, furthermore, the fundamental Constitutional issue that has been raised in the "Great Debate" on foreign policy: His conduct of war without consultation of Congress, let alone the consent of the people. Should a single man, as Truman did in the case of Korea and as he clearly plans to do with relation to China and Western Europe, commit this country to war or engage armed forces on foreign soil wherever and whenever he sees fit? That is one of the most crucial questions on which the American people expected Truman to speak. But he disdained to answer it.

Instead, he presented us with the appalling prospect of ever-increasing and accelerated preparations for "full war mobilization" and a "full-scale war." And although he did not dare to spell out the details, he indicated a future of growing scarcity, higher prices, heavier taxes, frozen wages—the austerity of a garrison state.

# Israel out of occupied territories

As the U.S. and Israeli governments try to pressure Palestinian representatives into renouncing some of their fundamental rights through signing a so-called peace agreement, it is important for working people in this country to speak out against these reactionary moves and in defense of the Palestinian people's right to a homeland and in the interests of all workers and farmers in the region.

As Palestinian spokespeople have explained, Washington and Tel Aviv are demanding the Palestinian people accept a deal that would give them a patchwork of neighborhoods in Jerusalem under their control, but with most of the city in the hands of the Israeli regime—and with the Palestinian Authority banned from holding heavy weapons for its self-defense. The deal would perpetuate the overall Israeli military dominance over the West Bank. Palestinian officials would also have to agree to renounce the right of return of the 3.7 million refugees—a fundamental condition for resolving the conflict.

But despite the heavy diplomatic pressure, accompanied by continuing Israeli brutality, including the assassination of Palestinian leaders, Washington and Tel Aviv

have not succeeded in getting the Palestinian people to forfeit their rights and give up their future.

Behind the imperialists' inability to force through such an agreement lies the irreconcilable antagonism between the Israeli state and the interests of the Palestinian people. That state was erected on the dispossession and displacement of the Palestinians, and in permanent conflict with other countries in the region. Its reactionary character is symbolized by the reported decision to wall off Israel from the West Bank with a 45-mile fence.

The interests of the great majority of Jews in Israel—most of whom are working people—do not lie in defending the Israeli state, which has proven to be a death trap for them. Workers and farmers who are Jewish share a common fate with Palestinian working people, and a common interest in establishing the only possible solution in their mutual interests—a democratic, secular Palestine.

As a necessary step toward that aim, class-conscious workers should join with the millions of others around the world in demanding the immediate, total, and unconditional withdrawal of Israeli forces from the occupied territories.

# Capitalist 'health-care' system

The cold-blooded decision by "health maintenance" organizations to chop nearly one million Medicare recipients off their rolls highlights the inhuman character of the capitalist health-care system. Hundreds of thousands of elderly and disabled people, workers and farmers in their vast majority, will be cut off from access to prescription drugs and other vital health needs.

Health care under capitalism is not a right, as it should be, but an industry, a lucrative one at that. The quest for profits and the "bottom line" are what drive the decisions of corporations that run hospitals and clinics, produce and distribute drugs, manufacture and sell equipment, and control other aspects of health care. Health insurance, medical visits, emergency room treatment, and home care become enormous bureaucratic exercises where working people are more likely to end up in miles of red tape than with a cure. Nurses and health-care workers have been forced on strike as they resist company attempts — even by so-called "not-for-profit" corporations — to increase working hours, decrease staffing levels, and cut wages.

More and more health-care responsibilities get pushed on family, friends, or individual sick people as hospitals push patients out the door in record time, funds for home nursing dry up, and medical facilities, especially in rural areas, are closed down as unprofitable. More and more working people use emergency rooms as the only option for last-resort medical attention as the number of people with no medical insurance remains at persistently high levels.

Officials of HMOs state matter-of-factly that they are withdrawing from the "Medicare market" because government payments have not kept up with rising prices charged by hospitals and other companies. A million more people were left without health insurance each year since 1987 under a bipartisan offensive at the federal and state level. The Clinton administration together with the Republican-controlled Congress deepened the assault by eliminating "welfare as we know it," as the White House proudly claims. Pushed off Aid to Families with Dependent Children, millions of working people were left without health-care coverage.

Combined with these moves, many companies have targeted union health-care and pension plans. Fighting back against such concession demands has been a hallmark of a growing number of strikes by unionists over the past several years.

Rather than leave this as an individual problem or some-

thing that local unions have to thrash out with the bosses, the labor movement needs to fight to pose the right to government-financed cradle-to-grave health care as a social question, one that is essential for defending the lives and living conditions of all. Labor can take the lead in combating the ruling-class "solution" of imposing on the individual family the responsibility for social services that should be taken care of by society—care of the young, the elderly, the sick and disabled. Such a fight can also push aside the practice, grown up with the agreement of the labor officialdom over the past decades, of tying health-care plans to the profitability of individual employers. This avoided a fight against the capitalist rulers to demand health care for all in exchange for "fringe benefits" and individual retirement plans for some — benefits that then came under attack when the "good times" ended.

Ninety miles from the shores of the United States, the people of Cuba have set an example of social solidarity and demonstrated the capacities of humanity. By making a socialist revolution, workers and farmers in Cuba have shown it is possible for even a relatively poor and underdeveloped country to make health care, education, and care of the young, elderly, and disabled a universal right. Life expectancy, levels of child mortality, incidences of death through lack of basic medical services rival the most economically advanced countries in the world.

The worries and hassles of forms, insurance, and other obstacles have been replaced with neighborhood clinics staffed by doctors and nurses and medical personnel who are in the profession to make people well, not to make a buck. Consistent with the proletarian internationalist course of the revolution, these conquests are not jealously guarded as a scarce resource available only to the Cuban people. Instead, Cuba has sent doctors and nurses around the world, and has opened its schools and facilities to treat people and train doctors from Latin America, Africa, Asia, and elsewhere.

This contrast with the coarseness and brutality facing working people under capitalism has to do with the different priorities and values of different classes. The capitalists who rule this country demonstrate daily that they are beneath nothing in their quest to ensure that they appropriate every bit of wealth for themselves that they can, regardless of the cost to the lives of human beings. On the other hand, the only class interests that workers and farmers have is to make the fruits produced by their social labor, the only source of wealth, available to all.

# Omaha meat packers win union

**Continued from front page**

Service (INS), together with local and state police. The cops detained some 200 workers who they claimed were in the country illegally and marched them into buses while still wearing their work clothes. An organizing effort is underway at the plant and the UFCW protested the raid as a violation of labor law.

In the parking lot outside the plant December 30, one worker said, "It was bad what the INS did" with the raid. He viewed winning undocumented workers to the union as a challenge, since many return home after a few months. "Those of us with papers should work harder to get the union in the plant," he said. "We should be more confident now to fight and at the same time defend those that the INS arrested." Another worker said that there had been two union meetings after the raid but that there were no plans to organize a protest.

In a phone interview, another worker at Nebraska Beef said two days after the raid "workers in fabrication [the cut floor] walked off the job and went into the cafeteria. They demanded that the line speed be slowed down and wanted a \$1 more an hour in pay. After about a half hour,

the company came back and said they would give a 50 cents an hour increase if people went back to work. Some of the workers wanted to hold out for the dollar as others were willing to go back to work," he said. "The company wrote down names and threatened to fire workers if they did not go back to work. After returning, six female workers were fired who the company targeted as leaders of the protest." Workers on the kill floor were not involved, he said, "as there had been no communication between the two parts of the plant." He also said that he had worked in the plant for a year and a half and that for the first time he was having trouble with his hands. The company is hiring workers every day but many quit after a day or two because of the hard work and pain they do not want to endure.

UFCW organizers say workers continue to get cards signed in the various plants that are targeted and the organizing drive in Omaha might be the largest single packinghouse campaign in the past 20 years.

*Edwin Fruit is a member of United Food and Commercial Workers Local 1149 and is a meat packer in Perry, Iowa.*

# Volunteer project advances Pathfinder

**Continued from Page 5**

*By Any Means Necessary* by Malcolm X, and *The Last Year of Malcolm X*, in addition to beginning production on *Rosa Luxemburg Speaks* and *The Jewish Question: A Marxist Interpretation* by Abram Leon. That brought to seven the number of titles that rolled off the presses in the printshop in December. Nine Pathfinder titles were produced in November.

With the new financial accounting system in place through the efforts of the volunteers, a switch is being organized in the invoicing of Pathfinder books. From now on, the printshop will take responsibility for invoicing Pathfinder titles as well as for shipping the books out to the bookstores and libraries that ordered them.

On December 24 volunteers organized a thorough cleaning and some light maintenance projects in the Pathfinder building. Then, at the end of the day, some 70 Pathfinder supporters celebrated with a dinner and party hosted by the Brooklyn branch of the SWP.

**'We need these books'**

A short program at the event noted the accomplishments of the week and a half of work. Natalie Tremblay, a Young Socialist from Montreal, spoke about the impact this volunteer labor made on her and remarked on how much she enjoyed getting to work with other volunteers of all generations from around the world.

"Our effort over the past 11 days helped to strengthen the communist movement. We need these books," Tremblay explained.

Janice Prescott, one of the more than 200 supporters of Pathfinder around the world involved in the Pathfinder Reprint Project to format and proofread all Pathfinder titles and place them on CDs to be rapidly reprinted when needed, detailed the efforts of the reprint volunteers to meet their goal taken in July to complete 30 books by the year's end.

"It is a race to see if we will get 31 or 32 titles," she reported, noting that the 30th title had just been delivered. By the year's end, volunteers had actually delivered 32 books.

The volunteers also turned in 10 CDs in December—the most ever done in one month. "Our goal is to complete 10 titles every month," Prescott reported. "We've picked up a lot of steam." She also noted that the volunteers on the Reprint Project had taken a goal to complete half of all Pathfinder titles, putting them on CDs, by May 1, 2001.

Norton Sandler, a leader of the Socialist Workers Party who headed a team of Pathfinder supporters who set up and staffed a booth at the Guadalajara Book Fair from November 25 to December 3, remarked on the tremendous accomplishments of this volunteer project. Sandler explained that Pathfinder publishes titles on the continuity of Marxism, books with speeches by the leaders of the Cuban Revolution, which for 42 years has been a living example for working people around the world to emulate, and titles by SWP leaders that explain and analyze the world we live in today as a guide to action. These books are essential for revolutionary-minded workers and farmers the world over, Sandler said.

Sandler also explained the effort to raise capital contributions of \$1,000 or more to finance the work to get revolutionary books produced and into the hands of workers and farmers who need them. He urged participants at the meeting to contribute to the Capital Fund that goes for long-term improvements to the machinery and equipment in the Pathfinder printshop as well as to the facility that houses the printshop. Sandler concluded by announcing plans for a special "red weekend" to be held January 27-28 to continue work on needed maintenance projects at the Pathfinder building in New York.

# Engels: wages system

**Continued from Page 13**

spring up a general Union, a political organisation of the working class as a whole.

Thus there are two points which the organised Trades would do well to consider, firstly, that the time is rapidly approaching when the working class of this country will claim, with a voice not to be mistaken, its full share of representation in Parliament. Secondly, that the time also is rapidly approaching when the working class will have understood that the struggle for high wages and short hours, and the whole action of Trades Unions as now carried on, is not an end in itself, but a means, a very necessary and effective means, but only one of several means towards a higher end: the abolition of the wages system altogether.

For the full representation of labour in Parliament as well as for the preparation of the abolition of the wages system, organisations will become necessary, not of separate Trades, but of the working class as a body. And the sooner this is done the better. There is no power in the world which could for a day resist the British working class organised as a body.



# Latino farmers file lawsuit against USDA

Continued from front page

27,717 Latino farmers, a growth of 58 percent since 1978. Hispanic farmers in general are of small scale, with 69 percent cultivating between one and 179 acres.

Latino farmers are concentrated in the states of California, New Mexico, Texas, and Colorado. In California, the majority are Chicano and Mexican. This legal action follows in the footsteps of *Pigford vs. Glickman*, a lawsuit filed by African-American farmers, and a similar suit by American-Indian producers against the USDA for decades of discrimination.

## Pattern of discrimination

The lawsuit aims to stop the pattern of discrimination, provide financial compensation for the farmers, and obtain debt relief. "Fifty thousand dollars is almost nothing compared to what was lost," said Gloria Palacios Moralez, one of the main plaintiffs of the class-action lawsuit, referring to the government-imposed settlement in *Pigford vs. Glickman*. "But the long-term effect [of the suit] will be even better for our family." The main goal of the suit is to put an end to discrimination, she added.

Palacios has been traveling around the country and meeting with farmers, explaining to them how they can join in the suit. She was central in organizing a meeting December 14 here in Fresno, where among the farmers attending were raisin farmers, peach farmers, cattle farmers, and produce farmers. Several of them described how they were denied loan and disaster relief when they qualified for it.

Tony and Patricia Jimenez, who are also among the main plaintiffs of the lawsuit, operate a 299-acre cattle ranch in Mariposa County, California. They received a \$200,000 farm ownership loan from the Farm Home Administration (FmHA) to buy the farm in 1989 and had applied simultaneously for a loan to begin operating the ranch. It was denied without explanation. They were denied loans again in 1990 and 1991, an emergency loan in 1992, and a 60-day extension when the cattle prices were at a 20-year low.

After paying \$52,000 to bring the mortgage on the ranch up to date, they were turned down for a loan deferral and adjustment in the interest rate on the mortgage. The Jimenezes filed a civil lawsuit in 1998 but have yet to receive an answer. Of the 100 head of cattle they had, they are down to six and are on the verge of foreclosure.

John Sanchez told the participants at the December 14 meeting that after losing 2,300 peach trees in 1998 because of the frost he applied to the USDA for disaster relief. "The adjuster came," he said, "and okayed the trees. But the USDA county committee denied the relief."

His case was then sent to the state and again back to the county and then to the national level. In order to appeal, Sanchez would have to hire a lawyer, which would cost him too much time and money to be worthwhile. Sanchez dropped the case. The situation for peach growers is difficult. "Today we get the same price as in 1970s for peaches and plums," he said, while the cost of production has been going up.

Alberto Camargo, who has had a 20-acre farm for four years, applied for an operating loan with the USDA. "They sent me an application," he explained, "but they told me that first I had to apply with banks and if I couldn't get one with them, then I could apply with the USDA and maybe they would

give me one." Camargo said that he could get a loan with a bank but the interest rate is high compared with those available from the USDA. Camargo, a peach producer, has seen the per case price drop from \$6-\$7 to \$5 today, which is at the cost of production, he said.

Palacios has been a raisin farmer for nearly 20 years. "What we have been trying to tell people is that we want all these resources available to us on an equitable basis," he stated. "We are trying to educate people so that they will get greater confidence to fight for their rights. Since 1979 when I applied for the first time for a loan, I could tell right away that the system was

set up to block you, not to help you." She was denied a loan several times, at first because the government agency said that there was not enough water on the farm. "But the USDA had handed money to the prior farmers, who were white, to plant the same land," she explained. Then "they changed the reasons and said that the land was too expensive and it wasn't worth what I was asking for," she said. After persisting in her efforts, Palacios received a loan—the last financial aid she has received—and started farming in 1981. "When they don't want to do it," she added, "they find a hundred reasons why they can't."

"In 1993, I lost 67 percent of my crop. I

applied for disaster relief and got an answer only in 1998. Meanwhile I lost everything," she said. "After 20 years I was forced to sell. I didn't want to sell my farm." Palacios first had contact with the Black farmers involved in the lawsuit against the USDA in 1998. She has been active since then to involve other farmers. She has spoken on several national radio programs and met with farmers across the country.

More meetings are planned in California, she said.

*John Benson and Rollande Girard are members of United Food and Commercial Workers Local 1288 in Selma, California.*

## 'Fertile Ground: Che Guevara and Bolivia'

Continued from Page 10

to struggle, and they were increasingly doing so, but without results.

I also want to recall here the situation in Latin America as a whole. This was taking place in Bolivia in particular. But the same situation was being repeated, to different degrees, with its own characteristics, in the rest of Latin America. Guerrilla groups had arisen in a number of Latin American countries....

### Response by miners, students, and others

*Question:* What was the popular response within Bolivia on learning of Che's *guerrilla*?

*Saldaña:* After the first clash between the army and Che's forces occurred on March 23, I drafted a manifesto, and we distributed it in the cities. We did not yet have a name, so we were posed with the decision of what name the organization should use to address the people. We knew the decision rested with Che and the guerrilla group. That was where our command was. But we needed to say something to the people in some way, to explain somehow what was happening.

This was the document we used to begin to work in the mines, with which we began to work in the city, explaining more or less what the guerrilla struggle meant.<sup>6</sup>

*Question:* Without mentioning Che?

*Saldaña:* Correct. Under those conditions, we had to do our work without mentioning Che. The enemy already knew there were guerrillas, and it had to have known that groups were working to support the guerrillas. We were telling them nothing they didn't know. There were individuals among the people, among the workers, however, seeking ways to make contact with the guerrillas, seeking that possibility. These were the reasons for what we did, and the conditions under which we did it.

*Question:* What was happening among the tin miners?

*Saldaña:* The support received from the miners is one of the things that gives the lie to charges that the Bolivian workers and peasants were indifferent to the struggle Che initiated.

I had been a miner at Siglo XX. I built the Communist Party there in the 1950s. So

<sup>6</sup> The authorship of this manifesto was previously either thought to be unknown, or sometimes attributed to Guevara. It should not be confused with Communiqué no. 5, "To the Miners of Bolivia."

I knew the party members, many of whom I had recruited.

I went to Siglo XX, it must have been in February 1967. I spoke with Rosendo García Maisman, who in those days was general secretary of the union, of the miners of Siglo XX, and a leader of the party there. He was an intelligent comrade, a very capable and courageous comrade. Without entering into details, I informed him that a decision had to be made soon. Later, after the first battle, he and I met on a number of occasions. By then he was already one of us, and he began to form two groups. One of these groups was to join the guerrilla column, and the other was to carry out support tasks.

As to the miners' commitment to the struggle, we have the testimony of Rosendo García's widow in the film *Coraje del Pueblo* [Courage of the People]. This film seeks to reconstruct all the events of the Noche de San Juan massacre. There the widow of Rosendo García is interviewed, and she mentions the trip I made to Siglo XX to talk with her husband. The communiqué we spoke about earlier had been sent to Siglo XX for distribution. That task had already been carried out by the compañeros grouped around García.

The miners registered their support to the guerrillas at general assemblies. They decided that each worker would donate one day's pay to help the guerrillas. Their commitment shows us that there was generalized support among the workers. It's possible, of course, that there were some who were not in agreement. But the miners unanimously made this decision at their assembly.

*Question:* This was in May or June?

*Saldaña:* This was at the end of May or at the beginning of June.

On June 24 there was supposed to be an expanded meeting of the miners federation, that is, union leaders from all the country's mines, were coming to Siglo XX. Representatives of the teachers and university students were also coming. In addition, this meeting at Siglo XX was to serve as a vehicle to discuss some general questions dealing with the workers' demands, and certainly it would have taken up support to the guerrillas.

During the night of June 23 into the dawn hours on June 24, the army entered the mining camp shooting, throwing grenades at the homes of the miners while they slept. This is why many women and children were among those killed. That was the Noche de San Juan massacre. The only place the

troops encountered armed resistance was at the union hall, where Rosendo García was, together with the few who were able to respond to the call of the mine's siren. The union's siren would be sounded in the mornings so the workers would get to work; it's like an alarm clock. But the siren was also used to summon people to assemblies and as a warning about some danger. That night the siren was sounded.

Immediately the workers knew—since it wasn't time to go to work it had to be something else, some emergency, or an assembly. Something was happening.

With a few rifles, they confronted the army. A number of people were killed there at the union hall, including Rosendo García Maisman, the central leader of the workers at Siglo XX. Many others died in their homes from machine-gun fire.<sup>7</sup>

The delegates who had arrived for the meeting hid out in the mines, and later in different ways they secretly left the area, which was occupied by the army.

This was the highest expression of support the guerrillas received, but this doesn't mean it was the only one. There were other demonstrations of support, although none reached this level. There was a willingness among members of many political parties to join up. There was the attitude of many intellectuals. Proof of this can be found in poems written at the time the guerrilla struggle began, and after Che's death.<sup>8</sup> We collected these poems together in a book. And there were surely many others that were never compiled for inclusion, that remained anonymous. There were also songs. In short, there were a whole series of manifestations of support.

This is in response to those who say there was no support among the Bolivian people, that Che was isolated. That is not true. The guerrilla events after March 23 stirred the people as a whole, the population as a whole, in all their different social layers.

<sup>7</sup> Dozens were killed in the Noche de San Juan massacre. Guevara's response is contained in the ELN's communiqué no. 5, "To the Miners of Bolivia," published by Pathfinder in *Pombo: A Man of Che's 'guerrilla'* and in Guevara's *Bolivian Diary*.

<sup>8</sup> On October 14, 1967, at a meeting of students at the University of Cochabamba proclaiming Che a "Bolivian patriot and citizen," Ramiro Barrenechea Zambrana read his poem, "To the Commander of the Americas." These and other poems are collected in a book edited by Barrenechea entitled *El Che en la poesía boliviana* [Che in Bolivian poetry] (La Paz: Caminos Editores, 1995).

## LETTERS

### Electricity rate gouging

The electricity price gouging that workers and farmers are experiencing in California and elsewhere on the West Coast appears to be a crisis manufactured by the drive for profit. The owners of some wealthy corporations are making a killing. The December 29 *New York Times* reported, "Lack of Power in the West Proves a Boon For Some." Kaiser Aluminum, which spent much of the past two years trying to bust the Steelworkers union, will earn \$47 million in December by reselling electricity it contracted to buy at \$22.50 a megawatt hour, back to the government for \$555 a megawatt hour! In January Kaiser will receive

\$280 per megawatt hour.

Kaiser's aluminum smelter in Mead, Washington, is shut down. Company spokesman Scott Lamb explained, "We can generate far more cash by selling electricity than we can by making aluminum." It is good to note that Kaiser is producing nothing here. It didn't generate the electricity it is selling.

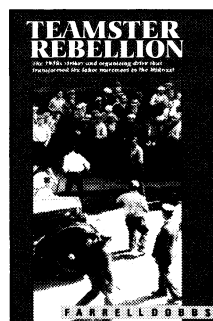
The *Times* reports further, "Under pressure from local and federal officials, Kaiser has agreed to pay its employees their regular wages and benefits for now, though it is unclear how long the company will continue to do so, as is the matter of when the plant will reopen." Kaiser could evidently keep up this

particular method of raking in superprofits through October 2001.

Company spokesman Lamb claims Kaiser "certainly wants to do what is right and fair." Steelworkers and others in desperate need of affordable electricity may be entitled to a few doubts on that score. Geoff Mirelowitz  
*Seattle, Washington*

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

### Further reading from Pathfinder



Available from bookstores, including those listed on page 12.

### Teamster Rebellion

Tells the story of the 1934 strikes that built an industrial union and a fighting social movement in Minneapolis. \$16.95

### The Second Declaration of Havana

In 1962, as the example of Cuba's socialist revolution spread throughout the Americas, the workers and farmers of Cuba issued their uncompromising call for a continent-wide revolutionary struggle. Booklet, \$4.50

### The Communist Manifesto

Founding document of the modern working-class movement, published in 1848. \$3.95  
*Also available in Spanish.*

## Canadian government unleashes cops against immigrant workers

BY ROSEMARY RAY  
AND JOHN STEELE

TORONTO, Ontario—The government of Canada is conducting a broad campaign targeting immigrant workers that includes criminal trials, factory immigration raids by federal cops, and scaremongering about immigrants spreading communicable diseases. The campaign intensified after the Liberal Party victory in the November 27 federal election.

On December 28 Ripudaman Singh Malik and Ajaib Singh Bagri, both Sikh religious leaders in British Columbia, appeared in a Vancouver court for bail hearings after being charged in October with murder and conspiracy to commit murder in the alleged bombing of an Air India plane that exploded off the coast of Ireland in 1985. Three hundred and twenty-nine people died in the disaster.

The charges against Malik and Bagri are the result of a 15-year police investigation by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) and the Canadian Security and Intelligence Service (CSIS). According to press reports the evidence to be presented against the two men is mostly based on wire-taps, police informants, and reports from India's political police. CSIS describes the Air India explosion as an act of "Sikh separatist terrorism" and "the work of Sikh extremists campaigning for a separate homeland in India's Punjab state."



Toronto demonstration in October in solidarity with Palestinian struggle. Immigrant workers in Canada are coming under increasing attack by the government, including factory raids and moves to deny charitable status to fund-raising groups.

Supporters of Bagri and Malik in the Toronto Sikh community have formed the United Defense Council (UDC) to raise funds for legal costs. On December 26 the UDC raised \$70,000 to contribute toward the defense effort at a \$100-a-plate dinner. Eight hundred tickets were sold for the event

and 300 people attended.

Balkar Singh Heir, a founding member of the UDC, explained in a press report that the UDC condemns acts of terrorism and sympathizes with the families of those who died in the Air India disaster. Heir said he believes the two accused men are victims of a

plot against Sikhs by the Indian government. The Indian government is opposed to the Sikh political movement that calls for independence for the state of Punjab from India.

"These two men are just ordinary people like the rest of us and we want to be sure there's ample defense for them," said Amarjit Singh Mann, a member of the UDC.

Ottawa is preparing draft legislation that would allow CSIS to effectively strip international fund-raising organizations in Canada of their charitable status. CSIS alleges that there are 50 violent "terrorist" groups operating in Canada, some of whose fundraising activities are given legitimacy because their registration with the government as charities allows them to issue tax receipts for donations, and exempts them from paying taxes. The *Toronto Star* reported that CSIS is targeting charities that raise money in "ethnic communities" that have ties to "every major regional conflict from the Middle East to Sri Lanka."

Already targeted to be denied its charitable status is the Federation of Associations of Canadian Tamils (FACT). CSIS and the U.S. State Department claim FACT is a Tamil Tiger front that goes beyond "legitimate" political expression. The Tamil Tigers are a rebel group fighting for an independent homeland in the north and east of Sri Lanka. The proposed federal legislation would allow CSIS to recommend revoking charitable status to organizations in secret court proceedings where evidence and names of informants would not be made public.

### Factory raids target immigrant workers

The Department of Citizenship and Immigration has stepped up factory raids in the Toronto area. A November 30 *Toronto Sun* article headlined "57 Illegal Aliens Nailed" reported on workers at Erie Meat Products arrested in a November 29 raid.

Immigration officials said that workers from Ghana, Grenada, St. Lucia, and Jamaica were charged with working without government work permits, and claimed that they had not undergone immigration health checks. These officials said that this had been their fourth factory raid in five weeks with 100 arrests.

The RCMP said it had joined the raid at Erie Meats because the meat packers "use knives" in their work. Immigration department spokesperson Anthony Iozzo said that these workers posed "a health risk to Canadians" and that health officials were called to the plant to investigate whether the chicken and beef products in the plant were safe, because some of the immigrants could have tuberculosis or other communicable diseases.

Less than a week after the raid at Erie Meats, a public health scare was promoted in the media with a report that a Caribbean man who had immigrated to Canada in 1999 had violated immigration health restrictions because he had "drug resistant tuberculosis." So far 35 people who allegedly came into contact with him have been diagnosed with tuberculosis. Immigration officials say they are preparing stiffer health restrictions for immigrants entering Canada.

Highlighting Ottawa's long history of discrimination against immigrants, Shack Jang Mack, 93, Quen-ying Lee, 89, and her son Yew Lee launched a \$1.2 billion class-action suit against the federal government because of the racist head tax collected between 1885 and 1923 from 81,000 Chinese immigrants. The plaintiffs also claimed damages caused by Ottawa's Chinese Exclusion Act, which banned thousands of Chinese family members from Canada until 1947.

*John Steele is a meat packer and member of the United Food and Commercial Workers union.*

## Washington refuses to apologize for massacre of civilians in Korean War

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

Senior U.S. officials have said the White House will not apologize to the Korean people for the U.S. Army's role in shooting civilians in the Korean town of No Gun Ri in 1950, nor will it offer any financial compensation to survivors or families of those massacred. The officials, interviewed by the Associated Press in late December, asked not to be identified.

They said the Clinton administration's decision was based on a recently completed U.S. Army investigation of its conduct at No Gun Ri. Details of the Pentagon's yearlong "investigation" are expected to be officially released in January.

In response to this announcement, survivors of the No Gun Ri massacre held a news conference in Washington December 19 to condemn the U.S. Army's report as a "white-wash."

"They killed us as if they killed animals," said survivor Chung Eun-yong. He described the incident as an "annihilation" carried out jointly by U.S. Army and Air Force troops.

Lawyers for the group of survivors said they intend to organize mock trials at law schools in Seoul and Washington in mid-January to dramatize evidence of the massacre already presented by Korean witnesses and U.S. soldiers.

In September 1999 the Associated Press reported, based on interviews with ex-GIs, on the slaughter carried out by U.S. military forces at the No Gun Ri railroad bridge from July 26 to 29, 1950. U.S. warplanes killed about 100 refugees and U.S. Army troops then killed about 300 more.

For decades, both the U.S. and south Korean governments dismissed claims by Korean civilians that a massacre had taken place there. However, after publication of the AP report, both governments announced they would open investigations of this incident.

The Korean War broke out on June 25,

1950, as Washington, London, and other imperialist powers launched an invasion by thousands of troops in response to what U.S. president Harry Truman called a "communist invasion of the south." The U.S.-led imperialist assault was waged under the cover of the United Nations flag.

On July 26, 1950, south Korean peasants in two nearby villages were forced from their homes by U.S. troops under the pretext that north Korean soldiers were advancing.

After U.S. Army officers ordered the peasants to walk on railroad tracks, U.S. warplanes swooped in and rained bombs and bullets on the area where the peasants were gathered. Those not killed scrambled for cover under a nearby bridge. For three nights, U.S. soldiers fired on the tunnel where the peasants, many of them women and children, were trying to hide. "People pulled dead bodies around them for protection," recalled survivor Chung Koo Ho.

"We ended up shooting into there until all the bodies we saw were lifeless," former GI Edward Daily told the Associated Press.

### Over 3 million Koreans killed in war

During the course of the 1950-53 war in Korea the U.S. rulers conducted saturation bombing of northern cities, factories, and mines, as well as many areas in the south, resulting in the deaths of 2 million civilians in the north, 1 million civilians in the south, and 500,000 north Korean soldiers, out of a total population of 30 million. Some 5.7 million U.S. troops were involved in the war and 54,000 were killed. In addition, the war claimed the lives of 900,000 Chinese volunteers who joined with the Korean combatants in repelling the imperialist assault, which was also aimed at the Chinese revolution. In the end, Washington failed in its bloody attempt to overthrow the workers state in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Commenting on the Pentagon's investi-

gation of events at No Gun Ri, U.S. Army secretary Louis Caldera declared that the "loss of life" in that town "was very regrettable" but this could not be called a massacre because it was not an "intentional killing." While admitting that "some" of the many civilians killed in the Korean War "were at the hand of American soldiers," Caldera asserted that the Koreans who survived had developed "corporate" or "collective" accounts of what happened and could not be believed.

"We cannot accept his statement," commented Chung Koo-do, a spokesman for a committee in south Korea representing survivors of the massacre.

Meanwhile, Donald Gregg, former CIA agent and U.S. ambassador to south Korea, and now head of the "civilian advisory panel" advising the U.S. military brass on their investigation, commented that "a central part of our response to No Gun Ri must be symbolic." He suggested building a monument near the bridge at No Gun Ri with inscriptions satisfactory to both the Korean and U.S. governments. The White House is also considering whether to erect a monument in honor of all civilians killed in the Korean War.

In early December, U.S. officials went to Seoul to get south Korean officials to sign a joint "statement of mutual understanding" prior to the release by Washington of its report, but the government there refused. However, after two days of talks at the Pentagon a couple of weeks later, south Korean officials reportedly reached a "broad agreement" December 21 with their U.S. counterparts.

According to Chung Koo-do, Washington and the U.S.-dependent regime in south Korea are trying to avoid investigating 61 other complaints that have been filed alleging killings of civilians by U.S. troops.

"If they investigate those other incidents, the fact that there were orders from above will be revealed," Chung stated.