Join ‘Militant’ subscription, fund drives to broaden reach

BY EMMA JOHNSON

“Seven striking union members working at Pacific Steel Casting in Berkeley, California, signed up for subscriptions to the Militant on the picket line and at a March 29 gathering outside the plant to vote on a new tentative deal that has dominated in the Mideast for decades. The result is increasing instability and war, which will continue and deepen regardless of whether the agreement with Tehran goes ahead, until a work-upcoming everywhere. But we can’t stop protesting. It’s got to stop. The company vice

White House pushes Iran deal in face of wide opposition

BY NAOMI CRAINE

President Barack Obama is working overtime to sell the draft nuclear agreement reached in negotiations between officials of Iran and the U.S., along with Britain, France, Germany, Russia and China. Announcing the deal April 2, Obama said it would “prevent [Iran] from obtaining a nuclear weapon” and “make our country, our allies, and our world safer.” The tentative deal faces a firestorm of opposition, including from Israel, Saudi Arabia and other governments in the Middle East, Republicans and some Democrats in Congress. It registers further unraveling of the imperialist order that has dominated in the Middle East for decades. The result is increasing instability and war, which will continue and deepen regardless of whether the agreement with Tehran goes ahead, until a work-upcoming everywhere. But we can’t stop protesting. It’s got to stop. The company vice

All out April 15 for $15 and a union!

National actions grow, win support

BY MAGGIE TROHE

Workers who are fighting for “$15 and a union” are planning strikes and protests all across the country April 15. Workers at fast-food restaurants, big-box retailers and other minimum-wage jobs will take part, along with growing numbers of unions and participants in social protest actions. Demonstrations have taken place in many cities over the last two weeks aimed at boosting participation and support. “We believe that we will win,” chanted 30 people picketing a McDonald’s in Houston April 2. “I’ve been part of the protests for two years, and they’re growing stronger,” Carlton Warren, a 22-year-old Jack-in-the-Box worker, told the Militant. “The company vice

Protesters say ‘It’s got to stop’ after Georgia cops kill unarmed man

BY SALI LATEEF

SMYRNA, Ga. — Some 500 people rallied outside City Hall here March 31 to protest the police killing a week earlier of Nicholas Thomas, an unarmed 23-year-old auto tire shop worker. The rally, called by the NAACP and Southern Christian Leadership Conference, was marked by participation of workers — many towing along their children, others still in work clothes. “This is sad that we have to keep coming out to protest this issue,” said Nurse Brenda Montgomery told the Militant at the rally. “Ferguson, New York, now Georgia, it’s like it’s happening everywhere. But we can’t stop protesting. It’s got to stop.” Thomas arrived for work at the Goodyear Tire Center March 24, a factsheet distributed by rally organizers said. The cops had informed his supervisor that they were coming to arrest Thomas. The cops confronted him as he was driving a vehicle into the shop for service. Thomas was wanted because he had stopped going to monthly meetings with a probation officer, stemming from a domestic incident in which he pled guilty to obstructing an

Oil strike for safety continues at Texas, Indiana, Ohio refineries

BY BOB SAMSON

PASADENA, Texas — Oil refinery workers remain on the picket lines at LyondellBasell here, Marathon Oil in Texas City and BP in Toledo, Ohio, and Whiting, Indiana. For them the nationwide strike that started Feb. 1 continues until the companies accept the national pattern agreement reached between Shell and the United Steelworkers March 12 and settle local issues. Some 3,800 USW oil refinery

Capitalist morality at root of NY gas explosion, deaths

BY SETH GALINSKY AND NAOMI CRAINE

NEW YORK — As more information comes out on the March 26 gas explosion and fire in the East Village here, it’s clearer than ever that behind the disaster is the dog-eat-dog, look-out-for-number-one morality that bombards everyone who lives in capitalist society. The blast killed two people, injured 22, destroyed three buildings and left dozens homeless. The “working theory is that one or more gas lines were surreptitiously

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Bedouin demand Israel recognize Negev villages 7

— On the picket line, p. 5 —

Bus drivers in Israel fight to raise pay, close wage gap
Vietnam shoe workers strike beats back attack on social gains

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Two Supreme Court justices have joined a growing number of public figures declaring the U.S. criminal justice system dysfunctional. In a congressional hearing March 23, Justice Anthony Kennedy and Stephen Breyer said they thought too many people were behind bars in the U.S. today and joined in opposing long-term solitary confinement and mandatory minimum sentences.

Kennedy is often the swing vote in the divided Supreme Court and is well known for siding with law enforcement in criminal procedure cases. The U.S. is home to 5 percent of the world’s population, but incarcerates 25 percent of the world’s prisoners. Currently 2.2 million people serve in the country’s prisons and jails, an increase of 500 percent in the last 40 years. An additional 4.8 million are on parole and probation. One-third of U.S. residents have a criminal record, often barring them from employment, housing and voting rights.

Kennedy said there are 187,000 people in jail in his home state of California. Some 30,000 people in more than 40 states are held in solitary confinement, locked up 23 hours a day. “This idea of total incarceration just isn’t working,” Kennedy said. “It’s not humane. Solitary confinement literally is onerous.”

The explosion of the prison population is a product of the bipartisan “war on drugs” launched in the 1980s. In 1984, Democratic Sen. Edward Kennedy and Republican Sen. Strom Thurmond were the driving force behind the Sentencing Reform Act, which set mandatory minimum sentences for low-level drug offenses at five and 10 years.

“I’ve said many times that I think that’s a terrible idea,” Justice Breyer said of mandatory minimums.

At the federal level more than half of inmates are serving time for drug convictions, disproportionately African-Americans. At the state level the number has increased 11 times since 1980. Clarence Aaron got three life sentences for introducing two dealers to each other for a fee of $1,500. When the other defendants pled guilty in a deal for a lesser sentence, fingering Aaron, he got life. Aaron has twice applied to have his sentence shortened through a presidential pardon. But he and countless others have had their petitions denied by the Barack Obama administration, which has used its federal clemency power less often than any other president in modern history.

In recent years 17 states have started programs aimed at bringing down the number of prisoners, and figures have begun to decline.

“Prison system is broken’

Supreme Court justices:

‘Prison system is broken’

BY EMMA JOHNSON

Two Supreme Court justices have joined a growing number of public figures declaring the U.S. criminal justice system dysfunctional. In a congressional hearing March 23, Justice Anthony Kennedy and Stephen Breyer said they thought too many people were behind bars in the U.S. today and joined in opposing long-term solitary confinement and mandatory minimum sentences.

At a hearing of the House Appropriations Committee, ostensibly called to discuss the Supreme Court’s budget, Arkansas Republican Rep. Steve Womack asked the two justices for their views on prison and local jail overcrowding.

“In many respects I think it’s broken,” Kennedy said of the corrections system. Kennedy is often the swing vote in a divided Supreme Court and is well known for siding with law enforcement in criminal procedure cases.

The U.S. is home to 5 percent of the world’s population, but incarcerates 25 percent of the world’s prisoners. Currently 2.2 million people serve in the country’s prisons and jails, an increase of 500 percent in the last 40 years. An additional 4.8 million are on parole and probation. One-third of U.S. residents have a criminal record, often barring them from employment, housing and voting rights.

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Hillary Clinton, a likely Democratic presidential candidate, said in December that “we have allowed our criminal justice system to get out of balance.” Former Florida Gov. Jeb Bush, expected to seek the Republican nomination, is among some 70 leading conservatives who have signed the Right on Crime initiative, calling for reform.

In recent years 17 states have started programs aimed at bringing down the number of prisoners, and figures have begun to decline.

The Militant

Defend women’s right to abortion!

Opponents of women’s rights are pressing to impose onerous requirements on abortion providers that limit the availability of safe, legal abortions. The ‘Militant’ covers the fight to defend abortion rights and explains why it’s a crucial issue facing the labor movement.

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March 21 abortion rights action outside hospital in Wellington, New Zealand.
Oil workers strike continues

Continued from front page

workers struck Feb. 1 after they failed to reach a contract agreement with oil bosses’ lead negotiator Shell.

By Feb. 21 the strike had expanded to 12 oil refineries and three chemical plants involving almost 7,000 workers. It was the largest oil strike in 35 years. The main issue was the serious safety question of being forced to work long hours with few days off.

They were fighting for more hiring, shorter hours, increased rest time and safer working conditions; to bring more overtime to a maximum of 12 hours, increased rest time and maintenance of current safety standards. The strike replaced shorter hours, increased rest time and safety question of being forced to work 12-hour shifts for weeks in a row.

LyondellBasell Executive Vice President Kevin Brown sent a letter to employees April 1 blaming the union negotiating committee for “not giving a clear picture of what the company has offered.” Brown said the company had offered to hire new operators and maintain the same number of workers, but warned to maintain a “balance” of union members and contractors as a “good long-term investment.”

“The fight over premium pay for overtime is really about forcing them to hire more people,” said Lerma. “To them it’s all about production; to us it’s about safety. We need more workers to fight the disease that killed two people.

“I’m back to work now,” Clint Clark, who works at Shell’s nearby Deer Park refinery, told the Militant. “But I also help out with the local on strike at LyondellBasell.”

Members of Steelworkers Local 8-719 in Catlettsburg, Kentucky, voted 226 to 153 April 3 to approve a contract agreement with Marathon. “We will start the process of returning to work Monday and take the operations over on Saturday, April 11,” Dave Martin, local vice president, told the Militant in a text message April 3. Martin said Marathon had finally dropped its effort to overturn the “no layoff” clause from the previous contract and one other concession. The executive board made no recommendation to the membership on this issue.

“We have mixed emotions,” Susan Evans, an outside operator and member of Local 8-719 and co-chair of the local’s Women of Steel committee, told the Militant. “Some union members didn’t like the contract. Others did. The contract has 12-hour shifts, but the company removed a proposal to contract out our jobs during a layoff. Our local officers and members fought the fight, and we are stronger because of it.”

Marathon’s Texas City refinery is still on strike. In addition to organizing the 1,100 workers into round-the-clock picketing, the union continues to organize regular activities involving strikers, their families and supporters. One entire wall of the union hall is stocked with canned goods, cereal, beans, baby diapers and formula.

On March 31 union members from USW Local 750 in Louisiana brought a trailer full of groceries and cooked homemade jambalaya, a popular bayou country Cajun dish, for the strikers’ supper. The union sponsored an Easter egg hunt for strikers’ children April 3.

Members of Steelworkers Local 7-1 on strike against BP in Whiting, Indiana, continue to hold strong. Only seven of the more than 1,000 members have crossed the picket line. Unionists organize weekly spaghetti dinners in Masonic lodges in towns near the refinery to raise funds for strikers and their families.

Mitchel Rosenberg, a member of USW Local 10-1 in Philadelphia, and Anne Parker in Chicago contributed to this article.

Join ‘Militant’ sales, fund drives

Continued from front page

Mary Dillon works at a pet supplies store and lives close to the building that exploded. She was one of seven people who bought copies of the paper.

“I talked about how the dog-ear-dog, take-care-of-number-one morality of capitalism affects workers,” Trowe said. “I contrasted that with the values of solidarity workers gain through struggles, in defense of women’s right to choose abortion and other social struggles.

Four Pathfinder Press books on revolutionary politics and perspectives are on special offer with a subscription.

Militant readers are using the paper to help build nationwide protests called for April 15 for $15 and a union.” In New York construction workers who support the fight held a march and rally April 4. Two members of the Laborers’ union decided to go for the introductory subscription, and one got Malcolm X, Black Liberation, and the Road to Workers Power — one of the books on special — and wants to get another copy at the April 15 actions for a friend.

The Militant’s coverage of workers’ struggles, social protests and key questions in world politics today are reinforced by communist candidates running election campaigns in the U.S., Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the U.K. On April 5, Seth Galinsky and Maggie Trowe, Socialist Workers Party candidates in New York, campaigned in the East Village neighborhood near the site of the March 26 natural gas explosion that killed two people.

Correction

In the article “Toledo Oil Strikers Fight for Safety, More Union Pow- er” in the April 13 issue, an error was introduced into the quote from Rudy Ramirez. It should have read, “Guys I used to work with thought we’d be put in jail. But the national settlement with Shell. I told them, ‘Nope, we’ll go back after we’ve settled on local’.”

Book specials for subscribers

Malcolm X, Black Liberation, and the Road to Workers Power by Jack Barnes $10 with subscription (regular $20)

Abсолved by Solidarity

by Waterstone University of London

by Antonio Guerrero

Absolved by Solidarity

by Waterstone University of London

by Antonio Guerrero

Militant photos by Ilona Gersh
250 in Michigan protest cop assault against auto worker

BY ROBERT KISSINGER
INKSTER, Mich. — More than 250 people marched here April 3 to protest the brutal cop beating and frame-up of retired auto worker Floyd Dent. Dent, 57, who is African-American and a Detroit resident, had just visited the brutal cop beating and frame-up of people marched here April 3 to protest.

By Ro...


during unrest and four broken ribs. Other cops cuffed Dent and used a Taser on him three times. The entire incident was caught on the cops’ dashboard video.

Dent spent two days in the hospital being treated for injuries — a fractured left orbital bone, bleeding in his brain and more publicity and are increasingly being met with public protests across the country.

Melendez, who was a Detroit cop from 1993 until his resignation in 2009, was arrested in December in connection to a 2010 shooting of a suspect in a break-in.

Continued from front page
officer, Fox News reported. The cops claim Thomas drove the car around the shop several times in a ‘reckless’ manner and, in fear of his life, Smyrna police Sgt. Kenneth Owens shot through the window, killing him.

Dent’s post-arrest drug test was negative. Melendez, who is called “Robocop” by workers in the area, said he decided to visit someone in a part of town known to pull Dent over because he had stopped by workers in the area, saying he decided.

Dent’s next court appearance is scheduled for April 15.

Georgia rally says killings by cops have ‘got to stop’

The Militant

Continued from front page


demand the Georgia Bureau of Investigation take over the investigation.

The family demanded the Georgia
driving for Economic and Community Services for Economic and Community Services.

Over the past year, killings and brutality against working people, disproportionately Black, have gotten more and more publicity and are increasingly being met with public protests across the country.

Thomas was the second unarmed man to die at the hands of police in the Atlanta area last month. Anthony Hill, an Afghan war veteran who suffered from bipolar disorder, was shot and killed by a DeKalb County cop March 9. The bureau has also taken over the investigation of this shooting.

Ultraclé call for guns weakens fight

While most speakers at the rally focused on demands that the cops responsible for killing Thomas be freed, one advocated responding with guns, an ultraclé course that would undermine the fight.

"We ain’t talking about no ‘Hands Up, Don’t Shoot,’” said a representative of the National Coalition to Combat Police Terrorism. “We have the right to bear arms, so we say ‘Arms up’.”

Free Oscar López!

Puerto Rican independence fighter who was jailed in U.S. for more than 33 years

The Militant

New York City
Sat. May 30
Assembly 11am
1220 5th St. and
Adam Clayton Powell Blvd.

For more info:
www.freescarrrymay30.org

Continued from front page

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UK communist: ‘Learning comes from struggle’

MANCHESTER, England — Andrés Mendoza, Communist League candidate for city council here, addresses 60 students at a March 27 debate organized by Manchester Young Lives. Next to Mendoza, from left, are Philip Eckerley, United Kingdom Independence Party; Loz Kaye, Pirate Party; Kieran Turner-Dove, Green Party; and Lucy Powell, currently a Member of Parliament for the Labour Party. They are all candidates in the U.K. national and local May 7 elections.

“The path I have taken to advance in life through education is open to others,” Powell said, when panelists were asked about their view on education. She called for cutting university tuition fees and guaranteed apprenticeships for young people, saying “the route to work is through education.”

“Real education comes through joining fights such as the recent health workers strike. There I’ve learned about solidarity,” Mendoza said. “The education I get through capitalism is all about how to climb the ladder in competition with your fellow students, it’s all about dog-eat-dog values. The factory I work in has more apprentices, but they’re put on a lower rate of pay than those they work alongside. The unions need to fight for them to get the same rate of pay. A participant asked Powell why Manchester’s Labour-run city council was cutting funds for youth services. “It would be nice if we didn’t have to pay for such things. But Labour wants to balance the books in a fair way,” she replied. “These aren’t our books, and the government doesn’t write our books,” Mendoza said. “Instead of looking to the bosses’ government to protect us, we should look to fellow workers and how through our struggles workers can transform themselves, preparing to take political action.”

— CAROLINE BELLLAMY

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Opening event Sat., April 11
Reception 6-8 p.m. Program 7 p.m.
Program: Live message from Antonio Guerro; Representative of Cuban Mission to UN; Alejandro Molina, May 30 to Free Oscar López

The Clemente, LES Gallery, ground floor 107 Suffolk St., New York

Exhibit runs April 11 - May 3 open daily 4 p.m.-9 p.m.

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Help make this column a voice of workers’ resistance!

This column is dedicated to spreading the truth about the labor resistance that is unfolding today. It seeks to give voice to those engaged in battle and help build solidarity. Its success depends on input from you. If you are involved in a labor struggle or have information on one, please contact me at 306 W. 37th St., 13th Floor, New York, NY 10018; or (212) 244-4899; or themilitant@mec.com. We’ll work together to ensure your story is told.

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Maggie Trowe, Editor

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Streiking Pou Yuen Vietnam shoe workers meet with labor officials in the Ho Chi Minh City factory March 31 during weeklong strike that pushed back government attack on social insurance.

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The Militant April 20, 2015

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25, 50, AND 75 YEARS AGO

April 20, 1940

The "U.S. Hands Off Cuba" demonstration held in New York City April 7 was a historic victory for all those who oppose Washington’s dehumanizing policy of aggression against Cuba. The protest through the streets of midtown Manhattan was the largest such action in the United States in more than 25 years. It took place at a time when Cuba faces the most serious threats and attacks since the 1961 Bay of Pigs invasion and the 1962 "missile crisis," during which Washington imposed a total blockade of Cuba and threatened nuclear war.

The fact that the action took place as planned and that participants stood up to threats and intimidation and did not let themselves be provoked by right-wing forces was also a big victory.

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April 19, 1965

APRIL 14 — Savage acts of South- ern police brutality combined with Ku Klux Klan terrorism have increased rapidly since the conclusion of the Selma-Montgomery march and the hurried withdrawal of federal troops March 25. In Camden, Alabama, police continued to use smoke bombs and tear gas against civil-rights demonstrators through April 7.

Both in Bogalusa and in Jonesboro, Louisiana, 160 miles to the northwest, Negroes have formed armed self-de- fense organizations called the Deacons for Defense and Justice. Charles R. Sims, president of the Bogalusa Deacons, told an AP correspondent: "We are the de- fensive team. If they come here to hit us, they will get hit back."

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April 20, 1940

AKRON Ohio April 14 — Two mil- lion pounds of crude rubber are jammed up in warehouses here as General Driv- ers Union, Local 348, AFL, refuses to go through the picket line of 1,400 CIO rubber workers on strike at General Tire and Rubber.

This is the first important strike in Akron’s rubber factories since the mili- tant strike struggles of two years ago. It was called in answer to the employers’ constant chiseling on pay rates, refusal to adjust grievances, in some cases for as long as eleven months, and attempt to introduce the 40-hour week (6-hour 5 day week) in place of the prevailing 40-hour (6-hour 6 day week) at a time when almost half of Akron’s rub- ber workers are unemployed.

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Maggie Trowe

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Bus drivers in Israel fight to raise pay, close wage gap

Some 800 drivers at the Egged-Taavura Ltd. bus company in Israel held their 12th strike in two years, demanding higher pay and benefits and better work conditions.

"Workers are angry," Assaf Bondy, south region coordinator for the Ko-ạch La Ovdim (Workers Power) trade union, said by phone March 30. "New hires make only 32.60 shekels an hour ($8.30). Many drivers work 10 to 12 hours a day, to make ends meet."

About 60 percent of the drivers are Jewish, including some Russian immi- grants. Most of the others are Palestin- ian citizens of Israel. A small number are Palestinians from the West Bank.

Some of the bus routes take pas- sengers between Israel and the West Bank: "Drivers on those routes face challenging—called stones and Molotov cocktails," Bondy said, referring to occasional at- tacks on buses by protesters opposed to the Israeli occupation of Palestinian ter- ritory. The union is demanding "extra pay for the higher risk."

Egged began as a cooperative in the 1930s. In the 1950s it began to hire other workers, paying them less than coopera- tive members. Bondy — along with another bus cooperative in Tel Aviv — had a government-sanctioned monopoly on public bus transportation.

In 1999 the government started selling the right to operate competing bus lines to private companies. Egged-Taavura is a joint venture formed in 2004 as part of this process.

"The drivers were disappointed in the last contract," Bondy said, so about a two and a half years ago they left the Histadrut, Israel’s largest trade union federation, and joined Koach La Ovdim.

Long-time drivers make one-third more than recent hires. Workers are demand- ing a raise for lower paid workers that than recent hires. Workers are demand- ing a raise for lower paid workers that

Drivers had planned to let workers ride free on March 2, but when bosses caught wind of the plan they sent all the drivers home. "Drivers went on strike again March 26," Bondy said, "because management took a U-turn during the negotiations, refusing to recognize agreements reached at previous meet- ings."

Seth Gafinsey

Crown Holdings can workers strike in Ontario wins support

TORONTO—Eighteen months into their strike against Crown Holdings, a major producer of beer cans, the 120 members of United Steelworkers Local 9176 are still fighting for a contract.

Crown has been negotiating with man- agement and strikebreakers.

The local has been organizing “Days of Action” publicizing the strike and winning solidarity by leafleting at tar- geted provincial beer stores. The strik- ers are asking workers to buy beer in bottles instead of cans.

At the beer store in a working-class neighborhood on Toronto’s east side March 26, a dozen workers, including five teachers, leafleted. Striker Steve McHugh, the main organizer of strike outreach, organized the action. Global TV news came by to do a story.

The response to the leafleting was positive and many workers made a point of showing the strike supporters the cases of bottled beer they had bought as they left the store.

Ontario Labour Minister Kevin Flynn appointed a mediator March 13.

The strike has received support from unionists in Canada, the U.S., Europe and Turkey. To express solidarity or contribute money to the strikers, go to the USW Local 976 website: www.bottlesnotcans.ca.

Tony Di Felice

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Israelí bus drivers during one-day strike March 26 against Egged-Taavura Ltd. bus company. Jewish and Palestinian Israeli drivers want to close gap between wage tiers and raise all wages.

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Courtesy of Koach La Ovdim

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Jewish and Palestinian Israeli drivers want to close wage gap between wage tiers and raise all wages.

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Socialist Appeal

April 20, 2015
Becky Ellis: Forty-five years building proletarian party

BY DAVID ROSENFIELD

MINNEAPOLIS — Fifty people from across the Midwest and beyond gathered at the United Labor Centre here March 20 to mark 45 years of political and cultural contributions of Becky Ellis.

“She was a cadre of the Socialist Workers Party in eight branches of the party around the country,” said Steve Sandler, a co-organizer of the organizing drive.”

Becky as our candidate for U.S. Senate in working-class neighborhoods nearby on television.

said, “the party ran Debbie Leonard for said, “Becky was part of the party’s efforts against the local Pacifica radio station. "We needed to build the importance of what is opening up today with increased labor resistance and widespread struggles against cop brutality,” he said. “She knew these were our struggles. She also understood how this same generation that she was part of, and those that came after, must act on what is opening up for the communists, so that today is decisive to recruiting fresh forces to the communist movement.”

Maggie Trowe, SWP candidate for U.S. Congress in New York, described the party’s work in the Midwest to organize its members to join with other workers in the meatpacking industry fighting boss attacks, and to participate in labor battles and social struggles.

In the late 1990s, Trowe and several other SWP members worked at the Hormel slaughterhouse in Austin, Minnesota. “When we got to know workers beyond the departments we worked in,” Trowe said. “They also joined us going door to door with the Militant. And we brought interested co-workers to Friday night forums in Twin Cities.”

“The collaboration of the party branches in the Midwest was crucial for turning toward working-class struggles in the region, and remains so today,” Trowe said.

Ellis worked as a sewing machine operator, he said. “We needed to build a defense campaign that pushed the Klan underground. We were infected by comrades’ confidence that workers would be interested in, and needed, the Militant;” Jonsson and Proppé wrote. “Sure enough, a good number stopped their cars to pick up a copy of the paper or subscribe.”

August Nimtz, co-coordinator of the Minnesota Cuba committee, told participants how Ellis and the SWP were part of building a “jury of millions” that won freedom for the Cuban Five. “Here in the Twin Cities they worked with the Minnesota Cuba Committee on many events we held to publicize their case, especially the exhibition of paintings and cartoons of two of the Five, Antonio Guerrero and Gerardo Hernández.”

Many participants stayed after the program to talk, look at all the messages, and study a panel display on Ellis’ 45 years building the SWP. The ample spread of food and drinks prepared by SWP supporters added to the celebratory air of the event. An appeal raised $1,763 for the Socialist Workers Party, a fitting way to salute Ellis’ life.

 Capitalism morality behind gas blast

Continued from front page tapped, the New York Times said March 31.

The New York Post reported April 6 that a plumber working on the lines confessed to “rigging a gas-supply system for apartments” in the building, saying the landlord’s son ordered him to do it. New York police and prosecutors are considering criminal charges against the landlord, his contractor and workers involved in installing the pipes, the April 6 New York Daily News said. Whatever caused this explosion, many residents in the neighborhood told the Militant that jury-rigged set-ups are not uncommon, where many buildings are more than 100 years old.

East Village resident Mary Dil-lard spoke to Maggie Trowe, Socialist Workers Party candidate for Congress in the 11th District, who visited the area April 5.

After the explosion Fire Department officials inspecting nearby apartments discovered that the line to a friend’s apartment was tapped, Dillard said.

Less than a week later, city officials issued an emergency stop-work order on renovations across the street from the destroyed buildings. After tenants calling saying they smelled gas, the Post reported, Con Ed found that lines in the basement had been tapped.

Trowe returned April 6 with Naomi Craine, a Militant reporter who had lived just a block from the site of the explosion.

Some of the local residents Trowe spoke with said the problem is “greedy landlords.”

Danny Bassevich, a house painter, said the problem is “corrupt contractors” who tap the gas lines.

Tito Mesa, a retired jewelry maker, told Trowe a lot of buildings have similar problems, “but there’s nothing you can do about it. The whole world works like this.”

“I think workers and our unions need to analyze the contradictions of this system,” Trowe said. “It’s true the bosses try to maximize their profits, and they push workers to cut corners and close their eyes to dangerous conditions. But building a super or plumber — or any worker — shouldn’t accept their values or agree to do something unsafe.”

“Through class-struggle battles workers become transformed, breaking from the me-first, all-others-be-damned mentality, and embracing human solidarity and self-sacrifice,” Trowe said.

“Malcolm X said you had to find your self-worth. This is a bedrock for construction of a revolutionary movement to overthrow capitalism.”

“Striking oil refinery workers are setting an example,” the socialist candidate said. “Their fight is to be able to work safely and ensure the safety of everyone around them.”

“People change, come together”

Mia recalled that in the 1970s he was inspired by the fight of farmworkers to unionize. “Little by little they involved more people, and it changed people, they came together more,” he said. “That’s what we need today.”

Referring to widespread corruption
Nebraskans for Peace forum discusses Cuban Revolution

BY JACQUIE HENDERSON
LINCOLN, Neb. — Fifty-five people participated in a public forum and discussion on “What Will Changes With Cuba for U.S.-Cuba Relations?” which was organized by the Lincoln chapter of Nebraskans for Peace March 31 at the Unitarian Church. The meeting was co-sponsored by the Unitarian Church of Lincoln.

The four panels were Hendrik van der Berg, an economist and professor at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln; Frances Mendenhall, an Omaha dentist who recently visited Cuba on a tour organized by Code Pink; Dan Schlitt, a Quaker and longtime advocate for fair treatment for Cuba; and Rebecca Williamson, a leader of the Socialist Workers Party who participated in the Havana International Book Fair in February, as a representative of a very small group of Nebraskans for Peace, chaired.

“I have been watching the U.S. negotiations with Cuba closely and I have to say that I am highly suspicious of our intentions,” van den Berg said.

He described working with U.S. government agencies in Latin America for several years and said that every country they “helped” there ended up with a military dictatorship promoting the interests of U.S. businesses.

“Capitalism is a very powerful system,” van den Berg said. “It creates the idea that you can get rich, which of course is only true for the very few, at the expense of the very many, at the expense of the very poor.”

“But I am worried. I hope Cuba negotiates very carefully, to protect what they have accomplished over the past half century,” he said.

Cuba’s revolutionary leaders “are well aware that 11 U.S. administrations — from Eisenhower to Obama — have tried every means they could to wipe out the revolution made by Cuban workers and peasants in 1959 and defended by them ever since,” Williamson said.

“We should demand an end to the economic embargo against Cuba, the return of the Guantanamo Naval Base to Cuba, and oppose every attack on Cuban sovereignty,” she added. She noted that Nebraskans for Peace can be proud of its participation in the fight against the U.S. government frame-up and imprisonment of the Cuban Five, who are now free and working in Cuba to defend their revolution.

“Attacks against Cuba of various kinds have been going on for decades,” said Schlitt, who got involved in the Fair Play for Cuba Committee in Chicago in the 1960s. “This country organized an invasion of Cuba in 1961 in an attempt to overthrow the revolution.”

“As a Quaker I have followed the question of religious freedom in Cuba,” he said. “I think it is worth noting they don’t seem to have a policy of interfering in religious questions, but that all the Churches have always had a reciprocal policy.”

“I think we should concentrate on working with the religious communities here to help improve conditions for the people in Cuba,” Schlitt said.

Visiting Cuba was like “walking into a different kind of world where medical care is treated as something everyone is entitled to, where treatment is not related to the amount of money you have,” Mendenhall said. “This is something everyone in Cuba took for granted. They explain it has been this way since the beginning of the revolution.”

She pointed to the severe shortages of medical and other supplies and joined other speakers in demanding an end to Washington’s economic embargo.

“I don’t have enough time to tell you about the impact of Cuba’s medical aid throughout major parts of the world,” Mendenhall said in response to a question on Cuba’s international role. “Even before they sent hundreds of doctors and nurses to fight the Ebola epidemic, they already had doctors working throughout Africa. And not for financial gain, to help those in need.”

“This is something that I agree with Rebecca on, this is selfless internationalism,” she said. “But the government in Cuba has much too much control. They have kept the Internet out of Cuba, and that is a problem.”

“The Cuban government is for Internet access,” Williamson replied. “Cuba has never acted in isolation from the world. It was the U.S. companies and government that cut off Cuba’s means of communications — cutting the phone cables, denying the right to travel to and from Cuba, cutting Internet access, putting Cuba on a ‘terrorist state’ list, trying to isolate them.”

Joel Gajardo, a Presbyterian minister, spoke in the discussion on how Cuba wiped out illiteracy. Commenting on several questions on religious freedom in Cuba, he said Fidel Castro’s government never aimed to limit religious or other freedoms, but only to prevent acts against the people carried out in the name of religion.

Matthew Gregory, a member of the Nebraska Farmers Union, asked what could be done to help farmers who are having difficulties selling their crops get more of a chance to work with Cubans in need of food products. Mark Welsch from the Omaha chapter of Nebraskans for Peace said that lifting the embargo would help farmers here and in Cuba.

The lively discussion continued for almost an hour after the meeting ended. The Grand Island chapter of Nebraskans for Peace has set April 26 to have a similar panel on Cuba.

Bedouin demand Israel recognize Negev villages

BY SETH GALINSKY
“Cuba is a different world where health care is something everyone is entitled to,” said Frances Mendenhall, standing, March 31 at Nebraska panel on changes in U.S.-Cuba relations.

“Israel’s parliament. The four-day march, demanding recognition of the villages and access to basic services, was initiated by Ayman Odeh, head of the Arab-led Joint List, which won third place in the elections.

When the State of Israel was formed in 1948 most of the up to 95,000 Bedouin living in the Negev were expelled or fled. While the 11,000 who remained were given Israeli citizenship, the government has systematically dispossessed them of the land they lived on for hundreds of years.

“The state demanded all kinds of complex legal requirements,” Michal Rotem, a spokesperson for the Negev Coexistence Forum for Civil Equality, who helped organize the march, said by phone from Beerseha March 30. “They made it impossible for the Bedouin to prove their land rights. The government then argued that since no one owned the land, it belongs to the state and built Jewish villages there.”

The Israeli government has tried to relocate the Bedouin, now numbering more than 100,000, to a handful of authorized townships. Entire villages have been repeatedly razed by the government and then rebuilt by the Bedouin.

“My late grandfather had 40 sheep and goat, and it was an essential part of our identity,” Abu-Kweder said. “But now we have very little livestock.”

“Today we work as laborers in Israeli factories, in construction or on farms. In the last decade more of us have become teachers and government employees,” he said. “Some own small businesses.”

While the Bedouin villages, including 13 that were granted legal recognition, can’t get even basic water and electrical service, “you have prospering Jewish communities with electricity and granted subsidies for agriculture just a few minutes away,” Abu-Kweder said.

“The bosses don’t start with how to save lives,” Trowe said after visiting the village of Lajat to show how a new aqueduct is being built. “They base it on the old pipe in the ground... in excellent condition.”

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For further reading...

Women in Cuba: The Making of a Revolution
Within the Revolution
by Vilma Espín, Asela de los Santos, Yolanda Ferrer
$20 Also in Spanish

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by Jack Barnes
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Is Socialist Revolution in the U.S. Possible?
by Mary-Alice Waters
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UNITED KINGDOM

END OF DISPLAY OF PATHFINDER BOOKS.
April 15 actions

Continued from front page

president said we can’t wear shirts or buttons sup-
porting the fight. I wear a big white armband.

Workers are gaining confidence as their fights spread. The April 15 national day of action promises to be the biggest yet.

McDonald’s CEO Steve Easterbrook, “a moto-
ivated workforce” is good for business, announced
April 1 that the company will raise wages to at least $1 more than the local minimum wage and allow workers to accumulate a maximum of 20 days paid time off per year after one year’s service. But the changes apply only to the 90,000 workers directly employed by the company. The rest of the 750,000 McDonald’s employees work for franchises and aren’t included.

An April 1 Fortune magazine headline summed it up: “McDonald’s pay raise helps only a fraction of work-
force, may not motivate much.”

Workers’ response to McDonald’s announcement was to hold protests at restaurants in 24 cities the next day.

“This is a victory for some, but not a win for all,” Darius Cephas, 23, a McDonald’s worker making $9.25 an hour, told a Boston rally of 50. “We need $15 an hour! We’re going to make sure they hear us.”

“What about the rest of us, aren’t we all worth a raise?” McDonald’s worker Katherine Cruz told a rally outside a Fifth Avenue restaurant in New York. “We don’t show up as a number!”

The announcement by McDonald’s came less than two months after Walmart raised starting wages to $9 with plans for another increase next year in response to seven years of organizing and fighting by Walmart mer-
tors and supporters of Organization United for Respect at Walmart (OUR Walmart). Retailers Target, Marshalls and T.J. Maxx quickly followed.

In addition to a substantial wage increase and a union, the workers are bringing in other demands — a full 40-hour week, a regular schedule and safety on the job. McDonald’s workers are speaking out against the high incidence of on-the-job burns from deep fry-
ners and griddles.

Support for fight broadens

The fight for $15 and a union has intersected with the wave of protests against police brutality, especially after the Staten Island cop who killed Eric Garner in a chokehold last summer was allowed to walk.

Fast-food and Walmart workers have been joined by airport baggage handlers and cleaners, home health care workers and others who earn little more than the $7.25 per hour federal minimum wage.

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The demand for a minimum wage of $15 an hour would go further toward ensuring that ‘middle class’ workers have a voice in the labor movement, like the AFL-CIO, are looking at the possibility of a $15 minimum wage as a way of repositioning themselves in the battle for workers’ rights.

More workers will be attracted to the example of the Cuban Revolution, its internationalism and self-
sacrifice, and repelled by Washington’s 56-year effort to overturn it. And the rise of resistance in the bustion of the empire strengthens the Cuban Revolution.

The Missile Shield, with its heavy weapons in the hands of those be-
ginning to resist boss attacks. It tells the truth about their fights, lets them know about others fighting worldwide, discusses the key political questions facing humanity from this perspective and draws the lessons of revolutionary struggles past and present. Join us to help expand the paper’s circulation.

White House pushes deal with Iran

Continued from front page

ing-class leadership capable of charting a way for-
towards the interests of the toilers is forged.

The talks did not end in a signed agreement, but rather with an understanding that negotiations would be negotiated over the next three months. According to a White House press release, these include Iran’s agree-
cement to reduce the number of uranium enrichment centrifuges from 19,000 to 6,104 for the next 10 years; not to enrich uranium beyond the level used to gener-
ate nuclear energy for 15 years; and to reduce its stock-
pile of enriched uranium. This is supposed to increase the time it would take Tehran to produce the material for a nuclear bomb. The deal is predicated on “enhanced inspection” and confidence is inspiring. The Steelworkers union has set an example for militancy and taken the moral high ground in fighting for safety, both for oil refinery workers and those who live in surrounding communities. The growing refusal to accept police brutality and racist attacks is another sign of the changing consciousness among millions of working people. The protests since grand juries let cops walk in Ferguson, Missouri, and Staten Island, N.Y., have energized the Fight for 15 and, unionists are increasingly showing up at ac-
tions against police violence, from London to Stenynia, Georgia.

As they engage with others in struggle, workers broaden their scope and deepen their sense of solidarity.

They see themselves differently, not as lone wolves condemned by “human nature” to battle other work-
ers, all looking for number one, but as members of a class and a movement that can win concessions on the road to ending the dictatorship of capital and build-
ning a society based on our morals, not theirs.

The new workers’ movement, inspired by the example of the Cuban Revolution, its internationalism and self-
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