

THE MILITANT

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FBI targets union resisting takebacks by Puerto Rico gov't

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Mississippi: Socialist Workers beat back red-baiting attack SWP ticket also on ballot in Louisiana

BY SUSAN LAMONT

JACKSON, Mississippi—The Mississippi State Board of Election voted on the morning of September 7 to place the Socialist Workers presidential ticket on the state's ballot. The socialist candidates will appear along with those of the Democratic,

Republican, Libertarian, Green, Reform, and Constitution parties.

"This is a big victory for workers and farmers in Mississippi and around the country," said Norton Sandler, SWP national campaign director. "Not only because we are on the ballot but because how this happened.

The SWP candidates beat back a serious red-baiting attack on the socialist campaign to get here."

Sandler also noted that the same day state officials said that the SWP ticket has been placed on the ballot in Louisiana too.

The victory in Mississippi came after three months of campaigning by supporters of the SWP ticket of Róger Calero for president and Arrin Hawkins for vice president in this southern state. It marks another step in the successful nationwide effort to get the working-class alternative to the parties of capitalism on the ballot in the most states since 1992 (see listing on page 9).

Since June, supporters of Calero and Hawkins from Mississippi and surrounding states worked to bring this to fruition.

In June and early July, volunteers petitioned in Jackson, Meridian, Natchez, Pascagoula, and Tchula to gather nearly 2,200 signatures for the socialist candidates. They campaigned at shopping centers in working-class communities, at Jackson State University, at meetings of farmers, in the Delta, and

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Class polarization sharpens in Argentina over 'piquetero' protests

BY MARTÍN KOPPEL

The government of President Néstor Kirchner of Argentina is stepping up its crackdown on protests by unemployed workers, unionists, and others.

The Peronist administration, which took office last year pledging not to unleash the police against social protests, has been deploying more cops on the street and threatening to prosecute hundreds of protesters.

To justify this offensive the Argentine ruling class has whipped up a propaganda campaign against organizations of jobless workers, known as *piqueteros* because of their frequent tactic of setting up pickets to block roads. The capitalist media blames the unemployed groups for creating "chaos" and hurting the economy. This campaign has found an echo among middle-class layers.

On August 25, in a signal that the government is taking a harder line, the police arrested Raúl Castells, a leader of the Independent Movement of Pensioners and Unemployed Workers (MIJD), which for

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U.S. rulers press attack on Social Security

Tout tax 'reform,' say 'peace dividend' ended

BY MARTÍN KOPPEL

Coming out of the Republican National Convention, President George Bush has been campaigning around some of the key domestic policies his administration would push for in a second term. He has called for making previous income tax cuts permanent, establishing individual "health savings accounts," and—in the name of "strengthening" Social Security—the creation of private retirement accounts. This package of measures is billed as a way for working people to become "owners"—to have savings, investments, and property—as protection in face of economic uncertainty.

In reality, the proposals for individual retirement and health-care accounts are part of preparing the way for a stepped-up offensive by Democrats and Republicans against Social Security, Medicare, and other social conquests of working people.

The Republican candidates are also campaigning around the gains U.S. imperialism has made in shifting its military strategy to be able to wage wars to defend its interests around the world under the banner of the "war on terrorism." They contrast this with the previous decade, the years of the post-Cold War "peace dividend," when Washington scaled back military spending and had not yet adjusted



AP/Jim Reed

Lena Rodríguez, a retiree, works part-time at a Burger King restaurant in Tampa, Florida. More people are working past the retirement age to make ends meet. Latest proposals by White House will undercut Social Security.

to the perspective that "we're faced with a new enemy and we need a... fundamental redesign of our national security strategy," as Vice President Richard Cheney put it in a September 3 speech.

Bush pulled ahead of Democrat John Kerry in the polls following the Republican convention. A *Newsweek* post-convention poll put him 11 points ahead of Kerry—54 percent to 43 percent. This followed virulent attacks on Kerry at the Republican National Convention. Some speakers, especially Sen. Zell Miller, a conservative Democrat, questioned Kerry's ability to act as commander-in-

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Russian troops end hostage crisis with bloody raid; 338 die in assault Unrest in Caucasus spells trouble for Putin gov't

BY RÓGER CALERO

The government of Russian president Vladimir Putin has seized on the events around the armed takeover of a school in Beslan, a town in the southern republic of Ossetia, to broaden its "antiterrorism" offensive, especially against groups fighting for Chechnya's independence from Moscow.

In the aftermath of the brutal raid by Russian commandos that ended the hostage crisis in a bloodbath, the popularity of Putin, who has built an image of a "tough guy" who will do anything to "defend the fatherland," has plunged. At least 338 people, including many children, were killed during the raid. A governmental crisis has been provoked once again by the growing instability in the Caucasus, and the far-from-defeated movement for self-determination in Chechnya.

The 53-hour crisis began September 1. Armed attackers took over Middle School No. 1 in the small town in the middle of the Caucasus, and held nearly 1,200 people hostage, threatening to kill them if an assault was launched.

Military officials who began negotiations with the armed group, which initially resulted in the release of 25 hostages, claimed that the demands of the attackers were not clear.

The Russian government responded by surrounding the school with troops, tanks, helicopters, and armored vehicles. While Putin had said the school would not be

stormed, two Special Forces squads were practicing an attack at a nearby school similar to the one occupied. A shoot-out reportedly began September 4, when a bomb was set off accidentally by those holding the hostages. The explosion sparked panic among the captives who ran outside trying to flee, only to find themselves caught in the crossfire between Russian commandos and the hostage-takers.

Responding to widespread criticism of

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Militant/Brian Williams

SWP campaign supporters petition June 17 at Jackson State University in Jackson, Mississippi, for ballot spot. The state certified SWP ticket on ballot September 7.

Utah miners affirm support for UMWA representation at meeting of boss 'union'

BY GUILLERMO ESQUIVEL AND ANNE CARROLL

HUNTINGTON, Utah—Twenty miners at the Co-Op mine here reaffirmed their determination to be represented by the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) at a September 3 meeting of the company "union," workers reported. This was the second meeting of the International Association of United Workers Union (IAUWU), the outfit run by the Co-Op bosses, that UMWA supporters at the mine have attended.

After a 10-month strike for UMWA representation that ended in July, the company has felt obliged to organize these monthly "union" meetings to keep up the façade that the IAUWU is a labor organization, the miners said. Not one Co-Op miner remembers any such meetings being held prior to the strike.

"How long has your union existed?" Jesús Salazar, one of the leaders of the UMWA

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representation struggle, said he asked IAUWU local president Chris Grundvig. "For 30 years," responded Grundvig.

"For those 30 years you have never represented us. How long before you represent us. Should we wait another 30 years?" asked Salazar, amid laughter from

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Maryland protesters condemn cop killing of African immigrant

BY GLOVA SCOTT
AND NANCY BOYASKO

WASHINGTON, D.C.—Almost 200 people marched and rallied at the Silver Spring, Maryland, police headquarters August 21 to protest the killing by a cop of Peter Ayompeuh Njang. The protest began with a car caravan from the site of the shooting to a Montgomery County police substation where demonstrators rallied for several hours. Protesters then formed a car caravan and drove downtown, where they rallied at several street corners before marching to the police station.

Family members, friends, and supporters of Njang organized the action, and another five days earlier of 100 protesters at the same police station.

Njang, 25, a recent immigrant from Cameroon, was shot once in the chest at arms length by Montgomery County police officer Candice Marchone shortly before noon, August 12, in front of his sister's apartment. He was flown by helicopter to a trauma unit in Washington, D.C., where he was pronounced dead.

"Black, white, same justice," "No taxes for murder," and "No to police brutality!" chanted the demonstrators. "Montgomery County police took away Peter's citizenship rights," read one placard.

"What has happened here, is what I hear and see on radio and TV," said demonstration organizer and family spokesperson Julius Oben at the August 16 rally. "I never paid attention. It has landed home. It could have been any one of us. Peter is gone."

A *Washington Post* article repeated the police story that Njang failed to obey Marchone's orders to halt and lunged at her with a utility knife before she shot him in the chest at close range.

Organizers called on demonstrators to return to where Njang was killed to see the layout of the scene, stating they do not see how the cop could be in danger by the approaching Njang in broad daylight.

A neighbor, Carlos Méndez, witnessed the shooting. He told these reporters that

he did not see a weapon in Njang's hand. Instead, Méndez said, he saw Njang reaching into his back pocket, probably to pull out his wallet. Méndez also said that Marchone did not administer medical aid, as all the news reports are claiming, but ran off crying after dropping her gun belt.

Other witnesses noted that they saw Njang in front of the ground floor apartment waiting for his sister to go job hunting. Relatives stated that Njang had won a visa lottery and arrived in the United States May 14.

At 8:00 p.m. every evening since the shooting family, friends, and residents in the White Oak Apartments complex gather in a protest vigil. A memorial has been constructed, featuring a glass-framed photo of Njang and candles. Cars slowly drive up and stop as the occupants view the memorial and talk to family members.

Family members and others at the apartment complex where Njang was killed are angry over the cops' policy of shoot to kill. "Why could she not use the Mace or shoot him in the leg?" Clifford Dedzo said. "Why did she shoot him in the chest?"

Lea Sherman, Socialist Workers candidate for District of Columbia delegate visited the vigil site August 15. "The march planned for the next day is exactly

United Kingdom: rail workers strike Eurostar line for single pay rate



Militant/Jim Spaul

LONDON—Unionists at Eurostar rail service from London to Paris and Brussels carried out their first strike on August 28. Some 160 Rail, Maritime and Transport union members picketed outside the main entrances to the London stations at Waterloo (above) and Ashford. Maintenance workers from the west London depot who were not part of the strike joined the picket line before starting work at 8:00 a.m. Union organizer Agustín Pérez said, "We are fighting for a rate for the job. At the moment we have workers doing the same duties on different rates. If they work at Ashford outside London, they earn £4,000 [\$7,290] less" per year than those in London.

what is needed in order get a criminal indictment of Marchone," she said. The Socialist Workers 2004 campaign here issued a statement calling for prosecuting and jailing the guilty cop.

Njang's family has set up a fund for the transportation of his remains back to Cameroon. Donations can be sent to P.O. Box 141, 10169 New Hampshire Ave., Silver Spring, MD 20903.

Federation of Southern Co-ops meets in Alabama

BY JANINE DUKES

EPES, Alabama—More than 100 farmers and their supporters gathered here August 20–21 for the 37th annual meeting of the Federation of Southern Cooperatives/Land Assistance Fund. Farmers who are Black founded the federation in 1967 in order to advance the fight to retain their land. The theme of the conference was "Celebrating Rural Women: The Roots and Wings of Southern Development." A special workshop focused on an exchange

of experiences among women farmers who are Black.

A centerpiece of the meeting was the initiation of the Minority Farm Register, a new United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) program. The register is open to all "socially disadvantage farmers and ranchers." It will supposedly allow USDA agencies to locate such farmers and inform them of aid programs for which they may be eligible. Signing the register does not in itself guarantee assistance to any farmer.

John Zippert, the federation's director of programs here, said the group had been fighting for such a register for 15 years, but a key piece of its original proposal was still missing. "We wanted to know how much land people of color had and use that as a baseline," Zippert said. "We wanted to not let the acreage drop below that baseline."

Zippert and Ralph Paige, the federation's executive director, encouraged farmers to nominate themselves and other Black farmers to run for seats on the County Committees of the Farm Service Agency (FSA), a division of the USDA. One function of these committees is to decide who will be given loans in case of a natural disaster, and supports. Farmers who are Black have often been denied such assistance.

The liveliest discussion broke out dur-

ing the session on the *Pigford v. Veneman* lawsuit. In 1999 a federal judge issued a consent decree in the suit, which farmers agreed to based on provisions for a tax-exempt \$50,000 payment to those who could provide minimal proof of discrimination against them, and canceling outstanding debts owed to the USDA.

Mattie Mack, a lifelong farmer who now grows tobacco in Brandenburg, Kentucky, expressed the frustration of many in the room when she described how getting the funds promised in the settlement of that lawsuit, or debt relief, has been tied up in red tape. "If you call the monitor's office, they tell you to call the adjudicator," she said. "If you call the adjudicator, they tell you to call the arbitrator. They give us the runaround, when they need to give farmers the money."

The federation passed a resolution calling on the "Black Congressional Caucus and all members of Congress to adopt legislation and take action to correct problems and errors with the Black Farmer Class Action lawsuit as well as improve the general condition of all small and disadvantaged family farmers."

Jeanne FitzMaurice and Lisa Potash contributed to this article.

THE MILITANT

Get the facts on Utah miners' fight for union

After a 10-month strike, Co-Op miners in Huntington, Utah, have returned to work to continue the battle for the union from inside. The *'Militant'* has covered this fight weekly for the past year. Subscribers can get two back issues of their choice to learn more about this important labor struggle. Don't miss a single issue!



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