

THE MILITANT

INSIDE
N.Y. meeting celebrates publication
of new issues of 'New International'

—PAGE 6

A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

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Bosses' profit drive behind Texas City refinery blast

Explosion kills 15 workers, injures over 100

BY JACQUIE HENDERSON AND STEVE WARSHELL

HOUSTON—A massive explosion at the Texas City British Petroleum (BP) refinery on March 23 killed 15 workers and injured more than 100 others. Several of the injured remain in critical condition in four area hospitals, some with burns over 90 percent of their body. Of those injured, about 70 are plant workers and 30 residents of the area, the Associated Press reported.

The explosion shook the ground and blew out windows in Texas City, a city with a population of 47,000 located 35 miles south of Houston on Galveston Bay in the Gulf of Mexico. Affects of the blast were felt five miles away in the cities of Galveston and Clear Lake. It took more than two hours to extinguish the fire, whose plume of smoke was reported to have reached as high as

3,000 to 4,000 feet before the wind carried it out into Galveston Bay.

The blast occurred in the isomerization unit, where octane-boosting gasoline ingredients were made. One of 30 units in the 1,200-acre complex, it had been shut down for maintenance and was in the process of being put back on line when it exploded.

The oil barons keep their refineries operating around the clock for 18 months to five years before taking equipment down for repairs. This unit of the BP operation hadn't been shut down for maintenance in about two years. "The shutdown periods are kept as brief as possible," according to the March 26 *New York Times*, "especially in the past few years when the difference between the cost of crude oil and the value of gasoline and other products has been large, making profits strong." The day after the deadly disaster, oil prices spiked to \$54.84 per barrel on the New York Mercantile Exchange.

The refinery, BP's largest in the United States and the third-largest in the country, processes 460,000 barrels of crude oil daily. It produces 3 percent of the total gasoline consumed in the United States.

On the day of the explosion Gregory Nelson, a carpenter, was hanging drywall at a local business when he felt his ladder shake. He told the *Houston Chronicle* that he turned toward the refinery and saw "a big ball of fire, followed by a bigger ball of fire and then a big bang.... I saw pipes and debris going up into the air and then black, black thick smoke," he said.

Galveston County medical examiner Stephen Pustilnik told the media that most of the 15 victims were killed by blunt-force injury from the sheet metal and other materials thrown into the air. DNA testing will be necessary to identify some of those killed, he said, in a process

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AFP/Getty Images/William Philpott

Section of Texas City British Petroleum refinery destroyed after March 23 explosion.

Iraqi workers protest attacks on power plants

Antigovernment bombings kill co-workers



Hundreds of power workers march in Baghdad March 24 to protest attacks by groups tied to former Baathist regime of Saddam Hussein on electricity generating installations. Banner includes names of their fellow workers killed in these bombings.

BY SAM MANUEL

Hundreds of workers in Iraq's power industry marched in Baghdad March 24 to condemn attacks by antigovernment bombers that have killed dozens of their co-workers. Groups that trace their continuity with the former Baath Party regime of Saddam Hussein have been largely responsible for such bombings.

The same day, more than 200 workers held a protest outside the local government building in the southern port city of Basra demanding that the new oil and transportation ministers come from that region.

Also in Basra hundreds of students marched on the school administration building at Basra University demanding prosecution of militiamen reportedly or-

ganized by supporters of Muqtada al-Sadr who had attacked a student picnic on March 15—allegedly because men were playing music, dancing, and singing—and beat two students to death.

These actions, which cut across religious and other divisions, indicate that working people and youth in Iraq are beginning to use the political space they have today to push for democratic rights and defend their interests.

"No, no to terror!" shouted hundreds of

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Supporters of Marxist magazine start sales campaign

BY MARTÍN KOPPEL

NEW YORK—"It's time to hit the campaign trail," Joe Swanson told the audience of 350. He was speaking at a March 26 meeting in New York that celebrated the recent publication of issues 12 and 13 of *New International*, the magazine of Marxist politics and theory.

That meeting was a springboard to launch the international campaign to sell these two working-class political weapons and put them in the hands of workers, farmers, and young people over the next five months—from now through the end of the August 7–15 World Festival of Youth and Students in Caracas, Venezuela.

New International no. 12 features the article "Capitalism's Long Hot Winter Has Begun," by Jack Barnes, and "Their Transformation and Ours," a draft resolution of the Socialist Workers Party. Issue no. 13 features "Our Politics Start with the World," by Barnes.

Swanson reported that the Socialist Workers Party branch in Des Moines, Iowa, of which he is the organizer, is hosting a multicity team in the Midwest

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"One of capitalism's infrequent long winters has begun. Accompanied by imperialism's accelerating drive toward war, it's going to be a long, hot winter" —Jack Barnes



Today's sharpening inter-imperialist conflicts are fueled both by the opening stages of a world depression—what will be decades of economic, financial, and social convulsions and class battles—and by the most far-reaching shift in Washington's military policy and organization since the late 1930s, when the U.S. rulers prepared to join the expanding Asian and European wars, transforming them into World War II.

Class-struggle-minded working people must face this historic turning point for imperialism, this cataclysmic crisis for "the West" and for "Christendom." And draw satisfaction and enjoyment from being "in their face" as we chart a revolutionary course to confront it.

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Rice, Rumsfeld: Venezuela in U.S. gunsights

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

In a lengthy interview on U.S. foreign policy published in the March 25 *Washington Post*, U.S. secretary of state Condoleezza Rice spoke about Washington's hostile course toward the government of Venezuela. During a news conference in Brazil two days earlier, U.S. secretary of defense Donald Rumsfeld said the imminent purchase of 100,000 AK-47 rifles by the Venezuelan military is a threat to "the hemisphere."

Rice also touched on the U.S. rulers' inability to make much headway in promoting counterrevolutionary forces inside Cuba, which is unlike what Washington has been

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New Zealand: Dow plant tied to high dioxin levels in area

BY FELICITY COGGAN

AUCKLAND, New Zealand—Nearly four decades after health concerns were first raised, a government study has confirmed that working people living near the Dow chemical plant in New Plymouth have elevated blood levels of dioxin, a toxic chemical produced by the plant. In some cases, levels were similar to those found among Vietnamese people who were sprayed with Agent Orange during the U.S.-led war against their country.

Local residents and others have campaigned for many years for an investigation of high rates of birth defects, cancer, and other illnesses. They have organized protest meetings, marches, and rallies to press their cause.

"We should be working with the Vietnamese to go after the company's responsibility," Andrew Gibbs, a spokesperson for the Dioxin Investigation Network, told the *Militant* in a March 17 telephone interview. The previous evening, he said, he had participated in a meeting of some 160 people, including local residents, former Dow workers, and workers from adjacent sites, to discuss the next steps in the campaign.

The Dow AgroSciences plant, originally Ivon Watkins-Dow, was built in 1960, before the surrounding land was subdivided to become the suburb of Paritutu. It produced agricultural chemicals, including the herbicides 2,4,5-T and 2,4-D, extensively used in farming. Agent Orange is made from a mixture of the two chemicals. Dioxin is a by-product of the manufacture of 2,4,5-T, and is found in Agent Orange. In 1987, the New Plymouth plant became the last in the world to stop making 2,4,5-T after growing concerns, initially raised by U.S. veterans of the Vietnam War, about the health effects of its dioxin by-products, in particular the cancer-causing compound TCDD.

Government denials disputed

The study, conducted by the government's Institute of Environmental Science and Research (ESR) and reported in

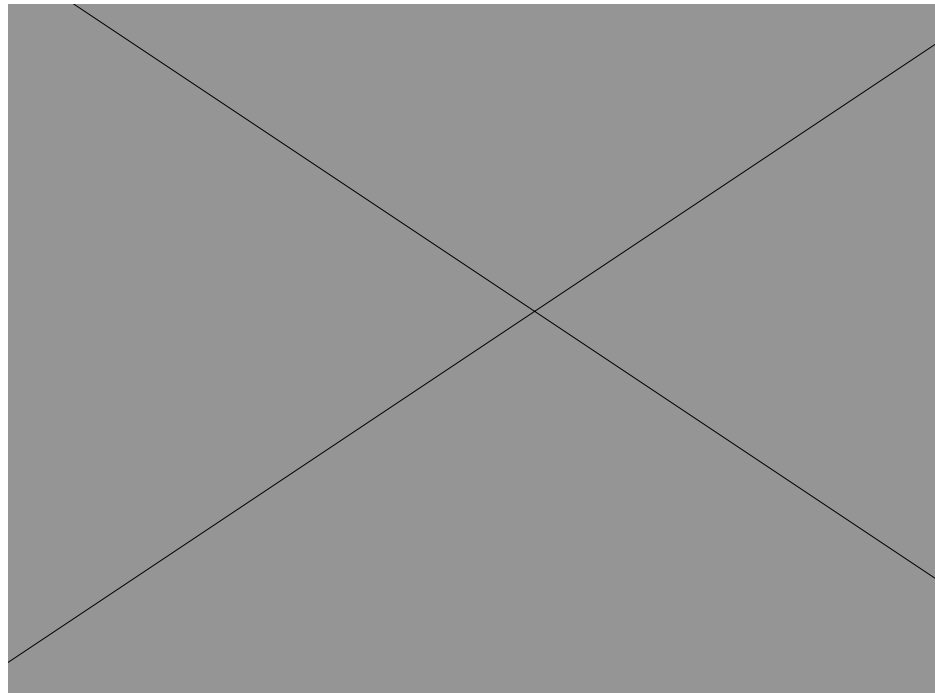
March, surveyed 52 people who had lived at some stage in a defined area near the factory. It found that blood levels of dioxin increased directly in relation to how close to the plant they lived and how long they lived there before 1987. These dioxin levels were on average 3.8 times higher than in the population nationally, and in some cases were 15 times higher. Those living closest to the plant for the longest time had levels similar to those found in Vietnamese with dioxin poisoning from Agent Orange. It is estimated that such levels could cause an extra three deaths from cancer for every 100 people. Dow claims the levels found are within the normal range internationally.

The ESR report follows years of official denials that dioxin emissions from the plant may have affected the health of nearby residents. As early as 1965, the nurse in charge of the local maternity hospital, Hyacinth Henderson, became alarmed. "It was the number of fetal abnormalities we were having, which I had never seen before, and I had 29 years in obstetrics," she told the *New Zealand Herald* in an interview last year. Her observations were shared by a local doctor, but the Health Department at the time dismissed her concerns.

In 1986, three years after Dow stopped making 2,4,5-T in the United States, a New Zealand government committee of inquiry refused to stop its use because of its importance in agricultural production. At the time, New Zealand was the heaviest user of the herbicide in the world, with the government subsidizing its cost to farmers.

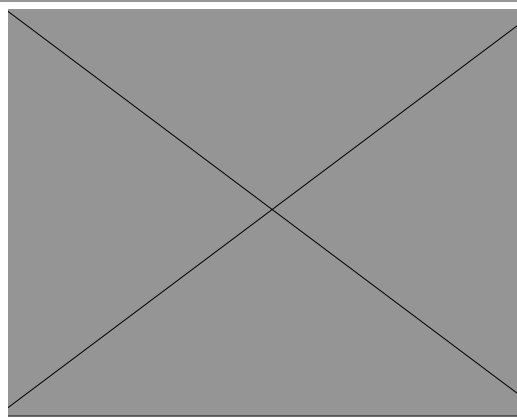
The Medical Officer of Health for the New Plymouth area said studies had found an increased death rate from cancer and an increased birth defect rate, but concluded that neither was statistically significant.

In December 2004, three months before the ESR report was released, the government was forced to formally apologize to New Zealand military personnel exposed to Agent Orange during the Vietnam War. After years of campaigning by veterans, a parliamentary inquiry released in October



Militant/Argiris Malapanis (above)

Above: Children born with deformities and mental illnesses because their parents were affected by dioxin contained in Agent Orange sprayed by U.S. military during Vietnam War receive treatment and schooling at Friendship Village near Hanoi, March 1. Right: Residents of area near Dow plant and others march toward factory in Paritutu, New Zealand, March 6 to demand compensation for victims of dioxin poisoning at levels similar to those in Vietnamese victims of defoliant.



finally acknowledged that troops were exposed to the defoliant. Until then, official reports had denied this fact, and successive governments had claimed there were no health problems for troops arising from their service there. Since 2001, the Labour government has offered limited financial help to children of Vietnam veterans with certain health conditions. The government has so far stopped short of promising any extra payments to veterans after these latest findings.

Protesters demand compensation

Working people in New Plymouth are now calling on the government to prosecute Dow for compensation. "People want the health care they've been denied for decades, and appropriate treatment," Andrew Gibbs said. "For years doctors have told them they are hypochondriacs."

On March 6, some 80 people marched to the gates of the Dow plant, calling for the company to set up a national compensation fund for those affected by dioxin. Those participating included Paritutu residents, Vietnam War veterans, environmental activists, and representatives of Sawmill Workers Against Poisons. The latter group campaigns on behalf of timber workers suffering negative health effects because of workplace exposure to the timber treatment chemical pentachlorophenol (PCP), which contains dioxin.

To date the government has merely offered one free doctor's visit to study those affected. Roy Drake, who worked as a contractor at the Dow plant and now suffers from multiple sclerosis, told the *Militant* that he was one of several hundred people

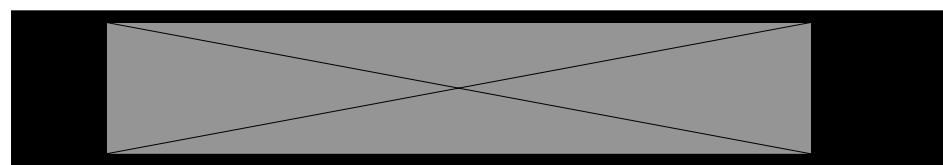
who applied for blood tests during the survey, but were turned down.

Workers previously employed at the Dow plant have significantly higher death rates from cancer, according to a recent World Health Organization study. Only two workers from the plant, however, have been approved for workers' compensation as a result of their employment there. Agricultural contractors who sprayed 2,4,5-T on farms also have high blood dioxin levels.

These developments have reignited long-standing claims that Agent Orange was manufactured in New Zealand. During the Vietnam War, the New Plymouth plant was a target of protests because of its connection to the chemical.

In January, Harold Duynhoven, government cabinet minister and member of parliament for New Plymouth, told a Sunday newspaper he had information that the components of Agent Orange were shipped from the New Plymouth wharves in the 1960s to the U.S. naval base at Subic Bay in the Philippines for use in the Vietnam War. He later backed off these statements and the government issued a denial, citing a 1990 parliamentary inquiry that found no conclusive evidence for the assertion. Dow also continues to deny the charge.

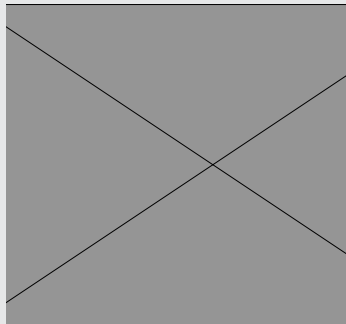
Former New Plymouth port watersider Norm Quinlan said, however, that it was well known in the 1960s that Ivon Watkins-Dow exported some chemicals to the Philippines. Vietnam veterans and New Plymouth campaigners are now asking for an investigation into whether the defoliant may have been produced at another New Zealand site with components from the New Plymouth factory.



Fight police brutality! Jail killer cops!

In working-class neighborhoods across the U.S. and other countries, cops mete out capitalist justice on the streets—all too often as judge, jury, and executioner. The 'Militant' covers the fights against cop brutality—from the march of 8,000 in Columbus, Georgia, against the city's refusal to indict a killer cop to the protest against a police shooting of a 13-year-old in Los Angeles.

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February 8 protest in Los Angeles where police shot 13-year-old Devin Brown.

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Business Manager: ARGIRIS MALAPANIS
Washington Bureau Chief: SAM MANUEL
Editorial Staff: Róger Calero, Arrin Hawkins, Michael Italic, Martín Koppel, Sam Manuel, Doug Nelson, and Paul Pederson.
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Iraqi workers protest

Continued from front page

power workers as they marched in Baghdad, reported the Associated Press. The workers were lined up behind a black banner inscribed with the names of coworkers who had been killed in Baathist attacks on electricity stations and oil pipelines.

During the protest in Basra the same day, oil workers delivered a statement to provincial governor Mohammed al-Waeli saying, "Everyone must know that the oppressed and persecuted people of the south refuse to have their interests ignored," according to AP. "We will stop pumping the oil and go on strike for those working in the oil fields and ports if our demands aren't met," said Mohammad Abdul Hafez, an officer of the oil workers' union and one of the organizers of the protest.

Basra is one of the main centers of oil production in Iraq. In 2003 members of the Basra Oil Workers' Unions went on strike, shutting down oil production for three days, according to the union president. Workers struck to protest wage restrictions imposed by Washington's former consul, Paul Bremer, who headed the occupation regime at the time.

Meanwhile, security officials opened fire March 27 on 50 people—killing one and injuring others—who were protesting at the ministry of Science and Technology in Baghdad. According to AP, the protesters were Iraqis employed by the ministry as security guards and were demanding their full pay. The following day, Iraq's interior minister, Falah al-Naqib, accused the protesting employees of having attempted to enter the office of Science

and Technology Minister Rashad Mandan Omar. He said Omar's bodyguards were doing their job to protect the minister when they fired into the crowd. Haitem Jassim, one of three people injured in the shooting, told the press the employees were unarmed.

Al-Naqib warned against anyone holding protests in the future, claiming they are an invitation to "terrorist" attacks.

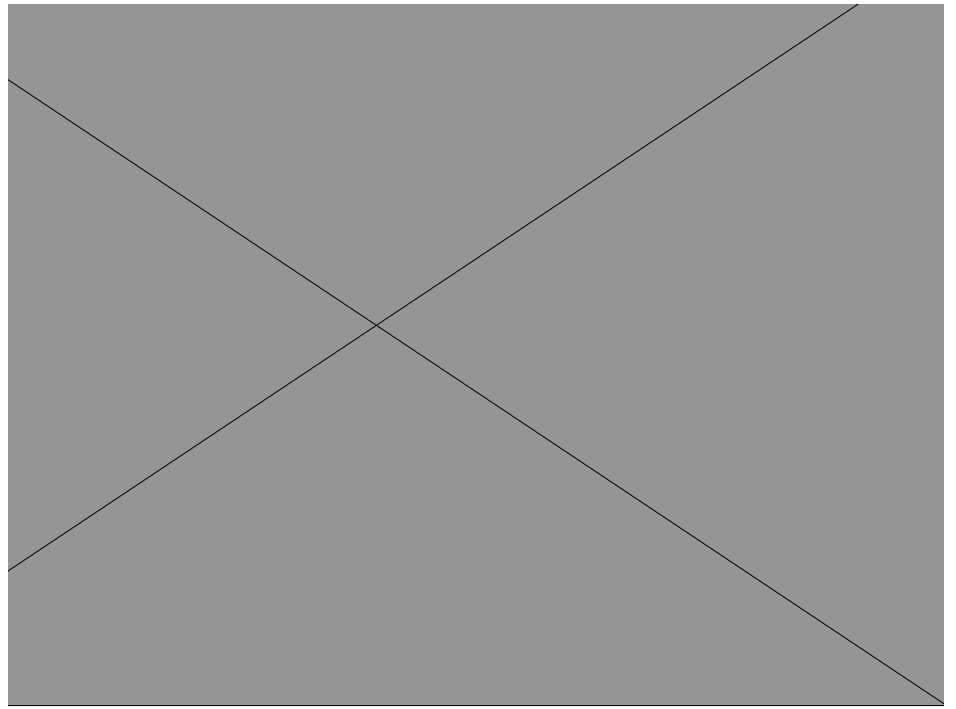
Students in Basra go on strike

On March 15, about 20 to 40 militiamen reportedly loyal to Shiite cleric Moqtada al-Sadr attacked a picnic of several hundred University of Basra students. Al-Sadr's militia fought fierce battles with the U.S. military in Najaf and parts of Baghdad last year.

The attackers used clubs, wire cables, and brandished pistols and rifles, according to AP. Students said police were present but did not intervene, according to the *Washington Post*. At least 10 students were detained by the militiamen and taken to their local offices but released later that evening. Two students were beaten to death, reported the *London Times*.

"They started shouting at us that we were immoral, that we were meeting boys and girls together and playing music and that this was against Islam," Ali al-Azawi, an engineering student who had organized the picnic, told the *Times*.

The next day, about 150 students marched on the university president's office. They demanded punishment of the militiamen involved in the attack, an official apology, return of property stolen



AFP/Getty Images/Essam Al-Sudani

About 1,000 students marched in Basra, Iraq, March 17 after members of an Islamic party prevented them from organizing a day trip.

from them by the attackers, and dissolution of the security committees that function as "morality police" in each university department and their replacement with Iraqi army troops. Classes were canceled and the students vowed to remain on strike until their demands were met.

The university students continued their protest the following day with a march to the governor's office. Their action inspired hundreds of students from smaller colleges and a few high schools to join them. After a two-hour meeting involving city officials,

the governor, members of al-Sadr's group, student representatives, and school officials, the city council president announced that the students' demands would be met.

Thirst for once-banned books

Another indication of increased political space for many Iraqis is the spreading availability of once-banned books. In the Renaissance Bookstore on Mutanabi Street in Baghdad, for example, once-banned books are selling well, according to a March 20 *Washington Post* article. Among the titles are books "by communist poets and martyred clerics, translations of Shakespeare, a 44-volume tome by a revered ayatollah and stories by Gertrude Bell, a British archaeologist and adventurer," the *Post* said.

Among the most sought after, said store owner Mohammed Hayawi, are language books—English, French, Turkish, and Farsi—books he described as passports to the rest of the world.

Hayawi told the *Post* he opposes the U.S. occupation but took part in the U.S.-orchestrated elections in January. He said he is a devout Muslim but dislikes the meddling of religious officials in politics. He also said he is a Sunni but resists identifying himself as such.

Pro-U.S. forces oust Kyrgyzstan gov't

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

The government of the former Soviet republic of Kyrgyzstan collapsed after days of protests over allegedly fraudulent elections. The demonstrations were organized by political forces seeking to ally the Central Asian country more closely with Washington, which has a military base there.

According to the Associated Press, after a March 24 rally of some 5,000 protesters in the streets of Bishkek, the republic's capital, about 1,000 people seized the presidential compound, meeting little resistance from police armed with truncheons and shields standing next to a protective fence. President Askar Akayev, who had been the nation's ruler for the past 14 years, fled the country. Akayev took refuge in Russia, where President Vladimir Putin made clear he would be welcome. Akayev has stated he is not resigning.

"I did not expect this," said Kurmanbek Bakiyev, an opposition leader and former prime minister who was appointed interim prime minister and acting president by parliament on March 25. "I thought we would have a rally and appeal to the president. But because they did not come to the talks, this was the result." Several days earlier protesters succeeded in seizing control of all three of the regional capitals in the southern part of the country as well.

Bakiyev had resigned his previous post as prime minister in 2002 after police fired into a crowd of 1,500 demonstrators protesting the arrest of a parliamentary leader.

The immediate issue fueling the latest protests were charges by opposition figures of fraud in the elections for a new parliament held on February 27, and in the March 13 run-off vote, in which Akayev's supporters won 69 of 75 seats. Discontent by working people with deteriorating economic conditions, however, is also a factor in the current conflict. Decades of Stalinist misrule followed by efforts to reestablish capitalism over the past decade have devastated living conditions among workers and farmers.

Kyrgyzstan, located on the western border of China, has a population of some 5 million people, 75 percent of whom are Muslim. While the country is rich in oil and gas deposits, the economy remains largely agricultural. An estimated 50 percent of the population live below the official poverty level.

With the breakup of the Soviet Union in 1991 and the collapse of the Stalinist regime there, production plummeted as an aggressive policy of "privatizing" the country's enterprises was pursued. A study

of the Kyrgyzstan economy published by the Federal Research Division of the U.S. Library of Congress described the way industry in the country was transferred from state ownership to "private" hands. "Most privatization (and almost all privatization in industry) was accomplished by creation of joint-stock companies," the report states. "Almost no public bidding for enterprise shares occurred, and the state maintained significant shares in enterprises after their conversion[.]"

Open theft of national patrimony by elements of the former Stalinist bureaucracy characterized this process. Akayev, who led this sell-off of state property, complained in 1993 that 70 percent of the state funds earmarked for economic improvements were diverted into private hands. A poll reported at the time that 85 percent of the country's so-called entrepreneurs reported that bribery was a necessary part of maintaining their businesses.

As part of its war against Afghanistan in 2002, Washington established and has maintained a military base with some 1,000 troops in Kyrgyzstan, right outside the capital, as well as 1,300 troops in the bordering former Soviet Central Asian republic of Uzbekistan. Moscow also maintains a military base near Bishkek. U.S. State Department spokesman Adam Ereli urged the Kyrgyz government to open a dialogue with the opposition, stating, "Violence is not an acceptable means for resolving differences."

The day after Akayev fled the country, the high court ruled that the recently held parliamentary elections were invalid and ordered the former deputies to reconvene. In effect, this ruling created a situation in which rival parliaments were competing for power. In response, acting prime minister Bakiyev signed an order saying that most of the newly elected deputies would be allowed to stay on, although it was not clear how this would be implemented. He also announced that a new presidential election would be held June 26, and announced his candidacy.

Bakiyev also phoned Putin to ask for emergency aid. Putin, while saying he wants to develop good relations with the country's new leadership, has condemned the uprising as "illegitimate."

Parliament also appointed opposition leader Felix Kulov to be coordinator of the country's police forces. Kulov, who resigned as vice president in 1993 over a dispute about missing gold reserves, had been jailed on corruption charges since 2001 until protesters forced Akayev to flee the country. "We have arrested many

people," commented Kulov. According to a government official, as of March 24 two people were killed and 173 hospitalized, and many more received minor injuries in the street clashes.

Kulov also announced that he was backing the newly elected members of parliament, which includes some wealthy businessmen. He vowed to arrest any of the former members of parliament if they organized any further protests, according to the AKI press agency.

Washington targets Venezuela, Cuba

Continued from front page

able to organize in former Soviet republics such as Kyrgyzstan or Ukraine.

"When it comes to Venezuela we have our differences," said Rice, who has described Venezuelan president Hugo Chávez as a "negative force" in Latin America.

In response to a question about whether Venezuela is interfering with the affairs of its neighbors, Rice asserted, "I think there are very strong signs that there have been problems with Colombia and there have been problems with others and, of course, Venezuela has a very close relationship with [Cuban president Fidel] Castro."

Turning to U.S. policy toward Cuba, Rice said, "The problem with Cuba is that there isn't much room for the engagement really of whatever may be bubbling in Cuba. There just isn't much room. And what room there is, like the couple of projects that have come up over the last couple of years, Castro has managed to cut off."

"So our view has been," she continued, "that somehow engaging Cuba is going to have an impact on that domestic structure is just, there's no evidence that that is going to be the case.... It's true that they have better relations with Venezuela, but other than the personal relationship between Fidel Castro and Hugo Chávez, I'm not really sure what Cuba has to give to the Venezuelan people. We'll see."

Two days earlier at a news conference held in Brasilia, the Brazilian capital, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld expressed his growing concerns about the Venezuelan government's plans to buy 100,000 assault rifles from Russia. "I can't imagine what's going to happen to 100,000 AK-47s," he said. "I can't imagine why Venezuela needs 100,000 AK-47s. I just hope that, personally hope, that it doesn't happen... I can't imagine that if it did happen, that it would be good for the hemisphere."

In response to mounting criticism from Washington, the government of Venezuela has warned about possible U.S. aggression toward the country and has responded by taking steps to upgrade the country's military and expand local popular defense units. In addition to the assault rifles, Caracas has agreed to buy at least 10 military helicopters from Russia and is considering updating its air force with Russian MIG-29's. Chávez has also expressed interest in buying as many as 24 Super Tucano patrol planes from the Brazilian jet maker Empresa Brasileira de Aeronáutica, or Embraer, according to a March 24 *New York Times* article.

In a similar approach, the conservative magazine *National Review* featured a photo of Castro and Chávez on the front cover of its April 11 edition with the headline, "The Axis of Evil... Western Hemisphere version." The related article is authored by Otto Reich, former assistant secretary of state for the Western Hemisphere and member of the National Security Council between 2001 and 2004.

Many Venezuelan capitalists and their U.S. allies have been angered by the passage of a series of laws beginning in late 2001. These include agrarian reform legislation, a bill strengthening state control of the country's oil resources, and a law that includes protections for artisan fishermen and restrictions on big fishing firms. The struggles by workers and peasants to implement these measures and push for others that would result in land ownership, jobs, and more democratic rights have struck fear in the hearts of most of the bourgeoisie in Venezuela and its allies in the United States. Local capitalists and landlords, with Washington's backing, have also protested the normalization of relations between Venezuela and Cuba and the presence of more than 20,000 Cuban volunteer doctors, literacy teachers, and agricultural technicians in the country.

Sell 'New International'

Continued from front page

to help give a strong early push to this campaign.

The *New International* effort coincides with a seven-week campaign, from April 2 to May 22, to win subscribers to the *Militant*.

"During the April 9-10 weekend, supporters of *New International* and the *Militant* in Des Moines will be joined by workers and revolutionary youth from Chicago, Omaha, and Twin Cities," Swanson said.

"The campaign teams from the region will meet on the morning of April 9 at the Des Moines workers hall, located at 3707 Douglas Avenue. Bagels, fruit, and coffee will be served.

"The teams will then be dispatched to towns and cities in the 50-60 mile radius of Des Moines, where we will meet packinghouse, garment, and other workers, as well as working farmers and students, who will want to discuss working-class politics."

Swanson noted, "You all look very well-dressed today at this meeting. That is how we want you all to look when we campaign with *New International*, so that working people take these working-class educational political tools as seriously as we are serious about the politics printed on the pages of these publications."

In a letter to campaigners in the Midwest, which was copied for those attending the March 26 meeting, Swanson reported, "The teams will return to the hall by 6:00 p.m. for a brief meeting on the day's campaign experiences. Dinner will be served at 6:30 p.m. and will include an entrée of

turkey mole, beans, and rice.

"At 7:30 p.m., the Des Moines Militant Labor Forum will present a talk on world politics in today's sharpening inter-imperialist conflicts and the need to chart a revolutionary course to confront it. The keynote speaker will be Jacob Perasso, a leader of the Socialist Workers Party and delegate to the Second International Preparatory Meeting" for the world youth festival, which took place at the end of February in Hanoi, Vietnam. "The forum will also hear brief presentations on the *Militant* Fund drive to raise \$90,000." Overnight housing will be provided—"bring your sleeping bags," Swanson said.

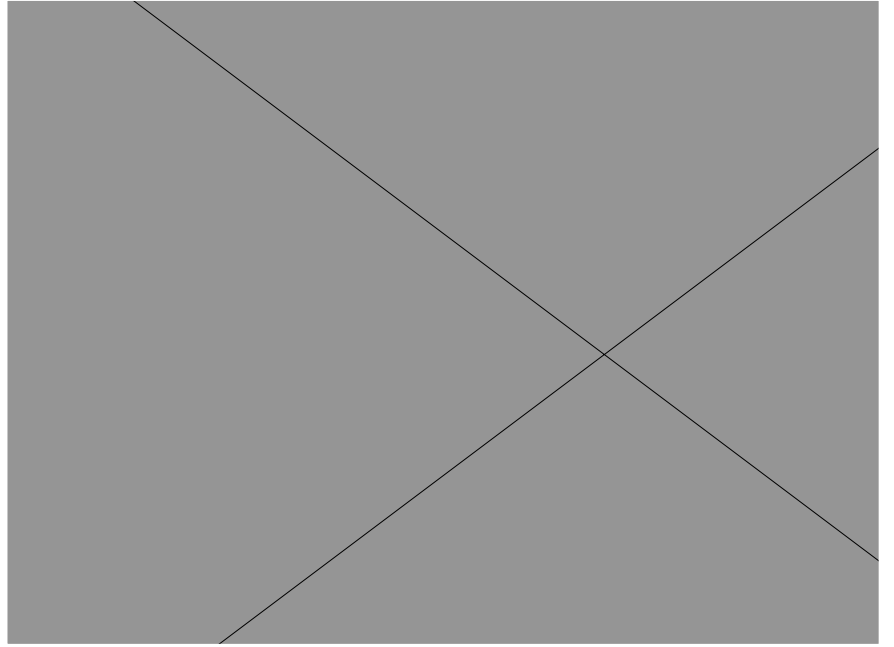
The letter concluded, "The campaign teams will meet again Sunday morning, April 10, at the Des Moines workers hall for another full day of campaigning on the way back to your cities."

Swanson explained that over the next several months the campaigners would be taking *New International* "to plant gates and mine portals, and we will knock on a lot of doors in workers districts. In the Midwest and other parts of the country, knocking on doors means a lot of trailer courts—part of the housing conditions of the deepening capitalist crisis.

"We will be setting up a lot of tables on college campuses. The youth we will reach will want to talk politics with revolutionary workers as we help build the world youth festival."

He emphasized, "This campaign is not just about numbers or quotas, but about the politics that working people need to read and study. We need to begin studying together these issues of *New International*

Lockheed Martin Machinists end strike



Militant/Bill Arth

Striking unionists at the Lockheed Martin plant in Marietta, Georgia, approved a new contract March 15 by a three-to-one vote. The 2,800 members of International Association of Machinists (IAM) Local Lodge 709 had walked off the job a week earlier after rejecting the bosses' demands for concessions on medical benefits and pensions. The initial company offer proposed a 10 percent pay increase over three years and higher premiums for health-care and retirement insurance.

The Machinists' walkout also included plants in Meridian, Mississippi, and Clarksburg, West Virginia. Lockheed Martin is one of the largest contractors for the Pentagon. A company spokesperson said that no major changes were made from the original contract offer on pensions, wages, or health insurance.

—NED MEASEL

as we go out to sell them.

"Yes, you can be a good fighter, but to advance with our class against the bosses'

class—the enemy of the vast majority of humanity—you have to be politically armed with the facts and the lessons of the class struggle. And these new magazines will do just that. Workers, farmers, and youth need them."

Swanson urged campaigners to send "articles to the *Militant* on the experiences of selling *New International* and discussing the politics in the Marxist magazine—brief reports that can give new ideas that might not have been thought of where you live and work."

"You can feel in this room the proletarian eagerness to do this campaign," the socialist leader said. "So let's go for it, out of this meeting, as we match our words with the necessary deeds. Then, after the five-month campaign, we will have another reason to celebrate."

Quebec poultry workers reject contract

BY SYLVIE CHARBIN

MONTREAL—After more than six months on strike, 80 percent of the 86 members of the Volailles Marvid Workers Union voted against the company's "final offer" on March 23. It was the third time the workers had rejected a company offer since the strike began on Sept. 13, 2004. This time the offer was accompanied by a company warning that if the unionists did not sign the contract by March 25, the bosses would shut down the plant.

The Marvid plant is the largest kosher chicken slaughterhouse in Quebec.

The proposed contract fell far short of the union's demand for a guaranteed minimum workweek of 30 hours. The company offered a five-year agreement that included a guaranteed 29 hours a week to a worker currently employed, excluding new hires. The minimum workweek would increase to 30 hours for the second year, 31 for the third, and 32 for the fourth year. However, this offer would start only a year after the contract is signed. Total yearly hours guaranteed would include all legal holidays, vacations, sick leaves, or other absences.

Hours lost due to lateness, absences, or disciplinary action would be deducted from the guaranteed number of hours. Under the company proposal, the bosses would compensate for any hours below the minimum at the end of each year, and payments would only go to those who worked the full year. In the year and a half before the strike, workers regularly put in only 15 to 20 hours a week.

In another attack on the union, the company offer demanded "complete mobility" of the workforce. For example, if less than 90,000 chickens are slaughtered in a given week, a worker could be transferred into up to three departments for a minimum of one week. "The bosses will use this to disorganize us, to hit us over the head, in a selective manner," said Carlo Désir, president of the union, "and if we sign, I don't know how many hours of work we'll get, or how many of us will get back in."

Total wage increases offered over the five-year contract ranged from 65 cents to a little more than a dollar an hour, depending on job classification.

The negotiating committee made no recommendation on the proposed contract, leaving it up to the members to decide.

At the beginning of the two-hour meeting, union members were informed by a official from the Confederation of National Trade Unions (CSN), to which the

union is affiliated, that the company had already initiated plant closure procedures, including canceling contracts.

Just before the vote was taken, workers broke into their union chant, adapted from a carnival tune from Haiti. One line says, "We don't want to be fooled, and we don't want to be feathered." The vote, which was counted in front of the entire membership, was 69 against and 17 in favor.

"I'm very satisfied with the vote we've just taken," said Ruth, a workers of Haitian

origin who has worked at the plant for 23 years. "We don't want to go back on our knees. We want to work under decent conditions, not like slaves. We've waged a hard fight for six months and we deserve to be treated with respect, to work in peace." Some 80 percent of the strikers are originally from Haiti.

Désir reported that an hour after the boss was informed of the vote, the company lawyer told the union the owners would close the plant March 31.

Pittsburgh students publicize youth festival

BY RON SMITH

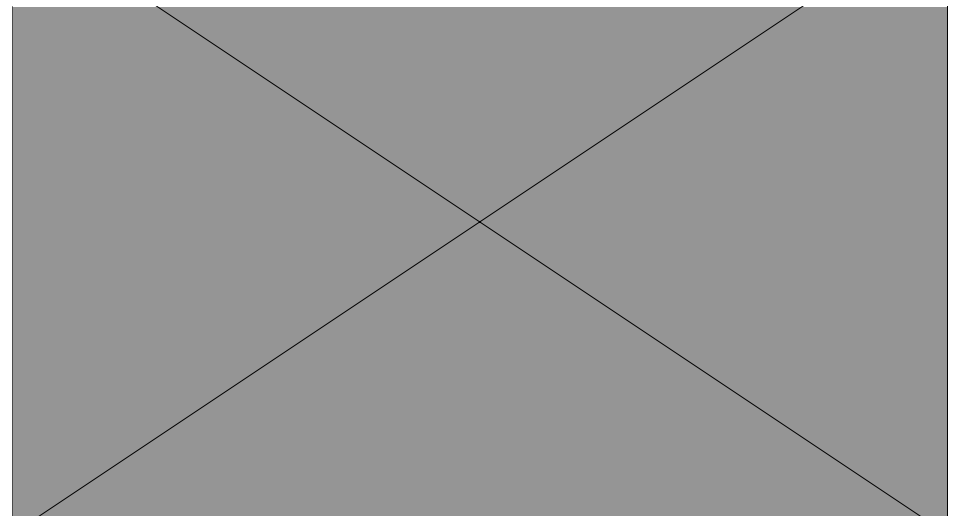
PITTSBURGH—A contingent organized by the Western Pennsylvania Local Organizing Committee (LOC) for the 16th World Festival of Youth and Students marched in a peace protest here March 19. The action, which drew around 1,500 people, began in the Squirrel Hill district and ended in a rally in front of the student union at the University of Pittsburgh. The contingent marched behind a banner that read, "World Festival of Youth and Students. For Peace and Solidarity, We Struggle Against War and Imperialism. Caracas, Venezuela, August 2005."

The message on the banner is the official slogan of the festival, which will take place August 7-15 in Caracas, Venezuela's capital. Thousands of youth from countries around the world are expected to attend the gathering.

"The delegation was representing what we were marching for. We talked to teenagers to grandparents. We related what our delegation is about, what we're fighting against, this war, and imperialism," said Tommy Furfari, a member of the committee who marched in the contingent. "We talked about the situation in Venezuela, why it is good to have the festival there because they fight U.S.-backed imperialism. When people unite, with demands, they are showing what can happen."

Committee members passed out hundreds of flyers, staffed an information table all day, encouraged people to sign a contact list, and raised \$15 from a donation can. The LOC prepared a written statement describing the youth festival and encouraging people to join and support the effort. A representative of the Thomas Merton Center, the organizers of the action, read the statement at the rally in front of the William Pitt Union.

"I thought we got a really good response. A lot of people want a thing like this. People



Sara Nigh

Students and others in Pittsburgh set up information table at March 19 peace rally to build delegation to world youth festival, taking place August 7-15 in Caracas.

are longing for a better community," said Devin Gorney, another LOC member also in the march. "And this festival is attractive, when you have people from around the world coming to together. There is politicization amongst working people to Bush's attacks."

That evening, the committee held a house party and invited all participants in the day's action to discuss and mingle with those building the festival.

Earlier that week, on March 16, the committee organized its second film presentation of *The Revolution Will Not Be Televised*, a documentary that shows the mass working-class mobilizations in Caracas that were key in defeating the April 2002 U.S.-backed military coup in Venezuela.

The event was held at the University of Pittsburgh. About 40 students and others attended. The film showing was sponsored by Pitt Students in Solidarity, Pitt Students

for Justice in Palestine, and Sankofa. The Thomas Merton Center, which also endorses the LOC, publicized and sent information on the event to its mailing list. The committee members built the event by going to classes, posting flyers on campuses, on the Internet, and promoting the event on two local radio stations. The following week the LOC elected a steering committee with representatives of various student and political organizations in the committee. Its duties are to help carry out the day-to-day work decided at each committee meeting and to pull together an agenda for the weekly meeting. The committee meets every Sunday at 11:00 a.m. in Posvar Hall at the University of Pittsburgh. Each meeting starts off with political discussion, and plans out future fund-raisers, and the week's work. For more information and to get involved, contact the committee at worldyouthfest_wpa@yahoo.com.

Utah daily papers press for dismissal of mine bosses' suit

BY NORTON SANDLER

The *Salt Lake Tribune* and the *Deseret Morning News*, the major daily papers in Utah, continue to press for dismissal of the lawsuit C.W. Mining and the International Association of United Workers Union (IAUWU) have filed against the papers. Also targeted by the owners of the Co-Op mine as defendants in a sweeping lawsuit are the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) and several of its officers, 17 workers who were part of a 10-month strike at the mine that began in September 2003, and the *Militant* and the Socialist Workers Party.

All defendants in the case have filed motions to dismiss the lawsuit. Company lawyers have responded to the two Salt Lake papers and to the UMWA. They have asked the court to grant them until April 15 to respond to the motions to dismiss the case filed by the 17 miners, the *Militant* and the SWP, the Utah AFL-CIO and its president, Ed Mayne; Jobs With Justice; Paper Allied-Industrial, Chemical and Energy (PACE) union Local 8-286; and University of Utah professor Hans Ehbar.

On March 21 attorneys for the Utah dailies issued their reply to company efforts to quash their motion to dismiss the case.

A bargaining election was held at the mine in December 2004, where the workers could choose between the UMWA, the IAUWU—which the workers describe as a company union—and no union at all. The results of the election are still pending. In a 2-1 vote in January, the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) in Washington, D.C., upheld the NLRB regional director's decision to throw out the votes of anyone belonging to the Davis County Cooperative, an association of family members linked to the owners of the mine. Because of this, more than 100 votes of the bosses' relatives working at the mine were not counted.

The company challenged the votes of an additional 27 workers, claiming they were terminated from employment at the mine a few days before the election because the bosses "discovered" that they were "illegal immigrants" who did not have the proper documentation to work in the United States.

The lawsuit was originally filed in

September 2004. The 70-page complaint was amended last December. The bosses claim that peaceful conditions existed at the mine for many years until UMWA "agents" disrupted relations between the company and the IAUWU in violation of federal law. They also claim that the UMWA and its agents and supporters, including newspapers covering the dispute, are also guilty of civil conspiracy.

The company and IAUWU lawsuit also makes sweeping claims of defamation directed at all the defendants. Twenty-four of the 70 pages of the complaint cite articles from the *Militant's* weekly coverage of the labor dispute between September 2003 and the time the amended complaint was filed 15 months later. The company also falsely claims that the *Militant* is owned and controlled by the SWP.

On February 17, the Salt Lake papers filed a joint brief asking Judge Dee Benson to dismiss the case against them, their editors, and several of their reporters. The *Tribune* and *Morning News* argue that their coverage of the ongoing dispute at the mine is constitutionally protected. Their court papers explain, "The Plaintiffs' defamation claim against the Tribune Defendants and Morning News Defendants suffer from at least six legal defects, any one of which is sufficient for dismissal."

Attorneys Carl Kingston and Mark Hansen, representing the company and the IAUWU, filed a Memorandum in Opposition to the Motion to Dismiss on March 9 that attempted to rebut these arguments. They pressed the judge to continue the case. In one of their arguments, the company and IAUWU lawyers state, "Plaintiffs have sued the Defendants, not for republication of statements made by a responsible organization, but for Defendants' own false and defamatory statements endorsed by the publishers. The original sources from which Defendants obtained the information upon which Defendants based their defamations was not a responsible organization, but a rabid labor union and its cohorts."

Attorneys for the two Utah papers filed their reply on March 21. They explain that the neutrality of coverage of a dispute is not limited to reporting on statements by "prominent" or "responsible" individuals. This right is afforded a writer or publication that reports on "serious charges made by one participant in an existing controversy against another participant in that controversy," and the appropriate focus is on the neutrality of the report, not the prominence of those involved in the controversy.

The two papers also cite protections afforded in Utah for reporting on a public controversy where issues such as wages or mine safety are in dispute.

"Perhaps the clearest basis on which Plaintiff's claims should be dismissed is

New Mexico miners organize conference on women's rights in the workplace

BY TERI MOSS

PRICE, Utah—Coal miners who are members of the International Union of Operating Engineers (IUOE) at the BHP Billiton mines in the Farmington, New Mexico, area are hosting a conference on women's rights in the workplace.

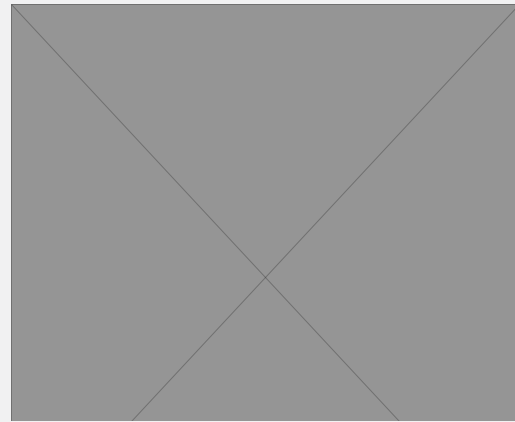
This gathering, the first of its kind, will take place April 18 at the Farmington Civic Center. It is co-sponsored by the IUOE and the University of New Mexico School of Law.

"The conference is being organized by women for women," said Rosie Kellywood, chair of the IUOE Ethics Committee and a surface coal miner at BHP. "We especially hope this will be a learning experience for those of us in non-traditional jobs."

There are about 20 women and several hundred men in the area mines, she said.

"We've sent letters to members of the union, especially the women miners, to build the event, and we are posting the brochure on union bulletin boards at work," Kellywood explained.

The title of the gathering, "Changing



Militant/Jeff Powers

Members of United Mine Workers of America picket Kemmerer mine in Wyoming in 2000.

Woman Conference," refers to a Navajo legend. Navajo miners represent 90 percent of the workforce at BHP.

Those wishing to register for the conference can mail a check for \$10 payable to Changing Woman Conference and send it to Operating Engineers, Local 953, U.S. Hwy 64, Kirtland, New Mexico 87417. Organizers ask that those interested send their name, address, phone number, and occupation. Kellywood said seats are limited.

Changing Woman Conference

Monday, April 18, 8:00 a.m.—3:30 p.m.

Farmington Civic Center—Farmington, New Mexico

For information call IUOE (505) 598-6634 or Rosie Kellywood (505) 598-0418

the failure to allege statements that, *taken in context* convey defamatory meaning," the *Tribune* and *Deseret Morning News* brief asserts. It further explains that the sharp language often used in labor disputes is protected free speech and the press has the long-established freedom to cover a dispute and report the statements by the participants in it.

The two papers additionally explain the legal precedents that protect the constitutional right to cover the opinion of the workers involved and to print editorials or opinion columns on the miners' fight, which the company had listed as examples of defamations by the two papers.

The Utah papers' memorandum challenges the company lawyers' claim that the newspapers deliberately falsified their coverage of NLRB rulings during the Co-Op miners' fight to be represented by the UMWA.

"Plaintiffs continue to claim that certain statements regarding forced reinstatement, backpay, and illegal firings do not accurately reflect the NLRB proceedings. Plaintiffs claim they voluntarily gave unilateral offers of reemployment, rather than being ordered to reinstate workers. Plaintiffs appear to suggest their actions all were done without any pressure or involvement from the NLRB. However, as already noted, the NLRB docu-

ments tell an entirely different story."

The memorandum goes on to say, "Plaintiffs would have this court believe that out of the goodness of their corporate hearts, and with no pressure at all from government regulators breathing down their necks, Plaintiffs voluntarily and generously gave reinstatement offers to former employees they would have nothing to do with prior to the time of the NLRB's involvement. Such an argument strains credibility."

After the Plaintiffs have responded to all the defendants' motions to dismiss the case, the judge will make a determination on whether oral arguments will be heard in this case.

Militant Spring Subscription Drive April 2—May 22 Local Quotas

Country	Goal
AUSTRALIA	30
CANADA	60
ICELAND	20
NEW ZEALAND	
Auckland	20
Christchurch	15
N.Z. total	35
SWEDEN	16
UNITED KINGDOM	
Edinburgh	20
London	40
UK total	60
UNITED STATES	
Atlanta	40
Birmingham	25
Boston	60
Chicago	65
Cleveland	35
Craig, CO	20
Des Moines	50
Detroit	28
Houston	50
Los Angeles	90
Miami	65
NE Pennsylvania	40
New York	115
Newark	55
Philadelphia	50
Pittsburgh	50
Price, UT	50
San Francisco	25
Seattle	35
Tampa	30
Twin Cities	70
Washington	55
U.S. total	1103
Int'l totals	1324

'Militant' launches \$90,000 fund

BY SAM MANUEL

Participants in the March 26 meeting to launch a five-month campaign to study and sell two new issues of the Marxist magazine *New International* (see articles on front page and page 6) also made pledges to the *Militant's* spring fund drive amounting to \$32,885. They also donated more than \$5,000 in cash contributions at the meeting.

As we enter the second week of the eight-week fund drive, partisans of the *Militant* need to get on a rhythm that will allow regular payments averaging \$12,000 per week in order to meet the \$90,000 goal by the May 22 deadline. These funds are needed now to cover operating costs such as rent, electricity, and printing and shipping bills.

The fund drive coincides with an international campaign to sell the *New International* along with subscriptions to the *Militant*. In Iowa, supporters of the socialist newsweekly will host a regional sales team April 9-10 that will be capped off with a Militant Labor Forum (see front-page article.) Such campaigning and public meetings organized now will be a big boost for the fund drive, too.

The *Militant's* only source of funding is contributions from its readers. Workers, farmers, and others who value the paper's irreplaceable role in covering struggles by working people to organize unions and use union power to resist job speed up, weakening of safety provisions, cuts in wages, and broader attacks by the wealthy rulers on the social wage are those who fund it.

As we go to press, supporters of the *Militant* in Australia, Iceland, New Zealand, Sweden, and the United States have adopted local quotas that exceed \$85,000. That's about \$5,000 short of the international target. Work to approach all readers of the paper and other potential contributors on the job, at plant gates, on picket lines, in campuses, and elsewhere over the next week or two can help close this gap.

Local distributors and other readers are encouraged to send in accounts of their progress each week that can be included in this column. Checks or money orders should be made out to The Militant, earmarked "Spring Fund Drive," and sent to the *Militant* at 306 W. 37th St., 10th floor, New York, NY 10018.

\$90,000 Militant Fund March 26—May 17

	Goal
AUSTRALIA	\$750
CANADA	
ICELAND	\$200
NEW ZEALAND	\$1,500
SWEDEN	\$800
UNITED KINGDOM	
UNITED STATES	
Atlanta	\$4,300
Birmingham	\$1,300
Boston	\$3,000
Chicago	\$4,000
Cleveland	\$1,000
Craig, CO	\$1,800
Des Moines	\$1,100
Detroit	\$2,500
Houston	\$3,500
Los Angeles	\$8,000
Miami	\$1,400
NE Pennsylvania	\$1,500
New York	\$11,000
Newark	\$3,750
Omaha	\$335
Philadelphia	\$3,000
Pittsburgh	\$2,500
Price, UT	\$4,000
San Francisco	\$9,200
Seattle	\$6,000
Tampa	\$1,500
Twin Cities	\$4,500
Washington	\$3,000
Totals	\$85,635

Campaign begins to sell Marxist magazine

New issues of 'New International' launched at public meeting in New York

BY CINDY JAQUITH

NEW YORK—Some 350 people gathered here March 26 to celebrate the publication of two new issues of *New International*, the magazine of Marxist politics and theory, and to launch a campaign to sell thousands of copies to workers, farmers, and youth around the world over the next five months.

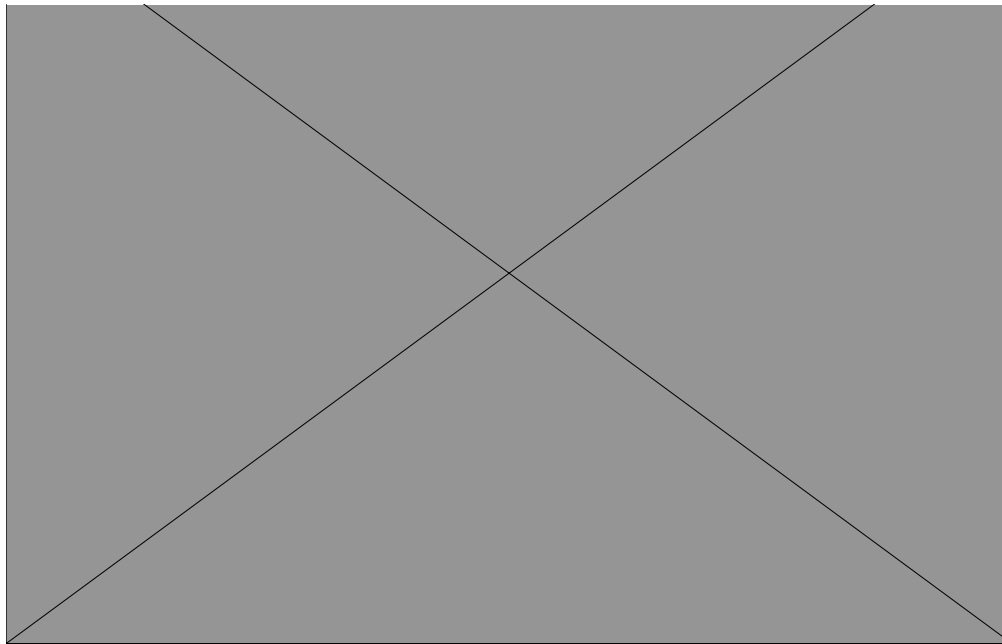
Those in the audience, eagerly awaiting the opportunity to get these two political weapons into their hands and start using them, included communist workers and young socialists from around the United States and several other countries. Also present were a large number of supporters of the communist movement, who over the past months mobilized to assure the publication and delivery of the volumes in time for the meeting. The campaign to sell the two new issues of *New International* got off to a good start at the meeting itself, where more than 250 copies were sold.

A significant number of young people also took part in the meeting, many of them new to revolutionary politics. Most of them were active in building delegations to the 16th World Festival of Youth and Students, which takes place this August in Caracas, Venezuela. Among those present were a number of workers who had learned of the meeting through fellow workers on the job or by running into teams of socialists campaigning on the streets.

29 issues of 'New International'

Socialist Workers Party national secretary Jack Barnes, who chaired the event, began by pointing to the 29 issues of *New International* published since 1983—the majority of them in English and an increasing number in Spanish, French, Swedish, and Icelandic. Major articles from the magazine have also been printed in Greek and in Farsi, the official language in Iran.

The two new issues—nos. 12 and 13 of *New International*, and 6 and 7 of *Nueva Internacional*, which have the same contents in Spanish—came off the presses in time to be available at the New York gathering. *New International* no. 12 features "Their Transformation and Ours," a draft resolution that the Socialist Workers Party will be discussing and voting on at its June national convention. It also contains "Capitalism's Long Hot Winter Has Begun," a report by Barnes adopted by the 2002 SWP convention. *New International* no. 13 contains "Our Politics Start with the World," a report by Barnes that was discussed and adopted by the delegates at the 2002 SWP convention.



Militant/Eric Simpson

Mary-Alice Waters (right), editor of the Marxist magazine *New International*, and SWP national secretary Jack Barnes (behind Waters) talk with students and others at end of March 26 meeting in New York launching the sales campaign for new issues of *New International*.

At the March 26 meeting, Barnes noted that the two new issues are companion volumes. They focus on the accelerating economic, social, political, and military contradictions that have pushed the international imperialist system into the opening stages of a global financial crisis and depression, as well as a large-scale transformation of the U.S. military on a scale unprecedented since the eve of World War II.

Although militarily powerful, he said, the imperialist ruling classes are unable to understand the capacity of working people to resist the attacks on their conditions and dignity. He pointed to an interview in the March 25 *Washington Post* with Condoleezza Rice (see also front-page article). The U.S. secretary of state revealed some of the blindness of capitalist politicians to the impact of the Cuban Revolution's example on working people in Latin America and around the world. After noting that Cuba receives a substantial supply of oil from Venezuela, Rice said of the Cubans, "It's true that they have better relations with Venezuela, but other than the personal relationship between Fidel Castro and Hugo Chávez, I'm not sure what Cuba has to give to the Venezuelan people." She will find out, Barnes remarked.

Driven to rely increasingly on its military might by the need to expand its dominance of territories and markets, the U.S. ruling

class has made gains through its "war on terrorism" in the Middle East. At the same time, Barnes noted, Washington's actions have unintended repercussions: working people have been taking more political space to organize and act in their own interest, from Iraq to Lebanon. The most important thing for communists to look for is this political space, he said, citing two recent examples. One was a March 24 demonstration in Baghdad by hundreds of electricity workers against the repeated attacks by antigovernment bombers on power facilities that have killed many of their co-workers. The other was an interview in the March 20 *Washington Post* with booksellers in the Iraqi capital, which gave a glimpse of how sales of literature in Arabic, English, French, and Farsi—especially once-banned books—are exploding.

Co-Op miners' struggle

Barnes introduced Bill Estrada, a leader of the struggle by coal miners at C.W. Mining's Co-Op Mine in Huntington, Utah, to win representation by the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA). Estrada thanked the organizers of the meeting for the invitation to speak on behalf of the Co-Op miners, and said the workers are open to address meetings about their struggle. The workers are fighting to be reinstated and win recognition of the UMWA as their union, he said.

The National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) is investigating charges by the UMWA that the company fired more than 30 miners in early December on phony grounds of lacking "valid" work documents in order to thwart a UMWA victory in a representation election held a week later. The board has yet to rule on the validity of the ballots cast by the fired workers. He noted that the NLRB in Washington, D.C., recently upheld the regional NLRB's decision to not count the ballots cast in the election by more than 100 members of the Davis County Cooperative because they are related to the mine bosses or the company shareholders.

Estrada said he is going to Caracas for the world youth festival in August, where he will explain the experiences of the Co-Op miners in the union-organizing fight in Utah as part of the struggles of working people in the United States today.

Estrada said the miners, many of whom have not yet found other jobs, are not waiting for an NLRB ruling in the hope that it will determine the outcome of their fight. Instead, he said, the miners are organizing to get the fight solidly back onto their terrain—the streets, the picket lines, and solidarity actions. He cited as examples the March 12 rally of 100 in support of the Co-Op miners and an informational protest on March 22 across the road from the depot where coal from the Co-Op mine and other area mines is loaded onto rail cars after being trucked there from the mine.

Estrada also said the Co-Op miners are organizing to get other jobs. Conditions in nearby coal mines are such that other miners are also interested in the union, he added. Any advances toward organizing by union backers in the area will be the biggest help to the Co-Op struggle.

PRDF joins fight against boss lawsuit

SWP National Committee member Norton Sandler spoke on the campaign to defend the *Militant* and the SWP against a harassment lawsuit filed against the socialist weekly, other newspapers that have covered the Co-Op fight, miners and the UMWA, by the owners of the Co-Op mine and the International Association of United Workers Union. The suit charges the defendants with defaming the company and the company union at the mine. (See also article on page 5).

Sandler announced that the Political Rights Defense Fund (PRDF) is supporting the *Militant* and the SWP in this case. PRDF has just produced a new brochure that explains the stakes in defeating the lawsuit, including an explanation of previous harassment suits aimed at disrupting the workers movement. "The 50-Year Domestic Contra Operation," a feature of *New International* no. 6, is particularly useful in studying the continuity of the communist movement in the fight against the assault on political rights by the bosses and their government, Sandler said.

Sandler urged participants to distribute the new PRDF brochure and to purchase copies of the various legal briefs that had been filed by both the plaintiffs and the various defendants in this case and to help win support for the *Militant* and the SWP's defense. Sandler said many defenders of the Constitution will see that they too have a stake in defending freedom of speech and freedom of the press, which is under attack as part of the mine bosses' lawsuit.

Joe Swanson, organizer of the Socialist Workers Party in Des Moines, Iowa, urged all those present to join in the campaign to sell the two new issues of *New International* and reported on the team of campaigners from around the Midwest who will be hitting the campaign trail on the April 9-10 weekend (see also front-page article).

Cuban communists: 'We're not afraid'

Mary-Alice Waters, editor of *New International*, reported on the experiences of the international team of communist workers that took part in the recent Havana International Book Fair, as well as events in the cities of Matanzas and Cienfuegos sponsored by the Association of Combatants of the Cuban Revolution, to present Pathfinder books and the newly released no. 7 of *Nueva Internacional*. The thirst for this literature demonstrated by people who came to these events was a reflection of the ongoing strengthening of the revolution, she noted (see coverage in the February 28 and March 7 issues of the *Militant*).

A recent development in Cuba that registers this political strength is the popularity of recent government measures to limit the circulation of the U.S. dollar and strengthen the buying power of the Cuban peso. Use of the dollar was legalized in the early 1990s when Cuba was thrust more directly into the world capitalist market after the collapse of aid from and favorable trade relations with the Soviet Union, ushering in what Cubans call the "Special Period." While a necessary move at the time, it led to greater social inequalities between those with and without access to dollars. As a result, the new moves have been welcomed by workers and farmers, especially those who do not have easy access to the U.S. currency.

Waters pointed to a recent speech by Cuban president Fidel Castro closing the congress of the Federation of Cuban Women on March 8, international women's day. According to the Cuban newsweekly *Granma Internacional*, Castro said the Cuban people are "leaving behind" the Special Period. "We are not afraid," Castro also noted, in reference to recent threats by Washington against Cuba. The number of casualties U.S. forces would endure in an invasion of Cuba

Continued on Page 9

New International

A MAGAZINE OF MARXIST POLITICS AND THEORY

Imperialism's March Toward Fascism and War

New International no. 10
There will be new Hitlers, new Mussolinis. That is inevitable. What is not inevitable is that they will triumph. The working-class vanguard will organize our class to fight back against the devastating toll we are made to pay for the capitalist crisis. The future of humanity will be decided in the contest between these contending class forces.

Also in Spanish and French.

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There Is No Peace!

SWP statement at end of second worldwide interimperialist slaughter

The following are major excerpts from a statement by the Socialist Workers Party National Committee featured on the front page of the Aug. 18, 1945, *Militant*, at the end of World War II. It was published under the banner headline, "There Is No Peace! Only World Socialism Can Save Mankind From Atomic Destruction in Another Imperialist War; Workers Of America: You Must Take Power Into Your Own Hands!" We publish it as the third installment of this column, which will appear regularly this year—the 60th anniversary of the end of World War II—to tell the truth about the second worldwide interimperialist slaughter.

Workers, Farmers—Toilers of America!

The second imperialist world war has ended. Six years of wholesale slaughter and devastation have been brought to an awful climax with the discovery of the atomic bomb and its use, with frightful effect, against the people of Japan.

The din of battle has ceased. Mankind now must contemplate the destruction and the ruin, the pain and the heartbreak, which the war has caused. People in every land are celebrating the end of the carnage, not so much with joy as with a sense of relief that it has come to an end. They do not and can not feel secure. Over their celebrations, like a lowering cloud, hangs a grim foreboding of things yet to come. Here in America, where the civilian population has been spared the monstrous agony endured for long, unbroken years by the peoples of Europe and Asia, joy that the war has ended is also tinged with dread for the future.

Revulsion and Anxiety

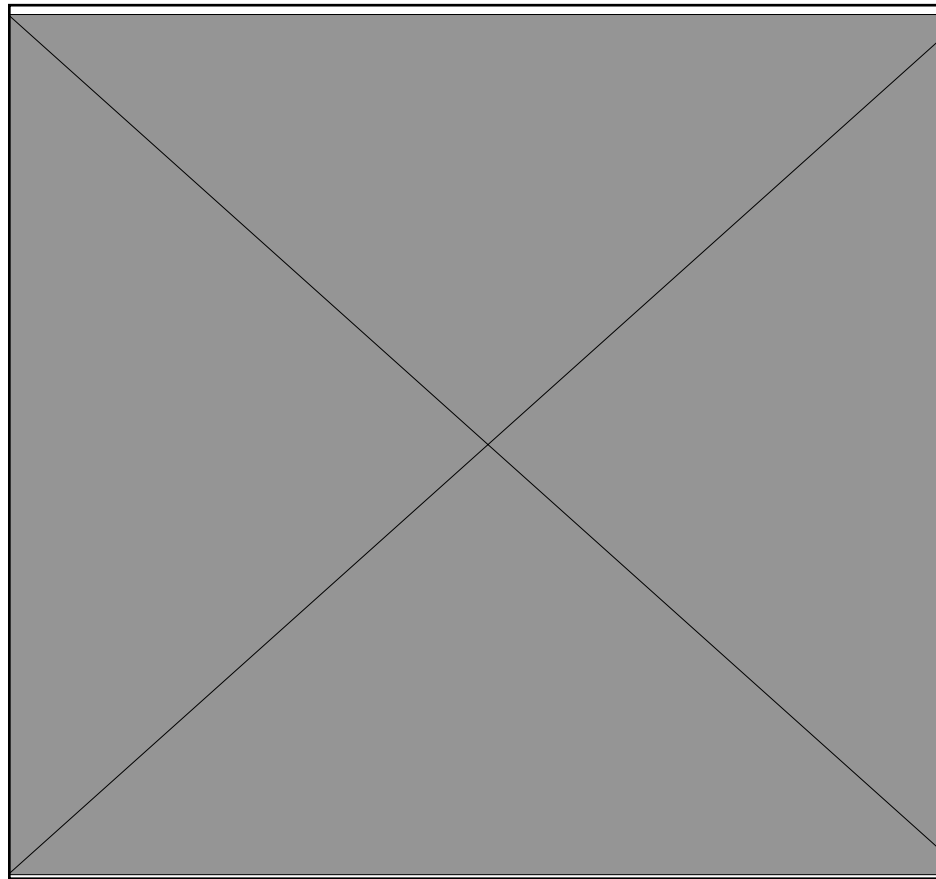
The atomic bombing of the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, with a combined population of 600,000 men, women and children, has sent a wave of revulsion and anxiety throughout the world, especially among the toiling populations who are the principal victims of the war. It is universally realized that mankind has been saved from total annihilation in World War II only because the atomic bomb was invented so late. There is also the conviction, amounting to certainty, that another world war will mean the doom of the human race.

Hatred of imperialist war, and fear of what the future holds, is driving the workers to revolutionary political conclusions. The imperialist rulers, who alone have profited from the war, seek to prevent this at all costs. They want to sidetrack the workers from the struggle to end the capitalist system and establish socialism, which is the only sure guarantee that another war will be impossible.

All the organs of ruling class propaganda are mobilized to deceive the masses into thinking that the end of the war means the dawn of true and lasting peace and that peace can be preserved without revolutionary social change. As a second line of deception, they are trying to persuade the masses that even if another war should come, the American people need not fear annihilation because means will be found to "control" the use of the atomic bomb and insure that it will not be used against this country.

Illusions Being Spread

Among the illusions now being sown is the idea that the unlocked secret of the atomic energy possess such ghastly destructive power that the capitalist rulers will refrain from using it in future wars. But the entire history of imperialist warfare refutes this contention. Between two world wars the most frightful instruments of death were invented and perfected. ALL HAVE BEEN USED! During World War II other death-dealing weapons were invented and perfected. ALL HAVE BEEN USED! Demolition bombs of enormous weight were dropped on helpless civilian populations. Incendiary fire bombs were used to wipe out whole cities and burn their inhabitants to death. The unspeakable flame-thrower



Front-page cartoon published in Aug. 18, 1945, *Militant* along with this statement.

was employed by all the belligerents to burn masses of men to a crisp. The only reason poison gas was not used was its unreliability as a weapon, the danger that it might destroy its users.

To annihilate their opponents, the imperialist criminals will employ every deadly weapon in their arsenals. Let no one deceive himself that the atomic bomb will not be used!...

Cold-Blooded Extermination

And what does Truman mean by "misuse" of the atomic bomb? Was the deliberate and cold-blooded extermination of 600,000 Japanese a high act of humanitarianism? In the shyster language of the imperialist criminals, a weapon is "misused" only when it is employed by their opponent. The Nazis "misused" the weapon of aerial bombardment when they blasted Warsaw, Rotterdam and Coventry. The Japanese imperialists "misused" it when they blasted Canton, Hankow and Chungking. Then the Anglo-American imperialists improved on the performance of their rivals and wiped out dozens of German and Japanese cities and hundreds of thousands of civilian inhabitants. They just "forgot," and hoped their own peoples would forget, their previous pretended indignation.

The atomic bomb, no matter what may be decided in Washington and London, will not remain even an Anglo-American-Canadian secret. Sir James Chadwick, chief British scientist in the atomic bomb project, stated in Washington on August 12 that this deadly weapon was "not a strictly British-American secret" and that "any nation could learn the secret in about five years of experimentation, assuming it had access to the necessary raw materials..."

[C]apitalism is incapable of utilizing the great advances in science and technique for the enrichment of human life. In "peace," capitalism condemns the masses to poverty and insecurity amidst potential plenty. In war, it conscripts industry and science for the mutual destruction of the peoples.

Admission of Bankruptcy

THEY KNOW OF NO WAY! This admission of bankruptcy and helplessness comes from the most powerful ruling class on earth. Out of their own mouths they are condemned as the murderers of the human race. With an insane calmness they tell the people to await their doom.

Let no man deceive himself with the thought that because Germany and Japan

have been defeated, a new war, at least during the lifetime of this generation, is unlikely. Capitalist appetites and imperialist rivalries remain. Only the focus of the antagonisms has shifted. War is the end result of the ceaseless capitalist hunt for profits, markets, colonies, spheres of influence. It is a lie that war can be prevented by treaties and agreements among the imperialist bandits. The League of Nations could not prevent war. It was dead and buried before World War II broke out. The United Nations organization will not be able to prevent a third world war. Its very formula of "peace by force" implies war and not peace. In unguarded moments the imperialists admit that they know of no way to prevent war. The admission is implicit in the maintenance of gigantic armaments. First Washington dispatches on the atomic bomb quoted official quarters as saying this new weapon would "revolutionize all future warfare." Could anything be plainer?

America Will Not Escape

Nor should any man deceive himself that America will escape the annihilating blasts of the atomic bomb in a future war. Air power and sea power will afford no sure protection. Scientists already tell us that an air force will not be necessary to carry this new missile on this deadly mission. It will be fired immense distance in the form of a jet-propelled rocket that will speed to its target at a lighting rate and with unerring accuracy. New York or Detroit or Los Angeles will be as vulnerable as Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

It is at this point that the liberal apologists and defenders of the bloody capitalist system come forward to explain that the new weapon makes future wars "unthinkable," because its extensive use would mean the utter annihilation of the human race. This is another dangerous illusion.

After World War I these same liberals declared that another war was "unthinkable." Now that mankind has suffered another terrible bloodbath, do they seek to inquire why the "unthinkable" came to pass? They do not. For honest inquiry leads straight to the conclusion that under capitalism wars are inevitable and inescapable, and that once war begins all the diabolical instruments of killing and destruction are brought into cover up for

capitalism, to mislead the masses by sowing illusions, and thus divert them from the struggle for socialism which alone can end the horrors of war for all time. That is why, while quaking in their shoes at the realization of what the atomic bomb means, they can only mutter the senseless incantations that a new war is "unthinkable."

They know of no way!

But there IS a way—THE WAY OF THE SOCIALIST REVOLUTION!

No Time to Lose!

Capitalism in its death agony, writhing in the toils of mortal crisis, has perfected an instrument of all-embracing annihilation. This deadly destructive force, held in the grip of the criminal capitalist rulers, will be used to decimate mankind unless it is snatched in time from their murderous grasp. The workers must awake, and awake quickly, to the realization that war with all its horrors is the product of the capitalist system.

To conceal the true source of war, capitalist propagandists divide the nations into "aggressors" and "peace-lovers." This is a lie. The people of every nation hate war, for they are its victims. They are plunged into war by the capitalist rulers, who alone profit from it. It contributes exactly nothing to understanding the profound social causes of war to say that Germany or Japan started it. Germany and Japan have been defeated. Yet the germs of war are STILL lodged in the heart of capitalist society. No trust whatsoever can be placed in the "peace-loving" declarations of the statesmen of capitalist rule in this or any other country. Only the utter wiping out of capitalist rule throughout the world can insure that atomic explosives will never again be used for mass murder.

We Always Told the Truth

Toilers of America! Years before the war and right up to the moment of its outbreak, the Socialist Workers Party, the Trotskyists, warned that war was inevitable if capitalism was allowed to live. We told the workers the truth!

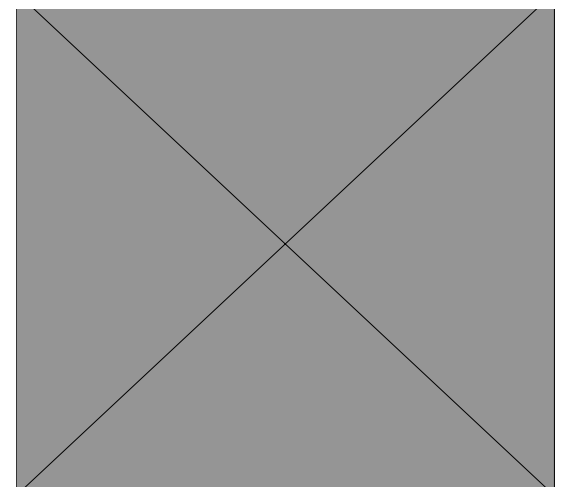
When war began, we exposed the lie that it was a war for "democracy." We laid bare the truth that it was an imperialist war. We have never ceased to proclaim this truth. We proclaimed it alone against all the liars and deceivers of the people!

This truth was proclaimed by our comrades in other lands, in Europe and in Asia....

Today, at this great turning point in history, we bring our message of hope to toiling humanity. We point out the road of salvation!

Let the cataclysmic horror of Hiroshima and Nagasaki serve as a clarion call to the working class! The workers must wrench the power from the hands of the blood-drenched capitalist criminals and take their destiny in their own hands. The fight for socialism is now more than a fight to

Continued on Page 11



Cartoon, titled "Haymaker," was published in Aug. 11, 1945, *Daily Worker*, newspaper of the Communist Party USA, celebrating nuclear bombing of Hiroshima by the U.S. Air Force.

Che: revolution liberates individual capacities

Below is an excerpt from *Che Guevara Talks to Young People*, one of Pathfinder's Books of the Month for April. It is a collection of speeches by one of the outstanding leaders of the Cuban Revolution to several gatherings of youth and students between 1960 and 1964. The selection below is from the speech titled "To be a revolutionary doctor you must first make a revolution," presented Aug. 19, 1960, to a gathering of medical students and health workers in Cuba. Copyright © 2000 by Pathfinder Press. Reprinted by permission.

BY ERNESTO CHE GUEVARA

This modest ceremony is only one among hundreds being held as the Cuban

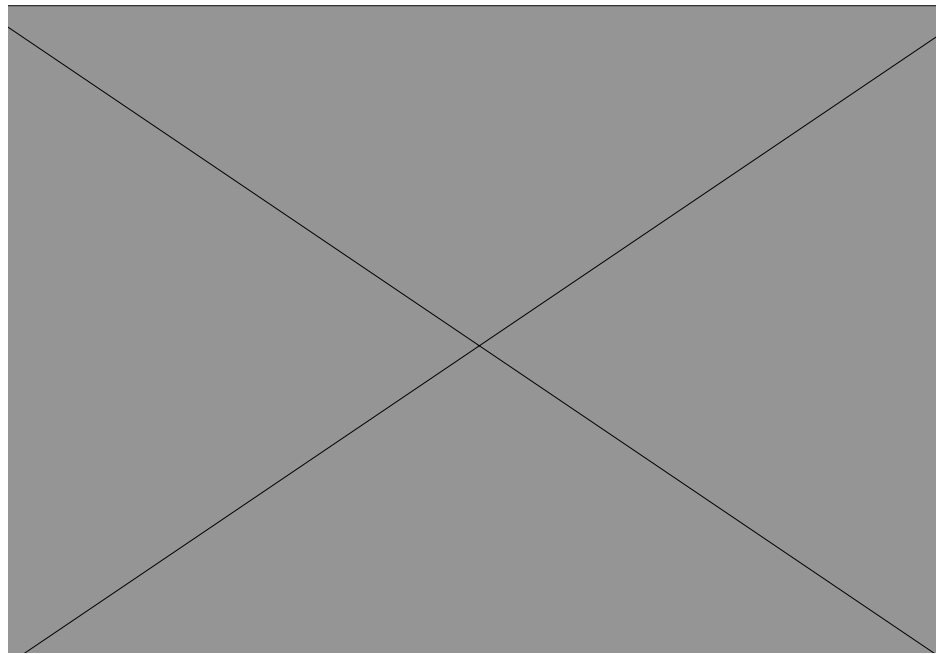
BOOKS OF THE MONTH

people celebrate day by day their freedom and the advance of all their revolutionary laws, their advance along the road to total independence. But I find it interesting nonetheless.

Almost everyone knows that a number of years ago I started out my career to be a doctor. And when I started, when I began to study medicine, the majority of the concepts I hold today as a revolutionary were absent from the storehouse of my ideals.

I wanted to succeed, as everybody wants to succeed. I dreamed of being a famous researcher. I dreamed of working tirelessly to achieve something that could really be put at the disposal of humanity, but that would be a personal triumph at the same time. I was, as we all are, a child of my environment.

Through special circumstances and perhaps also because of my character, af-



Militant/T.J. Figueroa

A Cuban doctor and South African nurse in an orthopedic ward of a hospital in a rural township in South Africa. Cuban medical specialists serve throughout the world in some of the most remote regions of their host countries.

ter receiving my degree I began to travel through Latin America and got to know it intimately. Except for Haiti and the Dominican Republic, I have visited—to one degree or another—all the countries of Latin America. Given how I traveled, first as a student and afterward as a doctor, I began to come into close contact with poverty, with hunger, with disease, with the inability to cure a child due to lack of resources, with the numbness that hunger and unrelenting punishment cause until a point is reached where a parent losing a child becomes an accident of no importance, as is often the case among those classes in our Latin American homeland who have been dealt the heaviest blows. And I began to see there was something that seemed to me almost as important as being a famous researcher or making a substantial contribution to medical science: it was helping those people.

But I continued to be, as all of us always are, a child of my environment, and I wanted to help people through my personal efforts. I had already traveled a lot—I was then in Guatemala, the Guatemala of Arbenz—and I had begun to make some notes to guide the conduct of a revolutionary doctor. I began to look into what was needed for me to be a revolutionary doctor.

However, the aggression came, the aggression unleashed by the United Fruit Company, the State Department, [John] Foster Dulles—they're really all the same thing—and by the puppet they put in who was named Castillo Armas—was named! The aggression was successful, since the people were not yet at the level of maturity the Cuban people have reached today. So one fine day, I, like many others, took the road of exile, or at least I took the road of fleeing Guatemala, since that was not my homeland.

Then I realized a fundamental thing: to be a revolutionary doctor, or to be a revolutionary, there must first be a revolution. The isolated effort, the individual effort, the purity of ideals, the desire to sacrifice an entire lifetime to the noblest of ideals—all that is for naught if the effort is made alone, solitary, in some corner of Latin America, fighting against hostile governments and social conditions that permit no progress. A revolution needs what we have in Cuba: an entire people who are mobilized, who have learned the use of arms and the practice of unity in combat, who know what a weapon is worth and what the people's unity is worth.

Then we get to the heart of the problem

that today lies ahead of us. We already have the right and even the obligation to be, before anything else, a revolutionary doctor, that is, a person who puts the technical knowledge of his profession at the service of the revolution and of the people. Then we come back to the earlier questions: How does one do a job of social welfare effectively? How does one reconcile individual effort with the needs of society?...

The principle of creating a robust body should be the basis of the battle against disease—not creating a robust body through a doctor's artistic work on a weak organism, but creating a robust body through the work of the whole collectivity, especially the whole social collectivity.

Someday medicine will have to become a science that serves to prevent disease, to orient the entire public toward their medical obligations, and that only in cases of emergency intervenes to perform some surgical operation, or to deal with something outside the characteristics of that new society we are creating.

The work entrusted today to the Ministry of Health, to all the institutions of this type, is to organize public health in such a way as to aid the greatest possible number of people, to prevent everything foreseeable related to disease, and to orient the people. But to carry out the organizational task, as for all revolutionary tasks, what is required, fundamentally, is the individual. The revolution is not, as some claim, a standardizer of collective will, of collective initiative. To the contrary, it is a liberator of the individual capacity of human beings.

What the revolution does do, however, is to orient that capacity. And our task today is to orient the creative talent of all the medical professionals toward the tasks of social medicine. We are at the end of an era, and not only here in Cuba. Despite everything said to the contrary, and despite all the hopes of some people, the forms of capitalism we have known, under which we have been raised and have suffered, are being defeated throughout the world. [Applause]

The monopolies are being defeated. Every day science, the collective work of many, registers new and important triumphs. It is our proud and self-sacrificing duty to be the vanguard in Latin America of a liberation movement that began some time ago in the other subjugated continents of Africa and Asia. That very profound social change also demands profound changes in the mentality of the people.

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NYT to elderly—“Drop dead”—The February 27 *New York Times* business section offered a think piece by Daniel Altman. He

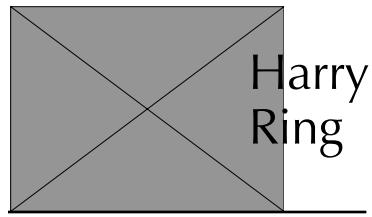
looming cost be contained? One idea is to let people die earlier.... End-of-life care may also be a useful focus because, in some cases, efforts to prolong life may end up only prolonging suffering.”

net with filing crooked Medicare claims, creating a lack of Medicare funds for state public hospitals. Meanwhile, a foot-dragging federal probe estimates Tenet has overbilled Medicare by about \$1.9 billion. And that’s just one pig at the trough.

In a word, imperialism—“The plight of newborns is not just a medical issue. It is also a moral issue of our times, a measure of our values and our feelings for others.”—Richard Horton, editor of *Lancet*, the medical magazine that published the findings.

be 20,000 layoffs this year, second only to 2001 when the industry lost 25,000 jobs.”—*USA Today*.

It figures—“Charlotte, North Carolina, shelters say they’re trying to make room for teenage boys. They’re too young to sleep in rooms with adult men they don’t know and too old to share space with single women. The Salvation Army emergency shelter in Charlotte opened a new dorm down the hall from the women’s space where eight teen-age boys sleep in a small room. Of the 200 people on any given night at the Salvation Army shelter, children total nearly 50 percent.”—*USA Today*.



presented a step toward reducing the cost of Medicare, which he regards as a major factor in the Social Security “crisis.” He suggests, “How can Medicare’s bal-

If you’ll pardon the irony—We pondered the *Times* suggestion to curb Medicare costs by letting elderly people die earlier. Maybe the next idea that pops into their heads might be that seniors be denied flu shots.

Medicare gold—Utilizing a racketeering statute, the state of Florida is suing the Tenet hospital chain for \$1 billion. It charges Te-

“Right to life”?—LONDON—“Four million newborns die every year but three-quarters of them could be saved, researchers said. Most of the deaths occurred in 10 countries in Asia and sub-Saharan Africa and are caused by infections, prematurity and breathing problems related to birth complications.”—Reuters news agency.

Social Security “owners”?—“North Carolina: Greensboro—Layoffs of North Carolina’s textile and apparel workers have continued at such a rate that 2005 may be recorded as the second-worst year ever for the industry, some economists say. Mark Vitner, senior economist at Wachovia Corp. in Charlotte, said there may

Marxist magazine launched

Continued from Page 6

would be so high that the U.S. rulers would not be able to sustain them politically.

Stalinist lies about World War II

Pointing to preparations for the world youth festival in Venezuela, Barnes said that leaders of Communist Party youth organizations in several countries, especially in Europe, have proposed that one day of the festival be dedicated to celebrating the 60th anniversary of “VE Day,” the victory of the Allied imperialist powers over German imperialism. This is an attempt by Stalinist organizations to blunt the anti-imperialist character of the festival. They are urging this celebration be held under the slogans “Never again war! Never again fascism! We continue the anti-imperialist struggle!”

“But imperialist war is going on right now,” Barnes pointed out, in Iraq today, and being prepared for other countries tomorrow. There has been no peace in the world since VE Day.

The most important questions to discuss at the Caracas youth festival cannot be reduced to the defense of Venezuela and the Cuban Revolution from U.S. imperialism, he said. What Cuban revolutionaries themselves are striving for is the broadest possible participation in the festival to advance the fight against imperialism worldwide.

The issues that need to be joined at this event are broad questions of the class struggle and the fight against imperialism in practice today. This comes up in the ongoing discussion around World War II, Barnes noted.

Organizations around the world that look to the former Stalinist regime in Moscow are hailing the 60th anniversary of the “victory of the antifascist coalition,” referring to the “popular front” course carried out by the Stalinist Communist Parties around the world. This counterrevolutionary course advocated the subordination of the interests of working people and oppressed nations to support for U.S. imperialism and its allies in their war with the “Axis” imperialist powers over the redivision of the world.

The popular fronts—governmental alliances of workers parties with capitalist parties—imposed on the workers movement by Stalinism were responsible for the defeats of revolutionary upsurges by workers and farmers in France, Germany, Spain, and elsewhere—defeats that made inevitable

the second world imperialist slaughter, Barnes explained.

In the early 1940s, leaders of the SWP and Teamsters Local 544 in Minneapolis, as well as Puerto Rican independence fighters, were framed up and imprisoned by the U.S. government for their opposition to U.S. imperialism’s course in World War II. The Communist Party USA not only cheered the Smith “Gag” Act convictions in Minneapolis as part of their support for U.S. imperialism’s alliance with Moscow in World War II. To this day the Stalinists proudly recount the involvement of some of their cadres in key wartime posts planning the firestorms that incinerated hundreds of thousands of workers and their families in Japan and Germany, Barnes said. The Stalinists operated during the war as enforcers of the bosses and the government, cracking down on workers threatening strikes and other labor resistance. They urged Blacks to put aside the struggle against racist discrimination in the armed forces, war plants, and elsewhere.

The turning point in the conclusion of World War II that paved the way for the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, he continued, was Roosevelt’s decision to firebomb Tokyo and more than 60 other Japanese cities in the spring and summer of 1945 to break the spirit of working people and better prepare for the U.S. occupation of Japan. This “success” for U.S. imperialism followed the British and U.S. firebombings of Dresden and other cities that annihilated working-class neighborhoods.

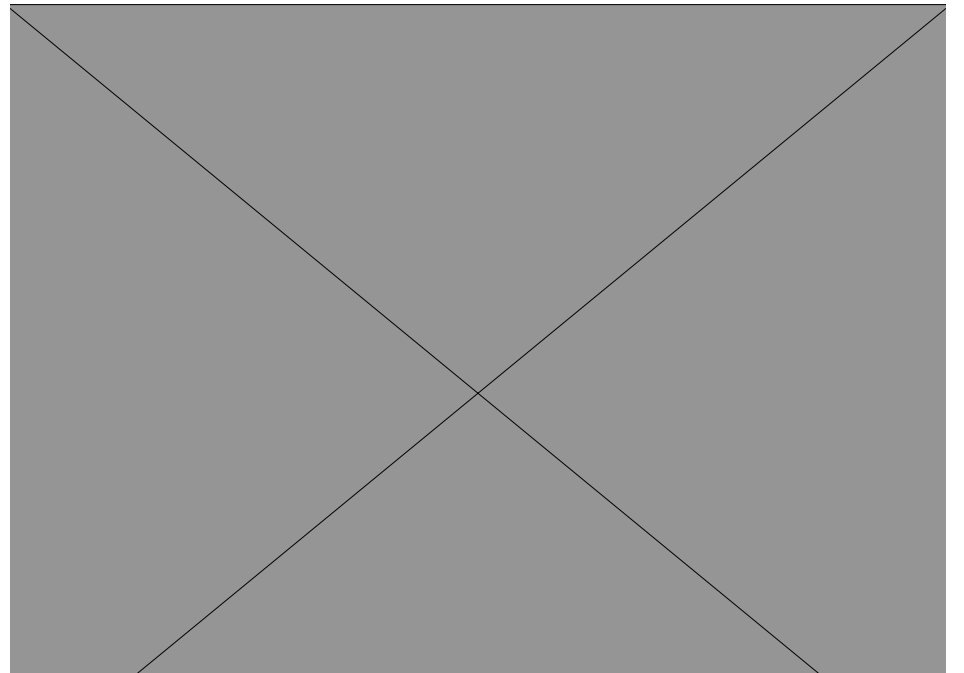
The lesson of this and other historic events in the class struggle, Barnes explained, is the need to build revolutionary workers parties and carry out a strategy that leads workers and farmers to overturn capitalist rule and take power. These are the questions that many of those attending the world youth festival will be looking for answers to.

How proletarian party builds festival

Alice Baum, a coal miner in Price, Utah, currently laid off, described how socialists there are integrating their political work in the mines with building participation in the world youth festival. In the nonunion mine where she has worked, Baum said, discussions on the vital issue of safety often turn into discussions on the need for a union. Young miners looking to organize unions are among those Utah socialists are seeking to win to go to Venezuela this summer.

Work on campuses is part of, not separate from, this proletarian orientation. Baum said that Students United Against Violence and Injustice has organized an event, titled “Getting to Know the World around You,” at the College of Eastern Utah in Price, which a number of miners attend, to help build participation in the festival.

Barnes closed the meeting by appealing for donations to the \$90,000 spring fund drive for the *Militant*, to cover the paper’s operating expenses. Those present that evening contributed or pledged nearly \$33,000. On top of that, they contributed



Militant/Arthur Hughes

Sales table featuring new issues of *New International* was busy during welcoming reception and after program of March 26 public meeting in New York.

another \$5,000 for the PRDF-organized Militant Fighting Fund.

Wide interest among youth

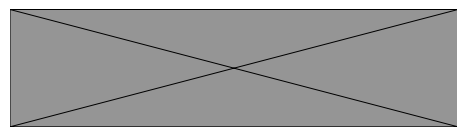
Following the meeting, many stayed to continue the discussion over refreshments and around the book displays. Among them were three workers who came from Atlanta and three fellow militants from New Jersey, all originally from Guatemala. One of them, Santos, said the remarks by Barnes “made clear the objectives we all have: to take power from those governments that are oppressing us and discriminating against us.” He said he had been reading with interest about the Co-Op miners’ struggle in *Perspectiva Mundial* magazine and “they are an example of what can be done.”

Other participants involved in the youth

festival who were new to communist politics came from Tampa, New York, Albany, Chicago, Cleveland, Newark, Boston, Minneapolis, and Detroit, as well as Montreal and Toronto, Canada. One of the workers who came from Philadelphia said he had read the Spanish editions of *Capitalism’s World Disorder* and *Che Guevara, Cuba, and the Road to Socialism* after buying it from a socialist co-worker in a meatpacking plant.

Jon Smith, a 23-year-old student at the University of Pittsburgh, said he hadn’t read any issues of *New International* yet, but was eager to study the ideas they present. He explained that he intends to go to the youth festival in Venezuela because it is “a prime opportunity to be with the working class in a country going through a major political struggle.”

— 25 AND 50 YEARS AGO —



April 11, 1980

NEW YORK—In the legendary days of the great train robberies, the bandits would swoop down without warning.

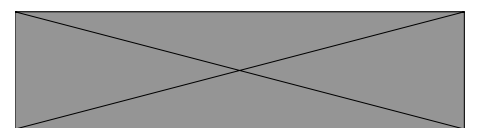
But not the bandits who control the New York transit system. They’re already publicizing the new, higher priced subway token. The only thing left to be announced is the extent of the ripoff.

Why the new fare hike? Obvious, says Mayor Koch. The workers are striking for more money. But the minimum projected fare increase will be 20 percent, and the seventy-five cent fare would mean a 50 percent boost. Is that what they’re offering the workers? And weren’t they already planning to raise fares long before the strike?

Well, the subways and buses are losing money anyway, argues the Transit Authority. But not everyone’s a loser.

Like, for instance, the bankers who organized the sale of the BMT and IRT subways to the city forty years ago. The banks obligingly loaned the city \$310 million—a lot of bucks in those days—to buy the subways.

We’ll reportedly be making the final payment this June. With forty years of steady interest we’ve paid those original bonds several times over.



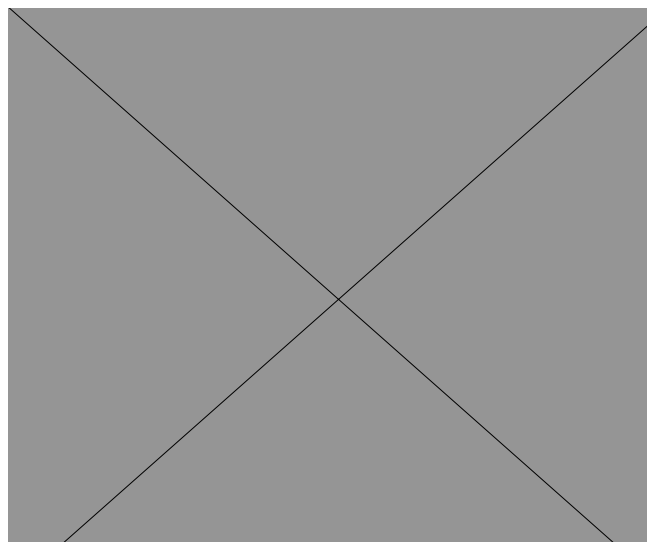
April 11, 1955

LIVERPOOL, March 30—Dockers on England’s north-west coast return to work tomorrow after a victorious three-day strike which completely paralyzed the ports of Liverpool, Birkenhead and Manchester.

All but a handful of the 20,000 men employed on this waterfront stopped work as a swift and decisive answer to Arthur Deakin and the other bosses of the Transport and General Workers Union.

As reported in previous issues of the *Militant*, the leaders of this most bureaucratic of British trade unions have been fighting desperately during the past six months to prevent the growth of the militant National Amalgamated Stevedores and Dockers Union.

Ever since the national dock strike last October, dockers in Merseyside and in Manchester have been leaving the TGWU in a steady stream and joining the NASDU. Six months ago not one docker in this area was a member of the “blue” union, as the NASDU is popularly called. Now almost half of them have joined and the total continues to grow.



The Communist Party USA backed Moscow’s alliance with U.S. imperialism in World War II and cheered the nuclear bombing of Japan at the time, Barnes said. The cartoon above appeared in the Aug. 10, 1945, *Daily Worker*, the newspaper of the Stalinist party.

Bad misjudgment by Bush, DeLay

The cynical maneuver by the Bush administration to use the Terri Schiavo case to gain political mileage by throwing a bone to the right wing of the Republican Party was a bad political miscalculation. As the posturing in Congress unfolded, the White House could have no doubt about what the outcome of this controversy would be. After decisions and appeals that had dragged through the courts for seven years, George Bush, Republican congressional leader Thomas DeLay, and their cohorts knew that no judge would touch this issue with a 10-foot pole.

What they did not anticipate was the reaction by the big majority of the population. Whether they cast a vote for Bush or Kerry, millions were disgusted by the scene of politicians debating in the halls of Congress a family's most intimate—and difficult—personal decisions. It was seen by most for what it was: an outrageous and dangerous invasion of privacy by the state.

Bush's electoral strategy of selling wolf tickets to the right wing while carrying out a mainstream social policy may have peaked with the Schiavo affair. The Bush administration carried out a similar maneuver last year when it peddled a constitutional ban on gay marriage that was bound to fail. The year before the White House weakly grandstanded in support of a challenge—decisively rejected by the Supreme Court—to an affirmative action program at the University of Michigan.

Some capitalist politicians and rightists accused the husband of Terri Schiavo, Michael, of being a money-grubbing, adulterous husband, and several claimed he was responsible

for his wife's tragic injury. These crude slanders—part of an “unseemly circus,” as the right-wing *New York Post* called it—were a feature of the public debate on this case, another sign of the continued coarsening of political discourse that marks bourgeois politics today.

Millions of people face difficult medical decisions when tragedy strikes a close family member. The notion that those choices could be taken out of the hands of the individuals most intimately involved and be adjudicated by the courts—or the state or even federal government—sticks in their craw, regardless of whether they are classified by bourgeois commentators as belonging to a “Red” or a “Blue” America.

Hard-fought struggles by millions, like the civil rights revolution of the 1950s and '60s and the battles for women's equality, have profoundly changed social attitudes toward the basic right of individuals to make decisions in private matters without government interference: from a woman's right to choose abortion to the right of gays to be free from discrimination and harassment.

These popular social attitudes are not determined by which capitalist party someone may vote for in any given election, or what religious denomination they may subscribe to, if any, or what part of the United States they live in. Rather, they are a product of the deep-going conquests of the working class and its allies over the decades, and they strengthen our potential class power. Neither the Bush administration, nor the Democratic “opposition,” will have an easy time trying to take them back.

‘Terri’s Law’ backfires on its sponsors

BY RACHELE FRUIT

TAMPA, Florida—Overwhelming support among the American people for the right to privacy—especially in personal medical decisions—has forced the government, from the president and Congress to Florida governor John Ellis Bush and state legislators there, to abide by the decisions of the courts in the case of Terri Schiavo. The courts have repeatedly affirmed Michael Schiavo's position that his wife, who has been in a persistent vegetative state for the last 15 years, would not have wanted to prolong her life artificially.

Congress met in emergency session March 20—two days after Schiavo's feeding tube had been removed—to pass “A bill to provide for the relief of the parents of Theresa Marie Schiavo,” which aimed to take the decision-making power over her fate out of the hands of her spouse and legal guardian, Michael Schiavo. President Bush signed it into law soon afterward.

This political and legal maneuver fell flat.

On March 25, several legal doors closed for Terri Schiavo's parents, who have fought their son-in-law Michael Schiavo for seven years to keep their 41-year-old daughter's feeding tube from being removed.

A three-judge panel from the 11th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in Atlanta again denied an emergency order to reinsert the feeding tube. The court agreed with U.S. District Judge James Whittemore, who rejected the same request earlier in the day. And a state court judge denied a motion by the Florida Department of Children and Families (DCF) to take Schiavo into protective custody.

The *Tampa Tribune* reported on a March 23 showdown between separate branches of government, each with jurisdiction over different cop agencies. Agreeing with the claim by her parents that Terri Schiavo may have been “misdiagnosed” and that she was being “abused,” Florida governor Bush ordered state agents of the DCF to take her into custody. But Pinellas County Circuit Judge George Greer blocked the move. Bush said that he would not violate court orders by seizing Schiavo.

On March 26 the legal battle came to an end as the Florida Supreme Court dismissed an appeal from Schiavo's parents.

The calculated grandstanding by Republican politicians, with the acquiescence of their Democratic counterparts, in support of a small, right-wing campaign, organized by leaders of Operation Rescue, has backfired, even among some of their most ardent supporters.

“As Terri Schiavo slips toward death, her final days have become an unseemly circus. Enough. Let her die in peace and with dignity,” the *New York Post*, a staunch supporter of the Bush administration, wrote in a March 30 front-page editorial. “Congress, to its discredit, added endgame drama to the debate. So did President Bush; it was not his finest hour.”

Opinion polls have consistently shown that a large majority both in Florida and throughout the country did not support the involvement of the federal or state government in this case; that they agreed with Michael Schiavo's right to order the removal of his wife's feeding tube; and that they themselves would not want to be kept alive artificially under similar circumstances.

A sampling of letters to the editor in the March 22 *Tampa Tribune* illustrated how President Bush and other political figures miscalculated when they thought that their “culture of life” stance would increase their standing among broad sections of the American people. “I am thoroughly disgusted with my party right now.... If the Republicans continue to forget that the biggest part of a conservative foundation is

limited government, I may have to stop voting,” said one letter.

Another reader wrote, “It is inconceivable that Congress and the president are making every possible effort to keep alive (it is not really a life) a person who has been in a vegetative state for 15 years.... If they are successful it basically says that a husband can not make a life decision for his wife. It appears to me that would invalidate every marriage license that has ever been issued.... Republican Party, you have lost my support, and I'm sure I'll have plenty of company.”

In a front page article in the March 27 *St. Petersburg Times*, staff writer Wes Allison wrote, “Polls show most Americans, including most evangelical Christians, believe the government should have stayed away.” A CBS News poll released March 23 found that two-thirds of evangelical Christians and conservatives opposed the Schiavo law passed by Congress.

Allison reported that Arthur Caplan, director of the Center for Bioethics at the University of Pennsylvania, has received 3,000 e-mails about the case in the past week. “At first they overwhelmingly favored feeding Schiavo. But as people began absorbing what Congress had done, the mood changed.”

Operation Rescue, the rightist group behind the campaign to reinsert Schiavo's feeding tube, gained the spotlight for organizing a campaign in the early 1990s to mobilize anti-abortion forces to shut down abortion clinics. After scoring a victory in Wichita, Kansas, in 1991 the rightists were pushed back in city after city as they were outmobilized by defenders of a woman's right to choose.

In the course of this ongoing confrontation, a half million people marched in Washington, D.C., in April 1992, demonstrating mass opposition to turning back the clock on women's rights. In April 2004 an even more massive march in Washington again made clear that millions in this country stand behind the right of women to make the private decision of whether or not to bring a pregnancy to term.

Other rightists have also entered the debate. Ultrarightist politician Patrick Buchanan came out March 29 in and interview with right-wing radio commentator Don Imus for executive action to force the feeding tube back into Schiavo. “Look, if a woman is dying of thirst, you go give her some water,” Buchanan said.

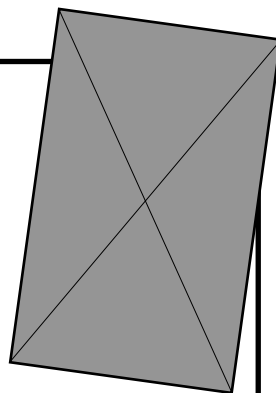
Florida governor John Ellis Bush “should have just gone [to the Pinellas County hospice] with the state troopers, taken Terri Schiavo, had the tube reinserted, and let [Florida Judge George Greer] hold him in contempt,” Buchanan said. “If the governor had gone in there and done it, then held a press conference and said... [‘]This was wrongly decided... so I'm asserting executive authority in place of judicial power.’ Then just let the chips fall where they may.”

Despite such demagoguery, the rightist protests at the hospice where Schiavo has been receiving care, however, have remained small.

Abortion is a Woman's Right

Why abortion rights are central not only to the full emancipation of women, but to forging a fighting labor movement. \$5

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Refinery blast

Continued from front page

that could take weeks or months. Some of the workers who died in the blast were in a temporary office trailer about 150 yards from the site of the explosion. One of the injured workers, Arturo Verdin, told the *Chronicle*, “I saw metal coming down. There was no place to hide.” A contract worker who had been at the refinery for about a week, he earned less than \$12 an hour and is not sure if he has health insurance.

Over the past seven years, workers have been seriously injured or killed during restart operations at five refineries or chemical plants in the United States. The March 23 explosion was the deadliest in the Houston area since 1990, when 17 workers were killed during a similar “turnaround” at the Arco Chemical Co. in nearby Channelview.

None of the 15 who died in Texas City were employed by BP directly, but by companies it contracted to do the work. They included 11 who worked for Jacobs Engineering or its subsidiary, J. E. Merit Constructors. At the time of the explosion, BP had 3,300 workers at the refinery—1,100 full-time workers organized by Local 4-1 of the Paper, Allied-Industrial, Chemical and Energy Workers International Union (PACE) and 2,200 workers employed there by contract companies. PACE has sent an accident investigation team to the refinery. Union representatives have said they believe that five of its members are among those seriously injured.

Johnny Elton, a member of the Texas City Metal Trades Council and an operator at a nearby chemical plant, told the *Militant* there is a declining level of training of those employed in the local oil industry.

“It used to be that the workers doing maintenance and turnaround work had served in apprenticeship programs before getting hired directly by the plants or by contractors,” said Elton. “That's no longer true. In fact, there are no more apprenticeship programs left in the area.” Other workers agreed and also noted that contractors who come in for turnaround or repair work frequently hire untrained workers.

A PACE member employed by BP told the *Militant* that a number of the workers who died in the blast should not have been in the area while a dangerous procedure was being performed. “Some of the people were meeting in a trailer next to the unit,” he told us. “We know this is dangerous work, so when there's the chance of a problem they should have been taken out of the area. They should have been outside the gate, not next to line where product is being introduced.”

History of unsafe conditions

The BP complex, which was built in 1934 and has been owned by several oil companies over the years, has a long history of death and injury to workers. Two pipefitters were burned to death and a third seriously injured last September when a seal burst on a water pump they were working on, spraying them with superheated water and steam.

British Petroleum has been slapped on the wrist for numerous safety violations. The refinery and its parent company, BP North America, have been fined more than \$172,000 by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) for violations that have occurred during the last 12 months. The company paid \$109,500 following the Sept. 2, 2004, deaths of the two pipefitters. Texas Commission on Environmental Quality investigators have also carried out 75 inspections over the past five years, identifying multiple violations on each occasion.

The refinery also ranks as the eighth-largest polluter in the state. In 2002, it is recorded as having released 5.1 million pounds of pollutants, including chemicals that are known carcinogens. BP has admitted to six different chemicals in the black smoke that followed the fire March 23, but company and state officials have stated that the explosion had a “minimal impact” on air and water quality.

Smaller explosions in refineries in the area are so common and so often minimized that it took two days for investigators to turn their attention to reports that a hydrogen-fueled fire had broken out in the same octane-enhancing unit less than 24 hours before the big explosion on March 23.

Lord John Browne, BP's chief executive officer, flew to Texas City from London for a press conference the day after the explosion. Asked about the plant's history of safety problems, he claimed that the safety record at the refinery “has improved enormously,” and that the company always has “safety first in mind.”

“We do not produce day to day just to make a quick buck,” Lord Browne said, while assuring investors that the explosion, though massive, would have only a negligible effect, probably less than 5 percent, on the output of the entire refinery.

Texas City itself was the scene of what has been called the worst industrial accident in U.S. history. In 1947, a ship loaded with ammonium nitrate fertilizer exploded in the harbor. The ensuing series of blasts engulfed the chemical and refining plants in the area and spread to the city, which burned for days. The official death count for the disaster was 576 people, and 5,000 were injured.

Cuban doctors aid tsunami victims in Sri Lanka, Indonesia

BY PATRICK BROWN

AUCKLAND, New Zealand—Medical teams from Cuba operated clinics in Indonesia and Sri Lanka following the tsunami that rolled across the Indian Ocean on December 26, taking hundreds of thousands of lives.

The 25 volunteers in the team to Aceh, Indonesia, “treated wounds, infections, respiratory diseases and also psychological shock behaviors,” said Miguel Ramirez, Cuba’s ambassador to Indonesia, in a March 5 phone interview.

Nineteen doctors, two nurses, an electro-medical engineer, and two experts in a Cuban-produced rodenticide for use against rats made up the team, said Ramirez. They were based in the Walubi camp, “run jointly by the Air Force and a Buddhist NGO [non-governmental organization] near the Banda Aceh airport.”

“The work was difficult but they are accustomed to working in difficult conditions,” Ramirez said. Many were veterans of internationalist missions, providing health care in working-class communities and rural areas in Africa and Latin America—including Guatemala, Bolivia, Nicaragua, and El Salvador.

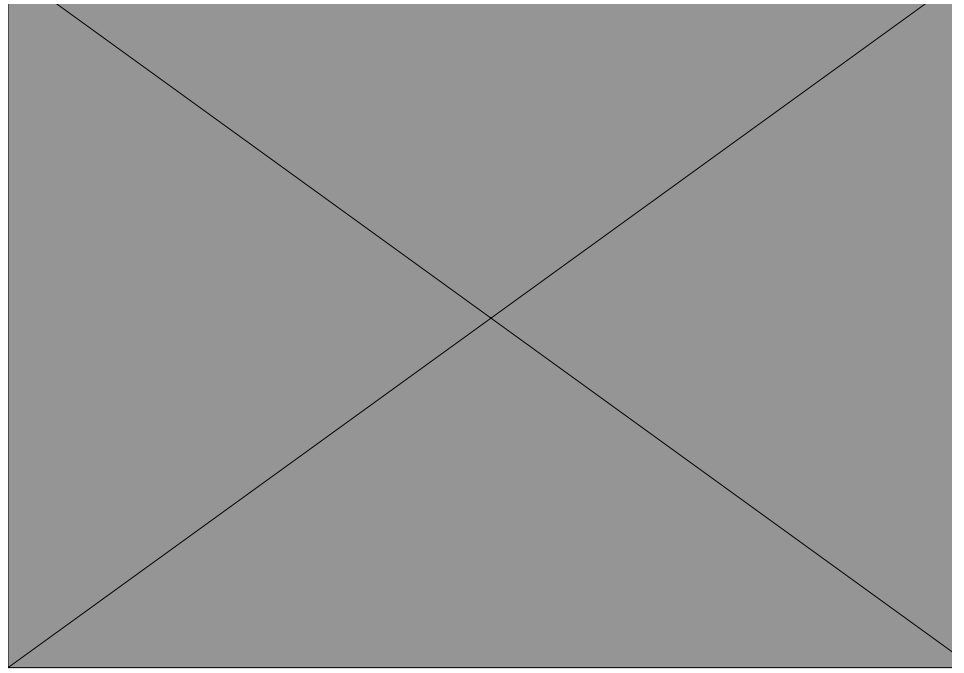
The scene in Aceh “was really devastating, and they are still discovering new corpses,” said Ramirez, who traveled there to help set up the Cuban aid operation. “Thousands of bodies were still in the streets when I was there, waiting to be

buried. The land near the beach had been completely flattened.”

The December 26 tidal waves, which were triggered by an undersea earthquake near the coast of Indonesia, killed hundreds of thousands of people, and wreaked devastation on coastal communities and cities in a number of countries.

Of all the regions in the tsunami’s path, Aceh suffered the greatest destruction and loss of life. The New Zealand Press Association news service reported from Indonesia that as of February 20, “up to 750 bodies are still being recovered daily” in the province, “with some estimating the local toll will exceed 200,000.” As in Thailand, India, Sri Lanka, and other countries that were hit, the death toll and destruction in Indonesia were amplified many times by the underdevelopment that is part and parcel of imperialist domination of the region.

In Sri Lanka, the Cuban volunteer team set up a temporary clinic in Galle, 70 miles from Colombo, the capital. *Granma International*, an English-language weekly published in Havana, reported January 25 that the team consisted of 16 doctors, two nurses, two hygiene experts, three specialists from Labiofam (a Cuban medical laboratory) and an engineer responsible for the generator. The article noted that Galle was “severely damaged and it is still not known how many of its 80,000 inhabitants died as a result of the disaster.”



Granma/Juvenal Balan

Cuban medical brigade in Aceh, Indonesia. They treated a variety of injuries and diseases resulting from the tsunami’s devastation. Similar Cuban medical teams serve in some of the most remote areas of Africa and Latin America.

The response by revolutionary Cuba to a disaster in a region many thousands of miles from its shores is not out of the ordinary. Tens of thousands of Cuban doctors and nurses are currently volunteering around the world. More than 15,000 Cuban

medical personnel are now in Venezuela as part of the *Barrio Adentro* program, which offers quality health care in working-class neighborhoods across the country that have had little or no access to medical care in the past.

No peace after end of WWII

Continued from page 7

end poverty and inequality, to abolish the exploitation of man by man. Today the fight for socialism is a fight to prevent the annihilation of the human race. Mankind must now exterminate the capitalist system—or be exterminated!

Plunging Toward the Abyss

Time is of the essence. At an even faster pace capitalism is rushing mankind toward the last abyss of destruction. The end of the second world war does not mean peace, only

an interval between wars, marked by smaller conflicts.... This breathing-space must be utilized by the progressive forces of society, the working class and its allies, to smash the capitalist system and usher in a socialist society.... Having abolished capitalism, they can harness the productive forces and the wondrous discoveries of science to the service of human needs.

The release of atomic energy opens up grandiose vistas for the development of human society. It holds the promise of eliminating all poverty and raising the living standards of all peoples to undreamed-of heights. Hazardous and unhealthy occupations can become things of the past. The drudgery and servitude of ugly and unnecessary toil can be ended. There can be leisure and comfort and cultural advancement for every man, woman and child on earth.

All on one condition—that capitalism, the strangler of human progress, is destroyed!

Toilers of America! Working men and working women in the factories and on the farms! [We] summon you to struggle for the socialist revolution! Enlist with us in the great battle for a new world in which permanent peace and well-being will be assured for all!

MILITANT LABOR FORUMS

FLORIDA

Tampa

The Case of Terri Schiavo: Defend the Right to Privacy. Sat. April 2, 7:30 p.m. Donation: \$4. 1441 E. Fletcher Ave (at 15th St. 2nd fl., entrance in rear of shopping center) (813) 910-8507.

NEW YORK

Manhattan

Terri Schiavo Case: Defend the Right to Privacy. Speaker: Dan Fein, Socialist Workers Party. Fri. April 1. Dinner 7:00 p.m. program 8:00 p.m. Donation: \$5 dinner, \$5 program. 307 West 36th St, 10 fl. (use north elevators). (212) 629-6649.

PENNSYLVANIA

Pittsburgh

Sixty Years since World War II: There Is No Peace! The History of Imperialist Crimes and Stalinist Betrayal. Speaker: Ron Smith, Young Socialists. Fri. April 8, 7:30 p.m. Donation: \$4. 5907 Penn Ave., Room 225. (412) 365-1090.

WASHINGTON, D.C.

Terry Schiavo Case: Defend the Right to Privacy. Speaker: John Hawkins, Socialist Workers Party. Sun. April 3, 3:00 p.m. Donation: \$5. 3717-B Georgia Ave., NW. (202) 722-1315.

CALENDAR

NEW YORK

Albany

Oppose Washington’s Confrontationist Course Against Venezuela and Cuba.

Presentations and slide show. Speakers: William Camacaro, Alberto Lovera Bolivarian Circle; Argiris Malapanis, *Militant* editor. Thurs. April 7. Program 7:00 p.m. SUNY-Albany campus. Social Science Building 117. Tel: (845) 706-4811

LETTERS

Katyn massacre

I believe the *Militant* understated the scope and nature of crimes committed by the Stalinist bureaucracy in the Katyn Forest Massacre, which it calls “a massacre of Polish army officers” [Editorial, “The Truth About World War II,” March 28 *Militant*.]

This is the way it was originally described when the initial mass graves of 4,000 were discovered by the Nazis in 1943.

Subsequent revelations show the crime was much more far-reaching. As many as 22,000 Poles were shot on Stalin’s orders at Katyn. Many were prisoners of war. Only about 8,000 of 15,000 POWs were officers.

On March 5, 1940, Lavrenty Beria, head of Stalin’s secret police, signed an order to kill “nationalist and counterrevolutionary” activists kept in camps and prisons of the occupied Western parts of Ukraine and Belarus. This broad definition meant significant numbers from among the Polish intelligentsia were put to death, in addition to Polish cops, reservists, and active military officers.

Jay Ressler
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

Truth commission

A judge in Spain (Baltasar Garzon) is trying to create a “truth

commission” to investigate crimes against humanity committed during the dictatorship of General Francisco Franco. He also attempted to try former Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet. Mr. Garzon should be commended, and judges in other former dictatorships should follow his lead.

I would like to see the creation of an American Truth Commission that would investigate and publicize the U.S. government’s support of dictators (Somoza, Batista, Shah of Iran, Saddam Hussein, the House of Saud, etc.) over the years. But it won’t happen because both the Democratic and Republican parties would be implicated.

Isn’t that a shame?
Chuck Mann
Greensboro, North Carolina

Irish struggle

I am writing from the British-occupied Six Counties of Ireland where there are more British troops stationed than in Iraq, Afghanistan, or Germany put together despite the now eight-year IRA cessation [of armed actions]. I have to thank you for your continued support for our struggle. There are few other international news outlets that treat our struggle with such fairness and honesty. I am glad that there is a revolutionary media telling the

truth around the world.

Sinn Fein is under an intense attack from all elements of the Irish bourgeois establishment and their media. They are once again trying to besmirch Irish Republicans as criminals as they did at so many times in the past. It is a sign of the fragility of the Six County statelet that the British Government has been unable to re-establish local representative-democratic structures and have to maintain direct-rule through (foreign) British ministers.

One way to respond to these assaults is by ensuring that Sinn Fein obtains a bigger vote than in the past as an answer from the growing number of people who are demanding unity and change. More importantly, Republicans need to strategically reorient towards extra-parliamentary political work to build campaigns to answer their opponents. Political change will require social change.

DÓC
Ireland

Women and children

In the 20 some odd years that I’ve been reading the *Militant* I have never noticed any degrading remarks or references about or regarding women. In fact, in my opinion, it has been one of the fin-

est examples of non-sexist publications, and indeed, a champion for women’s rights and equality.

For this reason I am both puzzled and disturbed by a paragraph included in the March 21 issue in an article by Sam Manuel about the Congo, which states, “Congolese officials in the area said that as many as 25 civilians were killed in the attack, including three children and several women who were burned to death” (emphasis added). It occurs to me that the *Militant* was likely paraphrasing Congolese officials or *The London Telegraph*, but it seems to me that singling women and children out as a special kind of civilian is problematic in a number of ways.

Children are smaller, weaker, and incapable of caring for themselves. The traditional grouping of women with children has been a common means of imposing these qualities on women. Second, the idea that it is somehow worse to kill female civilians arises from the belief that a woman’s child-bearing capacity requires that she be revered and protected from all harm. Finally, this particular statement has the added implication that women, and children for that matter, must be civilians.

To imply or assume that women must be civilians, that they should be considered only on an equal par-

with children, and that their lives are somehow more valuable than their male counterparts should be condemned.

Though it is my belief that this is not the viewpoint of the *Militant* or any of its writers or editors, I believe this kind of thoughtless error needed to be brought to your attention.

Laura Kamienski
Lewisburg, Pennsylvania

Reply from the editor

We thank the reader above for pointing out the pitfalls of copying the language of the big-business press.

Likewise, we take the opportunity to extend a belated but necessary thanks to reader Robin Maisel. In his letter to the editor titled “Two-class party?” published in the March 28 issue, Maisel pointed out the reasons why revolutionists don’t call for a “workers and farmers” party but for a proletarian party. We agree.

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.

Australia miners: 'Justice in Gretley mine disaster!'

BY RON POULSEN

SYDNEY, Australia—About 100 members of the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union (CFMEU) rallied March 14 outside the Court of Appeals here. The coal miners and union officials were protesting legal moves by mining corporation Xstrata to overturn its conviction for criminal negligence and A\$1.46 million (A\$1=US 77 cents) in fines by an industrial court over responsibility for a 1996 mine disaster in which four miners died.

Xstrata and another big company, Centennial Coal, backed by other coal bosses in the Minerals Council, are trying to overturn the criminal provisions in occupational health and safety laws.

Underground coal mining is one of the world's most dangerous industries. Centennial Coal has also been found guilty in the 1998 death of Barry Edwards, a miner at its Awaba colliery.

Gretley disaster

The issue has been brought to a head by the historic case before the New South Wales Industrial Relations Commission (IRC) over the Gretley disaster eight years ago. Newcastle Wallsend Coal and its parent company, Oakbridge, were convicted last August of breaching the Occupational Health and Safety Act by failing to ensure the health, safety, and welfare of their employees.

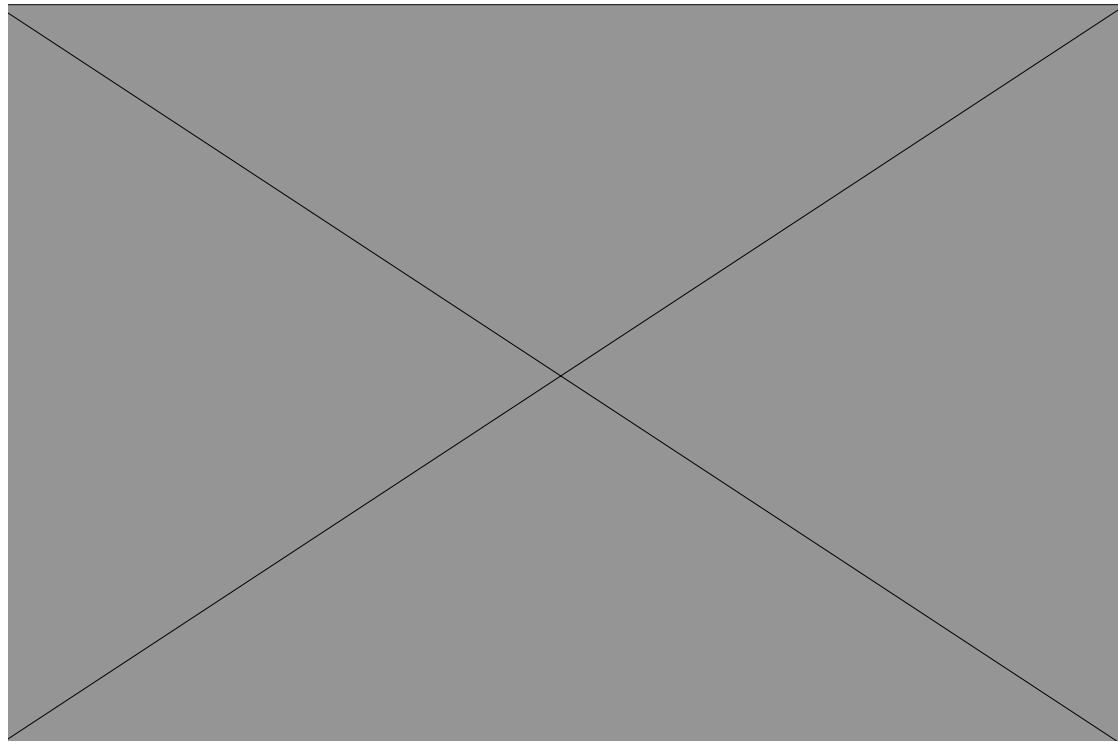
On March 11 the IRC issued fines of A\$1.46 million against Wallsend and Oakbridge, now owned by Xstrata Coal. Fines amounting to A\$102,000 against two managers and a mine surveyor were also issued. This is the first time individual bosses have been successfully prosecuted over deaths in the mining industry.

The miners at the rally carried four coffins and placed them in front of the court building in memory of the four men who drowned Nov. 14, 1996, in the Gretley mine. The coal mine is located near Newcastle, north of Sydney.

Edward Batterham, 48, John Hunter, 36, Mark Kaiser, 30, and Damon Murray, 19, died when their continuous mining machine broke through the wall of the adjacent Young Wallsend colliery, which was abandoned and had been flooded.

The four workers believed they were working safely 100 meters from the abandoned mine but had been provided with inaccurate Mining Department maps, copied from 1892 originals. In fact, they started their shift only eight meters from death.

A 1997 state government judicial inquiry lasted nine months and heard 70 witnesses. The investigation found that the



Militant/Bob Aiken

Miners carry coffins in front of Court of Appeals in Sydney, Australia, March 14 in memory of four miners who died in 1996 Gretley coal mine disaster. The unionists were protesting campaign by mining giant Xstrata to overturn fine by industrial court over the death of the miners.

miners were suddenly engulfed in hundreds of tons of water that pushed back the men and their 50-ton machine 17.5 meters down the head of the tunnel.

After Xstrata's decision to appeal the court penalties on March 11, Ian Murray, whose son Damon died in the mine collapse, spoke for the families of the victims. He was quoted in the March 12 *Sydney Morning Herald* saying the families had "been through hell for over eight years campaigning for justice." The conviction of the mine owners "should have provided us with closure, but with Xstrata going to court to overturn the laws that secured the

Gretley convictions, the issue is far from over," Murray said. If Xstrata is successful, he said, mining companies would be "immune from prosecutions for breaches of safety laws."

Over 4,000 miners have died

"Over 4,000 coal miners have died," Tony Maher, general president of the mining and energy division of the CFMEU union, told the rally. Most of the deaths have occurred in Australia's underground mines in New South Wales over the past 200 years. "The Gretley tragedy," he said, "was the incident that forced the government to start

prosecuting. There have been only three successful prosecutions, and all since 1998." Maher called this record "a disgrace."

Maher said "a debate has opened up over industrial manslaughter laws," which are being discussed by the state's Labor government after a number of recent workplace deaths. The rising pressure peaked when thousands of building workers, many in the CFMEU, organized to stop work and demonstrate in the streets of Sydney over the death of 16-year-old construction worker Joel Exner in October 2003. In August 2004 workers excavating a cross-city tunnel walked off the job after the death of another worker.

Maher pointed to "a campaign by the mining companies" as part of gathering opposition by employers to the possibility of tough new workplace death laws. "We should tell them [the Labor government] 'Don't dare back off!' and we should back it up with action," he told the rally.

Workers at the action, which included pit delegates from across the state and two from Queensland, adopted a motion warning of a state-wide strike if Xstrata's appeal succeeded. The resolution declared that if "safety laws are unenforceable, it will be unsafe to work in the mines."

Ross Whitaker, 50, an underground miner since 1977, works at the Whitehaven mine. At the rally he told the *Militant* that Xstrata "was trying to weasel out of its obligations" after "the complete and utter negligence" of the mine owners at the time of the disaster. The bosses "put production ahead of men's lives," Whitaker said. "The union fought for the right to go home at the end of the shift in the same shape as you arrive."

Sydney: housing project residents protest cop brutality

BY BOB AIKEN

SYDNEY, Australia—Simmering anger over heavy-handed policing erupted into a confrontation with the cops during the nights of February 25–28, in Macquarie Fields, a public housing estate in southwestern Sydney.

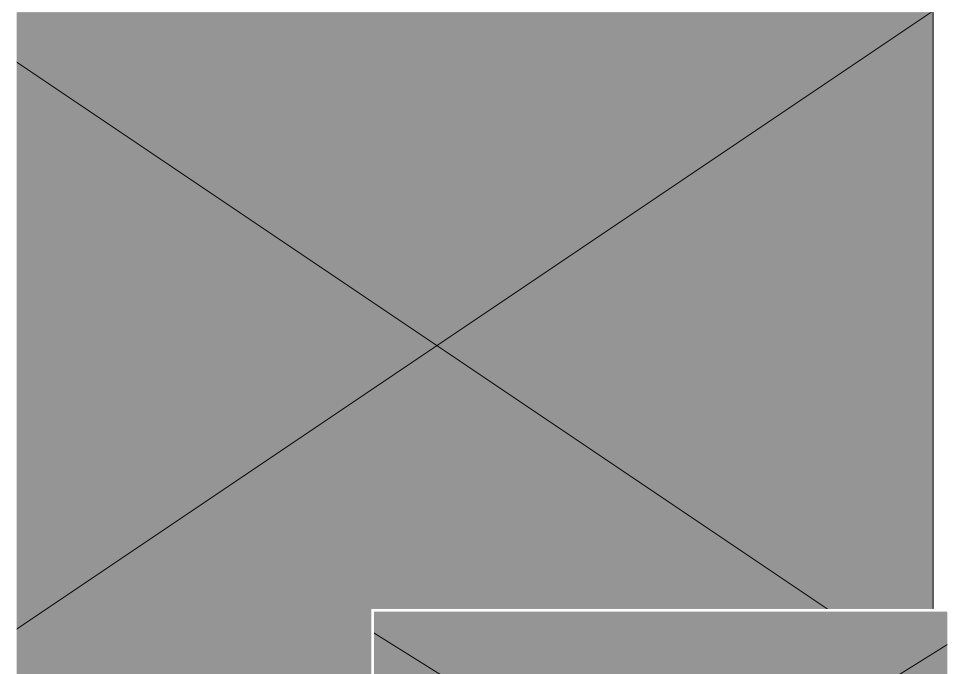
Residents, especially youth, gathered after two local teenagers were killed in a high-speed chase by the police through the housing project around 11 p.m. on February 25. The protesters began yelling and throwing rocks at the squads of cops arriving on the scene. Hundreds continued to protest the massive police show of force in the area the next three days.

Police arrested more than 60 people, including with military-style raids on individual homes, some of which were televised.

Residents interviewed by *Militant* reporters described the police crackdown. In one example, a man riding his bicycle home, who was not involved in the protests, was stopped by the cops, thrown to the ground, roughed up, and arrested. Police threatened people watching the events from their front yards that they would be arrested if they didn't go inside, witnesses said. Cops raided a house where people were watching the scene from their balcony and bashed up two men inside. Police kept using riot gear, horses, and helicopters with searchlights in nightly patrols.

Macquarie Fields was built in the 1970s with poor public transport and few other amenities. The unemployment rate there is 11 percent, and 17 percent among youth. It is double the overall jobless rate in Sydney. Residents also complain about a long backlog of repairs that have not been carried out by the Housing Commission.

The driver of the allegedly stolen car involved in the chase, Jesse Kelly, surrendered to the police March 9. He has been



Residents of Macquarie Fields housing project in Sydney, Australia, (above) confront cops after high-speed police chase resulted in deaths of two teenagers on February 25. Over four days, hundreds of people protested police show of force (depicted on right), which included military-style raids in homes and arrests of some 60 people.

charged with manslaughter for the death of his two friends, who were in the car with him and died during the crash that resulted from the police pursuit. Kelly's grandfather, Peter Perkins, spoke out against the cop chase and similar actions by the police in the weeks leading up to the fatal crash.

The police have been conducting raids in the area without warrants, he said, under the state's new "anti-terrorism" laws. "We do not condone violence, but to say that all this is the fault of the boys' bad behavior is totally wrong," he told the media. "The whole community is behind us."

For further reading

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

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—Farrell Dobbs

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