

THE MILITANT

INSIDE

Clinton's health 'reform' will cut workers' care

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Conference discusses women in Cuba today

BY SARA LOBMAN
AND MARY-ALICE WATERS

HAVANA, Cuba — Delegates at a solidarity conference here discussed the challenges and contradictions facing women in Cuba, who today are fighting, amid a deep economic and social crisis, to maintain the gains of the revolution. More than 400 women from across Latin America and the Caribbean, the United States, Africa, and Europe participated in the meeting, which was hosted by the Federation of Cuban Women (FMC). Delegations of solidarity groups, trade unions, and many diverse women's organizations attended.

The conference, entitled "Cuban Women in the 1990s: Realities and Challenges," opened March 7 with a discussion of the economic crisis here and its effects on women's daily life. Separate workshops were organized to discuss questions of education and culture, health, and the role of Christian women in Cuba today.

An evening was spent with neighborhood FMC organizations. Conference participants took this opportunity to discuss the situation in Cuba with rank-and-file members of the federation, their families, and their neighbors. The final morning of the conference, delegates divided up to visit factories, schools, hospitals, and daycare centers. In honor of March 8, International Women's Day, delegates were also invited to performances of the National Ballet of Cuba and a concert featuring popular Cuban

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Right-winger kills doctor at Florida abortion clinic

BY MAUREEN COLETTA

MIAMI — Dr. David Gunn was shot dead March 10 by an abortion rights foe as he tried to enter his Women's Medical Services clinic in Pensacola, Florida. His assailant cried, "Don't kill any more babies!" before shooting him in the back three times.

Moments later Michael Griffin surrendered to police. Griffin, 31, a Pensacola chemical plant worker, is charged with murder. He was ordered held without bail.

Griffin took part in an antiabortion rally organized by Rescue America held outside Gunn's clinic. John Burt, a lay preacher and a leader of Rescue America at the March 10 protest, explained that Griffin had attended his church the previous Sunday and spoke about Gunn. Burt, preacher at the Whitfield Assembly of God Church, said the murderer "asked that the congregation pray, and asked that we would agree with him that Dr. Gunn would give his life to Jesus Christ."

Burt himself has spent time in prison for a 1986 attack on another Pensacola clinic that provides abortion services.

Until Gunn opened his clinic in Pensacola, women's access to abortion there had been limited due to the right-wing protests, harassment, and attacks, including fire-

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Mandela calls for end to violence in South Africa

BY STEVE CLARK

PIETERMARITZBURG, South Africa — "I and my colleagues have come to this region to start a peace campaign in an effort to save lives," said African National Congress president Nelson Mandela at a March 14 press conference. He was wrapping up a three-day visit to the Natal Midlands region in the eastern part of this country.

An estimated 2,700 people have been killed in fighting in Natal province since 1991, 40 percent of the death toll for the entire country. Last year, two regional African National Congress (ANC) leaders, Reggie Hadebe and Hlalanathi Sibankulu, were assassinated. Nearly 150 have died since the beginning of this year.

Two weeks prior to the visit, in the Table Mountain area near here, 20 people, including six schoolchildren, were murdered in three armed ambushes of *bakkies* (vans) and buses within a week. Most of the victims on all sides are Zulu-speakers, who make up the majority in Natal province.

"The fact that... we have not been able to bring this violence to an end is a serious indictment against the entire South African leadership," Mandela said. "This is not a question of finger-pointing. It is a question of a critical self-examination by each organization. We must address the question honestly of whether we have been able to get our own followers to follow the code of conduct which will help to save lives."

"We have tended to blame one another," the ANC leader said. "And it is possible that this wrong approach will continue even in

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Militant/Sam Manuel

ANC president Nelson Mandela at solidarity conference in February. Mandela went to Natal to speak out against violence there and explain ANC's political course.

Join 'Militant' circulation drive: an invitation to all our readers

On March 27 supporters of the *Militant* around the world will begin an eight-week drive to win 2,800 new subscribers and expand the longer-term readership of the paper.

This drive comes at a timely moment, when coal miners in the United States have scored a victory against Peabody in their ongoing fight for a contract. British miners just voted for strike action in April against pit closures. At the same time, the revolutionary democratic movement in South Africa, led by the African National Congress, has conquered new ground in the fight for a democratic, nonracial republic. The *Militant* continues to provide unparalleled reports of these events.

Militant reporters are now in Cuba providing firsthand coverage of an international women's conference that just took place in Havana, the recent elections in that country, and how the Cuban people are defending their revolution in the face of a U.S. trade embargo and a severe economic crisis.

As we go to press the U.S. government has stepped up threats against the people of North Korea, demanding they open their military bases to hostile inspections in the name of a search for evidence of nuclear bomb making. As the U.S. rulers do this, their armed forces carry out a practice invasion of North Korea, with nuclear weapons at the ready.

In recent months the warlords in Wash-

ington have shown that they reserve for themselves the right to bomb at will countries that they have declared to be international outlaws, such as Iraq and North Korea.

From India to the Horn of Africa capitalism is unable to provide solutions to the burning problems of working people. "European unity" has turned out to be a mirage. The capitalist market system is in a worldwide depression. Economic recovery in the United States is marked by new waves of layoffs, and Japan and Germany are in recession.

U.S. imperialism's efforts to police the world, although bearing the dangerous seeds of large-scale military intervention, have been fiascos in Iraq, Somalia, and the Balkans. Meanwhile, the economic and political rivalries between the imperialist powers prepare the way for more trade and shooting wars.

The *Militant* has explained that these moves are part of the increasing military aggression by the U.S. rulers in the 1990s.

The United States is well into the eco-

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Join sales teams in coalfields!

Members of the United Mine Workers of America are gearing up for further rounds in their battle for a contract. Miners' confidence was raised after a preliminary victory against the number one mine company, Peabody Holdings Co., when the coal giant agreed to provide details on all its coal holding operations. This victory followed a month-long strike, which drew solidarity from other unionists throughout coal producing regions.

The union has agreed to the extension of expired contracts. These extensions expire May 3 for Peabody and in early April for other coal operators. The deadlines will provide new turning points in the miners' fight.

Teams of *Militant* salespeople are continuing to visit the coalfields, from Birmingham, Alabama, to Kayenta, Arizona. They are talking with miners about their struggle, reporting on its progress, and circulating the paper among miners and their supporters. These teams are essential for providing the *Militant's* ongoing coverage of this important fight.

More volunteers are needed for these sales and reporting teams in the coal mining areas. We encourage all our readers to join them. To do so, call the *Militant* at (212) 243-6392 or get in touch with *Militant* supporters at addresses listed in the directory on page 16.



Spanish farmers protest

Two weeks of protests by Spanish farmers culminated March 5 with a demonstration of 100,000 in Madrid. An additional 50,000 protested in other parts of Spain. The rallies, tractorcades, and other protests were called by a coalition of farm organizations to dramatize the crisis facing farmers. Following a year of severe drought, working farmers in Spain are being ruined at an alarming rate. Protesters entered Madrid from different directions, tying up traffic. Many motorists honked and cheered in support.

Demands raised by the marchers included financial assistance to farmers hurt by the drought, refinancing the growing farm debt, cutting the skyrocketing production costs, and increased retirement benefits. Spanish farmers are paying double what they did five years ago for gasoline and fertilizer, while the prices they receive on the market for grain and other products have fallen. Retired farmers currently receive only 50,000 pesetas per month (US\$425). Almost half of the 1.5 million farmers in Spain are now over the age of 50.

Bonn indicts two in racist slaying

Two ultrarightists were indicted March 8 in Frankfurt, Germany, in last November's firebombing deaths of a Turkish woman, a child, and a teenager. The killings sparked demonstrations around the country against right-wing terror.

Michael Peters, 25, and a 19-year-old man were each charged with murder, attempted murder, and arson for the attack in the northern town of Mölln. The prosecutor's statement said the two men had reported the fire to authorities in a telephone call that they ended by saying "Heil Hitler."

U.S.-EC trade war

The United States government and officials of the European Community (EC) exchanged threats of trade sanctions after U.S. trade representative Mickey Kantor pulled out of trade talks March 12. Each side wants the other to allow foreign competitors to win more public contracts in areas such as telecommunications, electricity, and water supplies. Washington is threatening to cut companies based in Western European countries out of sections of the U.S. market; the EC is considering retaliatory trade measures.



Militant/Michael Schnee
About 100 members of the Ku Klux Klan and other ultrarightists marched February 27 in Newark, Delaware, for seven minutes. Of the 2,500 spectators, a few cheered the Klan. The majority of the youthful crowd greeted them with obscenities and snowballs. One thousand people took part in a counterdemonstration a few blocks away.

Trade disputes over steel, aircraft subsidies, and agriculture are brewing between the various capitalist powers as well.

Forced labor widespread

Millions of workers in Third World countries are subject to forced labor, the International Labor Organization (ILO) said March 8.

The ILO's annual World Labor Report highlights cases of slavery in Africa, debt bondage in Asia, enforced prostitution in Latin America, and sale of children to sweatshops and brothels. The report says 20 million workers in Pakistan, including 7.5 million children, may be bonded laborers in the brick-kiln industry, fish-cleaning, shoe-making, agriculture, quarrying and other industries. Pakistan has a population of 118 million.

UNITA makes gains in Angola

After a two-month battle, forces of the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) overran Angola's second-largest city, Huambo. UNITA leaders said their forces had defeated at least two

Angolan army garrisons and captured 5,000 soldiers.

The Angolan government warned of a long and bloody round of civil war as UNITA forces threatened to "neutralize" oil installations in the north if government troops tried to recapture them. The government army chief warned Angolans earlier that UNITA possessed a "terrible war machine" and that they should prepare for a long war that could cause more casualties than the previous 16 years of civil conflict.

A March 11 press announcement by the Angolan government said South African citizens with ties to the regime in Pretoria are providing logistical support to UNITA's operations from South Africa.

Protests in Argentina

Hundreds protested March 10 at Retiro, one of the main rail stations in Buenos Aires, Argentina, against cuts in passenger rail service. The cutbacks in long-distance service would affect 13 provinces and deprive 100,000 passengers a month of cheap transport. It would also result in 27,000 layoffs.

The government of President Carlos Menem eliminated the train lines to save \$2.3 million a month, which is half of the deficit for the state-run railroad service. The other half is covered by the provincial budgets. The passengers affected, mostly working people, will have to use bus service for long-distance travel. Bus fares are 80 percent higher than train fares.

Crimes of Salvadoran military

A United Nations-sponsored investigation into the most notorious atrocities committed during the civil war in El Salvador has found active and retired military officers responsible for the killing of thousands of civilians, including Oscar Romero, the former archbishop of San Salvador.

Those who have read the report say it

names the Salvadoran defense minister, Gen. René Emilio Ponce, who offered his resignation March 12, as one of a group of senior officers who ordered the killing of six Jesuit priests in 1989. During the 12-year civil war, Washington supplied the Salvadoran government with more than \$6 billion in military and economic aid.

Clinton sidesteps Baeza dispute

President Bill Clinton announced he will name Alexander Watson, a career diplomat, as assistant secretary of state for inter-American affairs, dropping the nomination of Mario Baeza, a Wall Street lawyer. Some members of Congress who defend the U.S. embargo against Cuba and right-wing Cuban-American businessmen voiced loud opposition to Baeza, saying he favored moves toward normalization of relations with Cuba.

Significant forces in the Clinton administration, as well as Cuban-Americans who advocate a U.S.-Cuba dialogue, had favored Baeza's bid, but after several weeks the president decided to sidestep the controversy.

Australia Labor gov't reelected

The Labor Party government of Prime Minister Paul Keating was returned to office in Australia March 13. Most polls had predicted an electoral victory for the opposition Liberal Party. Australia has been hard hit by the world economic depression, facing the highest unemployment in 60 years. Liberal candidate John Hewson proposed a general tax on goods and services to address the economic crisis; the vote largely represented opposition to this course.

Immediately following his reelection, Keating announced he would postpone calling a promised referendum on the abolition of the British monarchy in Australia until after the next elections. The Australian government is trying to improve relations with London.

Bombay hit by bombings

More than 250 people were killed in Bombay, India, March 12 in bombings across the city. Bombs hit the stock exchange, an airline office, a movie theater, and several crowded markets. No group has yet claimed responsibility for the explosions.

Lal Krishna Advani, a leader of the right-wing Bharatiya Janata Party, the main opposition party, implicitly accused Pakistan of organizing the attacks and Muslims in Bombay of carrying them out. Immediately after the bombings, Advani visited the headquarters of Shiv Sena, a regional party that in January organized pogroms against residents who are Muslims. Some 600 people were killed in those cities.

— SELVA NEBBIA

Mindy Brudno from Madrid, Spain, and Michael Schnee from Newark, Delaware, contributed to this week's column.

THE MILITANT

Eyewitness coverage on the democratic revolution in South Africa

'Militant' reporters are providing on-the-scene coverage of the revolution for a democratic, nonracial, nonsexist South Africa. Interviews with African National Congress leaders, coverage on the ANC's solidarity campaign with Angola, reports from the scene in Natal make the 'Militant' unique. Don't miss a single issue!



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Russian gov't feud deals blow to Yeltsin

U.S. president backs calls by Richard Nixon for stepped-up aid to Moscow

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

The power struggle between Russian president Boris Yeltsin and his opponents in parliament is a reflection of the deep economic and social crisis wracking Russia. Feuding wings of the ruling bureaucracy are discussing how to proceed in imposing austerity measures and "market reforms" on Russian working people.

U.S. president Bill Clinton is now backing former president Richard Nixon's call for stepped-up aid to Russia's rulers, fearing growing instability there.

Nixon is the most prominent figure in U.S. ruling circles to have spoken out over the past year to warn that the task of decisively establishing capitalism in the former Soviet Union still lies ahead, and to urge the creation of what he terms a "management class" in Russia.

Yeltsin suffered a major political blow at the recent emergency session of the Congress of People's Deputies. The Russian legislature — whose members were elected three years ago prior to the breakup of the Soviet Union — voted to give itself the power to suspend Yeltsin's emergency decrees and to make it easier to begin impeachment proceedings against the president.

The legislators also canceled the compromise agreement reached with Yeltsin at the Congress's session last December that had authorized an April 11 nationwide referendum to decide whether parliament or a strong executive with increased presidential powers should rule Russia. Yeltsin was elected as Russia's president two months prior to the August 1991 coup against former Soviet president Mikhail Gorbachev.

'Strong presidential powers'

In response to the Russian legislature's decisions, Yeltsin stormed out of the meeting, declaring that he would press ahead unilaterally with a nationwide plebiscite on April 25 on who should rule. "I favor strong presidential power in Russia," said Yeltsin, "not because I am the president but because I am convinced that Russia would never survive and rise without it."

Before the parliamentary session opened, Yeltsin sounded out German chancellor Helmut Kohl about whether he would support a move by the Russian president to dissolve Congress and assume emergency powers. Kohl in turn sent a letter to Clinton and other leaders of the Group of Seven (G-7) nations — Britain, Japan, France, Italy, and Canada — urging continued support for Yeltsin in his struggle with Congress. The German government has a big stake in the outcome of this struggle, as it has provided 55 percent of all aid sent by G-7 members to Russia.

U.S. president Clinton has also pledged to "do what we can" to help Yeltsin succeed. He has set an April 3-4 summit meeting with the Russian president in Vancouver, British Columbia.

A senior Clinton administration official told the *New York Times* March 12 that Washington would not oppose a move by Yeltsin to suspend the parliament or abolish the Soviet-era constitution. "If Yeltsin suspends an antidemocratic parliament, it is not necessarily an antidemocratic act," stated the White House official, who wished to remain anonymous.

The British newspaper *The Independent* endorsed a similar approach, calling upon Yeltsin to "declare presidential rule."

During the presidential election campaign last April, Clinton criticized Bush for failing to distance himself from Gorbachev prior to his fall from power. Clinton may now find himself in a similar position in relation to his stance towards Yeltsin.

"Yeltsin's public stature has fallen steeply from the heights it reached only a year and a half ago," reports the *Wall Street Journal*. "He's losing the popular support that had given him a mandate for unpopular actions."

The confrontation between Yeltsin and parliament is a dispute between different

wings of the ruling bureaucracy over how fast to move in imposing capitalist market methods. Neither side offers any other answers to the deep social crisis and economic collapse in Russia. Opposition deputy speaker Nikolai Ryabov, for example, speaks in favor of "socially oriented market reforms" instead of Yeltsin's "efficient market reforms."

Economic catastrophe

While winning strong backing from the capitalist rulers in the United States and Europe, Yeltsin's economic program has been

entire exports is \$35 billion. This figure is less than Russia's required debt payments for this year, which amount to \$40 billion.

In a March 5 *New York Times* opinion column entitled "Clinton's Greatest Challenge," former U.S. president Nixon warns about dire consequences for the U.S. rulers if aid to Russia is not dramatically increased.

"Russia is going through an economic downturn worse than the Great Depression of the 1930's in the United States," writes Nixon. "Without a substantial increase in aid from the West, the Yeltsin Government will

ing more aid to Russia prior to an already scheduled G-7 session in Tokyo. As an immediate step, Russia's deputy finance minister Boris Fyodorov was invited to attend a G-7 meeting of finance officials in Hong Kong March 13-14.

Clinton has proposed an increase in U.S. aid to Russia of about \$300 million, up to a total of \$700 million in the next fiscal year. The White House is also considering offering Yeltsin loan guarantees to house demobilized Russian troops and an enterprise fund to support Russian businessmen.

Clinton's financial aid proposals, however, remain modest. As a March 6 *New York Times* article explained, "He is not going even to consider funding any huge financial schemes unless the allies support them and unless Russia sets up a viable monetary structure."

Last year the G-7 nations pledged \$24 billion in loans, cash, and technical assistance to Russia. Because of failure to meet IMF conditions, however, only part of that amount was allocated. This was primarily for commercial export credits and short-term loans that are already coming due. Among the items promised by the IMF and not spent was a \$6 billion fund to attempt to stabilize the ruble.

Capital flight and smuggling

One of the factors discouraging capitalists from investing in Russia is the huge capital flight from the country, which for 1992 has been estimated to be in the range of \$4 billion to \$15 billion. "Everything is being smuggled," stated Andrei Chernenko, head of the security ministry's press department. "Whatever there is to smuggle is smuggled — cheap things, expensive things, everything."

"The West's IMF-based aid program is now widely regarded as a failure," states the *Wall Street Journal*. "In fact, aid that arrives in the morning is often embezzled out as capital in the afternoon."

The *Journal*, however, remains upbeat about Clinton's proposals, which they describe as a bold new approach. "A lot of the New Russians driving BMWs are real businessmen," states the *Journal*, "rather than merely mafioso."

Some 45,000 small enterprises have been privatized in Russia, but basic industry remains under state control with 80 percent of the gross national product coming from the state sector. According to the *Journal*, the Russian government has set a goal of privatizing 500 large companies a month.



Russian villagers prepare pork to sell. In recent months, basic food prices have skyrocketed.

catastrophic for Russian working people.

The inflation rate stands at 25 percent per month. After state controls on prices of basic goods were lifted in January 1992, consumer prices rose 2,600 percent and wholesale prices shot up 3,600 percent. The value of the Russian currency, the ruble, dropped from 125 to the dollar one year ago to around 600 now.

Working people's standard of living has also dropped drastically. In January 1993, real per capita income was 43 percent of the level two years earlier. Total economic production in Russia in 1992 was almost 30 percent below the 1990 level.

In 1993 the projected value of Russia's

not survive." Nixon calls for the United States, together with Germany and Japan, to "join us in rescheduling for 15 years the \$84 billion debt Mr. Yeltsin inherited from Mr. Gorbachev."

"We should demand," adds Nixon, "that the bureaucrats running the International Monetary Fund [IMF] not treat Russia like a third world country." He says funds should be given to Russia despite its failure to fully comply with IMF-demanded austerity measures.

Clinton praised Nixon's article and invited him to the White House for further discussions. Clinton is also calling for an emergency G-7 meeting to discuss provid-

Washington uses nuclear proliferation issue to escalate its threats against North Korea

BY SELVA NEBBIA

Washington has stepped up its threats and provocations against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK). Accusing the North Korean government of nuclear proliferation, the U.S. government is seeking the agreement of its allies to enlist the United Nations Security Council to impose sanctions against Pyongyang. Washington claims these may be necessary to pressure the North Korean regime to open up the country to further inspection by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

"North Korea Trifles with Doomsday," was the headline of a March 16 *New York Times* editorial endorsing the possible imposition of economic sanctions against that country in order to "reverse its suicidal course."

Washington's threats came shortly after the government of North Korea announced March 12 it was pulling out of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty and put the country on a mobilization footing following the resumption of the "Team Spirit" joint military exercises by U.S. and South Korean forces.

Terming the joint exercises "a nuclear war rehearsal" against the people of North Korea, Pyongyang issued a statement explaining its

decision to withdraw from the nuclear treaty.

More than 100,000 people demonstrated March 9 in Pyongyang in response to the resumption of "Team Spirit."

The annual joint war exercises were called off last year by the South Korean regime after it signed a pact in late 1991 with North Korea on "reconciliation, nonaggression and cooperation" between the two countries. That agreement called for mutual inspection of nuclear sites in the north and the south. Seoul and Washington resumed the exercises this month stating the maneuvers are aimed at forcing Pyongyang to allow further inspections.

On March 15, South Korean president Kim Young Sam ordered all moves to invest in North Korea halted until Pyongyang reverses its decision to withdraw from the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty.

Drawn up in 1968, the treaty prohibits countries from spreading technology to build nuclear weapons. While most countries have signed the treaty, India, Pakistan, and Israel are among those that have refused. North Korea signed the treaty in 1985.

Last year Pyongyang allowed six inspections of its nuclear sites. Claiming it needed to carry out more inspections earlier this

year, the IAEA demanded inspection of several other sites in North Korea. The DPRK government refused, stating the military sites are unrelated to nuclear production. A North Korean government statement issued March 12 said that, therefore, "it is a matter outside the competency of the IAEA."

So far Washington's bases in South Korea, where 37,000 U.S. troops are stationed, have not been inspected by the IAEA, nor have other sites in South Korea. The Korean peninsula has been divided since the U.S.-led Korean War ended in 1953.

"If we submissively accept an unjust inspection by the IAEA," the North Korean statement said, "it would legitimize the espionage acts by the United States, a belligerent party vis-a-vis the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, and set the beginning of the full exposure of all our military installations." This would violate North Korea's sovereignty, it explained.

The British newspaper *Independent* reported that the government of North Korea closed its borders to foreign visitors and imposed a dusk-to-dawn blackout March 15, in response to the continuing U.S.-South Korean war maneuvers in the southern part of the peninsula.

The Daily Athenaeum

The following is an excerpt of a front-page article published in the February 25 issue of the *Daily Athenaeum*, the West Virginia University student newspaper in Morgantown, West Virginia. On March 15, the Morgantown city clerk announced that Elizabeth Lariscy qualified to be on the ballot.



BRADY DAVIDSON / Athenaeum

WORKER'S WORKER: Elizabeth Lariscy announces her intention to run as a Socialist candidate for City Council Wednesday at the Pathfinder Bookstore. Lariscy will run for the Fifth Ward seat currently held by Ron Justice.

Lariscy in the running for City Council as Socialist candidate

By BRYAN MOFFETT
NEWS EDITOR

The Morgantown chapter of the Socialist Worker's Party has put forth a candidate to run for City Council.

Elizabeth Lariscy, a union garment worker at Morgan Shirt Corporation with the local 347, is preparing her petition to run for the 5th ward seat on council currently held by Ron Justice.

Lariscy read a prepared statement to announce her candidacy at a press conference Wednesday at the Pathfinder Bookstore on Walnut Street. The conference was attended by the bookstore owner, her campaign manager, a reporter, a University student who filmed it for a class project and one other person.

Lariscy said she is running for

council to present a working class program to confront the economic crisis the country is facing.

"Working people and youth in Morgantown face an uncertain future with unemployment, cuts in social services, attacks on our standard of living and looming wars in which the poor will die to secure profits for the rich," Lariscy said.

Lariscy said the Socialist movement feels that working people are not responsible for the crisis of the capitalist system, but victims of it. Focusing mainly on national issues, Lariscy denounced Clinton's economic plan, saying it will shore up profits for the wealthy.

One of the main local rallying points for her campaign was backing the United Mine Workers striking against Peabody Coal. Lariscy said council should pass a resolution supporting their efforts.

"This is a coal mining community," Lariscy said. "Many of the students at the University, come from mining families."

"People in this area know how important the union has been in bettering the lives of miners and their communities. We need more unions, not less," Lariscy said.

Lariscy's campaign is centered on putting the working class first. Some of the long term goals of the party are:

- Shorter workweek with no cut in pay.
- Launching a massive public works program to create jobs and build needed social projects.
- Extending affirmative action.
- Cancelling debts for third world nations.

Socialist worker on Los Angeles mayoral ballot

BY NELSON BLACKSTOCK

LOS ANGELES — Socialist Workers Party mayoral candidate Kim Allen has won a ballot spot in the first municipal election since this city was shaken following the acquittal of cops charged with beating Rodney King last spring. In the aftermath, long-time mayor Tom Bradley decided not to seek reelection, and 52 candidates entered the race. Allen was among 24 to gain ballot status.

Campaign supporters celebrated the ballot victory at a February 27 rally at the campaign headquarters. As the featured speaker, Allen, a 27-year-old rail worker and member of the United Transportation Union, set a tone of bold opposition to that of her main opponents, whose pronouncements have been marked by calls for more cops and immigrant-bashing.

"They say immigrants are the problem and cops are the answer," Allen stated. "I say the cops are the problem. Defending the rights of immigrants is the answer." She pointed to the determined unionization struggle of drywall workers here, mainly Mexican immigrants, as an example for all workers searching for a way to combat assaults by the employers and the government.

Insisting that "there's no way to understand what's happening and no solutions without a working-class and internationalist perspective," Allen discussed U.S. intervention in Somalia. Pointing to a photograph of a U.S. soldier holding a gun to the head of a Somali youth, Allen said this gave a more accurate picture of Washington's policy than talk of feeding hungry people. Military intervention is an extension of the superexploitation of semicolonial countries by banks and major corporations in the imperialist countries, which has led to conditions like those in Somalia, said Allen. She called for cancellation of the Third World debt.

Social Security is a right

Turning to the budget proposed by President Bill Clinton, Allen lambasted his appeal for "shared" sacrifice. "There's nothing 'shared' about the sacrifice," she said. "Clinton is asking working people to pay for the crisis of the capitalist system."

"The government wants to take back what we have struggled for," Allen said. "They want to get rid of the idea that Social Security is a right, a part of the social workers have produced for the entire working class during a lifetime of labor."

"They are trying to create scapegoats — workers who are elderly or immigrant workers — to deepen divisions within our class in order to get us to fall into line,"

Allen said. "Instead, we need to see what we have in common. Working people in this country have more in common with the workers of Iraq than with the U.S. capitalist class."

Allen called Los Angeles a "microcosm of the world," noting the rise in homelessness and in diseases such as tuberculosis and hepatitis B, problems once thought to be limited to underdeveloped countries.

Speaking next was Kevin Jones, an aerospace worker and member of the United Auto Workers union. Jones also won a place on the ballot as SWP candidate for city controller.

As an employee of McDonnell Douglas, Jones offered his own plight as an example of the situation facing the working class as a whole. For the past year, Jones said, he has been forced to work overtime six days a week as part of the bosses' drive for increased productivity. Now, like thousands of others, he is threatened with lay-off.

Recovery during a depression

"We are witnessing a recovery," Jones said. "in the context of a declining capitalism in the midst of depression." While big business boasts of increased productivity, they have announced massive layoffs — 50,000 at Sears, 28,000 at Boeing, 11,000 at General Motors, he added.

"Workers in France, Germany, and Japan are confronted with similar layoffs," he said. "Just as we've seen in the news from Germany, attempts are being made here to scapegoat immigrants for capitalism's problems." Jones condemned mayoral candidate Tom Houston's racist claim that two gangs of "illegal Salvadoran immigrants" were responsible for 100 murders last year.

SWP school board candidate Gale Shangold, the final speaker, said: "The rulers do not want a population that is educated and self-confident. They only want the minimum education required to do the job." Proof of this can be seen in the slashing of wages of teachers. Faced with the prospect of a strike, the school board scaled back a proposed 12 percent cutback to a still staggering 10 percent, she said.

"It's reported that 3,000 teachers will be quitting their jobs as soon as possible. Meanwhile, the school board shifted part of the cuts from teachers' salaries to textbooks. All this will lead to more inequality and more segregation. We stand for a desegregated school district," Shangold said.

The rally heard greetings from 16-year-old Sean Evensen, who helped put the candidates on the ballot. "Putting people like Kim and Kevin in the public eye will bring

their message to thousands of others like me," he said. Greetings also came from Michael Verses, who told how he began to support the campaign.

Defending rights of immigrants

Chairing the rally was Juan Villagómez, an immigrant from Ecuador and SWP candidate for city council. *La Opinión*, the city's mass-circulation Spanish-language daily, recently printed a letter by Villagómez defending the right of immigrants to enter this country and to have jobs, health care, and equal education. The city council candidate spoke out in defense of immigrant workers in an appearance on a

Spanish-language program on radio station KPFK.

A reporter for City News Service covered the rally, an indication of the expanded coverage the SWP campaign has been receiving. *People* magazine conducted an extensive interview with Kim Allen. She is slated to be interviewed by Channel 11 television. Allen has been interviewed by campus newspapers at the University of California, Los Angeles; California State University, Los Angeles; California State University, Long Beach; and Los Angeles City College. Many students are getting a chance to hear her speak before college classes.

Join 'Militant' circulation drive

Continued from front page

nomic upturn, but with unemployment levels greater than at the trough of the 1990-91 recession. This doesn't even account for the growing numbers of part-time workers or so-called discouraged workers, who have given up hope for finding a job for now and are not counted by government record keepers.

The working class is going into four years of a Democratic Party administration that is abetting the bosses' assault on workers' wages and job conditions while it pursues an austerity drive. Bill Clinton seeks to undermine Social Security, Medicare, and other parts of the social wage-gains won by working people in this century.

The "culture wars" and rightist demagoguery of political currents represented by Ross Perot, Patrick Buchanan, and others continue to place their stamp on capitalist politics in the United States.

The *Militant* covers and analyzes these issues from the point of view of the working class and the fight for a society based on human solidarity, not the dog-eat-dog competition of capitalism.

The *Militant* has already received an excellent response among Peabody coal miners. Hundreds of miners and their supporters have purchased the paper since their fight began in January. Dozens have subscribed.

With your participation in this campaign, the *Militant*, *Perspectiva Mundial*, and *New International* can make real steps forward in expanding their circulation. The *Militant* will print the goals supporters accept in each area in the next issue.

As well as selling 2,800 subscriptions to the *Militant*, the goal of the international campaign is to win 600 new readers to the Spanish-language monthly *Perspectiva Mundial* and to sell 1,200 copies of the Marxist magazine *New International*, also published in French and Spanish.

With this issue the *Militant* is shifting its publication day to Thursday.

For two years the paper has been printed every Tuesday. This has meant that by the following Saturday the same issue of the *Militant* has been on sale throughout the world.

This publication day also allowed time for the paper to be separately printed in New Zealand for distribution in that country, Australia, and the South Pacific. For a time, this saved on distribution costs.

A recent review of the costs of printing the New Zealand edition shows that the savings are no longer sufficient to justify this extra operation.

Along with changing the printing day, different methods of shipping are expected to produce much-needed savings — in excess of \$19,000 a year.

As a reader of the *Militant*, you are urged to join the circulation drive. Your help can make it a real success. You can order a bundle of papers to sell, plus subscription forms, from the addresses of *Militant* distributors listed on page 2. If you like, you can set yourself a goal for subscriptions to sell that we will list on the weekly scoreboard to show the drive's progress. Or you can join the organized sales efforts in several cities by contacting *Militant* supporters at the addresses and phone numbers listed on page 16.

All supporters are encouraged to send in reports to the *Militant*, including photographs, of sales activities over the coming weeks.

Together we can go way over the goals by May 22!


George Fyson
Editor

'We are appalled by lack of evidence connecting Curtis with alleged victim'

Supporters of framed-up unionist speak out against slander campaign

Below are reproduced some of the recent letters sent by supporters of Mark Curtis's fight for justice to his defense committee.

These letters answer attempts, made by those who claim Curtis is guilty, to pressure endorsers of his case to end their backing of the defense effort.

The messages are a result of a drive launched by the Mark Curtis Defense Committee based in Des Moines, Iowa, where Curtis was framed up. The campaign aims to get prominent endorsers of his defense committee to write letters explaining in their own words why they support Curtis's fight for justice.

A political activist and union fighter, Curtis was framed up on false charges of sexual assault and burglary in March 1988. He was convicted of those charges later that year and is now serving a 25-year prison sentence.

* * *

Alfredo Alvarez Former head of Human Rights Commission, Des Moines, Iowa

"Mark Curtis continues to have my support in his ongoing struggle to win his freedom. When calmer heads examine the facts and learn the truth his struggle will soon come to a successful conclusion.

"Mark doesn't get my support because he was particularly famous, rich or politically popular. Mark, in my mind and heart, is not guilty of the crimes which he was charged with, and my support will not change. My belief system prevents me from turning back from a justice issue simply because it may be popular to do so, or [because] to continue support may bring the wrath of frothing at the mouth of critics.

"Recently, I read that supporters are being castigated for their support of Mark Curtis. Negative tactics will always fail, they may work for a time by clouding real issues, but they will always fade with the illumination of truth and time. Divisive tactics like questioning supporters' racial sensitivity or political correctness serves only to divide the Progressive Communities. It leaves very little room for informed and educated discussion. Do not these tactics alone bring into question these people's motivations?

"My life has been constant struggle to overcome many obstacles. I've never whined about it. I just did what I had to do. Justice doesn't say we pick and choose depending on how popular or least amount of criticism we may receive. Justice doesn't pick by sex, political beliefs, sexual orientation, color or race. Justice calls us to do what we have to do. It is blind.

"I try to live by many principles. One of them says, 'always do what is right. It may please some. But it will always amaze many more.' I live for a time when only a few may



Militant/Ruth Nebbia

Delegation of defenders of Mark Curtis to the jailed unionist's November 1992 hearing before the Iowa Board of Parole. Clockwise from left: John Studer, coordinator of the Mark Curtis Defense Committee; Stuart Adams, representing the National Conference of Black Lawyers; defense committee member Priscilla Schenk; Piri Thomas, Puerto Rican poet and author; Natalie Bombaro, committee activist; Edna Griffin, long-time civil rights activist; Hazel Zimmerman, treasurer of the Mark Curtis Defense Committee.

be amazed as to doing what is right. Supporting Mark Curtis is right."

Carol Warren Peace and Justice Coordinator of the Catholic Center, Catholic Diocese, Lexington, Kentucky

"Our Diocesan Council for Peace and Justice has asked me to let you know of our continuing support for Mark Curtis, and our belief in his innocence. We feel particularly called to support this young man because we, as social justice advocates and activists, realize that any of us could be taken advantage of by the same kind of frame-up that has put Mark Curtis in prison.

"We continue to be appalled by the shocking lack of evidence connecting Mark Curtis with his alleged victim. The description given by the young woman in no way matches Mark Curtis' physical characteristics. Dirt and animal hair found on the woman's clothing were not present on Curtis' clothing. And Mark Curtis is known to have been with friends at the time the incident is supposed to have occurred.

"It is also extremely disturbing that information regarding the conduct of the police officers who beat Mark Curtis brutally was not allowed to be presented during the trial. Nor was it revealed that one of the policemen had previously been suspended from

the force for lying on a police report. And from the remarks the police made to Curtis during the beating, it seems obvious that they knew who he was when they arrested him, which could hardly be coincidental.

"We join with you and other supporters of Mark Curtis in seeking his immediate release, and ultimately, his exoneration."

Manuel Cortez President, United Farm Workers of Washington State

"Having recently read the attacks on the Mark Curtis Defense Committee, I believe it would be beneficial to state why I continue to be a strong supporter of Mark Curtis.

"I met Mark Curtis when he traveled through the State of Washington at my local union meeting. I followed the trial and was present at several hearings and believe he is innocent.

"I have been a union activist for 20 years and am now President of the United Farm Workers of Washington State. I believe activists like Mark Curtis who actually work in the packing houses and factories — leading by example and teaching through discussion — are the most vital factor in the labor movement today.

"It is for this reason that I Manuel Cortez, union President, and many of my coworkers have supported exoneration.

"An injury to one is an injury to all."

Brian Adams Coordinator, Hands Off Cuba! Coalition, Washington, D.C.

"I am writing to reaffirm my support for the effort to win justice for Mark Curtis. I believe that Mark was targeted for attack by the state because of his efforts to defend the interests of his fellow packing-house workers, especially those who were undocumented. His trial, in which he was prevented from introducing evidence of the brutal beating he received at the hands of the Des Moines police, was unquestionably biased and unfair. His subsequent victory in a civil suit against the police clearly established that he was beaten because, in the words of the police, he was a 'Mexican lover, just like you love those coloreds.'

"The repeated denial of parole to Curtis despite the lengthy time he has served in prison, and the strong level of community, national, and international support he has attained, points to a continuing effort on the part of the state to deny him justice. In the face of a vicious counter-campaign that seeks to deny Mark Curtis's status as a political prisoner, all who fight for progressive change in this country must respond

resoundingly that, 'an injury to one is an injury to all!' To defend Mark Curtis is to defend all political activists who are the victims of government frame-ups and political persecution. To fail to defend Mark Curtis is to open the way for further and more widespread attacks on our movements. Justice for Mark Curtis now!"

Regula E. Burki Member of Advisory Board of Salt Lake Rape Crisis Center, Salt Lake City, Utah

"I have recently received letters by Mary Bertin and the Boston NAACP urging me to withdraw my endorsement of Mark Curtis or else be guilty of the crimes of 'sexism' and 'racism'!

"I find these letters highly repulsive, both for their sleazy accusations against the Mark Curtis Defense Committee of having gained endorsements by misrepresenting facts and for the stereotypical assumption, that if a white man is accused of raping a black woman, he must be guilty. This is as racist as the numerous frame-ups of black men accused and therefore automatically convicted of raping white women — the Scottsboro boys being just one famous example.

"As a gynecologist and member of the advisory board to the Salt Lake Rape Crisis Center the issue of rape is one with which I am confronted only too often and I take it extremely seriously. Only after extensive review of all the material available including the publications of the Morris family and the Workers League I came to the conclusion that Mark Curtis could not possibly be guilty and joined thousands of National and International endorsers. Periodically I restudy the materials sent to me by the counter campaign, always appalled by the sometimes slick and sometimes crude distortions of the facts as presented, i.e. in the court transcripts.

"At no time did I come across any misrepresentations such as Ms. Bertin intimates in her letters in either the written publications or verbal statements on the part of the Mark Curtis Defense Committee. Specifically: I was never told that Amnesty International had in any way endorsed the case nor was the fact that Mark Curtis was accused of rape ever made light of. On the contrary, I was repeatedly given reprints of the counter campaign literature by the Mark Curtis Defense Committee.

"The saddest part of such machinations like the one carried out by Ms. Bertin and the Boston NAACP is that it perpetuates the crimes of racism and sexism and it deprives the victim Demetria Morris of justice: the arrest of her real assailant!

"I remain a firm endorser of Mark Curtis, a political activist who was framed up, like other activists before him, of a most heinous and difficult to defend crime, in an effort to intimidate other social and political activists. He continues to deserve and need our support and respect."

Margaret Winter Attorney, Annapolis, Maryland

"After a hard look at all the circumstances surrounding his arrest and conviction, and all the evidence offered by both sides at his trial, I became deeply convinced some years ago of Mark Curtis's innocence. The poisonous and reactionary disinformation campaign that is now being waged out of Boston against Mark has done nothing to change my opinion. To the contrary, it has reminded me once again that the stakes are very high in the fight to free Mark Curtis; and that no one who strives for social justice and an end to racism in the United States can afford to sit this fight out."

* * *

Letters in support of Mark Curtis's fight for justice should be sent to the Mark Curtis Defense Committee, Box 1048, Des Moines, IA 50311. Fax (515) 243-9869.



Militant reporter Estelle DeBates (left) winning support for the Mark Curtis defense effort from activists in the Philippines during visit in January.

Cuban women face challenges of 1990s

International conference in Havana discusses effects of economic crisis

Continued from front page
singer Sara González.

FMC president Vilma Espín and Eunice Santana, president of the World Council of Churches, spoke at the closing session of the conference. Santana, who gave the main wrap-up talk, was especially well received by the audience. "Cuba can count on the women of the continent," she said to applause.

Three simultaneous workshops were organized to prepare a final conference statement on ongoing solidarity work that was read at the closing session. The resolution demanded the immediate and complete end to the U.S. government's trade embargo against Cuba. It pointed out that in November 1992 the United Nations General Assembly had decided, with only three dissenting votes, to condemn recent attempts by Washington to impose sanctions on third countries that trade with Cuba despite U.S. government pressures.

The meeting launched no specific campaigns but urged the women of the region to participate in all activities in solidarity with the Cuban revolution and to continue to press their respective governments to normalize relations with Cuba. The closing statement at the meeting reported that the regional offices of the Women's International Democratic Federation in Havana would be available to organize future work.

Discussions at the conference, both formal and informal, revolved around the impact of the deep economic crisis in Cuba. Beginning in 1989 with the rapid disintegration of the Stalinist regimes in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, Cuba's vital supply line of oil, food, raw materials, and spare parts disappeared virtually overnight. Under pressure from the draconian U.S. trade embargo that has been in effect for 33



Delegates at conference hosted by Federation of Cuban Women in Havana. More than 400 women from around the world participated in the gathering.

years, 85 percent of Cuba's foreign trade had been with these countries, much of it on more favorable terms than those available on the world capitalist market.

Because of long-standing policy decisions that the leadership acknowledges were mistaken, Cuba was not even self-sufficient in basic food products. With the collapse of foreign trade agreements, Cuba has had to rapidly secure vital necessities at world market prices, paying in hard currency instead of pesos. The crisis has been so severe that

only the mass mobilization of voluntary agricultural work brigades has prevented widespread famine and assured basic social stability.

The effects of this crisis hit women especially hard since they carry primary responsibility for food, laundry, and other family care.

Constant pressure of food shortages

The cumulative wear and tear resulting from more than two years of serious shortages of soap and the most basic food items is the single biggest factor in the daily lives of the Cuban people. While the international guests attending the conference were impressed with the inventiveness, determination, and sense of humor with which Cuban women are confronting shortages, many discussions concretized the toll taken by constant worry about each meal, the time spent looking for food or standing in line, and the scarcities that have produced a burgeoning black market.

Many women explained their concern that the diet imposed by the current crisis is not nutritionally balanced. While vegetables, fruits, and root crops like potatoes and yucca may provide adequate calories for most, there is little protein available and health problems related to vitamin deficiencies have started to appear.

Each Cuban is issued a ration card, which is supposed to guarantee everyone at least a minimum amount of basic necessities at subsidized prices. The overwhelming majority of Cubans support the ration system, which is an attempt to ensure that available goods are shared equally.

There has been, however, almost no red meat available through rationed distribution for a couple of years. Chicken is available once or twice a month in very small quantities. Beans, which Cuba has traditionally imported, are scarce.

Dairy products, including milk, are given to all children under the age of eight and adults with medical needs, but there are no milk or dairy products for the rest of the population. The bread ration in Havana is one small roll per person per day. Rice, an important staple, is available only in small quantities. Rations of oil, soap, laundry detergent, toothpaste, and other basics are not sufficient to last through the ration period.

Rafael, a member of the translation staff at the conference, explained that it was the instability of the food supply that was the hardest to cope with. He said that given the depth of the crisis, it is impossible to count on the rations being available when they are supposed to be.

The egg ration, for example, is supposed to be for nine days. Rafael's family will carefully plan meals using the eggs over that length of time. When the next supply is three days late, however, they are left without a crucial component of their diet. Every item on the ration card is subject to this irregularity, he explained, so he and his wife must constantly pay attention to which rations have arrived and then find the time to stand in line to get their share.

The food shortages have generated a growing black market in stolen goods. Food items are siphoned off shipments intended for individual rationing, schools, hospitals, and factories and then sold on the black market for many times their official price. A single egg now sells on the black market for 3 pesos, a chicken for 120 pesos, and a bar of soap for 30 pesos. Most factory workers take home considerably less than 200 pesos a month.

Black market takes a toll

This not only affects the quality, for example, of the lunches that children receive at school but, most importantly, leads to increased inequality, reinforcing the search for individual solutions rather than collective efforts to resolve the shortages and distribution problems.

Everything is available on the black market, many conference participants told us, and almost everyone has to buy on it in order to survive. This takes a serious toll on the morale of the revolutionary vanguard of workers and farmers, their confidence in their collective self-discipline, and their ability to lead the working class to meet the challenges of the current situation. "I consider myself a good revolutionary," Rafael said, "and yet here I am buying goods I know are stolen."

The food program adopted a little over a year ago by Cuba's National Assembly aims at achieving food self-sufficiency in every municipality — or province in the case of areas containing large cities like Havana and Santiago. Most factories and many hospitals, schools, and other workplaces now have their own agricultural area where they produce enough food for one or more meals a day for their students or workers.

Many individual families have backyard or front yard gardens that contribute substantially to their diet. Even in Havana, people are growing food in small yards and on terraces. Individual gardens of this kind were previously illegal; now they are encouraged, but it is still illegal to keep livestock in the city. One Cuban delegate at the conference, however, reported that she knows several people who are raising pigs in their bathtubs.

The decisive difference in food production has been the organization of the voluntary work brigades that have provided the necessary work force on the state farms. Hundreds of thousands of Cubans, organized through their unions, student associations, and other mass organizations, volunteer for 15-day brigades twice a year.

Even with these mobilizations, however, food production is still insufficient. The problem is not primarily that the volunteers are unskilled as agricultural workers or that weather conditions have been unfavorable. These factors do play a role, but lack of fertilizer, pesticides, and petroleum to run the irrigation pumps and to transport produce to market are far greater obstacles.

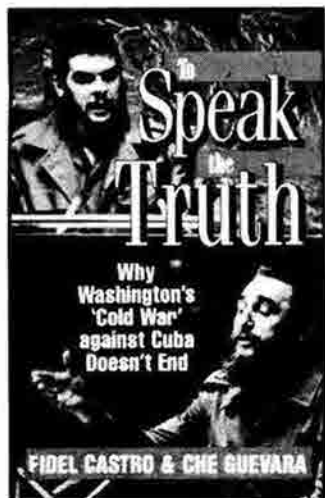
One conference participant explained in a conversation, for example, that the pesticides needed to protect the garlic crop from fungus are not available. To compensate, people must be mobilized in the fields to physically remove the part of each head of garlic that is affected. A recent report in the Cuban daily *Granma* noted that a lack of fuel had reduced irrigation of the banana crop and lowered output.

Conditions vary across country

The ability of the different provinces and municipalities to provide for themselves varies considerably across the country. Conditions in the city of Havana — which has the densest population — are clearly worse than in other parts of the country, although rations are higher in Havana to compensate for the fact that few residents have land available for gardens to supplement their diets.

A delegate from Granma province, a largely agricultural area in the eastern part of the country, said food supplies in many of the municipalities in that province are substantially better than in Havana. In some areas there is even a regular ration of meat being distributed.

A delegate who is a member of the National Association of Small Farmers explained that popular militias similar to those of the early years of the revolution



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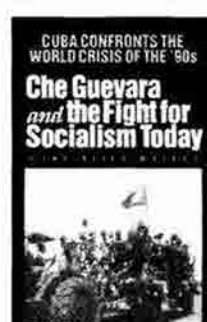
CUBA CONFRONTS THE WORLD CRISIS OF THE '90s

by Mary-Alice Waters

Socialism can only be built by free men and women who consciously work together to lay the foundations for a new society, transforming themselves in the process. That course, which Ernesto Che Guevara championed in the early years of the Cuban revolution, remains central for Cuban working people today as they confront the biggest challenges yet in the history of the revolution. Also available in Spanish and French. \$3.50

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were being reconstituted in the countryside to prevent the theft of agricultural products. These armed militias on horseback were first started on some of the cooperatives about a year ago, she reported, but have now spread to state farms as well. Participation varies greatly. On some farms it is as low as 15 percent, she said, but on her cooperative all 50 men and 20 women are part of the militia.

Delegates who visited child-care centers in Havana were impressed with the quality of the facilities, the caliber of the staff, and the happiness of the children. At one center, built in 1985, there were 180 children between the ages of 6 months and 6 years, cared for by a staff of 40 and open from 6:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. Child care is free in Cuba from the time an infant is 45 days old.

Contradictions for women deepen

With today's economic difficulties, however, there is a growing shortage of facilities in Havana and far fewer places than children and mothers who need them. Several women at the conference reported they didn't expect to be able to place their child in a center until almost a year after birth.

In 1987 and 1988, through a vast mobilization of voluntary labor, more than 100 child-care centers were built in Havana. The effort, part of what in Cuba was called the rectification process, reversed what had been a 10-year neglect of the need for child-care facilities and was an important reaffirmation of the working-class course of the Cuban revolution.

Gloria, a young mother with a four-year-old child, lives with her mother in the Diez de Octubre neighborhood in Havana. She reported that seven day-care centers had been built in this neighborhood in a one-year period. Even with these, she said, there were not enough centers to meet current demand. Priority is given to mothers who are working and women are increasingly being encouraged not to return to work rapidly after giving birth.

In the conference workshop on women's health, a leader of the FMC reported that Cuba's National Assembly recently adopted changes in the maternity law. Previously, women were guaranteed a three-month leave of absence from their jobs at full pay after giving birth.

The new law extends the period of paid leave to six months, although the second three-month period is at a reduced level of remuneration; moreover, it allows a woman to take an additional six months of unpaid leave. The FMC leader on the panel presented this as an advance for women that was realized in spite of the tremendous difficulties of the period.

In a related discussion, a Cuban doctor who specializes in breast cancer treatment reported that doctors in Cuba are now encouraging women to breast-feed their babies for at least three months after birth and the goal was

for women to breast-feed for a year.

Discussion on breast-feeding policy

Cuban women, she explained, had tended to bottle-feed their children from an early age to make it easier for the mother to return to work and other activities and to make it possible to enroll the infant in a child-care facility. The change in policy, she said, was due to international research that indicated that breast-feeding was healthier for the child and the mother.

Several Cuban women at the conference, in informal discussions, disagreed with the explanations given for these two changes. The changes in the maternity law and the moves to encourage breast-feeding, they said, were a response to the lack of resources to expand child-care facilities and a decision to encourage women not to return to work rapidly because most work centers are overstuffed. Inflated staffs are a longstanding problem in Cuba that began to be addressed as part of the rectification process. This problem has been exacerbated by the shortages and the shutdowns of many enterprises.

Given the great difficulties in coping with everyday life, many women are opting to stay home to care for their children for a longer period of time. The food shortage makes women more inclined to want to breast-feed as well. Extended maternity leave might be a legitimate move to meet an extremely difficult situation, women noted, but it should be presented as such, not dressed up as an advance for women.

One of the biggest debates at the conference concerned the growth of prostitution around the large tourist hotels. Everyone agreed this is occurring and is a problem. The view presented by FMC leaders in workshops at the conference was that in Cuba it is primarily a moral problem, not an economic one as is in the rest of Latin America and imperialist countries like the United States.

Individual youths are drawn to prostitution, FMC leaders said, because of the lure of the big hotels, the novelty of associating with foreign tourists, and the desire for consumer goods available in the imperialist countries. No woman finds herself forced into prostitution to feed herself or her children, they noted.

The FMC is working to minimize this serious problem, the organization's leaders said, by talking with the families of the young women and by trying to involve the youth in school and work.

What is cause of prostitution in Cuba?

Many of the conference participants from around the world found it difficult to accept these views. Of course prostitution has economic roots in Cuba as in the rest of the world, several of the delegates argued in the workshops. It is a product of the severe shortage of material goods in Cuba today

were back in operation.

The storm was all the more damaging because it followed unusually heavy rains, which destroyed seed crops earlier this year.

In addition, 17,000 chickens and other poultry were lost in Havana province, as well as numerous sheep, goats, and some cattle.

The storm damaged 29,000 houses, destroying 850. Damage to power lines and other equipment left four provinces without electricity for many hours. Three other provinces were partially affected.

Large sections of Havana were flooded for the second time in a year. Thousands were stranded for more than 24 hours as waves brought down walls at the waterfront and destroyed the aquarium, the Riviera Hotel's lobby, and other tourist and recreation centers.

As soon as the storm cleared, thousands of workers and neighborhood volunteers sprang into action, forming brigades to salvage crops and facilities and to launch cleanup and rescue efforts.



Militant/Argiris Malapanis

Volunteers near El Paraíso agricultural camp in Havana province. Hundreds of thousands of Cubans have mobilized on voluntary work brigades to increase food output and overcome shortages.

and the ready availability in the tourist stores of many products that make life easier and more pleasant, from household electrical appliances to shampoo and clothes.

A number of the Cuban delegates and workers at the Pan American Hotel, where conference participants were housed, were also discussing the recent decision to allow workers in Varadero — a big tourist resort center that employs more than 17,000 workers — to keep dollar tips they receive and spend them in special stores that will be stocked with food, clothing, and other goods that are available in the tourist stores.

Previously, Cubans working in the tourist industry were required to exchange dollars earned from tips for pesos at the official 1-to-1 exchange rate. The black market rate is now 1-to-50. Although it has been illegal for Cubans to hold dollars, most workers, we were told, keep the dollars and find people who will buy goods for them in the tourist stores. Most people expect that workers in the tourist industry elsewhere in the country will soon be allowed to keep the dollars they earn in tips.

The Cubans at the conference disagreed among themselves on whether this decision was good or not. A young woman argued this was an important step to ensure that the dollar tips were spent in a way that would immediately make more food and other necessities available to some families. Since

many people have relatives and friends who work in the tourist industry, she said, almost everyone will benefit.

"By recognizing what is already happening anyway," another Cuban said, "we bring it out in the open and make it easier to control." His friend disagreed. "This is just going to deepen the inequalities among different layers of society," he said.

Another Cuban, an artist, said he hoped the government would similarly soon allow artists whose works are sold for hard currency abroad to keep some of the dollar earnings for themselves. This would enable them to buy food, clothing, and art supplies not otherwise available, he said.

One indication of the deep-going discussions in Cuba today was the response by conference participants to a Pathfinder book table that was set up one day in the lobby of the school where many of the conference sessions were held. In the half hour before the morning session began, almost half the books — covering a range of topics on world politics — had been sold. By the end of lunch only a few English and French titles remained.

Through all these discussions, conference participants gained a more concrete appreciation for the realities and challenges facing not only women in Cuba but all those fighting to defend the gains of the Cuban revolution today.

Cuba vote rejects imperialist pressure, supports revolution

BY SARA LOBMAN

HAVANA, Cuba — Official results for the February 24 elections for the provincial and national assemblies were released here in mid-March. In numerous interviews, Cubans who are supporters of the revolution expressed satisfaction — and even some surprise — that the election results showed more support than they had anticipated.

The February 24 elections were the first time since the 1959 revolution that Cubans went to the polls to cast ballots in direct elections for the provincial and national assemblies. Until the electoral law was changed last year, members of the municipal assemblies elected the representatives to the provincial assemblies. The provincial assemblies then elected the national assembly deputies.

The electoral process opened in December with voting for delegates to the municipal assemblies. Cuba is divided into 14 provinces and 169 municipalities. Candidates for the municipal assemblies are nominated in neighborhood meetings. There must be at least two candidates and no more than eight for each seat.

After the December election, electoral commissions were established in each municipality and province. These were chaired by a representative of the Cuban Organization of Trade Unions (CTC) and included representatives of all the mass organizations — the Federation of Cuban Women, the neighborhood Committees to Defend the Revolution, the National Association of Small Farmers, and organizations of both high school and university students.

The commissions prepared slates for the

provincial and national assemblies with the requirement that 50 percent of those nominated be elected members of the municipal assemblies. The proposed slates were then submitted to the municipal assemblies for their review and approval. Unlike the municipal elections, only one candidate was nominated for each seat at the provincial and national level. To be elected, a candidate needed to receive more than 50 percent of the vote.

In an interview after the elections, Cuban president Fidel Castro said nominating slates of candidates in this manner, in consultation with the mass organizations and with discussions at workplaces, opened up the possibility that less well-known people, who might otherwise have been passed over, could be elected. Having only one candidate per seat meant these candidates would not have to compete for votes with well-known figures and ensured more broadly representative bodies, he stated.

The change in the composition of the new provincial and national assemblies is substantial. Eighty-three percent of the delegates to the National Assembly and 75 percent of the provincial delegates are serving on these bodies for the first time.

In a March 15 speech to the opening session of the National Assembly, Castro noted the importance of the fact that a large number of Cubans who are Black or *mestizo* (of mixed African and European background) had been elected, as well as many women. "This is a reflection of the progress that has been made in the struggle for equality and the fight against racism," he said. He also pointed to the large number of deputies who have participated in

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Storm disrupts Cuba food effort

BY FRANCISCO PICADO

MATANZAS, Cuba — An unusual winter storm with 100-mile-an-hour winds and heavy rain swept the length of the island March 13 and 14. It killed four people, injured 60, and caused massive destruction to agriculture and housing.

At a time when the Cuban people have been making extraordinary efforts and have registered gains in the fight to produce an adequate food supply for the population, the storm caused severe damage in 8 of the country's 14 provinces.

Although figures continue to be compiled, the Cuban news media reported the destruction of 1.5 million banana trees destined for local consumption and export. A substantial part of the winter vegetable crops was destroyed, including tomatoes, onions, cucumbers, and lettuce. Many fruits were ruined as well.

Although the storm disrupted the critical timetable for processing the sugar harvest by knocking out electrical power and damaging storage facilities, production was not severely hampered. By the end of March 14, the five mills most affected

Peru's regime uses arrest of Shining Path chief to crack down on democratic rights

Campaign in defense of Guzmán falsely portrays him as leader of oppressed

BY MARTÍN KOPPEL

The Peruvian regime is using the arrest and trial of Shining Path leader Abimael Guzmán to crack down on democratic rights in the country. Taking advantage of the hatred many working people in Peru feel toward Shining Path, a reactionary organization, the government of President Alberto Fujimori seeks to institute the death penalty.

Security forces captured Guzmán September 12 in Lima along with other top leaders of the Communist Party of Peru, a guerrilla organization better known as Sendero Luminoso or Shining Path. In its 12-year war against the government, the group has launched murderous attacks on the working-class movement in the country.

Supporters of Shining Path around the world have launched a campaign in defense of Guzmán, who was sentenced to life imprisonment at a military trial last October. The campaign seeks support by falsely portraying him as a leader of the oppressed in Peru.

In the name of combating terrorism the Fujimori regime has unleashed savage repression. Its goal is to make the country safe for corporate interests by muzzling workers and farmers who protest the economic austerity measures ordered by the International Monetary Fund. Peru is being crushed by a \$22 billion debt to United States and other international banks.

Regime assaults democratic rights

The regime has kept two-thirds of the country, including Lima, the capital, under a state of emergency. Amnesty International reports that government forces have kidnapped, tortured, and summarily executed thousands of people over the past decade. In 1990-91 alone, the armed forces and right-wing death squads "disappeared" 600 people. Most were peasants, as well as unionists, students, and political activists. Almost all political prisoners have been charged as "terrorists," according to the human rights group.

Last April Fujimori suspended the constitution, abrogated civil liberties, carried out mass arrests, and closed down Congress and the courts. The president has removed from office or driven into exile many political rivals, allying himself with the army brass.

Fujimori does not rule by repression alone. His regime is a product of the extreme social crisis and economic collapse in Peru, as well as the fact that the traditional political parties and institutions have been discredited. The main parties in the workers' movement — the social democrats and Stalinists — are tarnished as an alternative; they pursue a course of collaborating with the government and the employers.

Fujimori's popularity hit its highest recorded level, 81 percent, after his "self-coup" in April. He won widespread support for dissolving Congress and the courts by accusing those bodies of corruption and ineffectiveness. Posing as a savior who stands above political parties, he promises to bring peace and stability with an iron hand.

In January Fujimori-style "independent" candidates swept the municipal elections around the country. The Popular Revolutionary American Alliance (APRA), the main capitalist party for several decades, received barely 3 percent of the vote in Lima. The parties that call themselves socialist, which had previously won important municipal and congressional seats, were crushed at the polls.

A military show trial

Fujimori took advantage of the spectacular capture of Guzmán to prove he is fulfilling his promise to end the guerrilla war. The regime carried out a military show trial that

justify the government's repressive campaign.

Supporters of Shining Path in several countries, however, are carrying out a campaign in defense of Guzmán that has little to do with protecting democratic rights. They recently published a full-page ad in New York's *Village Voice* and in the Los Angeles Spanish-language *La Opinión*, titled "Defend the Life of Abimael Guzmán!"

The ad is signed by a number of prominent intellectuals, civil libertarians, and public figures. Among those listed are former U.S. attorney general Ramsey Clark, author Stanley Aronowitz, singer Sinead O'Connor, political activist Amiri Baraka, former South African political prisoner Dennis Brutus, Mexican human rights activist Rosario Ibarra, political writer Manning Marable, and civil liberties lawyer William Kunstler.

Cotinkers of Shining Path in the United States and Britain are organizing the campaign. The main political group in the United States that supports Sendero Lumi-

people out of political activity and instill fear, passivity, and dependence on a savior, namely Guzmán and his gang.

A clear example of Sendero Luminoso's political course is its "armed strikes" against the government, the most recent of which was carried out in November. These "armed strikes" are not connected to any struggle by workers but are counterposed to them. To prevent any mobilization by workers or their unions, Shining Path publicly warns workers to stay home or suffer the consequences. During the armed strike last July, the guerrillas killed bus and taxi drivers who disobeyed this order.

Sendero's war on working people

The main method used by Shining Path is assassinations. The targets are not only government officials but leaders of unions and of parties that are part of the labor movement. The assassination of a union leader — no matter how corrupt or disliked by the ranks he may be — is a blow against the union. It creates an atmosphere of fear among workers that curbs their ability to openly discuss and organize. Democratic rights are vital tools for workers and farmers to defend their class interests.

Like Fujimori's Bonapartist regime, Shining Path does not rule by terror alone. Similarly to the Peruvian president, the guerrilla group wins support among some of the most desperate and beaten down layers of the population.

Sendero does not recruit from the most politically seasoned and confident working-class fighters. It does not primarily attract workers but rather peasants and rural villagers in the country's most isolated and economically backward areas. This is how Shining Path has built a guerrilla organization of about 5,000 in the countryside and the shantytowns circling Lima.

A big part of the outfit's reactionary demagoguery is chauvinism. Shining Path leaders blame Peru's economic crisis on Peruvians of "foreign descent" — particularly Japanese-Peruvians, who are a small but significant part of the country's population — instead of the real problem: capitalist rule.

To foster these anti-working-class prejudices, Sendero has assassinated numerous individuals on the basis of their nationality, including Japanese-Peruvian farmers and priests, nuns, and agricultural technicians from Japan and Europe.

Shining Path's record of violent attacks on the working class and other reactionary policies make that organization an enemy of working people. As workers and farmers in Peru fight to develop the kind of revolutionary leadership that will mobilize millions to defend their interests against the capitalist rulers at home and abroad, they will have to politically take on and defeat the Shining Path gang.

The working class is the only class in modern society that can lead such a struggle to overthrow capitalist rule, establish a government of working people, and begin the fight to build socialism. As a productive and propertyless class, concentrated in the factories, mines, and mills, it alone has the social weight and the potential class consciousness necessary to build alliances with the peasants and other petty commodity producers and lead a fight in the interests of all the oppressed.

A political movement that is dominated by other social classes and acts against the working class — like Shining Path — can certainly be radical, but radically reactionary.

Sendero Luminoso's political course is to replace the current capitalist government with a brutal regime that, in the name of "communism," would enforce capitalist rule and enrich Sendero's privileged leadership clique — through the superexploitation of Peru's workers and peasants.

The crimes committed by Guzmán and his group against working people are indefensible. The political campaign waged by their supporters does not advance the fight for democratic rights in Peru.

Fujimori, however, has no moral or political right to pass judgment on Guzmán's outfit. The regime's war on democratic rights, including the illegitimate trial and sentencing of Guzmán, should be opposed.



Tanks patrol streets of Lima. In the name of combating terrorism, Peruvian regime has unleashed savage repression against the country's workers and farmers.

threw most legal guarantees out the window.

A hooded anonymous judge presided over the trial. The defendant's lawyers were barred from calling any defense witnesses and only twice were allowed to meet briefly with their client. The public was barred from the trial, as was a visiting delegation of legal observers from the United States, Canada, and Germany. The regime made Guzmán an object of ridicule, placing him in a steel cage and dressing him in degrading striped prison garb.

Guzmán was convicted of treason, sentenced to life in prison along with other Shining Path leaders, and locked up at a naval base on San Lorenzo Island.

The political aim of the trial was to justify further erosion of democratic rights. The regime plans to hold a national referendum this year to try to legalize the death penalty, which it can then use to terrorize working-class fighters and other political activists.

New legislation stipulates life sentences for teachers convicted of expressing sympathy for the Shining Path and for journalists convicted of "apology of terrorism." In late January military tribunals convicted the two lawyers who defended the Shining Path leader, Alfredo Crespo and Jorge Cartagena, of treason and sentenced them to life imprisonment.

The main target of these repressive measures are working people. In this atmosphere, for example, the regime mobilized riot police in early February to assault a group of Lima municipal workers who were on strike because they had not been paid since December. A dozen strikers were jailed.

Meanwhile, the U.S. government is escalating its military intervention in Peru. Washington recently announced it will resume military reconnaissance flights over the country, ostensibly to help the Peruvian regime fight drug trafficking. The flights had been suspended last April.

Numerous human rights supporters have condemned the flagrant violations of legal rights in Guzmán's trial, the regime's pursuit of the death penalty, and other abuses. They recognize that the trial was a farce designed to

noso is the Revolutionary Communist Party.

While claiming to be a civil liberties campaign, it is in fact a partisan effort that seeks to lend political support to Shining Path and falsifies the nature of the organization.

The ad states, "No knowledgeable and truthful observer of Peru, regardless of their political beliefs, can deny that Dr. Abimael Guzmán is the recognized leader of millions of peasants, workers, students, intellectuals and others of various walks of life in Peru. In no way can the twelve year long war he has been leading be dismissed as 'acts of terrorism.' In no way can Dr. Guzmán be denied the stature of a captured leader of a revolutionary party and army." It declares that the Shining Path chief should be regarded like "all imprisoned opponents of imperialism."

Liberal figures sign ad

Some liberal and radical forces, such as many of those who signed the ad, differ sharply with Shining Path's political perspective but accept the argument that it is somehow a revolutionary organization that represents some, if not all, the oppressed.

Workers World, newspaper of the Workers World Party, for example, editorialized that the Shining Path leaders "are not only political prisoners, but leaders of the fight of Peru's oppressed." A recent article in that paper stated, "Guzmán's only 'crime' is leading a mass struggle against the U.S. banks and corporations that exploit the Peruvian people."

Sendero Luminoso, however, is not a revolutionary organization or an opponent of imperialism. Guzmán and his group are not leaders of Peru's workers and peasants.

Shining Path poses as the defender of working people. But its goal is to replace the current government and impose by terror its own regime on the backs of workers and farmers. The group is not part of the working-class movement in Peru; through its actions Shining Path treats the working class as an enemy to be neutralized or crushed.

Reflecting the middle-class outlook of its leadership, the group is hostile to any action by workers and peasants in their own interests. It attempts to drive working

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ANC leader: talks are result of struggle

BY SAM MANUEL
AND STEVE CLARK

JOHANNESBURG, South Africa — "We begin with the fact that only an elected assembly — based on one-person, one-vote universal suffrage, nonracialism, and non-sexism — can give the constitution a legitimacy that will be respected," says African National Congress (ANC) leader Mac Maharaj. "So we have placed the election of a constituent assembly at the center of the negotiation process."

Maharaj is a member of the ANC's National Executive Committee and of its team negotiating with the National Party government and other political forces over the transfer of power to a democratic South Africa. He was one of five leaders chosen by the ANC to take part in the multiparty conference held here March 5-6. The meeting charted plans for the next stage of talks leading to the country's first-ever democratic elections, to be held later this year or early in 1994. We spoke with Maharaj at the ANC's headquarters in downtown Johannesburg.

Maharaj was imprisoned on Robben Island with Nelson Mandela from 1964 to 1976. His account of those years can be found in an appendix to the book *The Struggle Is My Life* by Mandela, published by Pathfinder. Active in the ANC's underground leadership in South Africa before the group was unbanned in 1990, Maharaj first had to leave the country and then be readmitted under a grant of immunity negotiated between the ANC and apartheid regime. He was rearrested in July 1990 on frame-up charges of "subversion," which were dropped in March 1991.

The apartheid regime was forced to the negotiating table in 1990, Maharaj said.

"We have a mass population which is uniquely politicized," especially since the Soweto township rebellion in 1976, he explained. Young people resisted apartheid's schooling, workers organized unions, and township residents sat up neighborhood committees.

"They made the country ungovernable," Maharaj said. "The townships were out of bounds for the regime." The councillors to apartheid's fake municipal bodies, for example, "were being elected with a mere 0.5 percent of people voting."

Recognizing the political ground that had been conquered, ANC leader Nelson Mandela took the initiative from behind prison walls in the late 1980s to press the regime to begin talks.

ANC has initiative

Each attempt by the ruling National Party to create obstacles to the talks since the unbanning of the ANC in 1990 has been met by resistance by millions of workers and youth. "As a result of the mass actions," Maharaj said, "the regime has lost all initia-



Mac Maharaj, member of ANC National Executive Committee and negotiating team.

tive, or any capacity to even manage the transition. We are therefore put in the position of having to propose initiatives to unblock the process and keep it moving."

"This gives the impression that we are making concessions," Maharaj added, and of course in negotiations both sides do make concessions. "But it is the regime which is responding to our proposals."

Until recently, said Maharaj, "the ANC could simply say to the regime, 'This system is your creation and your problem.' But as we move closer to becoming the government," he explained, "we have to take on more and more responsibility for leading the transition to a democratic South Africa."

"We have taken the initiative to have the most inclusive constituent assembly to write the constitution for a new South Africa," he explained. "Given the size of the country's potential electorate, it would have been reasonable to require a party to obtain 800,000 votes for one seat in the assembly. But in order to include a broader array of parties, we proposed 500,000 as the cutoff point."

Maharaj explained that at every stage of the talks, the apartheid regime has made proposals that would ensure continued white minority domination.

"The government wants a power-sharing agreement written into the constitution," he said. It proposed that the constitution require a coalition cabinet with a rotating president. The cabinet, the regime said, should make all decisions by consensus. All parties would be on an equal footing, regardless of the size of their vote, thus giving veto rights to the

currently ruling minority.

"Though we have made progress in the talks," Maharaj said, "the going has gotten tougher as the reality that we are actually displacing them from power begins to hit them between the eyes."

In an effort to allay the fears that the National Party regime seeks to promote among whites, Coloureds, Indians, and even some Africans in the country, the ANC has "proposed a set of constitutional principles to ensure that whatever the constituent assembly came up with would be democratic" and serve the interests of all South Africans, Black and white, he explained.

Some Bantustan regimes resist

Maharaj discussed the efforts by the white minority regime to mobilize the administrations of several of the so-called Bantustans. In the 1970s, to justify its disenfranchisement of Africans, the apartheid rulers set up 10 "homelands," or Bantustans, of which all Africans were supposedly citizens. Four Bantustans were even declared "independent" — Transkei, Venda, Bophuthatswana, and Ciskei.

At the multiparty Convention for a Democratic South Africa (Codesa) talks in December 1991, Maharaj said, it was agreed that all those living in the Bantustans would be reincorporated into South Africa with full rights. When the ANC first raised this, Maharaj said, "The regime came to us with tomes of international law," claiming this would violate the alleged sovereignty of the Bantustans. "They also came with their local laws."

"We pushed all the books to one side.

We told them we were not interested in apartheid law on the matter," he said. "With a stroke of the pen the apartheid regime had taken away the citizenship of the peoples in the 'homelands.' In that same manner it can be restored."

Codesa's Declaration of Intent endorsed "an undivided South Africa."

The Inkatha Freedom Party of Mangosuthu Buthelezi, head of the KwaZulu Bantustan, and the Bophuthatswana and Ciskei administrations, however, are seeking to maintain these apartheid creations, as well as their own income and power, in the name of "federalism." What's more, they are demanding that agreement to include this so-called federal structure in a new constitution be settled before election of a constituent assembly.

In an effort to meet the expressed concerns of these Bantustan governments, the ANC proposed at the 1991 Codesa meeting that a study be done on the implications of reincorporating these regions. Bophuthatswana's delegates to Codesa proposed that the study also look at the effects of nonincorporation.

"From both points of view," Maharaj stressed, "the study proved the claims of the Bantustan governments to an independent existence to be without basis. They are completely dependent — economically, militarily, and politically — upon the apartheid regime."

Seeking to discredit the study, Maharaj said, the regime argued that its conclusions on the security apparatus of the "homelands" were inaccurate.

"We pointed out to them that they regularly interfered militarily in the Bantustans," said Maharaj. "When the people rose up against [Lewis] Mangope in Bophuthatswana in 1988, the South African Defense Force rescued him in the middle of the night in his pajamas in a stadium and restored that regime."

Efforts to end political violence

Maharaj said the problem of what to do about the political violence in the country is "the most intractable issue" dividing the ANC and the National Party. "This government just refuses to acknowledge that its security forces have been, and continue to be, involved in the violence" that has resulted in the deaths and maimings of thousands of people in the Black townships in recent years. Many leaders and activists in the democratic movement are among the casualties.

"A substantial part of the constituency of the regime lies in the leadership of the army and state bureaucracy," Maharaj noted. "So getting them to deal with this issue is like a dentist who has a patient who must have all of his teeth removed. By the sixth tooth, even the dentist feels the pain!"

Elections and mass organizations

"An important product of mass action in this country," Maharaj said, "has been the proliferation of civic structures and organizations on all levels." These include unions, student groups, and organizations for housing, public services, education, health care, security of the communities, and women's rights.

Through the elections, which the ANC is demanding be held as soon as possible, "We have a chance to regain some of what was lost since the heyday of mass action" that forced the regime to the negotiating table, he said.

These organizations must not be seen just as "thorns in the side of government," as in imperialist countries today, or "rubber stamps for the government," as was the case in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, Maharaj said.

"Our democratic practice, including during the election, must embrace these civic structures and organizations as fundamental to the quality of the democracy we are bringing about."

International solidarity

Maharaj pointed to the role of the international solidarity movement in forcing the regime to negotiate a transition to a democratic South Africa with the ANC and other organizations.

He asked all those around the world who worked to help bring down apartheid to join with the ANC and others in beginning to build a new nonracial democratic South Africa.

Inside a South African migrant labor hostel

BY PETER CLIFFORD
AND JOHN STEELE

JOHANNESBURG, South Africa — Peter is a Black worker who lives in a migrant workers' hostel called Rand Leases, 15 miles west of this city. He works as a guard for Fidelity Security and is a shop steward in the Transport and General Workers' Union (TGWU).

Peter is telling us how "unhuman" the conditions are at the hostel. We've just taken some photographs of the dingy, crowded room where he lives, to show to coworkers and other unionists in Britain and Canada.

Suddenly someone yells, "What are you doing here? You can't do that here! You can't take pictures here! This is wrong!"

A stocky white man with an Afrikaner accent and a strong smell of alcohol on his breath grabs our arms and pushes us roughly out the door of the dormitory. Get out of the hostel, he tells us. We have no right to ask questions, or to take notes and photographs, he says.

The hostel owner begins shouting at Gladstone Miya, the TGWU shop steward who had brought us into the hostel. Miya hadn't gotten permission to let us into the dormitories, the proprietor says. As the three of us approach the iron-barred revolving exit gate, he shouts at the British and Canadian intruders, "When you are on this side of the gate you get treated like a Black; when you are on the other side you get treated like a white."

As we leave, Peter and several other workers follow us outside to continue talking. They describe their living conditions — "not fit for pigs," as one worker in the dormitory puts it.

The hostel owner, called Botha, argues that he just runs a business and isn't responsible for the conditions. Botha is ashamed the world will find out about these conditions, one worker explains.

"Security" is big business

Apparently the guards at the hostel gate had been under the impression we were white bosses coming onto the grounds to view a "parade" — a military-type drill the men who work as security guards have to perform from time to time.

Several thousand migrant workers live in this hostel. Many are employed by security companies. Others are miners from nearby gold mines.

"Security" outfits are a big business in South Africa. Of the six-million-strong labor force, 100,000 are security guards. They work up to 60 hours a week — at all times of the day and night — protecting the stores, factories, mines, banks, homes, farms, and other properties of the white minority rulers.

The TGWU, a union with 30,000 members, organizes security guards, cleaners, laundry workers, truck drivers, bus drivers, and taxi drivers. About 400 TGWU mem-

bers employed by Fidelity Security stay at the Rand Leases hostel.

Before being run off the premises by Botha, we were able to visit some of the living quarters.

There are six or seven double-decker beds in a 20-by-20 foot room that houses 14 men. The bed springs are covered with rotting foam mattresses. There are few blankets to be seen.

The room is windowless, except for a small skylight set in a corrugated metal roof.

A number of workers sit around a primitive heating element warming their meal, a bowl of mashed vegetables. A bent and broken plastic table stands in the middle, it is too rickety to be used to eat from. There are no chairs.

A few dented lockers contain some personal belongings, and clothes are strewn about.

Nothing to do

Rand Leases, like many of the 200 such hostels in the Johannesburg region, was built 60 years ago. It has clearly had little upkeep since then.

From the outside, the two-story hostel stretches in a huge U-shape with row upon row of dormitories, all basically the same. Laundry hangs out to dry on makeshift clothes lines. Workers sit and stand around doing nothing, because, as Peter says, there

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Mandela: Stop violence in South Africa

'Those responsible must be punished,' says ANC leader in visit to Natal

Continued from front page

the future. But we do hope that there are men and women in all organizations who appreciate the importance of peace and who are making efforts to save lives."

Accompanying Mandela during the Natal tour were, among others, Harry Gwala, chairperson of the ANC Regional Executive Committee in the Midlands; Ebrahim Ismail Ebrahim, a member of the ANC National Executive Committee (NEC); John Gomo-mo, president of the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU); Chris Hani, chairperson of the South African Communist Party; Patrick Lekota, member of the ANC NEC; and Peter Mokaba, president of the ANC Youth League.

Table Mountain massacres

The six children murdered at Table Mountain were from families who lived in an area dominated by the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP), led by Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi.

"Those who were responsible for such a slaughter — whether they are members of the ANC, the IFP, or the state security services — have lost their humanity," Mandela told several hundred ANC supporters in the rural area of Bruntville March 12. "They are no longer human beings; they are animals."

"Those responsible for this massacre must be punished," he said. "The principle of our law is that a man is innocent until he is proven guilty. Therefore, if there are members of the African National Congress who are arrested, we will find attorneys to defend them. . . ."

"But whatever the court does, we are going to start our own investigation," Mandela said. "And if we find them guilty, even if there is not sufficient evidence before the courts as such, we will take the strongest disciplinary action, because they will have violated the code of conduct of the ANC."

Three persons arrested in the assault on the schoolchildren are ANC members. ANC Midlands chairperson Harry Gwala told the *Weekly Mail* of Johannesburg, just prior to Mandela's visit, that the ambush had to be seen in the context of the "ongoing war" in the area. He suggested that the killing of the children may have been a mistake. "Inkatha killers generally use the bakkie when they move to kill," Gwala said. "It is never mentioned. The impression is being created that this was a cold-blooded murder."

Mandela had planned to attend the funeral of the six children, which was held near here March 13. Buthelezi participated in the ceremonies. "We thought that if we were seen together, joining in expressing our sympathy for the bereaved and appealing for an end to violence, this would make a tremendous impact on our cause," Mandela said at the press conference.

Inkatha refused to cooperate to ensure security arrangements, however. So, Mandela said, "we thought it was our duty — as the architects of the peace process in this country — to avoid any action . . . that might increase tensions and result in violence. So we did not go." Mandela did attend the funeral of 13 other victims of recent violence in the Table Mountain area.

The ANC president also spoke to a rally in Ezakehni Township in northern Natal, near Ladysmith. Inkatha claims the town as a stronghold, and the Inkatha-controlled government of the KwaZulu Bantustan blocked Mandela's access to the stadium where he was scheduled to appear. Nonetheless, more than 1,000 local residents turned out to hear him speak — with no public address system — in an open field.

Government, cops, and Bantustans

The true source of the violence, said Mandela at the closing press conference, is not "a particular Black organization working in a Bantustan." The Bantustans are 10 so-called homelands — 4 of them nominally independent — established by the white supremacist regime in the 1970s as a justification for its disenfranchisement of the Black majority. Inkatha is the governing party in the KwaZulu Bantustan, which is surrounded by Natal province.

"The mass media and the government put forward the picture that the conflict is between two Black organizations," Mandela said. But the Bantustan governments are

apartheid's creations, he explained.

The Bantustan governments in KwaZulu, Ciskei, and Bophuthatswana have backed the ruling National Party, and even parties to its right, in opposing the ANC's fight for a unitary nonracial, democratic South Africa. The governments of several others — Transkei, KwaNdebele, KaNgwane, Gazankulu, and Lebowa — have aligned themselves more or less with the ANC.



South African troops patrol Soweto, near Johannesburg, in 1992. Government security forces have played major role in fostering and carrying out violent attacks.

"These Bantustans give us trouble because [National Party president F. W.] de Klerk still wants certain areas of the country to be 'no go' areas for his main opposition, the African National Congress," Mandela said. "That is why he is not taking any steps to guarantee free political activity in his own backyard, the Bantustans."

"Behind these Bantustans," Mandela said, "is the full might of the South African army and South African police. So we are not fighting just a Bantustan organization; we are actually ranged against the powers of the state, who want to keep these Bantustans, so as to make it impossible for the democratic forces in this country to emerge with a clear majority."

Calls for discussion

Mandela used each of his meetings to appeal to ANC members and supporters to reach out to Inkatha members in Natal.

"You have a duty to go to members of Inkatha, tell them they are our flesh and blood, and that there is no reason why we should slaughter one another," said Mandela to a rally of 1,000 supporters in Ndeleni, a rural Black township outside Richmond. The area surrounding Richmond has been particularly hard hit by violence.

"Persuade them that we should abandon weapons of death," Mandela said, "that we should sit down and try to resolve our problems peacefully. That is how people who think, who are decent, handle their problems. And you yourself must avoid violence."

"I'm not saying you should not defend yourself when you are attacked," he continued. "But it is no defense, when innocent people are killed, for us to kill innocent people in return."

ANC Youth League leader Peter Mokaba also addressed the Ndeleni rally. During his last trip to the Richmond area, he said, his remarks were criticized by some for having exacerbated tensions in the wake of several violent attacks. "But I will repeat again — I commend you for your efforts to defend the ANC and your right to exist here," Mokaba said. "This is not 'war talk.' Defend the ANC, your only national liberation movement. Young lions, maintain your militancy!"

From Ndeleni, Mandela went to Kwa-Ximba, the home of Zulu chief Zibuse Mlaba. Mlaba is a supporter of the ANC. Following a performance by dancers in traditional skins carrying shields and sticks, Mandela spoke to a crowd of more than 1,000. He urged Mlaba and other traditional

leaders to help heal divisions and put an end to the violence. Mandela proposed that Mlaba initiate talks with neighboring chief Mdluli, an Inkatha supporter on the other side of the mountain.

Peace force

On the first day of the trip Mandela spoke in the rural areas of Wembezi and Bruntville. Violence mounted in Bruntville in 1990 as

At the press conference Mandela said that the agreements reached at the previous day-long summits with Buthelezi had never been implemented, in part because of "the lack of preparation for the meetings."

Buthelezi, Mandela said, has demanded the disbanding of Umkhonto we Sizwe as a precondition to further talks, a demand the ANC rejects. Buthelezi dropped this precondition a few days after Mandela's visit, saying he was prepared to meet.

Mandela said further talks would be pointless unless progress was guaranteed on several matters. "There must be free political activity in KwaZulu" for all organizations, including the ANC, he stated. There must be a banning of the public display of weapons of death. Hostels from which Inkatha members have launched attacks on surrounding townships must be fenced off and monitored for weapons.

In the wake of Mandela's visit to the Midlands, the first tentative steps toward joint action to reduce violence in the region were announced March 16 by Gwala and Inkatha leader David Ndlovu, a member of the KwaZulu cabinet. Gwala proposed to Inkatha that the two organizations hold joint rallies here in Pietermaritzburg and surrounding areas affected by the violence. Ndlovu welcomed the idea and requested a formal proposal to Inkatha's Regional Executive Committee.

Mandela took the opportunity of the three-day trip to address a number of questions related to the ANC's political course, particularly those most pertinent to the Natal region. Among these is a constitution that Inkatha has drawn up for a combined KwaZulu/Natal province.

"Some people say that this constitution is the first step toward secession," Mandela said. "I am not saying so myself. But what [Inkatha is] saying is that its boundaries, its powers and functions, must be determined by Codesa [the Convention for a Democratic South Africa] or the multiparty conference. We totally reject that without reservations."

Such multiparty bodies, while playing an important role in the negotiations, Mandela said, are not elected. As such, they must not make decisions on constitutional questions, he stressed.

The Inkatha Freedom Party or any other political party is free to come to the negotiations with proposals on any of these matters, he said, and they will be discussed. The ANC is "prepared to compromise, because we want peace in this country."

Government of national unity

Mandela addressed a meeting of 2,000 students at the University of Natal in Pietermaritzburg, before a crowd that was African in its large majority, with substantial numbers of Indian and white students. There he took on the debate over the ANC's strategic course in negotiations with the National Party government.

The February meeting of the ANC's Natal Midlands Regional General Council rejected the course adopted by the ANC's National Executive Committee that same month. The resolution, featured on the front page of *Ikhwezi*, said: "We accept that power-sharing is now ANC policy. This doesn't mean that we cannot constantly expose its dangers and try to minimize them."

In his remarks to the student meeting, Mandela said, "There has been a great deal of concern about the guiding principle that has now been adopted as the strategy of the African National Congress. Voices have been heard to the effect that the African National Congress has betrayed the liberation movement by adopting this strategy."

"Some people," he said, "have even accused us of having decided to share power with the National Party and its government. Almost without exception, the people who have said this have no alternative to put."

In the 1960s, when repression by the apartheid regime closed off even previously restricted avenues of nonviolent struggle, Mandela said, the ANC "had no alternative but to resort to armed struggle." Umkhonto we Sizwe's military operations dealt substantial psychological blows to apartheid, he said. "To see a white man running away from a Black soldier was something unheard of in

the ANC began to grow there following its unbanning.

First, the local ANC chairperson and his wife were assassinated. Inkatha supporters living in a local hostel slaughtered 30 people in two raids in November and December 1991.

Then, after an Inkatha member killed a worker on the shop floor at the Mooitex textile factory in Bruntville, 700 COSATU members walked off the job. The employer replaced them with workers from the United Workers Union of South Africa (UWUSA), an Inkatha-linked organization. Last December, the hostel where many UWUSA workers were housed burned to the ground.

In Bruntville and Wembezi, Mandela issued a call for an internal peace force, under the control of the multiparty National Peace Committee, to monitor areas that have been hard hit by violence. He proposed an all-South African force, made up not just of members of the South African army and police — the armed force of the ruling National Party, as Mandela put it — but also of members of Umkhonto we Sizwe, the ANC's military wing, and other anti-apartheid organizations. Mandela said he would ask the United Nations to appoint a commander to take charge of the force.

Mandela also called for an independent multiparty commission of inquiry to investigate the involvement of top military and government officials in massive financial corruption and murders of political activists.

"Millions of rands of money we pay as taxpayers have been stolen by senior state officials," he said. "Freedom fighters have been murdered with the involvement of senior state officials, simply because these individuals were condemning apartheid and wanted a nonracial society in their country." (See accompanying story.)

Meeting with Buthelezi

Mandela told the March 14 press conference that while he was still committed to a meeting with Inkatha leader Buthelezi, he was determined not to do so "unless I am convinced that that meeting will be fruitful."

Mandela has met with Buthelezi on two prior occasions and the ANC is negotiating with Inkatha on conditions for a third meeting. *Ikhwezi*, the newspaper of the Natal Midlands ANC, featured a front-page article, in the issue released on the first day of Mandela's tour, opposing the proposed meeting with Buthelezi or other bilateral talks with Inkatha.

this country. It gave us a great deal of strength, of pride and hope in our future.

"We have never been under any misconception, however, that we would be able to achieve a military victory against this regime," Mandela said. "But we knew we had the advantage of numbers, and therefore the potential to defeat this government in due course."

Based on the gains of mass struggles in the previous decade, he said, the ANC leadership decided in 1986 to instruct Mandela from prison to approach the National Party regime to propose negotiations. By 1990 those talks had begun.

Mandela reviewed the gains of the negotiations to this point, including "the unbanning of the ANC and other political organizations, the lifting of the state of emergency which was enforced for no less than three years, the release of political prisoners, the return of political exiles, the repeal of repressive legislation, the introduction of free political activity in the greater part of South Africa."

The ANC, Mandela said, has proposed the election of a sovereign constituent assembly to draw up a constitution of a nonracial, non-sexist, democratic South Africa. It proposes that an interim government of national unity be formed on the basis of the outcome of that election, drawing in proportionally representatives of all parties that win more than 5 percent of the assembly seats.

After the constitution is drafted and adopted by the constituent assembly, this same government would remain in office for about three to five years until the first elections under the new document.

"We have never put forward as the solution the idea of power-sharing, never," Mandela said. It has been explicitly rejected by the ANC leadership time and again, he said.

It is the National Party that proposes power-sharing, Mandela explained. That party proposes a governmental structure "where the party that loses the election, instead of going into opposition, . . . will remain in government and be able to block legislation by the majority party."

"Our policy," Mandela said, "is a government of national unity, which is totally different from power-sharing. . . . The party that wins an outright majority is entitled to form the government."

Why, then, has the ANC said it will invite other parties with more than 5 percent of the vote into such a government for several years following the adoption of a constitution?

"We are having the beginnings of a counter-revolution," Mandela said, "in which certain elements are slaughtering innocent people in order to prevent the democratic process. We haven't got the power — in spite of the fact that we are drawing unprecedented crowds in our regions — to stop that violence."

"Last year we brought into the streets through mass action no less than 4 million people," he said. "We have that power, that

is true. But we can't stop the violence that is raging today."

Holding office is not holding power

"When a democratic government is installed," he said, these same forces "are even going to launch a civil war to destroy the new government." He pointed to the example of neighboring Angola, where the reactionary forces of Jonas Savimbi's UNITA organization have launched a murderous assault on the newly elected government after failing to win in United Nations-monitored elections last November.

"It is comparatively easy to win an election," Mandela emphasized. "But when you do so, you merely hold political office; you don't have political power. Because to gain political power means you have to control the civil service, the army, the police. You have to have the support of business, of technicians, of academicians." A new government "will start to reorganize the civil service and the security services, but to do so is going to take some years."

"What happens in the meantime?" Mandela said. "It is easy to win an election. But to hold political power is something extremely more difficult. That's why we are saying, therefore, that we will invite other political parties to form a government of national unity. We want a government where everyone of us, each national group, can see that it is represented in that government."

"We must also think in terms of the minorities — the whites, the so-called Coloureds, the Indians," he said. "During the transition, many of them will say: 'If this change comes, what is going to happen to me? To my spouse? To my children? To the national group to which I belong? To the values in which I believe? To my possessions?'"

"There are always these concerns," Mandela said. "It is our duty, as the architects of the negotiations, in succeeding in bringing about unity."

"So we challenge anybody: give us an alternative to address these particular problems."

Winning a democratic majority

In all of his talks in Natal, Mandela cautioned supporters against any complacency



Militant/Brian Taylor
Rural area in Pietermaritzburg, Natal. Some 2,700 have died in fighting in that region since 1991. "You have a duty to go to members of Inkatha and tell them there is no reason we should slaughter one another," Mandela told a rally of supporters.

about winning an ANC majority in upcoming elections. Ensuring such a victory, he said, would require conscious political work over the next year. He urged every ANC adherent to go out and win 10 more supporters.

This theme took on special importance in his March 12 speech to 2,000 members of the Indian community in the Northdale section of Pietermaritzburg.

While Indians comprise 4 percent of South Africa's population, they make up nearly 11 percent of the population in Natal — about 500,000 people. In the caste-like system used by apartheid to keep the disenfranchised divided among themselves, Indians and so-called Coloureds have been allotted relatively more rights than Africans. Of the three groups, Indians are the best off in living standards, with a much larger professional and commercial middle class.

Mandela opened his remarks by pointing to surveys indicating that if an election were held today, more than 50 percent of Indians would vote for the National Party and less than 10 percent for the ANC. While such surveys are far from unbiased or scientific, Mandela said, he was less inclined than many of his comrades to dismiss these findings.

In some cases, Mandela noted, the National Party has drawn support from Indians to help maintain white minority rule by appealing to individual material gains.

After reviewing the contributions Indians have made to the liberation struggle since the beginning, Mandela addressed some of

the obstacles the democratic movement faces over the coming year in consolidating its base in this community.

"We appreciate the concerns of the Indians and the Coloured population," Mandela told the meeting, "precisely because of the mistakes made by the African National Congress itself. Because the African National Congress, in spite of its [nonracial] policy, realistically is still an organization of Africans."

Quoting several lines from the ANC's Xhosa-language national anthem — "Nkosi Sikelel' i-Africa" (God Bless Africa) — Mandela noted that despite the song's popularity, it bore "no reference to the culture, the history, the contributions of the Indian and Coloured community, but only to the history and aspirations of the African community."

In some ANC leadership structures, he said, "you hardly find any member of the Indian community, any member of the Coloured community. That is the biggest mistake. And as long as that is the image we are projecting, it is going to be difficult for us to mobilize to the maximum the support of the Indian and Coloured communities."

But the large turnout for the Northdale meeting — the largest for an ANC event in the Indian community since 1990, according to organizers — was something the National Party could not equal, Mandela said. So, he concluded, ANC supporters should work to build on that victory to get maximum numbers to the polls to vote ANC later this year or early next year.

New evidence exposes regime's role in murder of South African activists

BY STEVE CLARK

PIETERMARITZBURG, South Africa — Gen. Bantu Holomisa, head of the administration in the Transkei Bantustan, released secret documents March 11 indicating that the 1985 murders of Matthew Goniwe and three other anti-apartheid activists in eastern Cape province flowed from a decision by a meeting of the State Security Council earlier that year chaired by then-president P. W. Botha.

"The SP [state president] had given an order that the situation countrywide be normalized between now and the end of 1986," wrote Gen. C. P. van der Westhuizen in a handwritten note summarizing the meeting. Current president F. W. de Klerk, then a cabinet minister, also attended the meeting. There had been an explosion of anti-apartheid demonstrations, boycotts, and strikes in 1984-85.

Meanwhile, at a judicial inquest in the eastern Cape March 10, Col. Lourens du Plessis, the officer who drafted the top-secret 1985 message ordering "the permanent removal from society . . . as a matter of urgency" of Goniwe and others, testified that the wording could only have meant killing them.

Du Plessis took the stand at an inquest by the Port Elizabeth Supreme Court into the bloody 1985 murders of Goniwe and three other activists who had been leading school boycotts and other protests in the eastern Cape. They were found with multiple stab and bullet wounds and with their faces burned beyond recognition.

The murders occurred 20 days after van der Westhuizen — now South Africa's chief of military intelligence — ordered du Plessis

to send the message to Gen. Johannes van Rensburg. A copy of the message was reproduced last spring in the weekly *New Nation* published in Johannesburg.

Earlier in the week, van Rensburg testified that, while he remembered receiving the message, the words "permanently remove" meant that Goniwe and the others should be detained, not killed. "Subjectively I knew what [van der Westhuizen] was suggesting," van Rensburg said, "but I knew the man on the street might have thought something underhanded was going on."

Seeking to pin the blame on du Plessis, van Rensburg claimed he had been so annoyed at the sloppiness of the formulations in the message that he had considered beginning courses in military intelligence in the correct use of language. Du Plessis said that terms such as "remove," "take out," "eliminate," and "cause to disappear" were the standard euphemisms for "kill" in the department.

Du Plessis is also seeking to enter into evidence the documents just released by Holomisa. The inquest has been postponed until the end of March while du Plessis seeks immunity from prosecution before continuing his testimony.

The files released by Holomisa show that van der Westhuizen's memo, flowing from the State Security Council meeting, explicitly projected the "removal" of Lennox Sebe, then-president of the Ciskei Bantustan. Sebe had long done the dirty work of the apartheid regime, but had begun to be seen as an obstacle to the government's plans. An affidavit by du Plessis said that

discussions of the need to kill Sebe took place in military intelligence at the time by van der Westhuizen and others. Du Plessis also states that the entire operation against the Ciskei administration fell under the direction of Gen. A. G. Liebenberg, who is currently chief of staff of the South African army.

The 1985 document projected that following the overthrow of Sebe, leaders of the new regime would establish a "Xhosa Resistance Movement" that was "in nature . . . similar to Inkatha and must together with our security forces form a counterrevolutionary front." That would be the first step toward merging the Ciskei and Transkei Bantustans, and the corridor of land between them, into a new "Xhosaland" Bantustan that would "become an African power," giving further legitimacy to apartheid's homelands policy.

"Such a Xhosa government," says the memo ascribed to van der Westhuizen, "can be further asked to keep its people (within or outside their land) in check. Together we can better combat the African National Congress/United Democratic Front onslaught."

The plan apparently foundered when Sebe narrowly escaped death in a botched 1987 coup attempt. He was overthrown three years later by current Ciskei head of state Gen. Oupa Josh Gqozo. That same year, the apartheid regime in the Transkei was toppled in a coup led by Holomisa who says he will release 12 more files in his possession documenting the Pretoria regime's covert efforts to crush the growing anti-apartheid movement in the 1980s.

Funds needed for Cuba, South Africa reporting trips

Over the past several weeks the *Militant* has fielded an extensive reporting team to South Africa. Through the efforts of several on-the-scene journalists our readers are getting unique and invaluable coverage of the struggle for the first free elections in South Africa's history.

Militant staff writer Sara Lobman and *New Internationalist* editor Mary-Alice Waters are now in Cuba to report on important meetings and conferences taking place there.

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Teachers hold sit-ins, strikes in S. Africa

BY JOHN STEELE

JOHANNESBURG, South Africa — Mass action and strikes by teachers and secondary school and university students over deteriorating education conditions have forced South African president F. W. de Klerk to agree to meet with leaders of the South African Democratic Teachers Union (SADTU) and organizations representing white teachers. The outcome of the meeting could determine whether or not there is a national teachers' strike.

In agreeing to the meeting de Klerk rejected out of hand the 25 percent across-the-board wage increase demanded by SADTU, which represents 50,000 Black teachers. The de Klerk government wants to hold wage increases for all government workers to five percent.

SADTU states that 75 percent of all Black teachers do not earn a living wage. The teachers have also been fighting layoffs and efforts by the government to superficially modify the apartheid education system in order to avoid a fundamental change.

Soweto flashpoint

The Black township of Soweto near Johannesburg has been the flashpoint for the spreading national struggle.

On March 4, almost 1,000 teachers from Soweto marched, sang, and danced the *toi-toi* through the halls and out of the Magistrates Court building into the streets following the court appearance of teachers arrested and charged with trespassing two days before. The teachers had been arrested after conducting a nine-day sit-in at the Department of Education and Training (DET) in central Johannesburg.

The DET is the apartheid government's agency responsible for the education of Africans. The department has earned the hatred of Black teachers and students for its repressive role as an arm of the apartheid regime.

The sit-in and accompanying demonstrations of up to 3,000 SADTU teachers closed Soweto's schools, which are attended by 100,000 students.

At the same time, secondary school students organized by the Congress of South African Students (COSAS) have been leaving class around the country to demand an end to school examination fees. The South African Students Congress (SASCO) has also been leading protests to demand university students with school fee debts for the previous year be registered for the new term.

ANC statement

A March 5 statement issued by the African National Congress (ANC) expresses "grave concern" about the "deepening crisis in education."

The statement emphasized that "the education crisis in this country is the direct responsibility of the apartheid regime and so long as they continue to hold office they have an obligation to resolve it."

The ANC condemned the "unilateral restructuring" of the education system being carried out by the de Klerk government and called for a "representative national education and training forum to be established as a vehicle for achieving a reasoned consensus as to the way forward in education."

The ANC demanded that "decisions around the crisis be made after thorough



Visiting teachers' union leader from Norway (left) with leader of South African Democratic Teachers Union at March 2 SADTU press conference in Johannesburg.

consultation with parents, teachers, and students." It called for the immediate dropping of the charges against the arrested students.

Under this mass pressure the government has instructed the DET to withdraw the charges against the teachers.

Injury to one, an injury to all

Teachers and students mobilized at the court house because "an injury to one is an injury to all," a young SADTU organizer stated as they waited for the court appearance of the charged teachers. "They got arrested, so we all got arrested," he said.

"We support the teachers and their demands," said Jolly Matongo, who is a full-time COSAS organizer.

There was standing room only in the small courtroom which was packed with teachers — the majority women — by 8:45 a.m. Court officials told union leaders they couldn't have people standing in the court room, and that there was too much noise. Finally, it was agreed that those standing would leave and wait in the hall.

Shouts of "Amandla!" and "Viva!" filled

the court house corridors when the accused teachers finally marched into the court room wearing SADTU T-shirts with the slogan, "The people need one education department." There are currently 17 education departments throughout South Africa.

The sit-in for which the teachers were arrested took place at the DET offices, on the seventh floor of the Dion department store building. It began after local DET bureaucrats refused to respond to the demands raised by the Soweto teachers for reinstatement of up to 30 teachers who had received layoff or "retrenchment" notices. The DET falsely claimed that the teachers had temporary status and were being replaced by others returning from leaves.

On the eighth day of the sit-in, 26 teachers occupied a small room without windows or functioning ventilation. Twenty-two of them were in the second day of a hunger strike. Hand written posters on the walls stated: "We shall not submit," "Nothing shall stop SADTU to reinstate teachers," and "Down with the reduction of state expenditures."

News of the demonstration of several thousand teachers in the street below was greeted with cheers.

M. W. Ndeva, who teaches mathematics, explained that "the World Bank is forcing the South African state to cut back and the government is stifling the Black people."

"We are going to stay here till we win or die," said Mlonyeni Mbatha, a science teacher and the SADTU marshal for those sitting in. "The government says there is no money, but look at the corruption and subsidies to the homes of government ministers," said Mbatha. "Our schools are in shambles. There is no furniture, no fences, and the books and stationary arrived three weeks late," he said. "We've been asking for desks for a year, and now they say we have to wait till after the [March 17] budget."

Without warning, the South African police arrested the teachers in the DET offices just 15 minutes before talks between SADTU leaders and DET and government officials were to begin in Pretoria.

At a rally of several thousand teachers the next day, in a park facing the Johannesburg central library, SADTU organizer Pinkie Mbowane reported the arrested teachers were taken to the infamous John Vorster prison. "We had to meet in the cells where many of our leaders were killed," Mbowane said. "We decided we couldn't leave our comrades in those conditions and asked them to leave with us. The police eventually dropped the original demand for bail and our comrades were released on condition they not enter any offices of the DET."

'We are here to solve the crisis'

"The DET shows that apartheid is not dead," Randall van den Heever, SADTU general secretary, told the demonstrators. "We have to stand together as never before."

Van den Heever said the government had laid off 4,000 white teachers when their union did not resist. But "we stopped the retrenchments of 6,000 Coloured teachers in 1992," he added. "They were able to retrench Indian teachers and now they want to retrench Africans. They can't say it openly because we are too strong."

"We are not delinquent teachers. We are here to solve the crisis," he said.

At a March 5 meeting between SADTU leaders and Education and Training Minister Sam de Beer, the government agreed to suspend the layoffs in Soweto and drop the charges against the teachers. Afterward a mass rally of 6,000 teachers in Soweto decided unanimously to return to work. COSAS leaders also urged Soweto students to go back to classes.

Meanwhile in the military-ruled Venda "homeland" 6,000 teachers have gone on strike for better pay and an end to government corruption. In the QwaQwa Bantustan, 2,000 teachers held a protest march and some of them stormed government offices at Setunya, near Phuthaditjaba, the region's capital.

SADTU has announced it will take a strike vote of its membership and called for demonstrations on March 17, the day the government reveals its new budget.

The 1.4 million-strong Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) convened a meeting of all its public sector unions March 13 to ensure that any action taken by SADTU is done in coordination with the other COSATU-affiliated public sector unions.

Inside South African migrant labor hostel

Continued from Page 9
is nothing to do.

One television is available. There are no recreational or sports programs. Showers and toilets are communal. With workers coming and going on all shifts, there is no privacy or tranquility for sleeping, reading, or anything else. The hostel is stuck in the middle of nowhere, in a field accessible only by pot-holed dirt roads.

Women are not allowed into the hostel. Friends from outside can only visit with permission and cannot stay overnight. Workers cannot live with their families, many of whom are great distances away in rural areas. Tenants can be evicted at any time by the hostel owner — and thus effectively fired from their jobs.

Each worker pays 105 rand (US\$32) a month to live in these prison-like conditions. Workers buy food at the hostel store. They can buy liquor and beer from Botha as well. Tensions run high, especially on weekends, workers tell us, and there are frequent fights.

The security guards, who can be seen all over Johannesburg dressed in military-type uniforms, are paid about 600 rand (\$192) a month. They pay for bus rides in and out of the city to work their shifts. Some are on permanent 12-hour night shifts. Sometimes they work ten days at a stretch before getting a four-day break to travel to see their families.

Migrant labor system

Rand Leases is just one hostel in a migrant labor system that is the backbone of apartheid.

Jane Barrett, an organizer at the TGWU's Johannesburg headquarters, tells us there are one million migrant workers in similar hostels throughout South Africa, including miners, cleaners, factory workers, and others.

Peter, like many other hostel dwellers, came to Johannesburg from an impoverished rural area, one of the so-called Bantustans artificially created by the apartheid

regime to ensure a steady supply of unorganized cheap labor to the cities.

Peter is from Venda in the northern part of South Africa. Unable to sustain his family through subsistence farming, he works in Johannesburg for much of the year. The abolition of apartheid's internal pass laws in recent years means he no longer has to renew his contract every year. If he can afford it, he can now buy or rent a house in Johannesburg.

But home for Peter is Venda. He doesn't want to move permanently.

Fight for decent conditions

As part of the Congress Alliance led by the African National Congress, the TGWU had initially demanded that the government shut down the hostels, Barrett says. Workers in the hostels, however, persuaded the union that the main focus now should be fighting to upgrade conditions.

The union is demanding separate rooms and cooking facilities for each worker, the right of access by families and friends, and adequate sports and recreational facilities.

These demands — along with the struggle for arable land and the wherewithal to work it for migrant workers who wish to farm — are central to the democratic movement's fight to end apartheid and its legacy of economic, social, and cultural devastation.

Peter Clifford is a member of the Transport and General Workers Union at G.E. Lighting in London. John Steele is a laid-off member of the Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union in Toronto.

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Glen Ridge case: issue is sexual assault

BY NANCY BOYASKO

NEWARK, New Jersey — On March 1, 1989, 13 young men took a 17-year-old mentally retarded woman to a basement in Glen Ridge, New Jersey. With the group surrounding the young woman, some of the men inserted a broom handle, and a small baseball bat into her vagina. They handled her breasts and performed acts of oral sex with her.

AS I SEE IT

Were these actions a crime? This is the issue that has been debated in a courtroom here since September. It has been widely discussed in workplaces, on campuses, and in communities across New Jersey. The trial has been the focal point of demonstrations expressing outrage at what took place in that basement at the Glen Ridge home of two of the defendants.

Four of the young men — now 20 and 21 years old — faced charges including aggravated sexual assault, the use of force or coercion, and aggravated criminal sexual contact.

On March 16 the trial jury found three of the four defendants guilty of assaulting the woman. The fourth was convicted on a lesser charge of conspiracy.

The acts that took place in the basement are not in dispute. Defense lawyers maintained, however, that the men's actions may have been wrong — even immoral — but not a crime. One defense attorney, Alan Zegas, attributed their acts to adolescence. He said adolescents are curious about their bodies and their hormones are at their peak. "It can be, for adolescents, a time of experimentation," he contended. "It can be a time of mistakes and a time of indiscretion."

Other defense lawyers blamed the victim because of her "almost insatiable need to satisfy herself through sex." One defense attorney laid the blame at the victim's mother for

raising her daughter in a "dysfunctional family."

But the acts that occurred in that basement cannot be excused with such arguments. They had nothing to do with young people exploring sexuality. They were acts of violence against a woman.

The facts uncovered in courtroom testimony show that the young woman was lured into entering the basement and coerced into participating in what followed. Friends of the defendants testified that the victim was "conned" into going to the basement with the promise of a date with one of the young men if she did so.

In the courtroom the woman explained that the abusive acts were forced on her. Asked by the prosecutor to define "force," she replied, "When somebody does something without your will," and added, "Like if somebody sticks a broomstick up you."

"Did you want to do it?" the prosecutor asked.

"No," she answered.

She testified that one of the defendants forced her to perform oral sex on him.

The victim also testified that the defendants threatened retribution if she told anyone what happened.

The facts also show that the young men present — many of whom the victim grew up and attended school with — were fully aware of her mental handicap. They knew they were taking advantage of the victim and thought they could get away with it.

The sexual assault lasted an hour. Six of the 13 young men, repelled by what was happening, quickly left the basement. "Something was not right there," Bart Ciccolini testified. "We figured we had to get out."

After suffering one abuse in March 1989, the young woman was victimized again and again in the courtroom.

The New Jersey rape shield law was waived early in the case. Under this law a woman who comes forward with rape charges is entitled to have her charges heard, based on the ev-

idence presented, without having her past sexual conduct put up for judgment. Rape shield laws were fought for and won by women's rights supporters beginning in the mid-1970s. Today Utah is the only state without such a rape shield law.

In the Glen Ridge trial the young woman's past history was dragged through the mud. Her medical records and past sexual activity became a part of the evidence. It was disclosed and publicized that the woman's mother put her on birth control pills when she was 17. This fact was used by defense lawyers and others to attempt to portray her as the sexual aggressor — a female with "uncontrollable sexual desires."

Many working people who followed the case have refused to accept these arguments. They are outraged not simply because the victim of abuse was a mentally disabled person but because a woman was sexually assaulted. The fact that she has a mental disability only deepens the abuse. The fact that this sentiment is prevalent among many of my coworkers and other working people in New Jersey — male and female — shows the progress that has been made in understanding and opposing violence against women.

Defenders of women's rights cannot depend on justice being won through the capitalist court system. These are not our courts or our judges. The real purpose of the police and the capitalist "justice" system is to protect the property rights of the rich and to terrorize and harass working people and the oppressed.

In recent years, however, under pressure from struggles by women's rights supporters, the courts have been forced to deal more seriously with cases of attacks on women. It is a historic advance that rape is now illegal. The guilty verdict in this case was justified by the evidence presented.

Nancy Boyasko is the Socialist Workers candidate for the New Jersey State Assembly. She is a member of Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers Local 8-046.

1,200 people hear ANC youth leaders in Oregon

BY FLOYD FOWLER

PORTLAND, Oregon — More than 1,200 people here heard Ntombenhle Sibeko and Clayton Lillienfeldt, two leaders of the African National Congress (ANC) Youth League of South Africa who toured this area March 8-12.

The Portland ANC Youth League Tour Committee organized a series of large meetings with students at Aloha, Jefferson, and Cleveland high schools, an evening forum at Portland State University (PSU), a luncheon with Reed College students, and a youth meeting hosted by the Urban League.

Preparations for the tour began in December and weekly tour committee meetings included a range of participants. Committee activists set up information tables and circulated petitions in high schools and college campuses February 8-14, which was officially designated "Stop Apartheid Violence Week" by Portland mayor Vera Katz. The mayor read her proclamation to a special meeting of tour activists from six high schools. Several radio and TV reporters attended a March 9 press conference for the youth leaders at city hall. The *Oregonian* and the PSU *Vanguard* newspapers ran announcements and news stories on the visit of Sibeko and Lillienfeldt.

Delegates to the March 8 meeting of the Northwest Oregon Labor Council greeted Sibeko and Lillienfeldt with a standing ovation and contributed \$140 to the tour when a municipal employees' union delegate

passed the hat. Delegates asked questions such as "What is Inkatha, and why do they oppose the ANC?" and "What can Black trade unionists in the United States do to help your cause?"

Lillienfeldt emphasized "the crucial role" played by the Congress of South African Trade Unions in the anti-apartheid struggle and explained how South African government forces have financed and supported the Inkatha Freedom Party and an Inkatha-sponsored union federation in the Natal region of South Africa.

PSU vice-president of finance Lindsay Desrochers told 150 people that evening that "this university is proud to welcome Clayton and Ntombenhle. You must listen and learn from them and take their message out to others." Sibeko explained that the tour "will help us to learn from each other, as we are all fighting for social justice."

Also speaking was Mayi Dieudonne of the Association of African Students, one of six PSU student organizations cosponsoring the tour. Other sponsors included two high school student councils, the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists, the A. Philip Randolph Institute, and two local anti-apartheid groups.

The Codesa (Convention for a Democratic South Africa) II talks, involving the ANC, the government, and other political organizations in the country collapsed last May "because the [F. W.] de Klerk regime had its own agenda and was determined to



African National Congress Youth League leader Ntombenhle Sibeko talks to students at Jefferson High School in Portland, Oregon.

cling to power," Sibeko said. "De Klerk was forced to unban our organizations and release our leaders. He was forced to talk to the representatives of the people. Now we need to engage all parties in the process of discussion. By involving all forces supporting democracy we can realize the election of a democratic government."

Lillienfeldt spoke of growing up "surrounded by violence and repression," of being "socialized to be violent. That was one way the government divided us."

Asked about what role whites could play in the struggle, he said, "We must take to heart the Freedom Charter. Perhaps some really believe we can ship all the whites back to Europe but this will never be. We must deal with the fears of white people, the fear of an ANC government. There is a role for whites in the ANC and in a new government because there have always been whites with us," he said.

The Freedom Charter, the democratic program advocated by the ANC, states, "South Africa belongs to all who live in it, black and white."

Sibeko stressed that the ANC's goal of a democratic, nonracial, nonsexist society "is not only our goal but what we practice every day." Advancing women into the leadership "is a challenge for all our people, because it is not really an ANC government that will make things happen. It is up to the people to make things better."

March 10 was a day of nonstop meetings with high school students organized by a student steering committee. An initial itin-

erary was changed and expanded to include a suburban high school "because they [the steering committee] decided to be guided by the ANC Youth League policy," said Mary Kay Gayne, who helped coordinate the high school events. "They wanted to be like the Youth League and reach out to all students wherever they were."

At Aloha High School four assemblies of more than 100 students each were held, chaired by Anh Phan, a student who is a member of the Oregon Governor's School for Citizen Leadership. Jefferson High School hosted a forum of several hundred students that included delegations from nine other schools. That forum and a panel discussion were videotaped by students to show at other Portland schools. That evening a Cleveland High School forum of more than 100 students, parents, and others took place. It ended with the singing of the anthem of the liberation movement in South Africa.

Throughout the day Lillienfeldt and Sibeko discussed the students' questions: Is de Klerk sincere in his reforms? Does the U.S. government support apartheid? What is the ANC's position on tribalism? Will the U.S. government intervene in South Africa as it did in the Persian Gulf? How smooth will the transition to democracy be?

During the tour's final meeting, April Cason, junior class president at Jefferson High School, told the ANC youth leaders, "Hearing you here has inspired me. I'm excited and willing to do whatever it takes to help you win your struggle."

ANC Youth League tour itinerary

Six members of the African National Congress Youth League are touring the United States. They are discussing the current developments in South Africa and the fight for the first free elections there. Their next stops are:

Central and West Coast schedule

East Coast schedule	Central and West Coast schedule
March 18-20 Philadelphia	March 14-19 Los Angeles
March 21-26 New York	March 21-25 Houston
March 22-26 Greensboro	March 27-30 Detroit
March 28-30 Baltimore	April 1-2 Toronto
March 31-April 1 Boston	April 4-9 Salt Lake City/
April 2-3 Baltimore	Denver
April 5-6 Morgantown	April 11-14 Seattle
April 8-15 New York/	April 16-17 Minneapolis/
New Jersey	St. Paul
	April 19 Des Moines
	April 21-24 Cleveland

For more information call Student-to-Student Anti-Apartheid Network (212) 316-5309

Illinois rail union defends fired engineers

BY PATRICIA SMITH CHILOANE

CHICAGO — United Transportation Union Local 1526 recently pledged to fight the February 19 firings of David Riordan and Willard Blewett, Jr. These engineers were operating two South Shore commuter trains that collided January 18 killing seven people and injuring more than 60 others near Gary, Indiana.

The front cars of the eastbound train from Chicago and the westbound train from South Bend, Indiana, sideswiped each other just west of a single-track bridge.

Like much of the deteriorating infrastructure across the country, a one-track bridge is an accident waiting to happen. A long overdue two-track bridge or a longer delay between trains would have avoided this accident.

Immediately following the crash the company and media blamed the engineer of the eastbound train. The press and news reported that Riordan was responsible for a 1985 crash that injured 79 passengers, 6 crew members, and 2 other railworkers, when he was a dispatcher. The fact is that Riordan was investigated in the 1985 crash and found innocent.

Company ignores safety problems

Riordan, a 16-year railroad veteran, reported that the signal dropped from green to red as his two-car train passed. James Thompson, general chairman of UTU local 1526, said his members reported 39 signal abnormalities around the bridge in the 18 months before the accident and the company ignored them. "They're still ignoring it," he said.

On January 25, one week after the fatal crash, the signal malfunctioned during rush hour. Company officials said the malfunction posed no threat to the trains or passengers. But Peter Erickson of Michigan City,

Indiana, a passenger, expressed the fears of others when he said, "They have got to be made to put new equipment in. After a fatal accident, I just can't believe they're having problems again."

Officials of the Northern Indiana Commuter Transportation District said extensive testing showed all signals were operating properly, eliminating any cause other than human error. When asked why the westbound engineer with the green signal was fired then, they replied that he relied solely on the green light and did not use common

sense. They say he ignored the warning of another off-duty engineer traveling with him who expressed concern.

John Breclaw, a lawyer representing some of the injured passengers, said his independent investigation of the January 18 crash — based on interviews with passengers, crew members, and maintenance records of the signal — indicates a signal malfunction. Just before the accident, according to Breclaw, the approach light one mile west of the bridge was green but malfunctioned and turned red after the eastbound train

passed it. When Riordan saw the second signal, the home signal, turn red moments later, he braked. "I'm fairly confident that Mr. Riordan was first in the system and had the right of way," Breclaw said. Stopping put Riordan's train in the path of the westbound train, which crossed the bridge 55 seconds later. The National Transportation Safety Board will not release the findings of their investigation for several months.

Patricia Smith Chiloane is a member of UTU Local 577 in Chicago.

Aircraft giant Boeing announces plans to lay off 28,000 workers

BY CHRIS HOEPPNER

SEATTLE — Frank Shrontz, chairman and chief executive officer of the Boeing Co., the world's largest manufacturer of commercial aircraft, announced February 18 that the company planned to lay off 28,000 workers over the next 18 months. Shrontz said this is necessary due to uncertainties about the economy. He said "improved competitiveness" was "the only job security." Production will be cut by a third.

The projected layoffs include 19,000 in Washington state, 7,000 in Wichita, Kansas, and another 2,000 at other locations nationwide. These layoffs are slightly larger than those in 1981-83, but so far less than the 63,000 layoffs in 1968-71. The total Boeing work force is 143,000 worldwide, with almost two-thirds in Washington state.

The announcement comes in the context of a big drop in domestic aircraft orders from

airlines facing financial losses along with reduced Pentagon contracts. Depressed economies in Japan and Europe have also cut into Boeing orders. Boeing continues to hold 60 percent of the world market for the manufacture of commercial aircraft, followed by Airbus Industrie, a European consortium, which controls 28 percent. McDonnell Douglas, Corp. is the third-largest.

The layoff notice by Shrontz came a day after President Clinton presented his economic proposals to a joint session of Congress. The president put forward severe attacks on working people's Social Security benefits and Medicare, along with higher taxes.

Clinton visited the Boeing plant in Everett, Washington, February 22 to sell his economic agenda. He said that "these layoffs would not have been announced had it not been for the \$26 billion that Europe plowed

into Airbus. . . . So we're going to change the rules of the game."

Continuing in this protectionist vein, Clinton said he will order an investigation into Airbus Industrie subsidies and will appoint a committee of 15 top airline, aerospace, and union officials to report back on proposals to reinvigorate the industry.

Boeing is using Clinton's attacks on Airbus to try to divert workers' attention from the U.S. company's attacks on jobs. At the same time, Boeing is worried about how protectionist moves could hurt its sales abroad.

Boeing vice-president Larry Clarkson, in testimony before the House Committee on Public Works and Transportation Subcommittee on Aviation, said: "Boeing sells 75 percent of its planes internationally. . . . So it's very important that we have open and fair trading worldwide; so we're not interested in seeing a trade war if it can be avoided."

British and French government officials, along with Airbus spokesmen, reacted angrily to Clinton's speech and denied making unfair subsidies. They maintained that government aid to Airbus was matched or exceeded by write-offs from the Pentagon and NASA (National Aeronautics and Space Administration) for contracts with Boeing.

The layoffs announced by Boeing are causing discussion among working people on how to respond to imminent job losses. One worker whose wife works at Boeing expressed his view that it was a problem that some people are getting laid off while others are working overtime.

A letter to the daily Seattle newspaper suggested that "more should work six-hour shifts instead of a few working eight-hour shifts. After all, everyone has to put food on the table." Another Boeing worker said he would "wait and see — maybe Clinton will do something."

Guy Blue, a member of the International Association of Machinists at Alaska Airlines, said, "The employers are attacking working people to increase their profits." He added, "The financial wizards say the recession is over, but not for us. The only solution is resistance."

Chris Hoepfner is a member of the International Association of Machinists Local 289 and works at the Kenworth truck plant in Seattle.

Trinity Industries threatens to close factory struck by Steelworkers union in Alabama

BY DENISE MCINERNEY

BESSEMER, Alabama — Three days before a solidarity rally in support of striking United Steelworkers of America (USWA) Local 9226, Trinity Industries announced it is "seriously considering" closing its struck plant.

Commenting on the threatened closing, James Allen, president of USWA Local 9226 said, "It's not only the way I feel, but I think the way the whole local feels, that we would rather they close the plant than go back under their conditions."

Local 9226 member Juanita Lee summed up the views of most strikers. "This is just another way of Trinity trying to get what they want. But they won't get it without a fight."

Some 500 trade unionists and strike supporters from Alabama, Georgia, and Mississippi, rallied and took part in a car caravan in Bessemer March 6 to protest Trinity's refusal to negotiate a decent contract and its efforts to bust the union.

The central issues of the nearly six-month strike are wages and high health insurance payments. In addition, Trinity has arbitrarily fired 54 unionists, including members of the union's negotiating committee, for alleged strike violations. The union is demanding amnesty for these members.

Participants in the solidarity activities included members of several locals of the USWA, the United Mine Workers of America, the United Auto Workers, the Graphic Communications International Union, the United Transportation Union, the Glass, Molders, Pottery, Plastics and Allied Workers International Union, and others. Strikers organized hundreds of cars honking horns and displaying signs saying "One Day Longer than Trinity" and "Union yes, Scabs no."

According to the union, a skeletal crew of 95 replacement workers and managers cross the picket lines to work. This figure includes just five former members of Local 9226. Without the more than 500 unionists previously employed to run the plant, production remains at a virtual standstill.

George Becker, USWA international vice president, told the rally, "Trinity has a lot of plants all over the country. . . . If they shut down the plant, we have more people to work longer and harder and carry that battle throughout the United States. We should form truth squads and commit-

tees and send them out to every location there's a Trinity plant and meet with local union officials and civic leaders. We can make Trinity sick and tired of us." Following the rally, strikers began to discuss how to organize such truth squads.

According to a statement issued by Trinity, a final decision on the plant closing will be made within the next few weeks.

Denise McInerney is a member of USWA Local 9226.



Trinity Industries strikers on picket line in Bessemer, Alabama.

Mark Curtis sends message to striking Trinity workers

Following is a message to United Steelworkers of America Local 9226, on strike against Trinity industries in Birmingham, Alabama, by Mark Curtis. A unionist and political activist in Des Moines, Iowa, Curtis was framed up on false charges of attempted rape and burglary in March 1988. Convicted on those charges later that year, he is serving a 25-year sentence.

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

Congratulations on six months now of remaining rock solid against tyranny by Trinity!! I salute you and offer you my hand in solidarity from the Iowa State Penitentiary.

As a meat-packer I can tell you that the companies will drive us to death if we don't stand together and defend ourselves. The packinghouses have tried to divide us along lines of race, citizenship papers, language, and so on. Sometimes they have confused us, but they haven't stopped us

from figuring out their games and they haven't stopped us from fighting.

Trinity is labeling you as 'criminals.' And they have found cops and judges more than willing to arrest you, lie on you, frame you up, and lock you up.

I lived in Birmingham and went through a strike at Hayes Aircraft so I know that the newspapers aren't too friendly or honest about labor either. Our real friends are fellow workers and they will answer when called. Your strike deserves the full support of the entire labor movement.

By the way, several other inmates here are inspired by your fight after hearing about it in the *Militant* and your fact sheet I've passed around here.

Victory to the union!
Goon squads go home!
Drop all charges against the strikers!
Stay strong!

In solidarity,
Mark Curtis



Supporters of Mark Curtis campaign to win endorsers for his case at March 6 Trinity strike rally.

Cuban speaks on fight for socialism during Britain tour

BY MARCELLA FITZGERALD

LONDON — "What was destroyed in the Soviet Union was not socialism," said Cuban economist Carlos Tablada in answer to a question asked by a student at the University of Wales in early March. In a series of meetings in Britain, Tablada explained to a total of 1,300 people the current situation in Cuba, why the Cuban people continue to defend their revolution, and how they are fighting to move forward today in the face of dire economic circumstances.

During the final week of his tour in Britain, the Cuban economist addressed a meeting at the University of Wales in Cardiff. He spoke before students in London at Queen Mary Westfield College and the School of Oriental and African Studies. He was invited to meetings of the Association of South African Students at the London School of Economics and at Latin America House, a center for Latin Americans living in London. Tablada spoke to a meeting of members of Parliament at the House of Commons and met with Ken Cameron, leader of the Fire Brigades Union, and member of Parliament Tony Benn. A final rally, held at Congress House, headquarters of the Trades Union Congress, drew 300 people.

Speaking at the University of Wales, the Cuban economist said Ernesto Che Guevara, a leader of the Cuban revolution during the 1960s, argued against borrowing the economic priorities and methods used in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. Guevara saw that the economic model used in the Soviet Union was moving away from the socialist spirit, as he had read about it in the works of communist leaders like Karl Marx, Frederick Engels, and V. I. Lenin. Tablada said. Guevara understood that building socialism meant creating socialist relations between human beings.

Tablada cited Guevara's writings on how capitalism develops individualism and not individuality, selfishness and not solidarity. The Cuban revolution's task is to make these capitalist ethics weigh less and less, and to foster social solidarity, a new code of ethics, and a new culture.

"Che thought it was not enough to nationalize the means of production and think that a change in consciousness will arise

spontaneously," Tablada said. The revolution has to develop on two fronts, changing society and in the process transforming working people themselves. This is the main way to increase productivity, Tablada stated. "As Fidel Castro put it, it's a question of developing wealth through consciousness and not consciousness through wealth," he added.

Tablada is the author of a book that takes up these contributions by Guevara, entitled *Che Guevara: Economics and Politics in the Transition to Socialism*, which is published by Pathfinder Press. During the last week of the tour, 22 people who attended meetings bought copies of the book at literature tables set up by Pathfinder supporters.

Privileged bureaucracy

From the early 1970s, Tablada said, many Cubans in the government and the Communist Party stopped thinking for themselves. Instead they began to copy political institutions and styles of work from the Soviet Union. The bureaucracy in Cuba's state apparatus increased by 200,000, he said. Plans to develop the social infrastructure, which the bureaucrats regarded as unproductive, were slowed down.

A privileged layer of administrators emerged in state enterprises. They set easily achievable annual production goals in order to garner "overfulfillment" bonuses for themselves and layers of privileged workers.

Corruption set in and production figures were falsified by bureaucrats, Tablada said. "A double morality started, a gap developed between the people and their institutions. We were becoming sick," he said. "But when we fall ill we realize it. We have never hidden anything, from ourselves or from the world."

In 1984 a public discussion was initiated, and the Cuban people began to analyze these mistakes. "From 1986 we began the rectification process in the economic, social, and political spheres. We started to build hospitals, child-care centers, and schools again. We started to cut down the bureaucracy," he said. "It was due to rectification that we didn't lose the revolution," Tablada declared.

The U. S. economic embargo has meant that Cuba's trade was overwhelmingly with



Some 1,300 people came to meetings in Britain, like this one at the University of Wales in Cardiff, to hear Cuban economist Carlos Tablada (inset).

the former Soviet Union and Eastern European countries; in 1989 it was 85 percent.

Food program, tourism, biotechnology

Cuban communists foresaw the collapse of the Soviet Union, Tablada stated. "We realized that the Cuban economy was not prepared for the impact this would have. So we started to analyze what were our priorities." First came the food program, which has involved the mobilization of millions of Cubans engaging in voluntary work, particularly in agriculture, to produce the food they need.

The second priority were those industries that could provide a short-term source of foreign exchange that would enable Cuba to continue and develop the social justice the revolution has achieved.

Tourism has become the second-highest source of income for Cuba, he said. It is an industry where it is possible to recover very quickly the capital invested. Tablada answered several questions on social problems associated with tourism. One example is the emergence of prostitution around tourist hotels. Tablada said this was a sign of the "sickness" that came from not constantly "undermining capitalist relations and developing an alternative ethic." He said that tourism was not the cause of increased prostitution.

Besides tourism, big efforts are being made to develop the biotechnology and pharmaceutical industries. Cuba is now try-

ing to develop openings in the world market for new products it has developed, despite protectionist measures pushed by multinational drug companies in capitalist countries, Tablada said.

Serious economic difficulties

Tablada explained that the Cuban people face a very serious economic situation. "Daily life in Cuba is very hard. For breakfast we manage a little bit of black coffee and a slice of bread. Public transportation is practically nonexistent.

"You can wait up to three hours for a bus to get home from work, and when you get home you have to wait in line for food," he continued. "You have to shop more often because things don't come into the shops in big quantities. Electricity is cut off in each district for three hours a day."

In spite of great difficulties, Tablada explained that Cuba's priorities were more humane than in capitalist countries. In Europe he had seen how the economic crisis falls on working people in ways that don't happen in Cuba. "In Cuba I don't have soap, and that bothers me a lot," he said. But when a member of his family recently needed hospital treatment, that person didn't have to wait.

"The MPs [members of Parliament] I met told me 150,000 people in London are waiting for a hospital bed," Tablada noted. "We don't have a lot of things, but we haven't closed one hospital. They told me that 60,000 people are homeless in London and that 6,000 sleep rough every night. This is not our situation. No foreign tourist can find a single Cuban family living in the street or in the park."

"This is our policy, this is our ethic, this is the strength that allows us to go forward. If we lose this then the revolution will fall," Tablada explained.

Tablada was asked at several meetings whether the election of President Bill Clinton would improve relations between the U.S. government and Cuba. Tablada replied that in his view Clinton could be more dangerous than George Bush. He also took the opportunity to explain that a debate is going on in U.S. ruling class circles. One section sees military aggression and the economic embargo as the way to destroy the Cuban revolution, he said. The other "wants to kill the revolution with love." Their policy is to relax the blockade, sell U.S. goods in Cuba, offer well-paid university posts to academics and offer scholarships to young Cubans to come and live in the United States, Tablada said.

The Cuban economist expressed optimism. "Yes, it is possible for a people to struggle and win," he said. "Socialism in just one country is not viable but what should we do? Sit down and cry, give up, surrender? Or go on fighting to show that socialism is viable, to legitimize these ideas until others in another part of our planet develop a more just, more socialist society.

"This is our aim," Tablada concluded. "It is not new, it comes from the revolution itself. We Cuban revolutionaries have supported the communist movement internationally, have supported every national liberation movement, because if these movements triumph it will be the guarantee of the viability of the revolution and the independence of Cuba."

British miners vote for April strike action

Continued from back page

One issue dominating discussion in the mines is the use of "contractors" by British Coal. These are miners not employed by British Coal but by other companies on a temporary basis and in worse conditions. They work alongside British Coal miners and are usually members of the NUM. Most are miners who took redundancy and then returned to work in the pits under a new employer.

Miners at Ellington Colliery in Northumberland staged a one-day strike February 26 against the spread of contract labor. Jimmy Rae, a miner from Goldthorpe in Yorkshire, where there was a high majority in favor of the strike, explained that there was some animosity to contract miners at his pit. He explained that he was opposed to the contract system but not to the contractors themselves. Jim Spaul, a miner at Kellingley, pointed out that at his pit a large majority of the contractors voted for strike action.

NUM president Scargill, in his speech to the March 13 rally, stressed the significance of the strike vote. Lobbies and demonstrations had won "public support," he said, but had not stopped the government's determination to close 31 pits. Now was the time to take action and he called on members of other trade unions to also stop work for 24 hours on April 2.

Scargill also repeated the NUM leadership's call for a ban on coal imports. The NUM's view is that what lies behind the pit closures is a "rigged energy market which uses expensive nuclear power, gas, and coal imports instead of cheap British coal."

Following the wave of protests in October

the government retreated on its plans and set up an inquiry by a "select committee" of members of Parliament into the possibility of "expanding the market for coal." This committee, chaired by a Labour Party member of Parliament, reported back in February. Among its proposals to "save" 20 of the 31 pits were: subsidizing coal production in Britain, ending electricity imports from France, and ending the subsidy to nuclear electricity.

The economic crisis in Britain and divisions in the Conservative Party have delayed a report from the government itself on the pit closure program. This is now expected in late March. One option being pursued by the minister responsible, Michael Heseltine, involves forcing the electricity power companies to buy extra coal at a subsidized rate.

The prospect of such a subsidy is fueling further divisions in ruling circles as the government faces a growing budget deficit, expected to be \$72 billion by 1993-94. "While rebel Tories [Conservatives] had been pressing for as many as 18 pits to be saved," the *Observer* reported, "there is growing concern that fewer than 10 pits will be saved and Heseltine will be back in the political firing line."

Meanwhile, the attacks on the jobs and conditions of other working people continue. Unemployment is now more than 3 million. Rolls Royce, a major aircraft engine manufacturer, announced March 11 the shutdown of four factories, which will amount to 5,000 workers being laid off. This followed large job losses at the truck manufacturer Leyland Daf in February.

However, while days lost due to strike action reached a 101-year low in 1992, resistance by workers continues. On March 12, the day scheduled for a ballot for action by Ford car workers, the company withdrew a threat of compulsory redundancies. "The decision was reached against a background of increasing militancy among its 24,500 production staff," the *London Guardian* reported.

At a March 13 Militant Labour Forum at the Pathfinder bookshop in Sheffield, NUM member Jim Spaul welcomed the strike ballot result and explained that the actions of miners in Britain were part of the growing resistance by working people around the world.

"The fight of miners in Britain and in the United States is the same struggle," he said. "It's a common fight for jobs and decent working conditions. But coal imports aren't the problem," he continued. "That approach sets miners in Britain against miners in Australia, Germany, the United States, and other countries. We have to unite with workers in other countries and not let the bosses divide us."

Ray Varnes, a rail worker at a coal freight yard in Doncaster, agreed. "It's not a question of British rail workers or British miners defending British jobs, but workers internationally defending themselves," he said.

Celia Pugh, a member of the Amalgamated Engineering and Electrical Union at GEC Alsthom in Manchester, contributed to this article.

Doctor killed at abortion clinic

Continued from front page

bombings at The Ladies Center. This is part of a concerted campaign by groups such as Rescue America, Operation Rescue, and the Catholic Diocese's Youth for Life.

A "wanted" poster of David Gunn with his photo and phone number was passed out at an Operation Rescue rally last year in Montgomery, Alabama. Gunn had been threatened by phone, mail, and at home for more than seven years.

Gunn lived in Eufala, Alabama, and commuted by car and plane to perform abortions at two clinics in Alabama, one in Georgia, and two in Pensacola. He went where no other doctors performed abortions, explaining to friends and coworkers that he did this so women could exercise their legal right. Currently, 83 percent of the nation's counties have no doctor who will perform abortions.

Much of the national antiabortion leadership has spoken out on Gunn's murder, precariously balancing between decrying the "unfortunate" murder and applauding the death of a "mass murderer of babies." Don Treshman, head of Rescue America, claimed Griffin was not a formal member, although he attended their clinic blockades and pickets. He said he is setting up a fund for Griffin's family. Treshman called the shooting "unfortunate" but said that "over a dozen babies would have died" on March 10 at the clinic had Gunn not been killed.

Some local antiabortion groups such as Respect Life, which is affiliated to the Catholic Diocese of Palm Beach, have tried to distance themselves from Griffin's act. Respect Life, however, also carries out violence in the name of religion. At the Women's Clinic in Pompano Beach, Florida, protesters have blocked entrances, smashed windows, glued door locks, cursed patients, followed clinic workers, and picketed their homes.

Melbourne, in central Florida, is now the scene of an approaching battle. Operation Rescue started a training camp January 18 there. The 12-week session, called "Impact," teaches techniques on how to shut down clinics. Twenty-two students, ages 16-67, attend the training camp. They will then go on to train others across the country.

Abortion rights supporters expect a campaign to blockade a clinic will be launched at the end of the camp session, probably on Easter weekend, April 10-11.

A Militant Labor Forum on the topic of "Abortion Rights Under Attack," scheduled to celebrate Women's History Month, was turned into an emergency protest meeting here March 13. Participants discussed how to mount an effective response to the murder of David Gunn. Meanwhile, in Pensacola, 100 abortion rights supporters held a candlelight vigil in response to the terrorist murder.

North Miami National Organization for Women member Julia Dawson urged the audience at the Militant Labor Forum to join the clinic defense teams April 10-11 and special training sessions to be held March 27. Plans are being made to defend eight clinics throughout central Florida.

Dawson denounced the lack of an effective government response, labeling the murder "an act of domestic terrorism, not just against Dr. Gunn, but all women. For example, a pregnant woman would think twice before going to that clinic for an abortion."

President Bill Clinton, Florida governor Lawton Chiles, and Attorney General Janet Reno, the Florida state prosecutor until recently, deplored the murder and harassment of women and doctors. But the government has not taken any specific steps to protect clinics or doctors who perform abortions from attacks. In fact, a January Supreme Court ruling stated that the 1871 Civil Rights Act does not prohibit antiabortion groups from blockading clinics. This has only served to embolden antiabortion forces.

Dan Fein, Socialist Workers Party candidate for Dade County commissioner, called for the prosecution of Griffin to the full extent of the law.

"We can't allow this murder to intimidate defenders of a woman's right to choose," Fein stated. "Now is the time to increase demonstrations in support of abortion rights and defense of clinics. I urged all unionists, youth and others to join me in participating in clinic defense in Melbourne April 10-11."

Maureen Coletta is a member of the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers union in Miami.

MILITANT LABOR FORUMS

The Militant Labor Forum is a weekly free-speech meeting for workers, farmers, youth, and others. All those seeking to advance the fight against injustice and exploitation are welcome to attend and participate in these discussions on issues of importance to working people.

At the Militant Labor Forum you can express your opinion, listen to the views of fellow fighters, and exchange ideas on how best to advance the interests of workers and farmers the world over.

ILLINOIS

Chicago

Communist Continuity and the Fight for Women's Liberation. Presentation: "The Struggle for Women's Liberation in Africa Today." Speaker: Jeanne Lawrence, Socialist Workers Party, 1 p.m.; Presentation: "Women's Liberation and the Line of March of the Working Class." Speaker: Lucille Robbins, Socialist Workers Party, 3:30 p.m. Sun., March 28, 545 W. Roosevelt Rd. Donation: \$5. Tel: (312) 829-6815 or 829-7018.

IOWA

Des Moines

Class Conflict and Social Crisis in India, an Eyewitness Account. Speaker: Greg Rosenberg, Socialist Workers Party, member, United Auto Workers Local 879. Sat., March 27, 7:30 p.m. 2105 Forest Ave. Donation: \$3. Tel: (515) 246-8249.

Socialist Educational Conference. Fri., April 9: Presentation on "The Fight for a Democratic South Africa," at 2:30 p.m., dinner at 5 p.m.; Sat., April 10: Forum on "The Clinton Presidency, the Crisis of Capitalist Economies, and Perspectives for Workers and Farmers in the 1990s" at 7 p.m.;

Sun., April 11: Presentation on "The Origins of Women's Oppression and the Fight for Socialism" at 10 a.m. Classes also scheduled Saturday at 10 a.m. and 2:30 p.m. Location: Des Moines Holiday Inn, 1050 6th Ave. Registration: to be announced. For more information: (515) 246-8249.

MARYLAND

Baltimore

U.S. Intervention in Bosnia: Will It Help End the Civil War? Speaker: Jeff Powers, Socialist Workers Party. Sat., March 27, 7:30 p.m. 2905 Greenmount Ave. Donation: \$3. Tel: (410) 235-0013.

OHIO

Cleveland

Film: **Union Maids.** Sat., March 27, 5 p.m. 1863 W. 25th St. Donation: \$3. Tel: (216) 861-6150.

PENNSYLVANIA

Philadelphia

The Origin of Women's Oppression and the Fight for Women's Rights Today. Speaker: Nancy Cole, Socialist Workers Party, member, International Association of Machinists. Sat., March 27, 7:30 p.m. 1906 South St. Donation: \$3. Tel: (215) 546-8218.

Pittsburgh

The Fight for Democracy in South Africa. Speaker: Wendy Lyons, just returned from ANC International Solidarity Conference in Johannesburg. Sat., March 27, 7 p.m. 4905 Penn Ave. Donation: \$3. Tel: (412) 362-6767.

WASHINGTON, D.C.

Miners Face Down Coal Bosses. Speaker: Clay Dennison, laid-off member, United Mine Workers of America. Sat., March 27, 7:30 p.m. 523

8th St. SE. Donation: \$3. Tel: (202) 547-7557.

WEST VIRGINIA

Morgantown

Revolutionary Cuba Today, Eyewitness Reports. Speakers: Dr. Gersham Nelson, chair of History Department, Frostburg State University; Aaron Ruby, Socialist Workers Party, member, United Food and Commercial Workers union. Sun., March 28, 6 p.m. Mountainlair Greenbrier Room, West Virginia University. Donation: \$3. Tel: (304) 296-0055. Cosponsored by WVU International Students Association.

BRITAIN

London

Malcolm X and the Fight against Imperialist War. Sat., March 27, 6 p.m. 47 The Cut, SE 1. Donation: £2. Tel: 71-928-7993.

Manchester

U.S. Troops in Somalia: Humanitarian Aid or Imperialist Intervention. Speakers: Mo Gual, Somali-born, member, National Union of Mineworkers; Cliff Williams, Communist League. March 27, 7 p.m. Unit 4, 60 Shudehill. Donation: £1. Tel: 061-839 1766.

NEW ZEALAND

Wellington

The Fight for the Social Security System, Yesterday and Today. Sat., March 27, 7 p.m. 23 Majoribanks St., Courtenay Pl. Donation: \$3. Tel: (4) 384-4205.

Cuba vote rejects imperialist pressure

Continued from Page 7

internationalist missions abroad.

The weekly *Granma Internacional* presented the election results as a repudiation of the campaign organized by right-wing Cubans in Miami urging Cubans to abstain from voting in the elections, to annul their ballots by scrawling a large "no" across them, or at the very least to refrain from voting for some of the candidates as a way of registering opposition to the government. Several newspaper reports published in the United States, *Granma* reported, predicted that more than 52 percent of the votes would be against the government.

The elections were held during the most difficult period of the revolution's history. Under these conditions they took on the character of a referendum for or against the government, for or against the socialist course of the revolution.

Leaders of the Communist Party and government urged Cubans to vote in favor of the entire slate of proposed candidates as a way of showing unity in face of the trade embargo imposed by the U.S. government and the challenges Cuba confronts. According to official figures, more than 99.5 per-

cent of all eligible voters turned out February 24, the highest percentage in any Cuban election. Every Cuban 16 years and older is eligible to vote. Of these ballots 3 percent were blank and 4 percent had been spoiled. Almost 5 percent were for less than the full slate.

In the city of Havana and Havana province, where economic conditions are substantially worse than in other parts of the country and there is more opposition, both organized and unorganized, the percentage of invalid ballots and selective ballots was substantially higher.

In the city of Havana, for example, only 85 percent of the ballots were valid and 9 percent of these were for less than the full slate. In addition, 4 percent of the ballots were blank and 10 percent were spoiled.

The March 15 opening session of the National Assembly elected Ricardo Alarcón as its president. Alarcón is currently minister of foreign relations. Before that he served as Cuba's chief representative to the United Nations. The assembly also elected the Council of State and designated Fidel Castro as president of that body.

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They like the product — Twenty-five of Mexico's richest capitalists attended a private dinner party



Harry Ring

where they pledged an average of \$25 million apiece to the 1994 campaign of the long-ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI).

"As advertised in space" — Columbia Pictures snapped up that \$500,000 ad space on the hull of a

rocket to plug Arnold Schwarzenegger's upcoming cop film, *Last Action Hero*.

Flying billboards — Selling ad space on the side of that rocket, which is partially funded by private industry, was saluted by one space scientist who enthused, "This fits right into the development of space, and that means utilization of space."

Sensitive types — To further promote *Last Action Hero*, a megaballoon likeness of Schwarzenegger in a cop's uniform was floated over New York's Times Square. However, in deference to the recent World Trade Center explosion, they substituted a badge for the sticks of

dynamite originally clutched by the actor's likeness.

A boost — *Panama Deception*, an account of the 1989 U.S. invasion of Panama, is one of five films nominated for an Academy Award as best documentary of the year. The nomination was given added weight when the film was banned by the U.S.-installed regime in Panama.

Theological update — We reported the Pope's view that pregnant rape victims in Bosnia should not resort to abortion. This was followed by a Vatican assurance that this also applied to Catholic nuns in the area. The Vatican also denied a recurring claim that nuns functioning in areas deemed to have a high-

er risk of rape have ever been authorized to use contraceptive pills.

Everybody loves a cop — "Cops at Floyd Bennett Field in Brooklyn are working on a netting to stretch inside the windows of police cars. The netting will allow cops to drive with their windows rolled down without worrying about that random rock or bottle flung from a nearby stoop." — New York news item.

Cough up more for less — Triaminic, a cough syrup often used for youngsters, is now available in a "new improved" formula. So far, they haven't hiked the price. They merely diluted the medicine to half strength. A spokesperson said the

watered-down syrup tastes better and it's easier to pour a full teaspoon instead of a half.

There you go — Cincinnati Reds owner Marge Schott, who protested being suspended from baseball for calling Black players "niggers," also rejects any suggestion of bias in her description of Jews as "money grubbers." She said, "I have a Jewish boy who's head of my Chevrolet store."

Nothing's perfect — General Motors recalled some 7,000 school buses because they could accelerate without warning. Another 7,000 Pontiac Grand Prix cars were recalled because the headlight systems might fail.

Rodney King testifies on beating by cops

BY SANDRA PUCCI

LOS ANGELES — Rodney King's testimony in the trial of the four cops who brutalized him dealt a setback to the racist campaign by the police and government officials to turn him from victim into criminal.

King's testimony confirmed what was plain to see in the famous videotape of the incident — that he was the victim of police violence, not a "PCP-crazed giant" who posed a threat to the cops, as the defense has systematically and falsely argued.

Meanwhile, there was a new disclosure of elaborate police plans to crush any eruption of protest if the cops are acquitted, as they were in the earlier state trial. Last April the acquittal of the four cops who beat King sparked riots in Los Angeles.

In his testimony King reaffirmed that, after the police stopped him on the night of March 3, 1991, he fully complied with commands given to him by the cops.

He told the court that he did not try to resist arrest, nor did he attempt to attack the cops, as the defense lawyers have claimed. "I was trying to stay alive, sir, trying to stay alive," he said, "and they never gave me a chance to stay still."

King described to the court how the cops beat and taunted him. He testified that at a certain point, as he lay face down on the pavement, one cop yelled, "We're going to kill you nigger, run." Asked why he got up, he replied, "Because I thought I was going to die."

He told the jury how the beating felt. "My whole body was struck, all parts of my body. ... There was an enormous amount of pain."

Lawyers for the defendants tried unsuccessfully to goad King by asking him such

questions as whether he had drunk a case of beer on the night of the beating. "I don't think it was that," he answered. "I cannot drink a case of beer."

He was asked who had told him it was a baton that struck him. "Was it your lawyer?" one defense attorney asked him.



Rodney King at a press conference late last year

King replied, "No one had to tell me that. I felt it."

King candidly told the court that he had been drinking the night of the beating and had been speeding. Initially he had lied about this, he explained, because he was on parole and feared being sent back to prison.

King said later in his testimony that he could not say for sure whether the cops had used the word "nigger" or "killer" during the beating.

'Nigger, hands behind your back'

In the earlier state trial, it was contended that no racial epithets could be heard on the videotape of the event, which had been sound-enhanced by the FBI.

But in May 1991, a local TV station replayed the videotape, this time inde-

pently audio-enhanced. There, a voice could clearly be heard shouting, "Nigger, hands behind your back!"

Several medical witnesses have testified for the prosecution. Dr. Charles Aronberg described the seriousness of the injuries King suffered in his sinus areas. "There were innumerable small fractures," he said. "In some areas the bones were reduced to a very fine powder, like sand."

He testified that the injuries were caused by baton blows to the head and face, declaring that the defense's assertion that King sustained these injuries as a result of repeated falls to the pavement was "out of the question."

Neurologist Stanley Cohen, who examined King eight days after the incident, testified that King had suffered a concussion during the beating and sustained neurological damage which had affected his memory.

At the same time that the trial is taking place, the Los Angeles Police Department has been staging massive riot-training operations at the police academy in the Elysian Park area. Since November, 2,200 of the

police department's 7,000 officers have passed through the program.

The scope of the operation became public when a local community group lodged a protest with the police.

The protesters cited the case of eight youths who required medical attention after suffering nausea while at the park's recreation center. They had been affected by tear gas that floated over from the police training area. The community group also cited the complaints of nearby residents about the loud noise from the police cars and helicopters used in the daily training program.

Meanwhile, the trial of the three youths charged in the beating of trucker Reginald Denny during the antipolice riots last year has been postponed until April 12. The delay came after a request by the defendants' attorneys, who had been denied face-to-face visits with their clients.

While the cops who beat King have been free on nominal bail, the three youths are being held on exorbitantly high bail. For one defendant, Damian Wilson, it is \$585,000.

— 25 AND 50 YEARS AGO —

THE MILITANT

Published in the Interest of the Working People
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On March 16, a few days after Senator Eugene McCarthy received 42.4 percent of the vote in the New Hampshire primary, Senator Robert F. Kennedy announced that he, too, had decided to challenge Lyndon Johnson for the Democratic nomination.

Unless, as is unlikely, the President refuses to run for a second time, this portends a bitter battle between Kennedy and Johnson at the Democratic convention in Chicago next August.

Kennedy's long-deliberated decision to enter the race is a response to the serious predicament that has engulfed America's ruling class. It has been struck by the onset of three converging major crises: the specter of a military debacle in Vietnam created by the successful Tet offensive and the encirclement of Khesanh by the National Liberation Front and North Vietnamese forces; the disintegration of the international monetary structure; and the pending confrontation with the black community in the urban areas.

The chronic imbalance of payments has been steadily worsened by expenditures for the Vietnam war and rendered acute by Johnson's declaration that he will send more troops.

The alarm that Johnson's course has produced within ruling circles is evidenced by the opposition to its disastrous consequences expressed by publications ranging from the *Wall Street Journal* to the San Francisco newspapers. They feel an urgency to get rid of an unpopular and discredited president and prepare a replacement for him.

These are the underlying reasons for the sudden emergence of so-called "peace candidates," such as Senators McCarthy and Kennedy and Governor Rockefeller, in both the Democratic and Republican camps.

Each of these aspiring capitalist politicians hopes to ride the mounting popular sentiment against the war all the way to the White House.

At the news conference announcing his candidacy, Kennedy told reporters that he favored stopping the bombing of North Vietnam to get negotiations started. But he added that "if the negotiations are unsuccessful or if they use that period of time in a way adverse to our military forces there, then I think that we can take retaliatory action."

THE MILITANT

PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF THE WORKING PEOPLE
NEW YORK, N.Y. FIVE (5) CENTS

March 27, 1943

President Roosevelt intervened in the mine-wage negotiations this week, asking the mine operators to agree to continue their present contract with the United Mine Workers beyond April 1 with the understanding that wage readjustments when finally agreed on would be retroactive to that date.

But Roosevelt clearly indicated his intention of fighting the mine workers' demand for a \$2-a-day wage increase. "The dispute," he said, "must be settled like any other labor dispute under the national no-strike agreement of Dec. 26, 1941 ... that is, by collective bargaining, conciliation, and final determination, if necessary, by the National War Labor Board. ..."

But the miners had already denounced the War Labor Board as "a court packed against labor" which had already prejudged and decided against the UMW demands.

Roosevelt's Economic Stabilizer Byrnes has already publicly announced that "there must be no further increases in wages beyond the Little Steel formula."

The treacherous act of the AFL and CIO members of the WLB, who while putting up a verbal fight against the Board's wage-freezing, places the United Mine Workers in a difficult position and again imposes on them the necessity of breaking through the steel cage erected around them and all of U.S. labor.

DeBates leaves 'Militant' staff; will take on new assignment

BY GEORGE FYSON

Estelle DeBates, a member of the *Militant* staff since September 1991, has left the newspaper to take on responsibilities for leading the work of the Socialist Workers Party in New York City.

DeBates, 33 years old, will join one of the SWP's industrial union fractions — units of party members working in industrial union jobs. Prior to joining the *Militant* staff, DeBates worked in a Chicago machine shop and was a member of the International Association of Machinists.

DeBates contributed articles on issues from women's rights to the struggle of the Korean people for national reunification. She visited North Korea in April 1992 as the Socialist Workers vice-presidential candidate. While she continued to contribute articles to the paper, for the remainder of the campaign she was on leave from the staff.

During the 1992 election campaign DeBates joined workers and young people in the United States and around the world who are resisting government and employer assaults and the effects of the capitalist economic crisis. She visited picket lines and spoke on campuses, at protest gatherings, and many other meetings.

Over the last year DeBates also spoke to workers and youth in Iceland, Sweden, Japan, South Africa, and Canada. In January DeBates participated in a two-week reporting trip to the Philippines.

DeBates was recently named national campaign chairperson for the 1993 Socialist Workers election campaigns. So far this year Socialist Workers candidates have been announced for elections in Alabama, California, Florida, Michigan, Missouri, New Jersey, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Texas, and West Virginia.

Step up abortion rights actions!

The murder of David Gunn by an opponent of women's right to choose abortion must be loudly condemned, not only by women's rights activists, but by all working people and supporters of democratic rights. Pro-choice fighters should take this terrorist act as a signal to step up defense of abortion rights — at the clinics and in the streets. The labor movement should demand the government fully prosecute Gunn's murderer and others who physically assault patients and workers at abortion clinics or who attempt to shut down or damage the clinics.

The shooting of Gunn, a doctor who performed abortions in towns in Alabama, Florida, and Georgia where no other doctor would, is not an isolated incident of violence by a crazy man. The doctor's death was the direct result of a widespread campaign of violence, harassment, and intimidation by rightist groups against women who seek abortions and doctors who provide them.

Firebombings, threats, vandalism, and physical assaults have long been the stock-in-trade of antiabortion groups like Operation Rescue. Michael Griffin, the man who fatally shot Gunn in the back, associated with one of these outfits, Rescue America. At an Operation Rescue rally in Alabama last year, Gunn himself was targeted for harassment by a "wanted" poster that included his photograph and phone number.

The response of antiabortion figures such as Don Treshman, head of Rescue America, to the March 10 murder exposes the lie that these people are concerned about life.

Treshman said that, while the doctor's death was "unfortunate," at least now he could not perform abortions anymore. Treshman announced he was setting up a fund to help the murderer's family.

A leader of Operation Rescue explained that a large part of their strategy is to "effectively convince doctors to quit" performing abortions through their campaigns of harassment, regardless of the fact that abortion remains legal.

Supporters of the right to safe, legal abortion and of democratic rights need to demand that Griffin be prosecuted and jailed. The record shows that the courts and cops do not act to protect abortion rights unless people are mobilized to insist they do so. The Supreme Court, for instance, recently ruled that an 1871 federal law does not prohibit antiabortion clinic blockades. Such blockades create the atmosphere in which violence against health-care workers and patients can occur.

Young people, unionists, and other defenders of women's rights cannot allow this reactionary murder to intimidate us. The attack requires a response, not only to demand justice in this case, but to step up the defense of abortion rights at the clinic doors and elsewhere.

Abortion rights supporters in Florida are preparing to confront expected clinic blockades by Operation Rescue next month with mobilizations to defend the clinics. This is a good example of the kind of actions that can push back opponents of abortion rights and broaden support for the right of women to control their bodies and their lives.

Stop threats against N. Korea

While U.S. land, sea, and air forces, with nuclear weapons at their disposal, are engaged in war exercises with the South Korean army simulating attacks against North Korea, Washington has the arrogance to threaten that country, claiming its government's recent decision to pull out of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty endangers world peace.

In their attempt to isolate and bully North Korea, the U.S. rulers and their junior partners in Seoul are adding the threat of economic sanctions to the ongoing military threat posed by the resumption of their joint "Team Spirit" war maneuvers. Washington is trying to muster support among its imperialist allies to once again use the United Nations Security Council to threaten North Korea with sanctions unless it backs off and allows further inspections of its military sites on the pretext of a search for nuclear weapons.

The U.S. rulers, who are armed to the teeth with nuclear and conventional weapons, and hold the dubious honor of being the only government in the world to have dropped nuclear bombs killing and maiming hundreds of thousands of human beings, now hypocritically claim the right to "inspect" North Korea's territory charging that it has the

technology to develop nuclear weapons in the future.

The workers, farmers, and youth of the world do not share the interests of the ruling families of the United States. Our interests are the same as those of working people in North Korea, who were subjected to saturation bombing, the torching of their homes and villages, and the wholesale slaughter of their families four decades ago by U.S. troops operating under the UN flag. Working people worldwide share the same interests as our counterparts in South Korea, who are resisting the bosses' offensive in the midst of the devastation caused by the world economic depression.

The "Team Spirit" exercise, the continued presence of thousands of U.S. troops in South Korea, and the threat of sanctions are aimed not only at the people of North Korea but at the fighting workers and students in the South and at working people anywhere who resist attacks on their rights and livelihoods.

The labor movement should oppose any sanctions against North Korea and demand that Washington respect its sovereignty.

Washington's dilemma in Russia

The intensifying feud between Boris Yeltsin and his opponents in the Russian parliament presents the White House with a major foreign policy dilemma. It could turn into an even bigger political fiasco for the Clinton administration than Washington's failures in Haiti, Somalia, and the former Yugoslavia.

The dispute in Moscow is over which group of pro-capitalist politicians in the Kremlin and parliament will hold decisive political power and control over economic resources in order to maintain and enlarge its privileges. Yeltsin and his congressional opponents are fighting over how fast to impose "market reforms" and harsher austerity measures on working people in Russia.

The fact remains that capitalism has not been restored in Russia. To do so will require establishing new relations of exploitation based on a crushing defeat of working people and the seizure of the means of production by a new capitalist class. Former U.S. president Richard Nixon, in making his arguments for massive U.S. aid to Russia, acknowledges this dilemma when he declares that what's lacking in Russia is a "management class."

Unlike what Nixon or Clinton suggest, however, imperialism today is in no position to buy its way back to capitalism in Russia or Eastern Europe. The capitalist rulers are proving unable to do this even in eastern Germany, where not so long ago they thought they had it made.

While 45,000 small enterprises have been privatized in Russia, basic industry remains as nationalized property. The goal announced by the Russian government — that it would now like to begin privatizing 500 large companies

a month — remains just that: a goal.

Capitalists around the world are leery of investing large amounts of money in Russia, given its unstable currency and state of economic collapse.

Last year the Group of Seven nations promised \$24 billion in aid to Russia. However, because Russia failed to meet the demand by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for stiffer austerity measures, only \$10 billion of this was allocated, mostly in the form of short-term loans. These loans are now falling due, a burden that only adds to Russia's mounting \$84 billion debt.

Nixon is urgently calling for imperialism to find a way to restart the flow of IMF funds to Russia. And while Clinton has embraced Nixon's call, the White House is in no rush to sink vast funds into that country.

The disintegration of the economy of Russia and the other former Soviet republics is proving to be a huge liability rather than a boon for imperialism. It is not a means by which the world capitalist crisis will be resolved.

What deeply worries the U.S. rulers is that, as conflicts among the feuding bureaucratic gangs in Russia escalate over political power and control of resources, future battles there could easily eclipse the turmoil in the former Yugoslavia.

As grand privatization plans falter in Russia, other former Soviet republics, and throughout Eastern Europe, working people are resisting the effects of the "free market" reforms.

This resistance and the accompanying social and political instability are what capitalist politicians most fear.

Clinton's health 'reform' will cut care for workers

What are the Clinton administration's health-care "reforms" really about? In a letter to the *Militant* printed on the next page, reader Nader Avini notes that President Bill Clinton has not openly stated that his goal is to cut medical benefits for working people. This is true — Clinton did not say he intends to cut health care. But as the *Militant* article entitled "Clinton prepares to cut health care," that Avini refers to, explained, the new administration is laying the groundwork to do exactly that.

Although the president's task force on health care reform, headed by his wife, Hillary Clinton, has been functioning largely behind closed doors, the broad outlines of its health package are becoming apparent. The proposals the Clin-

DISCUSSION WITH OUR READERS

tons will put forward in the coming weeks and months will lead to the rationing of health care for those who cannot afford to pay "full price," more taxes, and cuts in existing government medical programs, such as Medicare benefits for the elderly. Those most affected will be working people.

The administration is planning to implement some form of "managed competition," where insurance companies would compete to offer the most "cost-effective" package of benefits to employers and the government. The *Los Angeles Times* recently offered a description of what this will mean for workers who need medical care, in an article aptly titled, "President, Public May Differ Over Health Reform Goals."

Under managed care, the article explained, workers must choose a doctor who is under contract with their insurance company. "That doctor receives a set amount of money to provide treatment and then serves as a sort of 'gatekeeper,' deciding what care each patient should receive," the *Times* article said. "Since the amount of money doctors receive is fixed, they will have a direct incentive to avoid unnecessary treatment," thus rationing care for those who can't pay extra out of their pockets.

The costs the Clinton government wants to control are those of the government and the bosses, not the price working people must pay for needed medical services. This is clearly demonstrated by ideas being kicked around of how to fund any new programs. For a while, Clinton officials spoke of taxing workers' health insurance benefits. Now, Hillary Clinton says, "Before we do that," the task force she heads will "look for other alternatives."

These alternatives include delaying implementation of the president's promise to provide some minimal health insurance to the 37 million who lack it and increasing taxes on cigarettes and alcohol. Such sales taxes — referred to by the Clintons, other capitalist politicians, and the big-business media as "sin taxes" — hit working people the hardest by far.

Cuts in existing medical programs are also in the works. For example, the *New York Times* reported March 5 that one of the working groups under Hillary Clinton is suggesting "a standard package of health benefits that must be offered by all employers to their employees. If the package of benefits for people under 65 years old is less generous than Medicare benefits, the Government might, as one option, 'eliminate current Medicare benefits in excess of the standard package,'" as a document prepared by the working group put it.

"This would reduce Medicare costs, since fewer services would be covered," the document said.

The program that Bill and Hillary Clinton are putting together — cutting government spending on health care and making workers pay the price — does not show "the Clinton administration has increasingly backed away from a liberal interpretation of his campaign promises on health care," as Avini asserts. This is what the liberal politicians have to offer.

The liberal section of the ruling class in the United States, represented well by the Clintons, wants "managed" and "cost-effective" health care for working people that does not waste money on "excessive" treatments. We can expect to see more proposals like the one for which the Oregon state government is seeking approval.

The Oregon plan ranks 709 conditions by "medical effectiveness" and "value to society" and offers treatment to low-paid workers for the top 587 conditions. Excluded conditions include acute viral hepatitis, noninfectious gastroenteritis, advanced stages of cancer, deformities of the spine, and joint and muscle sprains.

Working people need health care as a right — not a handout that can be managed and rationed for us. With that understanding, the labor movement should fight for free health care as part of the social security package, an entitlement for all working people. This is what working people are and should be concerned with, not how to reduce medical costs for the bosses and the government.

It is only through mobilization and struggle that the working class can win this right, and ultimately get rid of the capitalist system that determines who gets medical attention on the basis of what social class one belongs to.

—NAOMI CRAINE

Massachusetts mill explosion injures six workers

This column is devoted to reporting the resistance by working people to the employers' assault on their living standards, working conditions, and unions.

We invite you to contribute short items to this column as a way for other fighting workers around the world to read about and learn from these important

The flock division of Malden Mills manufactures furniture upholstery. Around 1,300 union employees work in the century-old buildings of the textile complex. The plant is organized by International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union Local 311.

In October 1992 the Occupational Safety and Health Adminis-

tration hit Malden Mills with \$40,000 in fines for 34 violations of safety rules. Since the fire, six more violations have been leveled against the company. None of these citations are connected to the fire. One citation said workers were exposed to chemicals dripping through the ceiling from leaking tanks.

Workers in the mill are angry about what happened. In the days after the explosion, groups of workers huddled together in discussions reliving the disaster. Workers from the apparel and woven divisions came over to get the full story and to see the damage. Many of the discussions turned to figuring out

Iowa meat-packers authorize strike

Monfort pork workers overwhelmingly voted March 9 to authorize a strike at the Marshalltown, Iowa, packing plant. Members of United Food and Commercial Workers Local 1149 also voted to reject Monfort's latest contract offer.

The wage increase the company has offered would not make up for the proposed health insurance co-payments the company is demanding.

Union members have been working under an extension of the old contract, which expired January 2. *The Times Republican*, a central Iowa daily, reports that Jim Olson, president of Local 1149, said strike authorization does not necessarily mean the union will strike but the union would notify the company of such a vote and request another offer.

Between 550 and 600 of the 800 union workers voted, accord-

ing to union officials. Some 93 percent authorized the strike and 99 percent rejected Monfort's contract offer. Negotiations are also taking place between Monfort, and the Teamsters union, which organizes workers in the boning and loading dock department at the Marshalltown plant. These departments were subcontracted out to MSP Resources in 1989 and their contract expired February 21.

N.Y. Domino sugar workers end strike

In early March, members of International Longshoremen's Association Local 1814 in Brooklyn, New York, voted 196-101 to ratify a three-year contract with the Domino Sugar Corp. The workers struck Domino for nearly 28 weeks, stopping production and maintaining round-the-clock picket lines.

For the past six weeks, strikers had also set up informational picket lines at a Domino plant in Baltimore.

Many workers at the ratification meeting expressed dissatis-

faction with the contract but no longer felt the strike would lead to gains. The company was meeting its orders through its other factories.

Domino eliminated three paid holidays, implemented a yearly bonus system instead of a pay raise, and will be allowed to bring in temporary workers at peak production times. The company was forced to back down on demands to eliminate some job classifications and weaken seniority rights.

Many workers said they were going back with their heads held high and with their dignity. They said a lot of the changes demanded by the company will be fought out in the plant. Many activists in the strike see this as the next stage of their struggle.

The following people contributed to this week's column: Danny Booher, member of International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union Local 311 in Lawrence, Massachusetts; Ruth Nebbia, member of United Food and Commercial Workers Local 431 in Des Moines, Iowa; and Mike Fitzsimmons in New York City.

ON THE PICKET LINE

struggles. Jot down a few lines to let other *Militant* readers know about what is happening at your work place or in your union. If there is an interesting political discussion going on at work, we would like to hear about that too.

An explosion and fire rocked the flock division building at the huge Malden Mills textile complex in Lawrence, Massachusetts, March 6. Six mill workers were sent to local hospitals with second- and third-degree burns and smoke inhalation. The blast shattered windows and sent broken glass flying.

LETTERS

Origins of national debt

What is the "national debt" and what is its significance for working people?

According to Karl Marx, the system of public credit, i.e., national debt, was consolidated in Europe during the manufacturing period that preceded modern industry. The national debt became one of the most powerful levers for the accumulation of capital by a tiny layer of the wealthiest factory owners and entrepreneurs.

The state treasury became a source of capital as well as a source of direct and indirect subsidy for the rising capitalist class. In the process, Marx explained, "The national debt has given rise to joint-stock companies, to dealings in negotiable effects of all kinds... to stock exchange gambling and the modern bankruptcy."

At their birth the national banks were no more than associations of private speculators who thanks to their privileged situation were able to make loans to the government. These state creditors were guaranteed handsome returns on their investments through the mechanism of the public debt.

The international credit system also arose with the national debt. Marx used the example of loans from England to the United States, explaining that a great deal of capital that appeared in the United States "without any certificate of birth" was yesterday created by the exploitation of child labor in England.

According to Marx, the modern system of taxation was the necessary complement of the system of national loans. "The loans enable the government to meet extraordinary expenses, without the taxpayers feeling it immediately, but they necessitate, as a consequence, increased taxes. On the other hand the raising of taxation caused by the accumulation of debts compels the government always to have recourse to new loans for new extraordinary expenses."

The insatiable appetite of the U.S. government for new loans to pay the interest on past loans has driven up the cost of borrowing money.

As the world capitalist crisis deepens and competition between capitalists intensifies, the U.S. rulers want to lower the interest rates

on the money they borrow in order to make themselves more competitive with capitalists of other countries.

The rulers' solution as presented by President Clinton is that working people should make even greater sacrifices in order to shore up the profits of the wealthy.

Cappy Kidd
Chicago, Illinois

Health-care debate

There has been a growing national debate concerning health-care policy in the United States in the recent period. During the 1980s a serious assault on the health-care rights of working people was launched by the capitalists and their government. Over 75 percent of recent labor battles have included attempts to protect health-care benefits. Yet, there has been no working-class perspective on the health-care crisis.

Over the same period, the *Militant* has carried a few articles dealing briefly and reactively to the problem of health care. The latest article (titled: Clinton prepares to cut health care; Intended "reform" of health system will reduce workers' access to needed care) in the February 26 issue offers some interesting facts about the health-care crisis and correctly promotes the idea of health care as a right. But as a critique of the Clinton administration's health-care policy, it suffers from important deficiencies. Contrary to the *Militant's* headline, Clinton has not admitted that he intends to cut health care. In fact, in his presidential campaign, Clinton outlined a plan which promised a "basic package" of health care for all through making health-care costs mandatory to each employer in a "pay-or-play" scheme with the federal government covering those without employer-provided insurance. The article denounces "managed competition" and "single-provider" insurance schemes without explaining them. (I suppose health care as a right presupposes a single-provider system).

The fact is that we are not provided with the Clinton plan yet. Supposedly, Hillary Clinton and her committee are busy negotiating it with other representatives of the ruling class. We can only say that the Clinton administration has increasingly backed away from a liberal interpretation of his cam-

paign promises on health care as reflected in the recent statements by various cabinet members. If these statements are taken at their face value, the Clinton administration is moving in the direction of the bill proposed by the Conservative Democratic Forum in the Congress.

The common concern in the current debate between the liberal and conservative defenders of capitalism is the high costs of health care for the U.S. businesses and government. Rising health-care costs have squeezed profitability of the U.S. firms and reduced their international competitiveness. However, health-care costs to the U.S. rulers are income for specific sections of the capitalist class and its immediate periphery that provide health services. The current dispute is about how to restructure the U.S. health-care system to aid the ailing U.S. economy.

While there have been real attempts to cut working-class health-care benefits and there are proposals to deepen that drive, there are others who argue for a restructuring of the health-care system in a way that will cut costs and help to secure industrial peace necessary to boost labor productivity by extending a minimum level of health care to most workers. This is why health care reform proposals that are similar to those in Hawaii, Germany, even Canada are getting a hearing in the U.S. Congress. Such changes if implemented will reduce health-care costs, increase access, and enhance efficiency of the health-care system.

While we cannot foretell which proposal or combination of proposals will prevail, it can be said with confidence that the current setup will not last very long. It is an obstacle to reproduction of capital and the capitalist system. Furthermore, any superior health-care system will require increased government interventions in the market as well as a more vigorous economy. Thus issues of costs, access, and efficiency will be raised and debated by capitalist politicians for the next period. What they will not address is the problem of equity and quality of care. These, and health care as a right, are the issues of interest to the working-class movement. These issues are closely tied to the working-class fight for socialism.

The *Militant* plays a unique role



in U.S. politics because it speaks in the interest of the working people. In the absence of any working-class voice in the health-care debate, the *Militant* has a special responsibility to put forward a working-class perspective, especially in the context of concrete fights around health care by the unions and working people.

Nader Avini
Brooklyn, New York

Chaos in Afghanistan

Three years back our nation forced the Soviet invaders to withdraw from Afghanistan and in April 1992 the puppet regime collapsed. Then the people thought that the dawn of liberty and peace was not far off. But since April our country has been drowned in horrible chaos, anarchy, and lawlessness never before witnessed by our people.

Antifreedom, antidemocracy, antiwoman, and medieval-minded fundamentalists have grabbed the power. They do everything evil in the name of Islam. They are as much against the Islam of the majority of our people as they are against the women and universal values of freedom and democracy. Their lust for power has no boundary. To seize the power monopolistically, there is fierce fighting among them. Each sees its survival in annihilation of other rival groups.

Our country will be free and the cause of reconstruction realized only when a national united front comprising all democracy-loving forces and elements establishes the central government.

The Afghan people who did not bow down before a superpower

will definitely fight the treacherous fundamentalists tooth and nail. It is an immediate task of the revolutionary prodemocracy forces to unite and stand in the forefront of our people's vengeful anti-fundamentalistic storm.

Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan (RAWA)
Quetta, Pakistan

[Editors note: Accompanying this statement was a letter sent by the RAWA on the upcoming trial of two individuals charged with killing the RAWA's founding leader, Kishwar Kamal (Meena), in 1987.

The letter explains that the fundamentalist party Hekmatyar has been exerting pressure on Pakistani authorities, which they fear could lead to the acquittal of the accused. The RAWA is urging that letters or telegrams demanding justice for the RAWA's martyred leader Meena be sent to: Interior Minister Chaudhry Shejaat Hussain, Islamabad, Pakistan; Minister for Law and Justice Chaudhry Abdul Ghafur, Islamabad, Pakistan; and Mir Taj Mohammad Jamali, Chief Minister, Baluchistan, Quetta, Pakistan.]

The letters column is an open forum for all viewpoints on subjects of general interest to our readers. 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.

Peabody miners ready to renew fight

BY STU SINGER

"We had a meeting last Wednesday night to hear a report about the company agreeing to turn over the information we need, and that we'd return to work for 60 days while they try to negotiate the contract. There was a standing ovation. We got what we wanted."

This is how Dave Hadley, a welder at the Peabody Squaw Creek mine in Boonville, Indiana, described the end of the 32-day strike by members of the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) against Peabody Coal Co. The miners forced Peabody and other coal companies that belong to the Bituminous Coal Operators Association (BCOA), to disclose the totality of their coal holdings to union negotiators and open discussions on the hiring of union members at their nonunion operations.

Steve Jones, who was president of UMWA Local 1602 in Shawneetown, Illinois, during the strike and now works on the union staff in southern Illinois, said that "spirits were pretty high. We made them come to the table."

With discipline and broad support in their communities and from other unions, the UMWA strike dragged the major coal companies to the negotiating table on the union's terms. The final push was March 1 when the UMWA leadership called out 1,500 more miners at other BCOA companies to join the 7,500 Peabody strikers. The next day Peabody gave in.

'We're keeping picket shacks up'

Butch Oldham, the UMWA strike coordinator in Union County, Kentucky, said: "We're keeping the picket shacks up, with firewood cut and neatly stacked at each of them. On Fridays, everybody wears camouflage clothing into work. And we're keeping the union support signs up in the stores and in front of houses. We're still there."

Denny Noss works third shift at the Eagle 2 underground mine in Shawneetown, Illinois. He checks methane levels, an important safety requirement for the mines. He told the *Militant*, "I feel like we won something. I hope we can settle this without going out again."

But Noss reports the local union is ready to resume the strike. The well-organized strike center and kitchen, run by union local members and the family auxiliary, were carefully packed up and closed down, but the miners are ready to reopen them on very short notice.



Miners and supporters at strike kitchen in Shawneetown, Illinois. The strike center was closed after victory, but miners are prepared to reopen it on short notice.

Noss also reported that a few miners just retired and the company called back some of the laid-off miners from that area who are on the panel. Defending the right to jobs for laid-off miners was one of the issues of the strike.

The union demanded the companies open their books on coal land properties and ownership links to other mines in order to enforce a provision of the 1988 contract. By hiding new mine ownership, the union is convinced companies violate the contract section requiring that at least three of five miners hired in new mines be laid-off UMWA members. Winning this not only provides jobs for the laid-off miners, but also gives a big boost to union-organizing efforts at the new mines.

In Boonville, Dave Hadley reports that Peabody union locals in that area bought ads in some of the local newspapers to thank the community for its support during the strike and to remind everyone that the contract battle is not over.

Hadley says the situation is somewhat tense in the mine with the foremen. "The miners have very vivid memories of the last 32 days," he said. "Now we have to work with the same foremen who took our jobs."

At the Peabody Squaw Creek and Lynnville mines near Boonville, the company brought in foremen and contractor employees to try to mine coal during the strike. A bus carrying these scabs hit and injured a Squaw Creek miner when the driver rushed nonstop through the picket line.

Hadley also said the Boonville miners are maintaining their picket shacks, wearing camouflage clothing — a symbol of the coal miners' fight against the bosses — into work and plan to remount many of the union support signs in front of people's houses in town as the frozen ground starts to melt. The rural Camp Solidarity the Squaw Creek miners set up during the strike is being maintained. "We still have meetings there and miners come in before and after work

to talk," said Hadley.

Camp Solidarity is the name used for the strike organizing center in southwest Virginia set up by UMWA strikers against Pittston Coal Co. in 1989. Miners and other union members from throughout the United States and other countries flocked to the camp to help the Pittston miners win. That experience was in the mind of virtually every miner as this year's contract battle developed.

Butch Oldham from western Kentucky reported that Peabody has started trying to get miners to work forced overtime. The union rejects this and has filed a grievance. "We don't mind forced overtime if there is an emergency, but not just to get more production," he said. And miners feel the company should call back laid-off miners, not force overtime on those still working.

Steve Jones in southern Illinois reports the company dropped its claim that miners may have been involved in sabotage at the #10 mine where a washer building collapsed during the strike. "Peabody now says they'll rebuild it. It was just an old tippie that collapsed. You would have had to work on it with cutting torches to make it come down like that," he said.

Jones reports the companies did furnish the union with the information on their holdings and negotiations are taking place now in Washington.

During the strike, miners received letters at their homes from Peabody trying to divide them from the union leadership and terming the strike unnecessary. The company also bought full-page ads in newspapers in the coal communities trying to turn residents against the strike. None of these gambits worked. Now the company negotiators in Washington have to contend with an opponent that showed it knows how to conduct a strike and is ready to do it again.

That message is not lost on the local foremen and managers who have to drive by those picket shacks every day going to and from work.

British miners vote for strike action

BY TONY HUNT

SHEFFIELD, England — Members of the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) have voted for a one-day strike against mine closures, to take place April 2. The March 5 strike call was approved by a 60 percent margin. The result of a simultaneous ballot for a 24-hour strike among rail workers in the National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers will be known by the end of March. Members of the pit supervisors' union, the National Association of Colliery Overmen and Deputies, also voted for a one-day stoppage but the vote fell 2 percent short of the two-thirds majority required by that union's rules.

The 24-hour stoppage was recommended by the NUM leadership "as part of a rolling programme of industrial action to stop plans to close 31 pits with the loss of 30,000 mining jobs and 70,000 others in rail, engineering, power, and other industries." The alternative to taking action was "a life on the dole for many miners and greater attacks by management for those who remain," said a statement by the NUM leadership.

The five-month-old protest campaign led by the NUM and Women Against Pit Closures (WAPC) has also continued. This began after the government and the state-owned British Coal announced plans October 13 to close 31 pits and fire 30,000 miners. The reason given by the coal bosses for the closures was the lack of a market for the coal produced by the pits in question. This followed decisions by the recently privatized electricity-generating companies to burn more imported coal and switch to gas-fired generation.

The government was forced to delay implementing the closures because of the huge protests it prompted among working people. These included two massive demonstrations in London. The protests opened divisions in the ranks of the ruling Conservative Party over the pace and timing of the closure program.

Soon after the ballot result, hundreds of miners and their supporters turned out for a demonstration March 13. The event was the annual commemoration for two striking miners, Davy Jones and Joe Green, who were killed during the 1984-85 strike. Among the speakers at the rally at the end of the march was Davy Jones's father; NUM president Arthur Scargill; and the union's vice-president, Frank Cave.

Five thousand people marched through London February 6 on a "Save Our Pits March" organized by WAPC. Smaller local protest actions have continued, as have the "pit camps" organized by WAPC. The camps are located outside 7 of the 10 mines that had been scheduled for immediate closure and where no coal is currently being produced. Miners at these pits sign on for work each day and are then sent home.

Contingents of miners from collieries all over the country attended the March 13 demonstration.

Miners expressed different views about the strike vote and the prospect of halting the pit closures.

'We have had enough'

Chris Brown from Littlejohn Colliery in the Midlands area reported a 91 percent vote

for action at his pit. "We have had enough and we have to do something," he said. "We've traveled all over to build up support for action on April 2. We've got 50 miners out visiting workers in three other towns. We went to a bus drivers' demonstration in London last weekend. We met with building workers and Ford car workers in London who were preparing their own strike. Miners will take a stand at the beginning," Brown said, "but we don't want to be left isolated."

In contrast, Dave McDevitt, a miner from Frickley in Yorkshire, was pessimistic about being able to stop pit closures. The vote at his pit was 52 percent in favor. He thought miners were too demoralized to fight. Garry Bailey from Markham Main in Yorkshire explained that he was considering taking redundancy (layoff). Several hundred workers had taken redundancy at his pit as a result of the pressure from management. This pit ceased production a week after the closure announcement in October.

Among the miners from Nottinghamshire in attendance was Trevor Morris from Rufford Colliery. The NUM is a minority union in that area. Most miners there belong to the Union of Democratic Miners (UDM), formed in 1984 by NUM officials opposed to the national strike. Morris reported a large majority for action among Rufford's 83 NUM members. He also explained that a significant number of UDM members were angry at not being given the right to vote on action. "I'd expect a number of UDM members to respect NUM picket lines on April 2," he said.

Continued on Page 15

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