

THE MILITANT

INSIDE

Final push begins to sell 1,500 copies of Marxist magazine

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A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

VOL. 59/NO. 9 MARCH 6, 1995

Pressure on Caterpillar as strikers stand firm

BY MEGAN ARNEY
AND CATHLEEN GUTKANST

PEORIA, Illinois — "Cat's only gaining one or two line-crossers a month. We're confident they don't have the skills or the manpower to produce products like they used to," said Morris Delbridge, a striking Caterpillar worker in Decatur, Illinois.

Members of the United Auto Workers (UAW) on strike against Caterpillar here in central Illinois continue to voice their resolve to keep up the fight until they can go back with a contract and their union intact. While 20 percent to 30 percent of union members have crossed the picket line, the vast majority did so in the first month of the strike last June. Since then, all of the company's attempts to get large numbers of strikers to cross have failed.

"We'll stay out as long as it takes," said Charlie Holt, also a Decatur Caterpillar striker.

The last UAW contract expired in September 1991, prompting a 163-day strike after Caterpillar had imposed the terms of its final contract offer at its plants. UAW members returned to work in March 1992 but were forced out on strike again June 21, 1994, against unfair labor practices by the company.

Talks aimed at ending this strike started January 31 in Louisville, Kentucky, between the UAW and Caterpillar, negotiating with a federal mediator. The discussions were recessed February 3 with both sides agreeing to meet again in the near future.

Caterpillar "can't produce the quantity or quality of products that they used to," said Larry Solomon, UAW Local 751 president in Decatur, pointing to pressures

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Racist ban on Black youth defeated in Georgia town

BY MAURICE WILLIAMS

In a victory for democratic rights, a racist ban prohibiting 21 Black youth from entering downtown businesses in Union Point, Georgia, was lifted February 21. Town officials ended the ban, which gained national publicity, after the Greene County NAACP scheduled a protest march for February 25 and initiated a boycott of businesses participating in the exclusion.

NAACP officials say the boycott will end and the demonstration will be turned into a victory march. Next week's *Militant* will feature on-the-spot coverage of the march.

The ban, initiated by the mayor, was imposed on Dec. 7, 1994, to bar alleged "troublemakers" who the cops claimed were responsible for shoplifting and vandalism. None of the 21 people have ever been convicted of such charges.

For information on the victory rally, call the Greene County NAACP at (706) 453-7037.

Biggest NY budget cuts proposed since 1930s

Socialist candidate supports call for protests

BY ANDY BUCHANAN

NEW YORK — "The New York city and state so-called budget crises are not of working people's making," says Brock Satter, the Socialist Workers candidate for state assembly in the 68th Assembly District. "These are crises of today's depression-ridden capitalist economic system, and they must not be 'solved' at the expense of working people. My campaign opposes all cuts in city, state, and federal social services."

New York City mayor Rudolph Giuliani's February 14 announcement of his latest cutback proposals came hard on the heels of Gov. George Pataki's plan to slash \$5 billion from the state budget. Giuliani aims to cut city spending by \$1.3 billion. This is the largest cut in city spending since the Great Depression of the 1930s.

The following day, Pataki opened another front in the assault against working people by announcing legislation to reimpose the death penalty in the state of New York. The last execution in the state was carried out in 1963. The new law would impose death by lethal injection as the punishment for convictions on 10 categories of homicide and would limit the number of appeals allowed to poor inmates relying on

public defenders.

The socialist candidate will be campaigning against these attacks on working people as part of explaining why the work-

ing class and unions must build a social movement to oppose the march of capitalist ruling classes worldwide toward fas-

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February 22 student protest in New York City against cuts proposed by Governor Pataki

Militant/Hilda Cuzco

Crisis in Mexico intensifies capitalist uncertainty and instability worldwide

BY GREG ROSENBERG

Neither the occupation of Chiapas by the Mexican army nor the financial pact cooked up by Washington with the regime of President Ernesto Zedillo has stemmed the political, economic, and social crisis in Mexico and its widening reverberations worldwide. What began at the end of last year with the devaluation of the peso has developed into a festering wound on the body of world capitalism.

Two months later, the peso continues to

fall, and the dollar is being dragged down with it. Stock markets are declining throughout Latin America, and banking systems are reeling from Brazil to Argentina. The so-called bailout of Mexico is not only failing to calm financial markets there, but is guaranteeing a deep recession that will bring greater misery to tens of millions of workers and peasants. The package ensures accelerated pillage of Mexico's national patrimony and is destined to provoke unanticipated political

consequences and social explosions.

Political zigzags by Zedillo are yielding no stability, but instead adding to discontent among working people and to declining confidence in his regime among capitalists inside and outside the country. Since the Mexican army's advance in Chiapas became mired down just a few days after it was launched, Zedillo has rejected calls by the Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN) for a withdrawal from the region. Hundreds of thousands have poured out for demonstrations in Mexico City demanding an end to the occupation. Peasants are continuing protests for land.

Mortgaging Mexico

Mexican and U.S. officials came to terms February 21 on Washington's \$20 billion portion of a tenuous \$50 billion bailout. The deal, cobbled together by the Clinton administration, is largely a package of loan guarantees and currency swaps with few actual loans. Mexico City is never likely to see the vaunted \$50 billion.

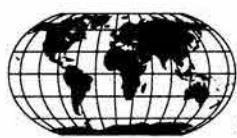
In fact, the *Wall Street Journal* noted, the pact "only extend[s] Mexico's cash crunch into the future. Eventually, Mexico must repay these debts. To do that, [Finance Minister Guillermo] Ortiz needs support from the financial markets and a resurgent economy, driven by a boom in Mexican exports." The agreement was signed by Ortiz and Clinton treasury secretary Robert Rubin, formerly of the Wall

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Troops in Chiapas, Mexico. Zedillo refuses to end occupation by armed forces.

Russia: economic free fall and war fuel political crisis—page 9



Scandal rocks banking in Japan

A top official from Japan's New Frontier Party resigned February 14, after news reports revealed he received huge sums of money from two credit unions that failed in 1994.

Japan's central bank, the Bank of Japan, announced in December it would set up a new bank to absorb more than \$1 billion lost from the two credit unions. The central bank said the move was necessary to insure stability in the nation's banking system, which has been weakened by collapsing land and stock prices in the 1990s.

CIA covers tracks in Japan

The U.S. State Department announced February 14 that the CIA is blocking the release of documents revealing covert activities in Japan. The Kennedy administration documents reportedly detail how the agency spent millions of dollars during the 1950s and '60s to help create and then prop up the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP).

The LDP dominated politics in Japan for 38 years until 1993, when a shakeout in capitalist political alignments was accelerated by several corruption scandals. According to the *New York Times* several prominent politicians benefited from the CIA's financial assistance.

N. Korea: no Seoul reactors

North Korean government officials have rejected nuclear reactors from South Korea as part of implementing an agreement with Washington last year to shut down its Soviet-designed reactors in exchange for new ones. If accepting reactors from Seoul is "U.S. policy, it will compel us to change our decision," said an unidentified official of North Korea's foreign ministry cited by the government news agency.

A U.S. government official replied that the South Korean reactors are "the only viable option." Talks between Pyongyang and Washington are scheduled to resume in March.

Tel Aviv to re-open border

The Israeli government announced February 16 that it would permit some 15,000 Palestinian workers from the West Bank and Gaza Strip to return to their jobs



Palestinian showing his identity card to Israeli border police February 17. Tel Aviv sealed the borders, barring more than 50,000 Palestinians from their jobs in Israel. Some 500 Palestinian workers protested February 16 at Erez border check point.

in Israel. More than 50,000 Palestinians traveled to work in Israel each day before Tel Aviv sealed its borders last month using the pretext of a Palestinian suicide bombing in which 21 Israelis were killed.

Tensions remain high among Palestinians in the West Bank over the expansion of Israeli settlements, especially around Jerusalem. The Israeli government's tacit encouragement of these settlements flies in the face of the agreement it signed with leaders of the Palestine Liberation Organization in 1993. Israeli prime minister Yitzhak Rabin is using the border closing to pressure the Palestinian Authority to come to terms on the settlements and crack down on those who oppose them.

In a related development, Raji Sourani, director of the Gaza Center for Rights and Law, was held for questioning by Palestinian police for 16 hours in mid-February. The organization had criticized Palestinian leader Yasir Arafat's decision to set up a military court as "the most serious violation of human rights" since the Palestinian administration was set up in May 1994.

Cairo condemns Israel on nukes

The Egyptian government has condemned Tel Aviv's refusal to sign the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty. Cairo, which in 1979 became the first Arab government to sign a peace treaty with Israel since the Zionist regime was established in 1948, condemned Tel Aviv's nuclear arsenal as a threat to Egyptian national security. The Egyptian government says it won't support renewing the nonproliferation treaty until the Israeli government signs it. Washington has threatened to reduce Egypt's annual \$2 billion in foreign aid if it persists in linking support for extension of the treaty to endorsement by Tel Aviv.

Paris loses fight on U.S. films

An informal meeting of government officials in European Union countries rejected Paris's proposals to impose tighter quotas on the screening of Hollywood films and other foreign productions by European television stations. The French government has sought a policy requiring general television channels to screen a minimum 51 percent of European-made programs. According to the *Financial Times* of London, the French culture minister argued that "the diversity of our culture will not be able to assert itself against uniformity unless we stand together." Some commentators suggest that profit considerations weigh more heavily than cultural ones on all sides of the dispute.

Minks mistaken for Russian subs

The Swedish government has disclosed that its 20-year-long campaign of shrill protests against intrusions by submarines into its territorial waters — primarily from the former Soviet Union and Russia — was based on mistaken identification of

sounds made by water-borne minks. The Swedish armed forces chief of staff said he could confirm there have been no violations of Sweden's territorial waters since 1992. A military researcher said the Swedish military has proven itself "to be lacking in competence."

Helms: No gay groups in gov't

U.S. senator Jesse Helms introduced a bill in January that would eliminate federal funds for any organizations or special programs organized by government employees who are gay. The bill would limit the activities of gay federal employees, including use of interoffice mail or posting of notices on bulletin boards.

In January the U.S. House of Representatives adopted a bill prohibiting elected officials from spending any federal funds on legislative caucuses such as the Congressional Black Caucus and the Women's Caucus. The Helms measure is the first to attempt to block federal funds for groups formed by civil service employees.

Strikes were up in 1994

According to the year-end report from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, major strikes — defined as those involving 1,000 or more workers — were up in 1994 from record lows the year before. Forty-five major strikes began in 1994, involving 322,000 workers and 5 million idled days. In 1993 there were 35 major strikes involving 182,000 workers and 4 million days of struck production. A nationwide Teamsters strike in the spring and the United Auto Workers strike against Caterpillar accounted for more than one-half of the idled days in 1994. Reflecting a modest strike wave that peaked in the middle of last year, 1994 had the largest number of major strikes since 1989 involving the most struck days since 1990.

Nuke plants to become dumps

A January 11 ruling in the U.S. Court of Appeals paved the way for nuclear power plants to store radioactive wastes indefinitely on their facilities without holding formal public hearings or conducting any environmental study. Nuclear reactors in the United States have produced 30,000 tons of high-level radioactive waste since the 1960s, according to officials in the U.S. Department of Energy. They estimate that by the second decade of the 21st century an additional 55,000 tons of waste will be generated.

The Palisades Nuclear Plant in Covert, Michigan, is erecting nine 16-foot-tall concrete casks to store its spent fuel. Last summer the Nuclear Regulatory Commission was warned by one of its own staff experts that the Palisades waste site was located on unstable sand dunes, was vulnerable to earthquakes, and was within 150 yards of Lake Michigan. A review of X-rays revealed flaws in the welds and "crack-like indications" in one of the casks.

— MAURICE WILLIAMS

THE MILITANT

What's happening in the unions?

Each week the 'Militant' carries reports on strikes, developments in the labor movement, and political discussions on the job from the United States and countries around the world. Unlike the big-business dailies, our correspondents are workers and unionists from the mines, mills, and factories themselves. Don't miss a single issue!



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Deepening Mexico crisis shakes world capitalism

Continued from front page

Street firm Goldman Sachs, which has billions invested in Mexico.

On news of the agreement, the Mexico City stock market fell nearly five percent — down 29 percent since January 1. The peso also dropped again, and ended up worth less than 18 cents. On December 19 a peso could be traded for 29 cents.

Washington and Wall Street are acting to protect wealthy bondholders on both sides of the border. They seek to avert a collapse of the banking system in Mexico — and beyond — and fend off explosive working-class and peasant protests in that country.

Chase Bank, for example, which has billions at stake in Mexico, issued a January 13 "Political Update" that argued "the government will need to eliminate the Zapatistas to demonstrate their effective control of the national territory and security policy." Chase added that "the Zedillo administration will need to consider carefully whether or not to allow opposition victories if fairly won at the ballot box."

The U.S. government is imposing onerous conditions on Mexico in the hope of long-term stabilization to build an export platform for U.S.-owned factories there. This includes acquiring, over time, growing direct control over land, labor, and natural resources in Mexico.

"We have very good collateral on this deal," President Bill Clinton gloated moments after the agreement was signed. "As collateral," Zedillo offered up Mexico's oil export revenues and control of government economic policy for the next decade.

Oil profits to Federal Reserve

The Mexican regime, at Washington's insistence, agreed that all importers of crude oil, oil products, and petrochemicals produced by Mexico's state-owned petroleum industry will deposit their payments into a special account at the Federal Reserve Bank in New York, and from there be (or not be) transferred to Mexico. In the event of a default on Mexican government bonds, the U.S. Treasury would grab the oil profits, which account for some \$7 billion annually.

U.S. officials also demanded and won from their pliant Mexican counterparts agreement to establish a draconian "tight money" policy guaranteed to produce sweeping austerity measures against workers and peasants. Washington will determine how any U.S. loans will be used. Mexico City must run a budget surplus this year, raise \$12 billion to \$14 billion through privatizations and concession operations over the next three years, tighten credit, and limit money growth to less than the rate of inflation.

As a first step, Wall Street joined U.S. officials in forcing the Banco de Mexico, the central bank, to raise interest rates to the usurious level of 50 percent on short-term loans. Bankers hope such high returns will stem the flow of capital from Mexico by making government debt more attractive to coupon clippers. But such rates also squeeze Mexican capitalists, while ruining entire layers of the middle class, workers, and peasants.

Mexico's banking system is in turmoil. Eight of 18 major banks are reportedly on the brink of collapse. Six of the country's main banks reported losses of up to 1,500 percent in the last quarter of 1994. *La Jornada* of Mexico City reported the losses have "placed these institutions in a delicate financial balance."

The Clinton-Zedillo pact will allow the Mexican government to use a small portion of the \$20 billion package to try to shore up the banking system, prevent defaults on billions of dollar in deposits, and avert a disastrous bank run. "The banking problem will be with us for a long, long time," predicted one senior U.S. official.

Massive recession on the way

To enforce Washington's edicts, Mexico's ruling families will have to impose belt-tightening policies that will plunge the country into a deep recession. The seeds of this have already been sown in the initial repercussions from the peso's tumble.

Much economic activity has simply frozen. Construction is near zero. Sales of new trucks dropped by 86 percent in January, and bus sales skidded by 66 percent. Mercedes-Benz shut down its two assembly plants for three weeks in January.

First multimillion dollar default

On February 15, shudders ran through the capitalist world when Grupo Sidek, a construction and tourism conglomerate, became the first big company to default on its debt since the peso crisis began. That raised fears of wholesale corporate debt default.

When the Sidek failed to meet its \$19.5 million debt payment, investors on Mexico City's *Bolsa de Valores* sent its stock share prices plunging by 24 percent, and dragged the entire market down more than 6 percent.

"The question is how many more corporations are going to miss their payments," said one Merrill Lynch analyst. "What will be the impact on the banking system? Things are going to get worse before they get better."

Living standards for working people have nose-dived since December, when there were already 40 million people living below the official poverty line. Close to two-thirds of all workers take home less than \$7 a day. But with inflation soaring to 45 percent, it's not just imported goods that have risen in price. Capitalist concerns and middlemen are also jacking up prices in hopes of offsetting their losses. Everything from razor blades to medicine prices have shot up. Soap, meat, and milk prices have increased, and sugar, although it is produced domestically, costs more. Gasoline prices are expected to rise 10 percent this year.

Interimperialist competition

In addition to Washington's \$20 billion in credits and swaps, \$17.8 billion in credits are to be advanced by the International Monetary Fund. Several Latin American governments and Canada are supposed to loan Mexico City several billion dollars. And about \$10 billion is to be advanced by other imperialist governments, with any losses to be absorbed by central banks.

The Clinton administration, however, was pulled up short on its call for international cooperation to "solve" the crisis. In fact, the peso devaluation and its consequences are exacerbating rivalries between Washington, London, Paris, Bonn, and Tokyo. Lack of confidence over the Washington-Mexico City deal was the major factor in sending the dollar to a two-year low against the German mark. Wealthy traders have been fleeing the dollar, and German capitalists have been reaping the benefits.

At an IMF board meeting at the end of January, the Clinton package met with stiff resistance, as other capitalist governments complained about footing the bill for Washington's problems. U.S. officials finally won the vote to get other central banks to pledge to stand behind some of the Mexican debt. Afterwards, however, British and German representatives asked to be recorded as abstaining from the vote.

"Clinton goes to the press and says the Fund will do this and that. It was just not acceptable. We are not banana republics," said a senior European official.

"It is in nobody's interest to see the package collapse," said a German government representative, "but it had to be made clear that this must not happen again."

'Peso contagion'

The Mexico crisis continues to reverberate throughout Latin America, in what is being called "peso contagion."

Stock markets in Brazil and Argentina have fallen almost every day in February. The Buenos Aires index fell nearly 7 percent February 16, and Argentina's economy minister predicted that only half the country's 190 banks would survive till the end of the decade. Panic over Mexico has forced a \$2 billion run on Argentina's banks since December. According to the *New York Times*, "there is also concern

that Brazil's new currency, the *real*, is overvalued by at least 25 percent."

A small but vocal layer of capitalist investors and journals in the United States has begun to campaign for the imposition of a so-called currency board on Mexico. A currency board would fix the value of the peso at a certain ratio to the dollar and be backed peso for peso by dollar reserves.

"The Mexican government and the central bank would give up all discretionary power to pump up the money supply or to act as a lender of last resort," said the editors of *Business Week* in agitating for their proposal, which — with imperial arrogance — they headlined "Putting the Peso on a Short Leash." "The PACTO, the annual agreement on wages and prices, would have to be abolished. And state-owned assets would have to be sold off to the private sector to sop up pesos."

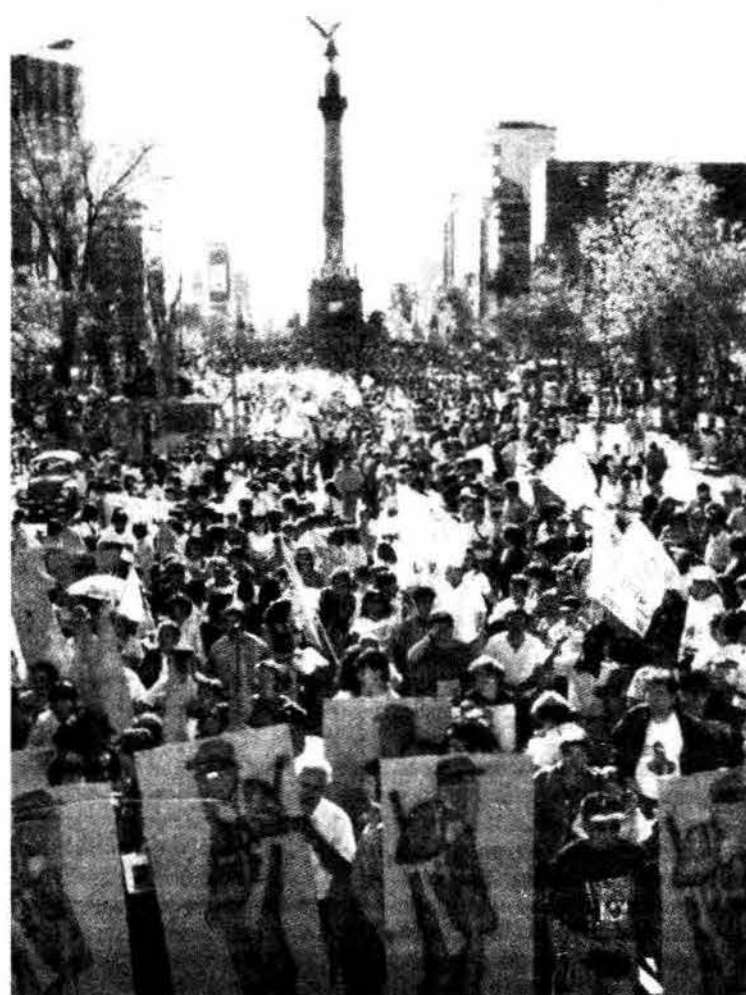
While such a currency regime would get some capital flowing toward Mexico in the short term, history has shown it would implode at any serious crisis of confidence, economic or political, resulting in a massive sprint from pesos to dollars.

No resolution in Chiapas

Popular opposition is mounting to the Zedillo regime. On February 18, some 200,000 protesters, many of them young, turned out in Mexico City to denounce the government's moves against the peasant rebellion in the southern region of Chiapas and the dispatch of the Mexican army.

Zedillo has rejected EZLN demands that the army withdraw from its occupation of towns and cities throughout Chiapas. EZLN spokespeople said they would not even consider Zedillo's proposal to negotiate while troops remain in the region.

Meanwhile, EZLN guerrillas have moved deeper into the Lacandon jungle. Only two clashes have been reported, one of them in which an army colonel was shot.



Demonstration of more than 100,000 people in Mexico City opposing military occupation of Chiapas. Zedillo's moves to quell peasant rebellion and paint regime as "democratic" have failed. The accord signed by the Mexican regime and Washington demands sweeping new attacks on workers and peasants.

In a related development, the Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD), a liberal capitalist opposition party, withdrew its support for the Chiapas "rebel government in transition" — headed by its own candidate in last year's elections — and formally recognized the rule of PRI governor Julio Cesar Ruiz. Ruiz was installed February 14 by Zedillo, following the resignation under pressure of the previous PRI governor who was widely believed to have rigged the recent vote.

Zedillo's attempt to pretty-up Mexico's capitalist regime and the PRI as being on the path of democratic reform suffered an embarrassing blow February 20, when the government's own human rights commission reported police torture of captured EZLN supporters.

Press access to areas under army occupation remains severely restricted. An Amnesty International statement said that eight people who had been captured were beaten by the army.

One said she had been threatened with the torture or death of her two-year-old son, and then forced to sign papers she could not see. Another reported that she was stripped, beaten, and subjected to electric shocks.

The coming austerity measures are sure to be met with resistance by working people and youth. The annual pact on wages and prices expires on March 3. According to an article in *La Jornada*, the University Student Council of Mexico's autonomous universities has called for national strikes and protests.

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All-out drive needed to sell 236 copies of Marxist magazine

BY NAOMI CRAINE

Immigrant rights demonstrations, tables at college campuses, door-to-door visits, and intensive calling to subscribers — all these are among the detailed plans supporters of the socialist press in Los Angeles have laid out for the last 10 days of February.

This is the kind of effort it will take across North America and around the world to make the international campaign goals by selling 236 more copies of issue no. 10 of the Marxist magazine *New International* (the total goal is 1,500); 7 more *Militant* renewals (the goal is 320), and 59 *Perspectiva Mundial* renewals (the goal is 80). The sales drive ends February 28.

The February 18-26 target week — during which distributors worldwide are making a special effort to get the sales campaign back on schedule — got off to a good start in Los Angeles. Three copies of the recent issue of *New International* were sold at a February 18 immigrant rights march of 700-800. This was the largest action in defense of immigrant rights since the passage of the reactionary Proposition 187 last November. Another copy was purchased that night at a *Militant* Labor Forum on Malcolm X.

Other *New International* supporters from Los Angeles and Tucson, Arizona, traveled to Phoenix that day to take part in a protest against a Proposition 187-type proposal in Arizona.

The plan for the rest of the week includes all-day teams to local campuses every day to sell the socialist publications. Other teams will call subscribers to sell them renewals and copies of *New International* no. 10 and go door-to-door in a neighborhood where many subscribers live. These efforts will especially focus on reaching *Perspectiva Mundial* subscribers. Renewals to the Spanish-language monthly have lagged behind those to the *Militant*. The Los Angeles supporters also decided to raise their *Militant* renewal goal from 20 to 25.

Target-week plans in Des Moines, Iowa, include attending hearings on hog farming. Small farmers in Iowa have been fighting attempts by large capitalist agribusiness to impose large-scale contract farming on them. *New International* supporters also plan to visit the picket lines where rubber workers are on strike against Bridgestone/Firestone, as well as



Militant/Jacque Henderson

Socialist campaign and sales table in New York February 20

get out to university campuses in the region.

A sales team in Twin Cities, Minnesota, reported selling a renewal subscription to the *Militant*, a copy of *New International* no. 10, a single copy of the socialist newsweekly, and a copy of the Pathfinder pamphlet *Farmers Face the Crisis of the 1990s* at the 10th annual meeting of Groundswell, an organization of working farmers based in southwestern Minnesota.

"The farmer who bought the copy of *New International* is very interested in economics, and knows that the big problems threatening the survival of working farmers are getting worse," reports Jon Hillson. "He bought the *New International* because it deals with the big questions he's trying to figure out." The new issue of the magazine features the articles "What the 1987 stock market crash foretold" and "Imperialism's march toward fascism and war," as well as an article titled "Defending Cuba, defending Cuba's socialist revolution."

A particular effort is still needed to reach the goals for sales to members of industrial unions. Supporters in some areas are combining reaching unionists with their other political work. A sales team to Union Point, Georgia, during an important fight against racism, sold eight copies of the *Militant* to members of the Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union at hosiery mills there and in nearby Greensboro,

Georgia.

Megan Arney, a student from Minneapolis, and Cathleen Gutekanst, a member of the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers from San Francisco, found a lot of interest among striking workers and others during a five-day *Militant* sales and reporting team in central Illinois.

At the Diamond Star auto plant outside Bloomington, Illinois, a worker who stopped to talk to the sales team said, "Of course I know the *Militant*. I'm a Caterpillar striker. I'm just working here now." He and two other workers there bought copies of the socialist paper. A sales table at the Illinois State University campus in Bloomington also netted sales of the *Militant*.

The most recent *New International* sale in Greece was to a youth who came to a forum on Chechnya sponsored by supporters of the *Militant* in Athens. This new reader wants to help translate the articles in *New International* no. 10 into Greek.

February 28, the last day of the drive, is a Tuesday, normally the deadline for reports on sales and renewals. To give us the best shot at celebrating in next week's issue that the international goals have been met on time and in full — and have gone over the top — we are extending the time for reporting *New International* sales and subscription renewals. Reports will be received at the business office until noon E.S.T. Wednesday, March 1.

Cuba activists speak to workers in Illinois

BY BETSY FARLEY

DECATUR, Illinois — "I didn't expect there would be so much interest in Cuba," said Danen Vance after speaking to two union meetings in this central Illinois town in early February. Vance is one of three young people whose passports were seized by U.S. Customs agents upon returning from the two-week International Youth Brigade to Cuba in January.

Vance and Ken Riley, a national leader of the brigade, attended the weekly meeting of the Workers Solidarity and Educational Coalition, as well as the open meeting of the United Paperworkers International Union (UPIU) local locked out by A.E. Staley Mfg. Co. Striking workers from Caterpillar and Bridge-

stone/Firestone, organized respectively by the United Auto Workers and United Rubber Workers (URW), were also present at both meetings.

"We received a warm welcome from Cuban working people and youth," Vance told the unionists. "This was in stark contrast to the way we were treated by our own government when we returned."

Workers at both meetings had lots of questions about the economy, unions, and the working class in Cuba. Riley responded to one question from the wife of a locked-out Staley worker about the strength of Cuban unions and how labor disputes are settled in Cuba.

Riley explained that the workers and farmers in Cuba are the rulers. "The government is theirs,"

he said. "Workers have played a central role in the discussions about how to get through the crisis and move Cuba forward. In meetings called workers parliaments, workers discussed the problem of production and set goals."

Several workers here were surprised to learn of the U.S. government trade embargo and restrictions against travel to Cuba. "What is the reason for our government's policy?" asked a URW member.

"It's because the U.S. government doesn't want us to know the truth about Cuba," Vance responded. "And they want to starve the Cuban people into submission. But like the strikers in Decatur, Cuban workers will keep fighting for what they believe in," he said.

Several unionists at both meet-

		Sold to date: 82%			Should be: 90%		
		New International no. 10			Militant renewals		Perspectiva Mundial renewals
		goal	sold	percent	goal	sold	goal
Australia							
		16	15	94%	9	7	2
New Zealand							
Wellington		3	4	133%	5	5	0
Auckland		30	26	87%	10	9	1
Christchurch*		20	17	85%	8	6	0
Total		53	47	89%	23	20	1
Canada							
Toronto		50	44	88%	15	14	—
Vancouver		35	30	86%	8	5	1
Montreal		45	37	82%	12	13	3
Total		130	111	85%	35	32	4
Britain							
London		55	46	84%	15	9	2
Manchester		40	33	83%	15	6	—
Total		95	79	83%	30	15	2
United States							
Atlanta*		40	38	95%	12	7	2
Miami		35	34	97%	13	8	6
Philadelphia		50	47	94%	12	8	3
Houston		25	23	92%	8	5	2
San Francisco		90	79	88%	16	19	5
Seattle		40	35	88%	12	6	2
Cleveland*		30	26	87%	10	9	3
Los Angeles		100	85	85%	25	22	10
Peoria, IL		20	17	85%	6	6	0
Morgantown, WV		25	21	84%	4	5	0
Twin Cities, MN		50	42	84%	14	8	2
Washington, DC		45	38	84%	10	16	3
Des Moines, IA*		40	33	83%	9	5	4
Boston		45	36	80%	12	13	4
Greensboro, NC		35	28	80%	7	6	2
Chicago		50	38	76%	15	9	3
New York		100	76	76%	13	13	4
Salt Lake City		45	34	76%	13	11	3
Pittsburgh		40	30	75%	11	10	2
Birmingham, AL		40	29	73%	8	3	2
Detroit		40	29	73%	11	10	2
Newark, NJ		100	72	72%	12	14	3
Brooklyn		100	70	70%	12	7	4
Cincinnati		5	1	20%	—	0	—
Tucson, AZ		5	1	20%	—	0	—
Other		—	20	—	—	6	—
Total U.S.		1195	982	82%	265	226	71
Greece		5	4	80%	4	4	—
Sweden		15	12	80%	7	4	3
Iceland		4	3	75%	5	5	0
France		20	10	50%	—	—	—
Puerto Rico		2	1	50%	0	0	2
International Total		1535	1264	82%	378	313	83
SHOULD BE		1500	1350	90%	320	288	80
In the Unions							
UFCW		5	5	100%	—	2	—
UMWA		10	7	70%	—	0	—
UTU		55	34	62%	24	20	—
ACTWU/ILGWU		20	12	60%	11	0	—
USWA		20	12	60%	—	0	—
IAM		40	23	58%	—	8	—
OCAW*		40	21	53%	—	8	—
UAW		60	31	52%	—	3	—
Total		250	145	58%	35	41	0
*raised goal							

ACTWU — Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union; IAM — International Association of Machinists; ILGWU — International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union; OCAW — Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers; UAW — United Auto Workers; UFCW — United Food and Commercial Workers; UMWA — United Mine Workers of America; USWA — United Steelworkers of America; UTU — United Transportation Union.

ings signed letters to U.S. government officials protesting the passport seizures and demanding their immediate return. Two workers at the UPIU meeting indicated interest in going on the next brigade to Cuba to see for themselves.

Following the discussion at the

UPIU event, union vice president Dike Ferris thanked Vance and Riley for "bringing the world to us tonight. We get so involved with our own problems. It's good to learn about struggles of working people in other countries for a change."

Protests slam U.S. ban on Cuba travel

BY DAMON TINNON

"The Freedom of Press is a constitutional right which must be honored and protected at all costs. The U.S. Government has trampled this right by seizing the passports of three youth who traveled legally to Cuba as credentialed journalists," explained Edwin Felien, editor of Minneapolis newspaper *Southside Pride*, in a letter to John Shattuck, assistant secretary of state for human rights.

Felien's letter is part of a protest campaign against the U.S. government's seizure of the passports of three young people returning from Cuba on January 21 and 22 at O'Hare airport in Chicago. Dannen Vance, Sukul Baul, and Aislinn Pulley — along with other participants in the International Youth Brigade to Cuba and their supporters — are working to get more protest letters from organizations and individuals outraged by the U.S. government's actions. They are also collecting donations at public meetings to cover the legal costs of their defense, estimated at \$5,000.

So far, more than 70 letters have been sent to U.S. government offices, and \$640 has been raised.

"As Press, we must unanimously condemn any action by the U.S. government which inhibits us from gathering and reporting news, any action taken by Washington which undermines democracy," Felien said in his letter. *Southside Pride* sent Lisa Rottach of Minneapolis to Cuba on editorial assignment as part of the brigade.

U.S. senator Tom Harkin of Iowa responded to a request by Vance that Harkin look into the matter and help secure the return of the passports. "I have asked [U.S. Customs official Jackie] Motley to review the documents you provided me, and return your passport as soon as possible," Harkin responded. Vance was reporting for the *Valley Courier* newspaper of Clive, Iowa, near Des Moines.

"This is definitely an attack on the First Amendment right to freedom of speech, press and travel," said Rodney Gayle, chairperson of the Student Political Organizing Committee of the Africana Student Cultural Center at the University of Minnesota, in his protest letter. "It is a sad and miscalculated error to punish these young minds for wanting to learn more about Cuba, and the world for that matter."

Jamil Salaam, another brigade participant, is a member of the Africana student center.

Letters of protest have also come from organizations in other countries. Dierdre Kelly, coordinator of the Office of Social Justice of the Diocese of Victoria Pastoral Centre in Victoria, British Columbia, sent a letter to Secretary of State Warren Christopher.

"Can you explain to me why these young people were treated in such a way by U.S. Customs, and further, why were their passports seized?" she inquired.

Last August, the U.S. Treasury Department — using the "rafter crisis" as a rationalization to step up aggression against



Militant/Angel Lariscy

Dannen Vance, Aislinn Pulley, and Sukul Baul, whose passports have been seized.

Cuba — tightened existing restrictions on travel to and from Cuba.

The new regulations bar most family visits to Cuba by Cuban-Americans and blocks them from sending money to relatives in Cuba. The regulations also limit who is eligible for journalist status, one of the few categories under which people are allowed to travel legally to Cuba.

Most other travel to Cuba is prohibited by virtue of regulations making it illegal for U.S. residents to spend money on the island.

Brigade leader Ken Riley of Brooklyn,

New York, will be speaking at Vassar College in Poughkeepsie, New York, February 23 to win more support for the campaign and to speak the truth about Cuba.

Another brigade leader, Jack Willey, was interviewed in the February 17 issue of *Noticias De Los Pueblos*, the Spanish edition of the mass circulation *Daily News* in New York. The interview quotes Willey as explaining the importance of travel to Cuba. We go to "find out the truth," Willey said, "because the news about Cuba published in the U.S. is mostly biased."

Twin Cities, L.A. events hear reports of Cuba trip

BY JON HILLSON

ST. PAUL, Minnesota — "I saw a country organized on the basis of what's good for the masses of people, not an elite," said Aislinn Pulley to a packed meeting of the Militant Labor Forum here February 18.

"That's the 'threat' Cuba represents to the United States. That's what the U.S. government doesn't want us to see. That's why they took our passports."

Pulley is one of three members on an International Youth Brigade to Cuba whose passports were seized by U.S. Customs officials as they returned from Cuba in January. Pulley, a student at Chicago's Lane Tech high school, and Sukul Baul, an Illinois State University in Bloomington student who also had his passport seized, were joined on the panel by five young people from Minneapolis-St. Paul who participated in the two-week, 70-member brigade. In addition to 50 from the United States, brigade members came from Britain, Canada, Iceland, Germany, France, and Mexico.

Pulley, 15, described her detention by customs agents at O'Hare International Airport. "They said I need a special letter from the State Department recognizing my credentials. But this is false. There is no such letter. Journalists don't get them to go to Vietnam, China, or Russia," Pulley noted. Officials detained Pulley for three and a half hours, finally letting her mother join her after protest.

A display at the forum featured protest messages to Assistant Secretary of State for Human Rights John Shattuck demanding the three passports be returned. A party, raffle, and collection raised \$400 to offset costs for the brigade and legal fight.

"I didn't know much about Cuba," Baul, 21, explained. "I'd heard of Ricky Ricardo [the role played by Cuban actor Desi Arnaz in the 1950s television show 'I Love Lucy']."

Baul said that before he left the United States he had visited Decatur, the Illinois town where workers are engaged in bitter struggles against the Caterpillar, Bridge-stone/Firestone, and A.E. Staley companies. "In Decatur, I was shown pictures of people sitting in the streets, with police in full riot gear spraying them with pepper gas. I remembered that picture in Cuba."

There, Baul saw a country where people supported the government. "They worked with each other for everyone's benefit. I saw the truth with my eyes, not what some journalists making \$100,000 a year write

in *Time* magazine." Baul's articles are appearing in the *Daily Vidette* in Bloomington.

The forum also heard reports from the five Minnesota brigadistas. The group had worked alongside members of the Union of Young Communists (UJC) for several days on a banana farm in Ciego de Avila clearing weeds and trimming trees. The difficult work created a climate for wide-ranging discussions between the Cubans and visiting youth.

Meagan Arney, writing for *Minnesota Today*, and Ingrid Osteena, a correspondent for *Insight News*, both said they had been "unprepared" for the impact of seeing begging and prostitution. These social phenomena are linked to serious economic problems in Cuba, Arney noted, as well as "the impact of capitalist businesses like tourism."

Lisa Rottach, who is writing for *Southside Pride*, explained that support for the revolutionary government remains high, a fact that journals like *Time* magazine are "forced to admit. They state that 'Castro is still popular.' But when they say 'Castro,' they mean millions of workers and farmers who refuse to sell Cuba to the highest bidder, and continue to defend a government that's theirs."

"We're very proud to be on the top of the U.S. foreign policy 'to do' list for 36 years," Rottach was told by one young Cuban, referring to the triumph of the revolution in 1959. Such attitudes are more widespread in rural areas than in the capital, Havana, where, she said, you run into a broader range of responses to the revolution and its problems.

Ryan Kelly, a University of Minnesota student who is reporting on the trip for *The Spokesman*, noted similar experiences.

Talking with the young Cubans helped "further my thinking about the relationship between Black nationalism and socialism," noted Jamil Salaam, a University of Minnesota student who is reporting for *Insight News*.

"I'd heard of Ernesto Che Guevara before, but never read him," Salaam said. But "all these Cubans talked about him, and now I've got to study him." Such is decisive, said Salaam, because his experiences in Cuba convinced him that the revolution is alive and setting an example for the world.

"The Cuban revolution proves," Salaam said, "that we can organize, that we can confront crisis, that we can make a change."

BY VANESSA KNAPTON

LOS ANGELES — Seven young people, just back from the International Youth Brigade to Cuba, described their experiences to 65 people at the Militant Labor Forum here February 11.

Speaking were Roger Calero, a leader of the Young Socialists; Eric Winston, a recent graduate of the University of California (UC), Santa Barbara; Elena Briones, a member of La Fuerza Unida and a student at Claremont College; Ana Rivadbeyra, an exchange student from Spain at UC-Santa Barbara; Floyd Taylor, 28, a member of the United Transportation Union; and YS members Jennifer Banathy, 20; Jeanne Tuomey, 19, a student at UC-Santa Cruz; and Laura Anderson.

Winston described his discussions with Afro-Cubans about the history of racism in Cuba.

Before the revolution, he said, segregation of schools, hospitals, hotels, and other facilities was institutionalized in Cuba, much like the Jim Crow system in the United States at that time.

The revolution made such racist practices illegal and enforced this, Winston said, and did much to change people's attitude toward one another, especially among the generations born and raised in socialist Cuba.

But with the return of the tourist industry and revival of the use of dollars, Winston said, instances of racial inequality have begun to increase.

Foreign capitalist corporations that operate hotels practice discrimination in hiring Afro-Cubans for certain kinds of jobs in hotels, Winston was told, and there's a rise in tourist-related prostitution, including among women of color.

Briones said she was thrilled by a performance of Cuban and African dance by children at a cultural studies center. "Children are being taught to love and respect their culture. They're being taught: This is where you're from. Look how glorious it is." As the daughter of Mexican immigrants, she said, this struck her deeply. "In the United States I have been denied my culture," Briones declared.

Laura Anderson described her experience living for a week at a home in Havana with members from three generations of a family. Older members, some of whom had gone hungry before the revolution, described Cuba's rationing system as a "blessing." Despite shortages, they said, none has gone hungry since the revolution, since the ration card gives everyone

access to whatever is available.

Anderson also recalled the joy of a Cuban agricultural worker when he said, "I never realized there were groups in the United States fighting like us, with the same ideology as us."

The audience contributed \$200 to the passport fight. Since the forum, brigade participants in southern California have presented a slide show at one college campus and scheduled two house meetings with rail workers and oil workers to discuss Cuba.

Protest seizure of passports

U.S. Customs Officials seized the passports of three young people returning from Cuba on January 21 and 22. The three, Dannen Vance, Sukul Baul, and Aislinn Pulley, were part of an International Youth Brigade to Cuba. All the brigade participants were on editorial assignments for local media from their cities and were covering the economic and political situation in Cuba. Brigade organizers ask that letters protesting the undemocratic passport seizures and demanding their immediate return be sent to those listed below with copies to the International Youth Brigade to Cuba, P.O. Box 1801, New York, NY 10009, phone (212) 677-4356.

Messages can be sent to:

Warren Christopher
Secretary of State
Tel: 202-647-5298
Fax: 202-647-6434

Richard Newcomb
Director
Office of Foreign Assets Control
U.S. Department of Treasury
Annex 2233
1500 Pennsylvania Ave., NW
Washington, D.C. 20220
Tel: 202-622-2510
Fax: 202-622-1657

John Shattuck
Assistant Secretary of State
for Human Rights
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street, NW, Room 7802
Washington, D.C.
Tel: 202-647-2126
Fax: 202-647-9519

'Join rally against D.C. cutbacks,' says socialist candidate

BY BRIAN WILLIAMS

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Under orders from Wall Street, government officials are accelerating their attacks on democratic rights and social programs vital to working people here.

A coalition of organizations in the city has called a demonstration for March 7 to oppose the budget cuts. The action, initiated by the D.C. Community Action Network, is to take place outside a city council meeting being held to consider Mayor Marion Barry's latest budget-slashing proposals.

On February 14, a major Wall Street rating agency, Standard & Poor's, reduced the city's credit status to near junk-bond level, affecting \$1 billion of the total \$3.4 billion D.C. government bonds still outstanding. Moody's Investors Service Inc. followed suit the next day.

In response, Democrat Eleanor Holmes Norton, D.C.'s nonvoting delegate to the House of Representatives, issued a call February 16 for Congress to create an appointed financial and management control board with broad authority to make spend-

ing decisions.

"The board will have complete power to do what has to be done," said Norton. "It is going to hurt. It is going to be painful....Some of the things that have to be done are not pretty." She made clear that the board's role would be to implement further drastic cuts in the city's workforce and social programs. Mayor Barry immediately endorsed the proposal, as did Republican representative James Walsh, chairman of the House subcommittee that has the decisive say on District finances.

Socialist candidate blasts cutbacks

"Wall Street is demanding more drastic and rapid stripping from the budget of programs that benefit working people and youth," said Greg McCartan, Socialist Workers candidate for D.C. City Council, "and the Democratic and Republican officials in Congress and the city administration have agreed to implement it." McCartan is running in city council Ward 8, where a special election is being held to fill the vacancy left when Barry was elected mayor.

A member of United Steelworkers of America Local 11322, McCartan blasted the move to impose an emergency financial control board over the city. The move, he said, is "an attack on the democratic rights of D.C. residents that's aimed at gutting union contracts and the social wage of the working class."

"What's needed," stated McCartan, "is a united response led by the labor movement to turn back these cuts. The March 7 protest action can be an important step in bringing together working people and youth affected by the bipartisan attack on social programs."

Supporters of the socialist election campaign have been petitioning to place McCartan's name on the May 2 ballot. They turned in 818 signatures February 22, well over the 500 required.

Meanwhile, Mayor Barry met with House Speaker Newt Gingrich February 17 at the offices of Empower America, the



Washington, D.C., mayor Marion Barry. Wall Street and the two parties in Congress are demanding draconian cuts in social programs that benefit working people.

conservative group led by former federal housing secretary Jack Kemp. Barry and Gingrich discussed ideas for turning parts of the city into "enterprise zones," where huge tax breaks would be granted to corporations and low wages and horrendous job conditions imposed on working people.

The same day, Barry outlined an additional \$224 million in social service cuts. Aimed at the most vulnerable sections of the working class, Barry's plan calls for disbanding the 108-person street-cleaning crew; cutting municipal services for homebound senior citizens by up to 50 percent; forcing the working poor who rely on city-subsidized day care to pay more; giving residents of halfway houses two meals a day instead of three; forcing heroine addicts to pay for methadone treatment; and cutting the city's grant to the Special Olympics for mentally retarded children.

Some trade union officials, leaders of community organizations, and several city council members, while coming out against some of the steepest budget cuts, have focused on making business "pay their fair share."

A rally slated for February 22 will demand that the tax exemption for the Fannie Mae corporation be lifted, allowing the city to collect \$300 million a year in addi-

tional property taxes.

Others are focusing the blame on a Republican-controlled Congress, building support for events to "show your support for the District of Columbia and self-determination," adding that Congress should "Respect Home Rule — It's A Capital Idea."

Under the "Home Rule Charter" adopted in 1974, residents of this city were allowed by Congress to elect a mayor and city council. But actual control remains with Congress and the president. For example, all budgets must be formally approved by Congress, which has routinely stripped out items such as funding for abortions for poor women.

'Home rule' charter a fraud

"The charter was a fraud," McCartan said. "It had nothing to do with home rule. The charter was meant to divert the struggle waged by working people since the 1930s for real home rule, including statehood and voting representatives in Congress elected on the same basis as in the 50 states," the socialist candidate said.

The lack of any substance to what is called "home rule" in D.C., McCartan said, is underlined by the proposal that Congress now impose a board directly beholden to the bondholders to make all city budget decisions.

"Working people need to oppose such a move," he said, "but doing so in the name of defending the current setup as some kind of 'home rule' just perpetuates the denial of rights and subordination of the needs and interests of Blacks, workers, and youth to the interests of the wealthy minority."

Workers should also reject the "shared sacrifice" approach pushed by Democratic and Republican politicians alike, McCartan said. "Working people and youth in this city don't have to come up with 'solutions' to balance local, state, and federal budgets. We didn't create this crisis and it shouldn't be 'solved' at our expense."

"Working people need to build a movement based on the unions that advances demands to defend the rights, standard of living, and social wage won by our struggles over the decades."

"Measures that unify us along these lines include shortening the workweek with no cut in pay to spread the available work around; demanding that Social Security be extended, not eroded, to provide lifetime protection against the ravages of the capitalist economic crisis; strict enforcement of affirmative action in education, housing, and employment; and solidarity with others fighting the same kinds of assaults around the world."

"Such a fighting perspective can only be effective if it is done on an international scale," the socialist candidate said. "But we in D.C. can set an example for others to follow by mounting such a struggle here."

The March 7 budget cut protest action will begin at 12:00 noon at Freedom Plaza, located at Pennsylvania Avenue and 14th Street, NW. For more information call: 202-393-1909.

Brian Williams is a member of United Food and Commercial Workers Local 27 in Cheverly, Maryland.



Militant/Dave Wulp
Socialist candidate Greg McCartan

Stingiest city budget in N.Y. since 1930s

Continued from front page

cism and a third world war. Satter, 24, is a garment worker and member of the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union. He is running in a special election in the 68th Assembly District, centered in the predominantly Puerto Rican community of East Harlem, that was called following the death of incumbent Angel del Toro. Voting will be March 14.

Actions and meetings opposing the deep cuts in social spending are beginning to be organized in New York City and across the state. Students in the city and state university systems are taking a lead in these protests. Slogans proclaiming "Patakkki sucks!" "Stop the war against students," "Pataki to students—Drop dead!" are posted on bulletin boards and grace the headlines of campus newspapers. A meeting at Manhattan's Bernard M. Baruch College called to discuss the history of the Black Panther Party turned into a discussion of the need to organize a fight back against the cuts.

The current round of protests will culminate in a February 27 rally at the state legislature in Albany. Buses to Albany are being organized from State University of New York and City University of New York (CUNY) campuses, as well as from a number of private colleges.

"Supporters of the Socialist Workers campaign will be working to build these protest actions," Satter said in a statement announcing his candidacy. "As we do so, we will advance a perspective of uniting and mobilizing all working people in opposition to these cuts. My supporters and I will use the campaign as a voice for the resistance that is developing. I urge everyone to join the student protesters in

Albany."

Satter also strongly condemned the effort to reinstitute what he called "legalized murder" in the state of New York. "This barbaric practice is a weapon the capitalists hold over workers and youth to terrorize us and try to keep us in our place," Satter said. "My supporters will urge working people and the labor movement to say 'no' to the death penalty in New York and demand an immediate halt to executions in every state of the union."

The city administration's ax will fall most heavily on Medicaid and other welfare programs with a \$1.2 billion cut. Altogether, the mayor proposes to slash almost 25 percent from this year's spending on welfare and other social services. Only the cops will be spared, with Giuliani proposing a 7 percent spending increase in the police budget.

"New York has too many hospital beds," Giuliani says, and "spends too much money on Medicaid."

Dennis Rivera, president of Local 1199 of the National Health and Human Services Employees Union, estimates the combined impact of cuts in state and city Medicaid programs will result in a loss of 100,000 health-care jobs statewide. One or more of the 11 city hospitals may be closed.

Responding to the slump in revenues signaled by these cuts, the Standard & Poor's credit rating agency warned it may downgrade the credit rating on bonds issued by the Health and Hospital Corp.

The city and state cutbacks will have a devastating effect on education. CUNY chancellor W. Ann Reynolds estimates that more than 1,000 full-time professors and hundreds of other workers will be laid

off. Tuition fees will rise by around \$1,000 and a range of financial assistance programs will be cut. Cuts in the education budget will force public schools to eliminate programs and are likely to result in teacher layoffs as well.

In addition to these cuts, Giuliani proposes to wrest \$600 million in concessions from municipal employees and to cut the city payroll by 11,000. Leaders of unions representing municipal workers hope to trade an agreement to reduce employee health and other benefits for a promise to avoid further layoffs.

Stanley Hill, a leader of the American Federation of State City and Municipal Employees District Council 37, the largest municipal union in New York, said, "I know there is a tough budget out there....The mayor is going to explain what's out there, and we're going to listen."



Militant/Salm Kolis
Socialist candidate Brock Satter

YSers defend Cuba, talk socialism in New Zealand

This column is written and edited by the Young Socialists, an international organization of young workers, students, and other youth fighting for socialism. For more information about the YS or to join write: Young Socialists, P.O. Box 2396, New York, NY 10009, or call (212) 475-6482.

BY NATHAN SIMMS

CHRISTCHURCH, New Zealand — Participants at the first national meeting of the Young Socialists in New Zealand focused their discussion on defense of the Cuban revolution and sales of the *Militant* and other socialist publications to young people in factories and on university campuses.

The meeting was held during the fifth constitutional convention of the Communist League in Auckland February 4-6. This was the first opportunity for Young

Socialists in New Zealand to meet and talk together at a national level. Bill Estrada from the Los Angeles YS attended the meeting, as well as a representative of the Young Socialists from Australia.

The meeting elected Annalucia Vermunt as the national coordinator and set up a system of local and national finances.

During the weekend, Matthew Walker, a student from Canterbury University in Christchurch, decided to join the Young Socialists. He attended the Communist League convention and took part in the Young Socialists meeting.

Walker said, "I wanted to join so I could be a part of YS activities this year, including the UJC [Union of Young Communists of Cuba] tour and the Youth Brigade to Cuba."

Coming out of the meeting, the Young Socialists in New Zealand have a number of activities planned. These include setting

up YS literature tables on universities and building educational discussions with students to discuss what communism is, explain the truth about Cuba, and other topics.

As a way of building defense and solidarity with the Cuban revolution, the YS decided to build the International Youth Brigade to Cuba scheduled for July and to build the tour of a member of the UJC of Cuba to Australia and New Zealand in May and June.

Bill Estrada was able to get this work off to a good start by reporting his experiences on the January youth brigade to Cuba in the week during and after the national meeting.

After the convention, Estrada went to Christchurch, where he spoke at a Militant Labor Forum. Returning to Auckland, he had a couple of meetings with individuals interested in the YS about Cuba and going

on the next brigade.

Another highlight of Estrada's visit was his participation in a protest February 6 at the Waitangi Day celebrations north of Auckland. Waitangi Day commemorates the signing in 1840 of a treaty between representatives of the British Crown and tribal leaders of the Maori people (New Zealand's indigenous people). The 500 mainly young protesters were angry at government plans to impose financial limits on the settlement of outstanding Maori land claims. The protesters' action led to the cancellation of the evening celebrations.

Nathan Simms is a member of the Young Socialists in Christchurch and a student at Canterbury University. Annalucia Vermunt, a YS member in Auckland and member of the Engineers Union, contributed to this article.

U.S. gov't demands trade concessions from Beijing

BY PAT SMITH

Representatives of the U.S. and Chinese governments met in Beijing in mid-February to discuss ways to avert the implementation of sanctions that Washington threatened to impose at the end of the month. On February 4 the White House said it would levy 100 percent tariffs on more than \$1 billion worth of Chinese exports such as cellular phones, athletic equipment, and plastic articles if Beijing did not close 29 factories accused of pirating U.S. goods and honor U.S. copyrights, patents, and trademarks.

At the press conference U.S. trade representative Mickey Kantor indignantly held up a box of Kellogg's corn flakes and a box of Chinese-made Kongalus "corn strips" — both decorated with the familiar green rooster. Washington is also demanding that Beijing shut down factories in China that produce unlicensed copies of items such as videos and compact disks. CDs sold on street corners throughout China reportedly go for about 50 cents, compared with up to \$15 for U.S.-made imports.

The Chinese government warned that implementation of the U.S. sanctions would threaten \$2 billion worth of proposed Boeing aircraft orders by China Southern Airlines. Beijing also said it would retaliate with punitive duties on imports of U.S.-made compact disks, video games, cigarettes, alcohol, and movies, many of the products the U.S. government accuses China of pirating. Beijing vowed to freeze negotiations over large automobile joint ventures and block approval for some U.S. businesses to set up holding companies or branch offices.

Pressure and hypocrisy

As the world's dominant economic and military power, Washington is raising a hypocritical hue and cry about bootlegging, and blustering about the danger of a "trade war," in order to pry open Chinese markets even further and on better terms for U.S. capital.

"Don't let China off the hook," was the headline of a February 20 *Business Week*

editorial. It said Kantor "should make it plain that the counterfeiting must end and the trade imbalance must begin to shrink....China and the U.S. can prosper together only if they can reap benefits from being in each other's markets."

Support for the measures announced by Washington was not unanimous in the U.S. business press, however. In an editorial headlined "Mickey Mouse at War," the editors of the *Wall Street Journal* said, "Now that intellectual property has started a trade war, we wonder if there isn't a better way to handle these things." The editors urged the U.S. government instead to batter "down the tariff walls and censorship that keep Disney originals and other American icons from competing with the copycats."

Various sectors of U.S. big business have voiced support for or opposition to Washington's warnings depending on how the profits of their particular industries will be affected.

"I think the damn American companies are a bunch of crybabies, complaining about people walking around with Mickey Mouse sweatshirts on," said an executive at Motorola Inc., producers of cellular phones that will be hit by Beijing's countermeasures.

On the other hand, Robert Holleyman, president of the Business Software Alliance, warned of the large losses computer companies will incur if Washington doesn't act. Eager to reap profits off the 1 million personal computers now in use in China, he displayed a Chinese newspaper advertising a CD-Rom with 70 pieces of software from the United States and China for less than \$100. "If legal, this package would cost between \$6,000 and \$10,000," he complained.



U.S. trade representative Mickey Kantor waves compact disk during February 4 announcement of trade sanctions against Beijing.

Washington's major capitalist trade rivals in Europe and Asia are skeptical about the U.S. government's holier-than-thou crusade for "free trade" and against "piracy."

Chinese competition

"Intellectual-property theft is not the only cause of American ire at Chinese trade practices," said the London financial weekly the *Economist* in an opinion column entitled "One reason not to chastise China."

"Some of America's fulminations are fueled by its big, and growing, trade deficit with China," the magazine said. That imbalance, it says, is caused not by alleged unfair trade practices but by China's competitive edge as a result of extremely low-wage labor. According to the column, more than 80 percent of China's exports are manufactured goods, particularly labor-intensive products such as

clothing, footwear, toys, and sporting goods.

On February 7, just three days after announcing the threatened sanctions on Chinese imports, Washington expanded its sale of subsidized wheat to China by 1 million tons. "We want to build our market share in China," Kantor explained. The Australian government, which does not subsidize wheat exports, was among the first to criticize the U.S. sale. Capitalist farmers and traders in Australia have complained bitterly about competition on world markets with subsidized grain from Europe and the United States.

With an eye to protecting the interests of Japanese capital in one of its largest overseas markets, a senior Tokyo official said the dispute between Beijing and Washington over "intellectual property rights would prove to be an interesting test case." If the Chinese government did not make a sincere effort to settle the dispute, the official said, "it would at the very least send a very disappointing signal to members of the World Trade Organization."

But the article in London's *Financial Times* reporting the official's remarks pointed out that this is "the closest the Japanese government has come to expressing support for the US stance in the copyright dispute."

Brand name monopolies crack

During the capitalist expansion coming out of World War II, big business in the United States took advantage of U.S. imperialism's near-monopoly of global markets for industrial goods to establish the dominance of their brand names. In the process, U.S. capitalists were able to keep prices high and profits up.

Intensifying rivalry on the world capitalist markets today, however, has cut deeply into that competitive edge and put downward pressure on prices and earnings. There is stiffening competition for market shares today, with intense rivalry over access to what the capitalists hope will be big new markets in China.

Some in the expanding middle-class layers in the government, party bureaucracy, and management of state-owned and private factories in China may prefer eating Kellogg's corn flakes and have the dollars to do so. But a worker who can only afford cold cereal — or a video, CD, soft drink, T-shirt, or other such item — every once in a while will be happy to consume a Chinese-made product at a fraction of the cost. Peasants flooding into the cities won't rush to buy more expensive brand names either.

But U.S. companies and their representatives in Washington are determined to fight for a market nonetheless, and that is why they are turning up the heat on Beijing.

Massachusetts attacks welfare benefits

BY GARY COHEN

BOSTON — Massachusetts governor William Weld signed into law February 10 a bill instituting draconian cuts in welfare. The Republican governor approved the "welfare reform" package crafted and adopted overwhelmingly by the Democratic-controlled state legislature.

The act requires 18,400 welfare recipients with children more than six years old to get a job or perform 20 hours of weekly community service at low wages after being on benefits for 60 days. In addition, 17,000 people with children under six must enroll in education or training programs or face a benefit cutoff. All 48,000 recipients of Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) will see their benefits slashed by 2.75 percent. No one will be allowed to receive benefits for more than two years in any five-year period.

Those with children cannot get additional benefits if they have more children.

Under so-called anti-fraud provisions, the cities of Springfield and Lawrence — both with a high percentage of Hispanic residents — will require fingerprinting. Penalties for welfare fraud include a lifetime ban on benefits.

The governor lauded the Democrat-drafted plan. "It looks to be a fine piece of work," Weld said.

Five hundred protesters, including a number of AFDC recipients, registered their strong disagreements at a protest in front of the State House in Boston. Legislators criticized the protesters as dupes of "welfare advocates."

Weld has been an ardent proponent of curtailing federal welfare expenditures through so-called block grants to states. Under this scheme, the U.S. Congress

would allocate certain amounts to the states for welfare and health care. If they run out of money, they will have to raise additional funds or cut off those in need of assistance.

Not to be outdone, a week after Weld signed the legislation, New Hampshire governor Steven Merrill announced his own plan.

"I do not propose to reform welfare," said Merrill, "I propose to eliminate it." Under the program, benefits would be terminated after 26 weeks and welfare recipients would be required to go to work. The plan would provide jobs likely to pay minimum wage.

The governor's chief of staff said the proposal was presented to the Clinton administration's secretary of health and human services, Donna Shalala, who received it with "enthusiasm."

'This strike is to maintain union,' say York workers

BY KATHY MICKELLS

YORK, Pennsylvania — "We have the intestinal fortitude to outlast Cat," said Marvin Weyant, one of 25 discharged workers at the Caterpillar plant here.

Morale was high among strikers, as the most recent ploy of the company to get workers to cross the picket lines fell flat. On February 3, negotiations between Caterpillar and the United Auto Workers (UAW), which began January 31, had been recessed. The break was called due to schedule conflicts of both the federal mediator and Caterpillar representatives, who went to Japan to assess earthquake damage to the Caterpillar plant there. But in an attempt to portray the union as intransigent and frighten workers to cross the picket lines, the company and major newspapers here and in Peoria, Illinois, claimed the "talks were in trouble" and had "broken off."

"We've always wanted to meet with the company and discuss issue by issue," commented Terry Orndorff, UAW Local 786 bargaining chairman. "Our membership wants to see us talking. We keep explaining that the company isn't going to just roll over and play dead." He said the company thought that in early 1995 more strikers would cross the picket line, given the length of the strike and reported record profits of Caterpillar. "But only two crossed at the first of the year here in York."

The strike, now in its eighth month, is the longest in Caterpillar's history. Despite record profits in the fourth quarter of 1994, Caterpillar's stocks have been downgraded due to the "disappointing" profit margins. Stock analyst Mitch Quain said the "strike at Caterpillar is clearly having an effect and the company will have to settle, although it won't be an unconditional surrender."

Since the beginning of the strike, Caterpillar has attempted to run its struck plants with UAW members who have crossed the picket lines, workers recruited through temporary agencies, and its own office and professional employees. According to the strikers, unless a sizable number of

skilled workers cross the picket line to help maintain the machinery, this kind of workforce will not be able to sustain the production the company needs.

"They're not delivering parts, at least domestically. They had a hell of an inventory, more than we thought," said Orndorff.

Fired worker wins reinstatement

"They're losing temps left and right," commented Denny Rohrbaugh, one of the discharged York workers who recently won reinstatement. "They're getting pushed into the ground, working seven days a week and lots of people are getting hurt. If [Caterpillar is] doing so good, why do they keep sending us letters encouraging us to come back to work?" he asked.

Rohrbaugh's reinstatement was an "indication that Cat is starting to break down. The pressure is on."

Rohrbaugh emphasized that his reinstatement was a victory for all those discharged and for all the strikers. "It means a lot. We needed one case that we won. It's not just for me."

Rohrbaugh, the day-shift committeeman at the York plant, was discharged in January 1992 for "distributing union literature on company time." In fact, he had been distributing the literature before his shift, and as he was going to his workplace, a worker handed him a company document. They discussed it and Rohrbaugh handed the document back. It was for this incident that the company fired him, claiming he had handed out a union leaflet.

Rohrbaugh had five hearings and appeals in front of unemployment boards and Judge James Rose, the administrative law judge assigned to hear 70 percent of the National Labor Relations Board charges in the Caterpillar dispute. On Nov. 24, 1994, Rohrbaugh won his job back with full back pay, benefits, overtime, and seniority. The judge ruled that the offense was "trivial in the extreme" and that the company had a "hidden motive" to get rid of Rohrbaugh for his "union activity."

Caterpillar, which had vowed to fight

these cases, didn't throw in the towel and honor the decision until Jan. 14, 1995. The company then sent Rohrbaugh a letter offering him his job back. They also backed off a previous declaration that Rohrbaugh would also be fired for participation in a 1994 demonstration at company headquarters in Peoria. The company would not "hand out disciplinary action at this point" in that case, Caterpillar's letter said, but would take it up after the contract is settled.

Main issue is rights

Many strikers here discussed the issues of the discharged workers, union representation, centralized bargaining, and the company's imposed "code of conduct." Caterpillar's "code of conduct" denies workers the right to wear any union badges, gather together, or display union information. The code is also at the heart of the discharged workers issue. Many of those dismissed engaged in activities that would be covered under the draconian regulations.

"It denies you your rights to be union and show it," said striker Johnnie Williams.

"We've got to stop them from discharging. Not just now, but for the future. If we don't stop them now, then anyone who stands up for their rights can be fired," said Ken Hite, a discharged worker. He added, "We all have to be brought back, or what will stop them? If they don't reinstate us, then everyone will be afraid. We will walk back strong. We're strong now and we can't give that up."

Strikers also said that the issue is union



Militant Angel Lariscy

Workers from York join May 1994 rally in Peoria. Caterpillar's firing of union activists is a key issue in the strike.

representation. "Right now, because of the judge's ruling, Terry [Orndorff] isn't recognized," Williams said. "There is no grievance procedure. That's like going to court and not having a lawyer." The striker was referring to a recent ruling by Rose that negated the contract provision that the company pay the wages of full-time union committeemen. Rose ruled that the contract provision was discriminatory and against labor law because the current workers — strikebreakers and nonunion personnel — cannot run for union committeeman since they are not UAW members in good standing. This ruling was met with outrage here.

"People want a contract, a fair contract. We're in this for the long haul. This is a strike to maintain a union worth anything, not just in name only," said Orndorff.

Kathy Mickells is a member of Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers Local 8-901 in Marcus Hook, Pennsylvania.

Caterpillar under pressure as strikers stand firm

Continued from front page

on the company to come to the negotiating table. "The media has reported on the falling prices for Cat's stock, despite their supposed \$279 million profit on \$3.9 billion sales. They have a stockholders' meeting coming up. The UAW international has provided the resources to us to stay in this fight."

Many striking workers discussed the union's current contract proposals. In response to management's demands for a permanent two-tier system — a 50 percent wage cut, with no way for new employees ever to catch up to the wages of those hired before 1992 — the UAW has put on

the table a 70 percent starting wage for new hires with a 5 percent progression every 6 months. The new hires would achieve full wages in 3 years.

"Cat is using union-busting tactics," said Rick Vespa, a striker at the Mossville, Illinois, engine plant. "The two-tier is really a union-busting tactic, because it tries to divide the workforce between young and old, economically, physically, and psychologically. It's like psychological warfare."

In recent weeks, Caterpillar has come under increasing pressure to settle with the union. The Peoria *Journal Star* ran banner headlines noting the union's offer, which

it said "has appeared to make significant movement." In a February 21 column, business editor Paul Gordon criticized the company for its refusal to comment to the paper about the union's proposal. Financial analyst Blair Brumley at Dain Bosworth Inc. expressed the opinion in January that Caterpillar is anxious to settle the strike because the cost of running its operations without UAW workers could be starting to mount.

As early as last November, the *Value Line* investors guide was noting that while "it seems as if Caterpillar can operate [using white-collar staff, some retirees, and scabs as production workers] indefinitely," the "diversion from management activities such as new product development cannot be ignored.... Investors should not underestimate the risk involved in investment in Caterpillar shares."

Fines of \$36,025 levied against Caterpillar by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) for willful violations also sparked discussion among strikers. OSHA review commission judge James Barkley stated that Caterpillar "has shown a lack of respect for the commission, its rules and its orders."

Several strikers pointed to the measly fines as not nearly enough to deter a huge corporation from carrying out unsafe practices. "Caterpillar got fined \$12,500 for a worker who received eye injuries while carrying hazardous chemicals without adequate protective equipment," said Dick Diefendorf, a Mossville striker, citing a *Journal Star* article.

"Where are the laws and federal government to resolve 135 outstanding unfair labor practices? This strike is not about money, it's about workers' rights. Unions need to wake up and start backing each

other. This is not directed at any one union."

The UAW reached agreement on a new contract February 5 with J.I. Case, an agricultural and construction equipment manufacturer based in Racine, Wisconsin. The pact has been overwhelmingly approved by union members.

The contract includes a newly implemented two-tier wage system along the lines of the UAW offer to Caterpillar, as well as lump-sum payments in each of the next three years. Union members had been working under a 16-month contract extension that expired February 4.

Union officials had touted this agreement in numerous newspaper and radio advertisements as an example of what can be accomplished if a company chooses to bargain.

UAW negotiators say they expect talks with the company to resume shortly. "We are making every attempt to come back to the bargaining table. Caterpillar's trying to bust the union, and we're trying to get the word out as much as possible," says Jerry Brown, president of UAW Local 974 in Peoria.

Heads of other strikers on the picket line nodded in agreement with Ken Schumacher, an electrician at the Pontiac, Illinois, plant prior to the strike, when he said, "I'm determined to stay out until this is settled. If Caterpillar wins, it'll be a signal to every other company in this country to go after workers. If we lose, you're next."

Megan Arney is a student at the University of Minnesota in Minneapolis. Cathleen Gutekanst is a member of Oil Chemical and Atomic Workers Local 1-5 in Richmond, California.

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Russia: plummeting production and war in Chechnya fuel chronic political crisis

BY GREG ROSENBERG

In a speech before Parliament February 16, Russian president Boris Yeltsin insisted his government would move ahead on the path of "reform." Yeltsin, however, offered no initiatives likely to stem growing complaints by bourgeois voices the world over that the hoped-for restoration of capitalism in the former Soviet Union is bogging down.

At the same time, the Russian president blamed the army officer corps for the Chechnya debacle, and he underlined Moscow's opposition to NATO expansion — one of the main sticking points that have brought Moscow's relations with the imperialist powers to a low ebb.

A measure of just how shaky the Yeltsin regime is was registered in articles covering the speech in major big-business dailies. The *New York Times* found it significant that the Russian president "strode deliberately and firmly to the Kremlin podium," while the *Financial Times* decided it was newsworthy to report that Yeltsin seemed "in command of his faculties." Yeltsin's drinking habits and health have been the subject of renewed speculation in recent weeks.

Battered politically by the Chechnya war, Moscow is scurrying to deal with the continued disintegration of economic production. Three and a half years since the 1991 shattering of the Stalinist ruling party, the vying petty-bourgeois factions dominant in government have little to show for their efforts to integrate Russia into the world capitalist market.

The wanna-be capitalists who honeycomb the privileged caste in Russia continue to tack and weave to ensure that others do not come out on top if industry and agriculture become privately owned. Moreover, fears are rife among these bureaucratic layers that so-called shock therapy measures will ignite working-class resistance and undermine their perks and power.

Yeltsin, for example, made a point of mentioning threatened actions by miners in his speech. More than half a million coal miners held a one-day strike February 8, demanding payment of long-delayed wages. In 30 geographical regions of Russia incorporating 70 percent of the country's mines, work ground to a halt. On February 13, Norilsk, the world's biggest nickel producer, announced it was unable to pay miners' salaries for January. A company official blamed bureaucratic delays from Moscow for "creating the threat of social conflicts."

Privatization stagnates

Fearful for their own continued position at the head of the trough, various politicians, state functionaries, and factory managers are throwing cold water on privatization moves. Yeltsin told Parliament the state would take more steps to subsidize domestic industry and agriculture.

On February 7, the Moscow city administration granted itself the power to renationalize enterprises in the capital. The chairman of the Shareholders' Rights Committee in Moscow said the measure, drafted by the mayor, "is a terrifying resolution." The *Financial Times* noted the move "highlights the fragility of newly granted private property rights."

On February 1, Russian prime minister Viktor Chernomyrdin signed a decree placing one more obstacle in the way of mass privatization of the land. Officially, most collective farms have been transformed over the past year into "joint stock companies," in which each former member of the state farm has a right to a certain portion of land. The new edict, however, says would-be farmers seeking to use their land rights to establish private farms must gain unanimous consent from all other former members of the collective.

Throughout the Russian countryside, steps to dismantle state-owned farms have proven unpopular among millions of rural workers. Late last year, only some 5 percent of farms in Russia were private or family farms, accounting for 2 percent to



Cotton mill in Russia. Falling production across the country is exacerbating political and social crisis. Regime fears results of privatization will spark workers resistance.

3 percent of agricultural output.

Foreign capital's ability to snatch oil and gas, some of Russia's premium natural resources, have been frustrated by new legislation too. Moscow now tells joint-ventures each month exactly how much they will be allowed to export to either the former Soviet republics, where prices are far below those on the world market, or elsewhere in the world.

The fledgling Russian stock market, briefly a darling of capitalist investors in mid-1994, has been hard hit by the Chechnya war and the tremors of the political and economic crisis in Mexico. Moreover, complains the head of the Russian Commission on Securities and Stock Markets, there is "little security of ownership." Specialist Wall Street newsletters warn of the risks of total wipeout for investors in Russia. Still, for those willing to take enormous risks with capital, the specialists assert, everything in the country is for sale dirt-cheap.

Ruble tumbles

The ruble has continued a virtual free fall against the dollar. In early February, one dollar could fetch 4,100 rubles at official rates; a year earlier the exchange rate was about 1,500. Inflation is rocketing along at a rate of more than 3 percent a week. In January prices soared 17 percent.

Yeltsin told Parliament that after two failures, a "third attempt to halt inflation must succeed" because investors and the International Monetary Fund "expect this from us."

The IMF is finalizing negotiations with Moscow over loans totaling \$13 billion over the next year. The loans will be tied to the Kremlin's pledges to implement an austerity plan — and above all to its performance in doing so. Moscow is relying on the loans in large part to simply meet its projected budget. "Burned time and again by Russia's broken reform promises, the IMF is insisting that the government...make deeper cuts in the budget deficit," explained the *Wall Street Journal*.

The Commonwealth of Independent States — the loose, Russian-dominated grouping of former Soviet republics — reports that its members' gross domestic product declined an average of 16 percent in 1994, while industrial output tumbled by 23 percent.

The picture for the working class and peasantry by every social and economic measure is grim. Since 1992 the life expectancy for men has fallen from 62 years to 59 and continues to drop, as it does somewhat more slowly for women. The death rate has risen by 20 percent, a development with no precedent in modern history short of major wars. Only one in five children are born healthy according to official statistics.

The state of medical care is abysmal. Moscow has earmarked less than 1 percent of its budget this year for health ser-

vices. Half the country's hospitals have no hot water, and several thousand have no water at all. A quarter are without sewage systems.

Chechnya

A five-day cease-fire in Chechnya ended February 19. Moscow has been badly damaged politically in its war with Chechens fighting for independence. The Russian government has made numerous declarations of its "victory" in the Caucasus since launching the assault last December. Russian officials admit that by February 8, at least 1,020 of their troops had been killed in Chechnya. Radio news reports stressed this figure did not include casualties from the Interior Ministry or Federal Counterintelligence. The armed forces chief of staff claimed 6,690 Chechen fighters had been "eliminated."

Yeltsin defended the Chechnya invasion during his speech to Parliament, comparing the "criminal dictatorship in Chechnya" to "such blisters like the Medellín cartel in Colombia [and] the Golden Triangle in southeast Asia." But he warned that "the flames of armed mutiny have not yet been put out" there and blamed heavy losses on "failures, setbacks, and mistakes in command."

On another front, reflecting growing tensions between Moscow and capitalist governments in Europe and North America, Yeltsin put on a breast-beating performance in January when the Norwegian government fired a research rocket. Oslo says it had informed Moscow of the launch several weeks in advance, and that the missile landed on target, 1,000 kilometers off the Russian coast.

The Russian news agency, however, reported that air defense forces shot down the missile. Yeltsin announced that Russian monitors tracked the rocket from when it was launched, but that there was no need to shoot it down. "We spotted it right away," he boasted, declaring that "somebody perhaps decided to test us because the media is saying all the time that our army is weak."

By making such "bizarre claims," the *Wall Street Journal* editorialized, Yeltsin

"sounds not only bellicose, but also highly irresponsible." The non-incident put a spotlight on the sharpening divergence between Moscow and the imperialist powers over Washington's proposal to expand the NATO alliance into Eastern Europe.

Yeltsin again denounced the NATO plans in his February 16 speech. "This continent has already generated two global military catastrophes, and we do not want Europe and the world to return to old or new division lines," he said.

Sergei Karaganov, a member of Yeltsin's presidential council, told a meeting in Berlin that if the NATO expansion were pressed, "Russia might not yield." Instead, he called for a 1,500-kilometer semi-militarized zone between NATO-member countries and Russia.

In a related development, U.S. defense secretary William Perry told a congressional panel February 9 that many of the eastern European countries and former republics of the USSR being offered limited military cooperation through the Clinton administration's "Partnership for Peace" scam "will never qualify for NATO membership."

No alternative to Yeltsin

At a joint press conference in Washington the same day, U.S. president Bill Clinton and German chancellor Helmut Kohl expressed their determination to back Yeltsin politically and financially. They said they would proceed with NATO expansion in a measured way to avoid sharp recrimination from Moscow.

Summing up the dominant outlook among Washington and other imperialist powers, the *Financial Times* editors wrote that "for the time being, the awful truth is that it is not possible to work with Mr. Yeltsin — nor to work without him."

Ruling-class voices less directly accountable for the consequences of government policy have been more strident. The *Economist* declared in a major editorial that Yeltsin is "the wrong man to lead a reforming Russia."

The problem facing the imperialists is that there is no obvious and reliable figure to replace the Russian president. As a result, a minority chorus in ruling circles has attempted to distance itself from the course pursued by Washington and every other imperialist power in relation to Moscow.

The latest voice to heap scorn on the evolution of politics in the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe is Eduard Shevardnadze, president of Georgia and the former Soviet foreign minister. He told an audience at the Royal Institute of International Affairs headquarters in London that Washington's so-called victory in the cold war was "clearly Pyrrhic and obviously illusory."

"Having saved enormous sums of money upon ending the cold war, the civilized world did not invest those savings in support of democracy and freedom in Russia and the new independent states....The philosophy of a triumphant shopkeeper, wildly exultant after having won a victory against his competitor, has prevailed....As a result we do not have a global triumph of the values of western democracy, but rather the revelry of petty nationalistic dictatorships."

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Oil bosses risk lives of workers, residents

BY OMARI MUSA

RODEO, California — During the last six months numerous catastrophes and near misses have occurred at the UNOCAL refinery here, seriously endangering the residents of surrounding communities and workers in the plant.

In the worst of these events, a chemical called Catacarb began leaking from a tower last August. It was combined with steam and carbon dioxide, but the company deemed the substance to be safe. Components of

quantity released ranging from 100 tons to 300 tons. According to the MSDS, there are no tests that have determined the health effects of long-term Catacarb exposure.

Refinery workers were kept in the dark about what we faced during the release. Until the very last minute the company claimed the release either was not dangerous or would have no long-lasting effect.

Stung by criticism from workers and the community, the county health department issued another report December 12 stating, "Potentially 1,226 workers and 1,700 households were effected by the release.... Symptoms reported included illnesses such as vomiting, skin rashes, burning eyes, bloody noses, difficulty breathing, headaches, fatigue, diarrhea, and flu-like symptoms."

Residents from the towns of Crockett and Rodeo have formed organizations and others have filed lawsuits demanding the company set up and finance clinics to monitor the health of residents, as well as demanding payments to those suffering injury.

UNOCAL responded by transferring top company officials to the corporate center in Los Angeles and joining in "good neighbor" agreements. This occurs while the company is trying to obtain permits allowing construction of new units to produce gasoline that meets clean air control limits. Before UNOCAL assented to a good neighbor agreement, residents opposed granting new permits, fearing further spills, leaks, and releases.

These concerns proved valid when the deadly gas hydrogen sulfide was released September 15. Children in a Rodeo elementary school became sick and had to be restricted from going outdoors. UNOCAL agreed to pay up to \$300,000 to add door and window stripping to the school, but no solutions have been offered as to what happens when the children are outside.

UNOCAL has sought to have workers weigh in behind the company's request for the new construction permits. Union members were urged by the company to attend county hearings to back the company, sweetened up with the offer of free meals before the hearings. The company promotes the idea that we have a stake in fighting for their permits because these regulations and environmentalists are putting our jobs in danger. Union officials and some co-workers have attended the hearings in support of the company. Since the latest releases, however, some co-workers are beginning to think we are simply being used by the company and that our health is of no concern to them.

"I'm for the company getting the permits for building the reformulated fuels plant. But we are the front line. The company has to be held responsible for the health problems in the community and among the workforce in the refinery," said Don Brown when he spoke at a recent Militant Labor Forum in San Francisco. "They make a lot of money off that unit, and that's why I think



Militant/Susie Beck

Fire at Flying J refinery in Salt Lake City, Utah, March 1994. Oil workers face worse conditions and a rise in accidents as companies cut corners on safety.

they kept it running in spite of the danger to the surrounding community and those of us in the refinery," he added. Brown is off work because of a Catacarb-related disability. He later explained his experience at the hearings was convincing him that "the government, company, and lawyers are working closely together to help the company get what it wants. The government doesn't protect us from the company. It protects the company from us."

Other co-workers have been hostile to the demands of the community. One told me that since the refinery keeps the property taxes and rents low because so few want to live near it, "folks just have to take their chances." Others are interested in discussing how the union can be strengthened to fight the company on questions of safety and win the community as allies in the fight.

This means having a strong union with a safety committee that has teeth and the mobilized power of the workers behind it — not the company "safety committee" that simply uses workers to cover company decisions, which are made on the basis of profits, not health or safety concerns.

The offensive of the bosses in the oil and chemical industry is no different than in other industries. They fight to raise their market share and reduce their labor costs. Their perspective is to eliminate our rights on the job and weaken our unions even more. Only with a strong union movement can workers in the oil industry fight back against the attacks by the oil barons on health and safety conditions. This will be done by self-conscious workers who, through their experiences, come to the conclusion that this resource should be organized and run in the interest of society as a whole and not by billionaire families. In the final analysis oil workers and others will conclude that this can only be done by replacing this economic system based on exploitation and oppression with one based on human solidarity.

Omari Musa is a member of Oil Chemical and Atomic Workers Local 1-326 at the UNOCAL refinery in Rodeo.

UNION TALK

Catacarb — as listed in the Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS) later obtained from the manufacturer — include Diethanolamine, which can change into a compound that is a known carcinogen called NDEA, as well as boron, vanadium, and other heavy metals.

As the leak continued, the cloud got darker and darker — showing that the concentration of Catacarb in the solution was increasing. Workers immediately brought this to the attention of their supervisors. One worker contacted a union representative to demand that the plant safety committee discuss the dangers and shut down the unit if that was warranted.

But company officials kept the unit operating, ignoring the recommendation of union members on the plant safety committee, which met two days later. This unit produced \$250,000 a day for the company. It was more than a year overdue for shutdown and maintenance. The company was on a big push to get everything out of the unit before a shutdown scheduled for six weeks later.

Workers on the unit were ordered to don fresh-air equipment and to tie water hoses on the tower to knock down the Catacarb, so it would not float over surrounding communities and instead fall inside the refinery. Co-workers in surrounding units began to complain of dizziness, nausea, shortness of breath, and flu-like symptoms. But the unit was not shut down until September 6, after managers at nearby Wickland Oil complained that workers there were getting sick and that a thick brown substance was covering its storage tanks.

Residents in the surrounding communities were outraged that they were never told what was going on — either by UNOCAL, or by county agencies supposedly monitoring UNOCAL's operations. Residents complained of flu-like symptoms, wheezing, and running noses and eyes. People with vegetable gardens who noticed the brown sticky substance were simply told to wash it off with a hose.

On October 12 the Contra Costa County Health Services Department issued a letter to area residents and refinery workers stating, "We believe this spill is very unlikely to cause new health problems." But the Material Safety Data Sheet from the manufacturer of Catacarb states that "exposure could cause irreversible eye damage, breathing difficulty, vomiting and possible harm to the brain, heart, kidneys and central nervous system.... In the event of a spill or leak, nonessential personnel should be evacuated and the people exposed should have their eyes immediately flushed with water."

The regulatory agencies used samples taken by UNOCAL and information provided by UNOCAL medical personnel. There have been various estimates of the

Workers in Canada protest union busting

BY ROGER ANNIS

MONTREAL — Chanting, "No more scabs, no more scabs!" union members from across the eastern Canadian province of New Brunswick marched February 6 to denounce the use of replacement workers by companies shut down by strikes. Newspaper estimates put the number of marchers between 1,500 and 2,000.

The event was held in Bathurst, a city of 25,000 in the north of the province that was the scene of two recent hard-fought strikes. The protest was organized by the Bathurst and District Labour Council.

"First the paper mill workers were threatened with scabs, then it was the city workers. We decided we're not going to put up with this, we're going to organize the march," Collette Buttmer told the Militant. Buttmer is a nursing home worker and delegate to the labor council from the Canadian Union of Public Employees.

'Job strategy': low wages

The march went to the offices of New Brunswick deputy premier Marcelle Mersereau. While a delegation of three union officials met inside with Mersereau, demonstrators outside cheered speakers who denounced the government's labor policies and its much-publicized "job creation" strategy.

Provincial premier Frank McKenna has been grabbing headlines by convincing

companies across Canada to relocate facilities to New Brunswick. McKenna uses the province's low minimum wage and low workers compensation rates as a selling point.

"We don't want scab workers! We don't want minimum wages!" declared Deborah Smith of the United Food and Commercial Workers union to cheers at the rally.

"McKenna says he's creating jobs, but what kind of jobs? They only pay \$5 per hour — it will take three of them for just one person to survive," Buttmer explains.

Most marchers came from across northern New Brunswick. Papermaking, mining, and fishing are the area's main industries. Members of the paperworkers, steelworkers, and public service employees unions made up the largest union contingents.

About half the population in northern New Brunswick is French-speaking Acadian, an oppressed nationality in Canada.

Two van loads of strikers from the Irving Oil refinery in Saint John drove the 250 miles to Bathurst to attend. Two hundred sixty-four workers there have been fighting a scab operation since they went on strike in May of last year.

The march was originally called for the end of December as a show of support to striking workers at the Stone Consolidated paper mill who were threatened with being replaced by scabs.

A company attempt to reopen the mill with replacement trades workers in late-December was defeated when 150 strikers and union supporters held a rally at the plant gate and blocked replacement workers from entering. Negotiations began again in January, and some 30 trades workers will lose their jobs under the agreement.

City uses scabs to try and break strike

The march had been called off when negotiations in the strike resumed but then 85 Bathurst civic workers went out on strike January 13 and the city began running city services with scabs.

A new march was set, with the focus this time being the call for anti-scab legislation similar to that in the provinces of Ontario, Quebec, and British Columbia.

"It's like a war zone here. Police are escorting snow plows and arresting workers on strike," commented Communications, Energy, and Paperworkers Union of Canada member Dave Aube during the municipal workers' strike. "This kind of strikebreaking didn't happen in the past. Anti-union actions by governments are forcing workers to come together."

Roger Annis is a member of the Communications, Energy, and Paperworkers Union of Canada Local 841 in Montreal.

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Democratic rights and the working class

Lessons from James P. Cannon, a founding leader of communist movement

Reprinted below is an excerpt from a 1973 interview with James P. Cannon. It is taken from *James P. Cannon: A Political Tribute*, a recently reissued title in the Education for Socialists series.

Before and during World War I, Cannon was a traveling organizer for the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) and a cadre in the left wing of the Socialist Party — the political currents he refers to as “the syndicalists and red socialists” in his remarks below.

Following the Russian revolution in October 1917, Cannon was a founding member of the communist movement in the United States. He was expelled from the Communist Party in 1928 for supporting the fight to defend the revolutionary course for the world communist movement that had been charted under the leadership of V.I. Lenin against the counter-revolutionary policies advanced by the privileged bureaucratic layers represented by Joseph Stalin. A founding leader of the Socialist Workers Party, Cannon served as its national secretary and then national chairman until his death in 1974.

In 1941, Cannon and 17 other leaders of the SWP and Minneapolis Teamsters union became the first victims of the thought-control Smith Act, when, on the eve of the U.S. entry into World War II, they were framed up and convicted of a conspiracy to “advise and teach the duty, necessity, desirability and propriety of overthrowing and destroying the Government of the United States by force and violence.” Cannon served 13 months at Sandstone penitentiary.

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It's a proper and correct procedure to exploit every possibility to utilize what cracks there are in the bourgeois-democratic system to advance our ideas. It's like taking part in their elections. It's wise to utilize a situation like this to explain our ideas to a wider audience.

This wasn't known to the old radical movement. The old radical movement tended toward the ultraleft view that courts are crooked instruments of the capitalist class, so why bother? Ignore them. Including the elections. That was the prevailing opinion of the syndicalists and red-socialist wing in which I was.

But I don't blame myself for being an ultraleftist in those days. I didn't know any better and there was nobody to teach us better. The only ones who spoke the other way were the right-wing socialists who thought you could accomplish everything through the ballot box. We were pretty sure that was false.

It was not until after the Russian revolution and Lenin wrote his pamphlet on the infantile sickness, explaining how revolutionists could utilize parliamentary action effectively, that we got straightened out on that [*Left-Wing Communism: An Infantile Disorder*, available from Pathfinder]. It was so damned simple and so convincing



Leaders of Socialist Workers Party and Minneapolis Teamsters surrender at federal courthouse after conviction under Smith Act. James P. Cannon is fourth from right.

that I don't have any patience with people who still repeat the old arguments of the ultraleft before the Russian revolution.

I can recall instances in the early days where Lenin's approach could have been effective....

Campaign against World War I

[One] was in 1917 when the Socialist party came out against the war. Morris Hillquit, in the New York municipal elections that year, ran for mayor and made the war question his main issue. It got tremendous publicity across the country.

I didn't realize it then because I was still a hidebound syndicalist, but I look back on it as a wonderful illustration of how even a municipal campaign can be utilized for a national political purpose.

I really rejoice over the way our party [the Socialist Workers Party] goes into these elections, national, state, and local — any place they can get an edge in and get up some kind of an audience, newspaper space, some TV or radio time, and do it without giving away anything. That's all for free....

Revolutionists and courts

Our actions used to be purely defensive.... The tendency was to say the courts are crooked, influenced by the capitalist class, and so keep away from them. For instance, the idea of utilizing the courts was not known to me. I recall distinctly the terrible persecution of the IWW during the First World War.

They arrested active Wobblies wherever they could find them. They had so many they put whole groups on trial. Around eighty to one hundred were tried in Chicago. There was another big group in Sacramento, California, and another in Kansas City, Kansas, the Wichita Case, they called it.... In the Chicago and Kansas cases they put up a legal defense with lawyers. But in Sacramento they adopted the policy of a “silent defense”....

They didn't have any lawyers; they used no witnesses; they didn't use cross-examination. They ignored the court. They just sat there. Just to show their contempt.

They got stiff sentences like the others, but all they accomplished by their silent defense and their refusal to employ any lawyers was to lose the possibility of appealing, getting some of their people out on bail while the appeals were pending, and organizing an effective campaign. It was a negative action. It represented the prevailing attitude of the left-wing movement that you couldn't get anything out of the courts.

Now, our policy today is different. We base ourselves on the fact that it's not a police state, it's a bourgeois-democratic state, which a lot of people think is really democratic. In order to maintain that illusion the ruling class has to give you a little

leeway here and there.

The intelligent thing, as Lenin explained in his pamphlet on the infantile sickness, is that we utilize these crevices for our own purposes....

Smith Act Trial

They had to grant us a trial [in 1940, on charges of violating the Smith Act] which they wouldn't have had to do under a police state. And taking advantage of that, we used the courtroom for a forum. To do that effectively, we conducted a very prudent, dignified defense. We had our own lawyer, Albert Goldman, who was a member of the movement and on trial himself. We worked out together the questions he would ask and answers we would give. And in general we exploited the trial to the full for propaganda purposes.... We didn't concede a damned thing to them. We just denied that what we were doing was illegal. We used defensive formulas....

When the prosecutor kept prodding me on it, and I kept answering defensively, I finally ended, “I think the workers have a right to defend themselves. And if that's treason, you can make the most of it!” I stood up and shouted that at them.

And the whole goddamn courtroom was stunned and he just said, “That's well spoken,” and stopped.

When he questioned me about the Russian revolution, he was flabbergasted by my contention that it was a legal act. “What the devil are you talking about?” He didn't say that, but put it in lawyer's language. I gave some more calculated arguments about revolutions and their legality, and finally said, “I don't think you'll find a more legal revolution than that!”

He said, “That's all.” He just threw up his hands. “That's all.”

The pamphlet we made of that testimony has been the most circulated of all our publications. I've been told many times that it's most effective in talking with new contacts: *Socialism on Trial*.



PATHFINDER AROUND THE WORLD

Following is a review that appeared in the March 1995 issue of *Museum Ordnance*, “The magazine for the U.S. Army Ordnance Museum,” of the video documentary on the Cuban participation in the battle to defeat an invasion by the South African army into Angola. A turning point in that fight was the battle that took place in the Angolan town of Cuito Cuanavale, which the documentary centers on.

Museum Ordnance

CUBA AND ANGOLA Response to the South African Escalation

A Cuban Documentary. 3 Hours on two cassettes. VHS (also available on British PAL). Available from: Pathfinder Books, 410 West Street, New York, NY 10014. (212) 741-0690. \$50.00 (\$3.00 postage in U.S.)

To fully and completely understand an historical event, you must first realize the events as perceived by both (or more) sides to the conflict. This video is a rare look into the Angolan War during the South African-led attacks towards Cuito Cuanavale in 1987/88.

The video starts in Cuba with the initial Cuban reaction to the South African thrusts. Showing units in Cuba being mobilized and moved to the docks for loading. Although the quality varies throughout the roughly three-hour video, the color shots of Russian-made Cuban equipment is interesting. The preparation for the battle and the “cooperation,” with the FAPLA (Angolan army forces) comrades is played up heavily.

Although the video lacks hard details about the actual combat leading up to the finale when the South Africans were

either defeated (or accomplished their limited objectives, depending on who you read), it does cover the conflict in broad strokes with glimpses of the Cuban Army in Angola.

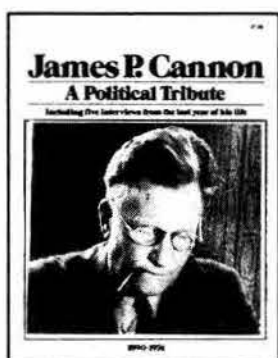
Without a doubt this was developed by the Cuban government as a propaganda tool for its citizenship back home. There is ample coverage of the good food, efficient supply system, and high morale of these loyal comrades against the “racists” and “bandits” from South Africa. Once you get beyond the rhetoric, this video really is very good.

The narration is done in English (the video is also available in Spanish) over top of the Spanish which can still be heard in the background. Some of the translations are awkward and strained and the conversations take on an almost comical tone. This is especially true with some of the briefings and meetings that Fidel Castro is part of. (Can it be true that Castro did not know it was dusty in Angola?) Some of this can be blamed on the problems of translating a fast moving dialogue from Spanish to English.

There is plenty for the equipment aficionado to see: T-54/55s, BMP-1's, ZSU-23's, MTLB's, Engesa trucks, and bridging equipment are there for the Cubans and Oifants, Ratels, Panhards and Unimogs are shown for the South Africans (although most of the South African footage is of poor quality because it came from secondary sources).

Although this video would be hard pressed to stand alone as a historical perspective of the conflict, it is a must as a companion for the Cuito Cuanavale battles. As I said once you get beyond the strong-handed propaganda machinery, this provides the best insight into the “other side of the story.” Well worth the price and highly recommended!

FOR FURTHER READING



James P. Cannon: A Political Tribute

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Left-Wing Communism: An Infantile Disorder

V.I. Lenin

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Clinton's New Attacks on Immigrants. Speakers: Alvaro Maldonado, leader, Pro-Immigrant Mobilization Coalition; Mauricio Miranda, United Neighbors-Temple Beaudry; Barry Fatland, Socialist Workers Party, member of United Transportation Union Local 1544. Sat., March 4, 7:30 p.m. 2546 W. Pico Blvd. Donation: \$4. Translation into Spanish. Tel: (213) 380-9460.

FLORIDA

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Budget Cuts and So-Called Welfare Reform: Bipartisan Attack on Working People. Speaker: Janet Post, Socialist Workers Party, member of International Association of Ma-

chinists Local 368. Sat., March 4, 7:30 p.m. 137 NE 54th St. Donation: \$3. Tel: (305) 756-1020.

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Protest Government Attacks on Entitlements! Sat., March 4, 5 p.m. 545 W. Roosevelt Rd. Donation: \$4. Translation into Spanish. Tel: (312) 829-6815.

MASSACHUSETTS

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Government Attacks on Welfare and Threats to Social Security and Medicare. Speaker: Gary Cohen, Socialist Workers Party. Sat., March 4, 7:30 p.m. 780 Tremont St. Donation: \$4. Tel: (617) 247-6772.

MINNESOTA

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The Cultural War and the Attack on Women's Rights. Sat., March 4, 7:30 p.m. 2490 University Ave. (east side of route 289, on 16A bus line). Donation: \$4. Tel: (612) 644-6325.

WASHINGTON

Seattle

Workers Defend Health and Safety: How Corporate Greed Causes Injury and Death. Speakers: Union members in the airline and

rail industries. Video showing of *Deadly Corn*, the story of the lockout of union members at A.E. Staley. Sat., March 4, 7:30 p.m.

The Crisis in Mexico: Eyewitness Account. Speaker: Mark Friedman, Socialist Workers Party, member, International Association of Machinists. Sat., March 11, 7:30 p.m. Both events at 1405 E. Madison Ave. Donation: \$3. Tel: (206) 323-1755.

WASHINGTON, D.C.

What's Behind Mexico's Currency Crisis. Speaker: Alyson Kennedy, Socialist Workers Party. Sat., March 4, 7:30 p.m.

Revolutionary South Africa Today. Speaker: Greg McCartan, *Militant* reporter at December 1994 African National Congress national conference. Sat., March 11, 7:30 p.m. Both events at 1802 Belmont Rd., NW. Donation: \$4. Tel: (202) 387-2185.

WEST VIRGINIA

Morgantown

Death in the Workplace: Labor's Role in Defending Health, Safety and the Environment. Speaker: Dennis Richter, Socialist Workers Party, member of United Transportation Union. Sat., March 4, 7 p.m. 242 Walnut St. Donation: \$4. Tel: (304) 291-2142.

AUSTRALIA

Sydney

South Africa: Working People Seize Open-

ings to Advance Democratic Revolution. Speaker: Ron Poulsen, Communist League election campaign, member of Australian Manufacturing Workers Union. Sat., March 4, 6 p.m. *Surry Hills Neighbourhood Centre* (corner Norton and Collins Streets, Surry Hills). Donation: \$4. Tel: (02) 281 3297.

BRITAIN

London

Mexico: Class Struggle and Financial Crash. What the Peso's Collapse Tells Us About the World Economy. Speaker: Stephen Jenner, member of National Union of Students and Young Socialists. Sat., March 4, 6 p.m. 47 The Cut. Donation £2. Tel: 071 928 7993.

CANADA

Toronto

Police Frame-Ups: Why They Happen, How to Fight Them. Panel discussion. Sat., March 4, 7:30 p.m. 827 Bloor St. West (between Christie & Ossington). Donation: \$4. Tel: (416) 533-4324.

NEW ZEALAND

Auckland

The Fight for Women's Rights. Speaker: Annalucia Vermunt, Young Socialists. Sat., March 11, 7 p.m. La Gonda Arcade, 203 Karangahape Road. Donation: \$3. Tel: (9) 379-3075.

Students press fight to oust Rutgers president

BY KATY KARLIN

NEWARK, New Jersey — Two weeks of almost daily demonstrations by students at Rutgers University demanding the resignation of university president Francis Lawrence led up to a Board of Governors meeting at the Newark campus February 12. At the meeting, the board voted to reaffirm its support for Lawrence.

The demonstrations began in early February after Lawrence was quoted in the Newark *Star-Ledger* from an address he gave to faculty last year. In those comments, Lawrence referred to Blacks as "a disadvantaged population that doesn't have that genetic, hereditary background" to get high test scores.

The response on campus to the university president's linkage of genetics and test scores was immediate and angry. Four of the five campus student governments and the daily student newspaper called for his resignation.

At the Board of Governors meeting, which was called to discuss Lawrence's future, 60 students were permitted to attend a three-and-a-half-hour open session. This was followed by a two-hour closed session. During the meeting, students had to struggle to get speaking rights in face of the chair's efforts to limit their comments.

As the videotapes rolled, students organized an open mike to air their frustration with the Rutgers administration. The crowd broke into chants of "Lawrence must go!" Protests have been organized by the United Student Coalition, a group of 40 student organizations including Black and Latino groups, student government organizations, and fraternities and sororities. The fight for Lawrence's resignation gained national attention February 7, when the coalition organized a sit-in on the Rutgers basketball court during halftime.

A walkout was scheduled on the New Brunswick campus the day after the ball game, and from noon to 1:00 p.m. bands of students visited classes throughout the

campus, encouraging other students to walk out in solidarity. More than 700 students assembled at Brower Commons beneath a banner that read "Apology not Accepted," in reference to Lawrence's explanation that he "misspoke." A similar walkout of about 300 was held at the Newark campus the following day.

Otis Rolley, a leader of the United Students Coalition, said the coalition is now turning its efforts to teach-ins and meetings in dorms and in classes. "We need to show people that this isn't just a Black issue, it's the whole system," Rolley said.

The students are also planning a demonstration for Monday, February 27 at the State House in Trenton. The protesters have called on New Jersey governor Christine Todd Whitman to demand Lawrence's resignation. While mildly criticizing his remarks, Whitman has repeatedly said she would leave the matter to the Board of Governors.

Democratic congressman Robert Torricelli, a Rutgers alumnus, called for the president's removal because "the controversy has done great harm. My concern is what was a dispute on the Rutgers campus has now become a national issue."

The coalition has raised a list of demands in addition to Lawrence's resigna-



Student at Board of Governors meeting calls for Rutgers president Francis Lawrence to resign for racist comment about Blacks.

tion, including dropping the Scholastic Aptitude Test as a requirement for admission, reducing tuition, and holding a general election in New Jersey for the next university president.

Lawrence's supporters have made much of his "good" record on minority recruitment at Rutgers and at Tulane University of Louisiana, where he was presi-

dent earlier. Student protesters, however, point to tuition fees that are rising in wild disproportion to inflation and the small numbers of tenured Black and Latino professors as examples of racist discrimination that remains prevalent at Rutgers. The protests have opened a debate on affirmative action and open admissions policies as well.

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Christchurch: 199 High St. Postal address: P.O. Box 22-530. Tel: (3) 365-6055.

SWEDEN

Stockholm: Vikingagatan 10 (T-bana St Eriksplan). Postal code: S-113 42. Tel: (08) 31 69 33.

CALENDAR

UTAH

Salt Lake City

Report from Cuba. Speakers: Al Campbell, Department of Economics; Bob Goff, Unitarian Universalist Service Committee; Tami Peterson, International Youth Brigade to Cuba. Wed., March 1, noon. *University of Utah, Sociology Conference Room, 3rd Floor, Behavioral Science Building.*

Benefit Concert with State of the Nation and Other Bands. Speaker: Tami Peterson, International Youth Brigade to Cuba. Fri., March 10, 8 p.m. Centro Cívico Mexicano. 155 S. 600 West. Sponsored by *Cuba Friendship/Freedom to Travel Campaign and International Youth Brigade to Cuba.* Donation: \$5. For more information: (801) 977-3911.

Gee, thanks boss — Toyota has taken the lead in responding to pressure from Japanese workers to reduce their long work hours. The carmaker will cut its work day by



Harry Ring

15 minutes, and take it off the lunch break.

You thought they were leftovers? — California prison officials say inmates eat well on a

budget of \$2.45 a day per person, even though that's only a dime more than it was 14 years ago.

One advance in modern prisons, they explain, is a "cook and chill processing system." Like, if there's going to be fried potatoes on Monday and Thursday, you cook a double batch on Monday and reheat them on Thursday.

Plus a warm setting — In one California prison that has a 15-minute eating time, you can gulp down the cook-and-chill and ponder a posted notice: "No warning shots will be fired if a disturbance breaks out."

That's why they call a club a baton? — Cops in Puerto Rico are as brutal and corrupt as their

mainland counterparts. To deal with this, rookie training courses now include liberal arts classes, with an emphasis on music appreciation.

March of science — The coffin-nail industry is still searching for a smokeless cigarette. A professor joined the quest, patenting a procedure for coating the cigarette's mouthpiece in nicotine, with electrical impulses driving it into the mucus membranes of the smoker's lips. He said it could also help people to kick the habit.

Get out of that ivory tower — That prof says he hasn't gotten far in interesting tobacco companies in his invention. "They said, 'We're in the business of making

cigarettes not getting people off them.'"

Really? — Air Force general Ronald Fogleman told reporters that the United States is developing a new crop of "smart" bombs even smarter than the previous ones. He assured, "This is an area that has really received preferred attention during the building of the 1996 budget."

That good old Silver lining — With support from Japanese officials and luck in locating a container ship that carried its own cranes, Sea-Land, a top container shipper, was the first to resume operations out of the port at Kobe, Japan, site of the recent earth-

quake. Said a Sea-Land official: "Suddenly, out of the devastation of the quake, we found all the answers."

But remember, drive safely — Ford and General Motors are recalling a total of 45,000 cars and trucks to check out such problems as steering, faulty welds on suspension systems, and problems with spare tires.

In that order? — The Thomas Nelson company is making a bundle marketing Christian books, cassettes, videos, etc. It says its purpose is "to publish, produce and market products that honor God and serve humanity, and to enhance shareholder value."

Attack on affirmative action begins in California

BY HARRY RING

LOS ANGELES — Opponents of affirmative action here are organizing to put the question on the California ballot in 1996. Their aim is to galvanize bourgeois public opinion around a campaign to scrap programs that combat the discriminatory consequences of inequality for Blacks, Latinos, other minorities, and women in state employment, education, and public contracting.

AS I SEE IT

The measure has been endorsed by the Republican administration of Gov. Pete Wilson. The leadership of the Democratic Party, which claims to favor affirmative action, has made clear it will surrender before the first shot is fired.

To the extent that state affirmative-action programs exist and are enforced, they provide a counterweight to past and continuing discrimination. If enacted, the measure — demagogically entitled the California Civil Rights Initiative — would not only set back the fight for equality in the state government but also offer a green

light to private industry to escalate its ongoing fight against affirmative action.

To get the proposition on the ballot, sponsors must obtain either the signatures of 615,000 qualified voters or a vote to do so by two-thirds of the state legislature. Proponents of the measure have not indicated if they will try to qualify it for the March 1996 primary elections or the November 1996 general elections.

The initiative was drawn up by two northern California professors. It quickly won the support of key sponsors of Proposition 187, the immigrant-bashing ballot measure approved here last November. Giving it their particular anti-immigrant slant, the 187 crowd indicated they would pitch for Black votes by arguing that affirmative action was originally intended to benefit Blacks but is now being used by others — including immigrants — at the expense of Blacks.

Other supporters attempted to mask their bigotry as concern for the "little guy" against better-off Blacks in the middle class. "Why should a middle-class Black whose parent is a stockbroker be given preference over some hillbilly up in my district?" said Bernie Richter, a Republican member of the state legislature.

Ultraright national political figures have already begun to champion the proposition. In his syndicated column, Patrick Buchanan offered his heartfelt endorsement, saying the proposition would end "all state favoritism toward Hispanics, blacks and Asians in taxpayer-supported jobs and schools."

"It may just be the silver bullet of affirmative action," Buchanan enthused. Many supporters of Ross Perot's right-wing outfit, United We Stand America, are also backing the measure, according to the *Los Angeles Times*.

Asked on NBC's "Meet the Press" to comment on the proposition, White House chief of staff Leon Panetta tipped his hat to affirmative action. The White House aide said the administration opposes "efforts to turn back the clock on civil rights....Where you have discrimination you need to have a remedy. That includes affirmative action."

California Democratic leaders were not impressed. They contend they were creamed in the November voting because they opposed Proposition 187. Their "opposition" boiled down to arguing that sealing the borders was the better way to handle the immigration "problem." So far, State Assembly Speaker Willie Brown, who is Black, has been the only Democrat to hit the anti-affirmative-action measure.

Gray Davis, the Democratic lieutenant governor, told reporters, "There shouldn't be any sacred cows in public policy and all of us should have the courage [!] to re-examine policies, no matter how noble, to make sure they're still wanted."

State Democratic chairperson Bill Press

chimed in, "Not only is this an area where there's a possibility of compromise, we have to be aggressively seeking a compromise to avoid a bloodbath in 1996."

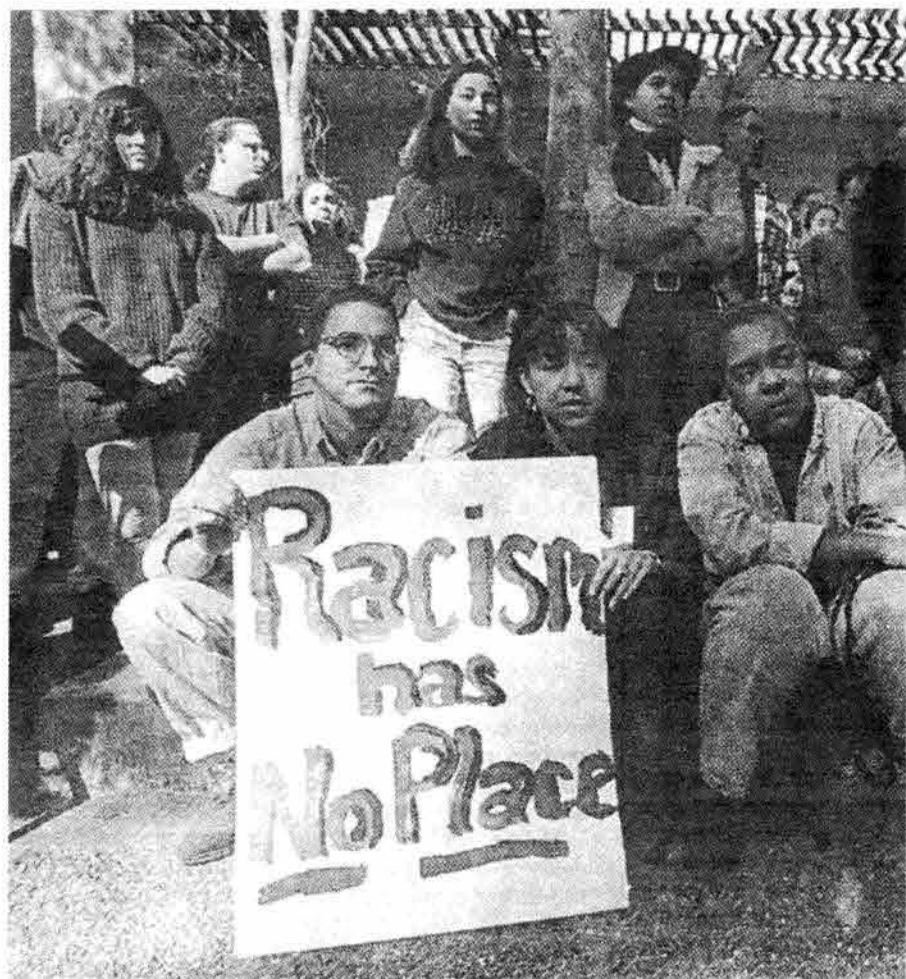
"I say that as a longtime supporter of affirmative action. But, like a lot of good programs it can be abused....There are cases where people can point to where it's been discriminatory. If it's broke, I think we've got to fix it."

Meanwhile, Bob Dole, Republican majority leader of the U.S. Senate, declared, "You know, the people in America are now paying a price for things that were done before they were born.... Slavery was wrong. But should future generations have to pay for that?"

Dole's argument is a total fraud. Affirmative action programs are needed because of discrimination that exists today. Workers who are Black, Latino, Asian, or from other oppressed nationalities are still the last hired and first fired. Their jobless rate is consistently higher than average. Their average wage is lower, and they still get the short end of the stick in job advancement. Women workers still face sex segregation in employment and promotions, and their average wages lag well behind those of men. There is continuing discrimination in schools, from the elementary level through university education, as well.

Ending such victimization and the divisions it perpetuates among workers is essential for the entire working class. Affirmative action is a key weapon in the fight to build working-class unity. Which is exactly why the employers and their politicians want to ice it.

Students rally against racist mail



More than 400 students rallied at the University of California, Berkeley, campus February 15 to protest anonymous racist flyers left in mailboxes of Black, Latino, and other minority students at the university's law school. One of the racist diatribes, received a few days earlier, said, "It bugs the hell out of me because your [sic] taking the seat of someone qualified." An earlier anonymous message declared, "Affirmative action sucks!!! Don't flunk out." Included was a picture of a gorilla. At the protest rally, student Nicole Wong was quoted as declaring, "It is just a symptom of a much larger sickness.... It creates an atmosphere which says racism is OK. The rally today says racism is not OK."

— 25 AND 50 YEARS AGO —

THE MILITANT

Published in the Interest of the Working People
March 6, 1970 Price 10¢

FEB. 24 — B-52 bombers have been used for the first time in central Laos, according to a *New York Times* dispatch from Vientiane, Feb. 21.

The giant bombers were employed in an unsuccessful effort to drive back revolutionary forces on the Plaine des Jarres.

"In a ten-day campaign," the dispatch reported, "North Vietnamese troops have seized more than 20 government positions in north-east Laos, despite the apparent use of U.S. B-52 bombers in Laos for the first time — apart from the bombing of the so-called Ho Chi Minh Trail."

Washington's preparations for a stand against the revolutionary forces on the Plaine des Jarres have been underway since early February.

These began with the forced removal of tens of thousands of the area's civilian inhabitants.

The population "is down to one tenth of the 150,000 who once lived there," *New York Times* Laos correspondent Henry Kamm reported Feb. 8.

"Hardly a house is left standing and the refugee camps where the last of the plainsmen live are about to be evacuated."

THE MILITANT

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

March 3, 1945

LOS ANGELES, Feb. 20 — Vigilante violence, overtly encouraged by the capitalist press and slyly winked at by the local authorities raised its head in California last week to endanger the lives of Japanese-Americans returning to the West Coast from inland concentration camps into which they were thrust shortly after America's entry into the war.

When the Army decided to release the Japanese-Americans from the camps, the reactionary press, with the *Los Angeles Times* in the lead, incited mob violence by "warning" that "trouble" would ensue if the internees were permitted to return to the West Coast where most of them lived before the war. They demanded that the authorities prevent the internees from coming back to their homes here.

[The] district attorney in Los Angeles, stated publicly that he knew of certain people who had threatened to "shoot on sight" any Japanese-Americans they might encounter on the streets of this city. On Feb. 17, Mrs. Joseph J. Holzman informed the police she had twice been warned by anonymous phone calls to discharge two Japanese servants whom she had hired after their release from the Tule Lake concentration camp. The man who phoned told her: "Better get rid of them or we'll get rid of you and take care of them."

Step up support for Cat strikers

Now is the time for working people in the United States and around the world to step up solidarity and support for the thousands of United Auto Workers (UAW) members on strike against Caterpillar. The earth-moving giant is feeling the pinch, both from its market rivals and from the strike, now more than eight months old. As one worker after another explains on the picket lines, the strikers are still solid in their determination to "outlast Cat."

Like its direct competitors and other capitalist enterprises, Caterpillar is on a cost-cutting and downsizing drive, going after workers' wages, extending hours, and speeding up production.

Since the walkout by UAW members, the company has attempted to keep production going with an assortment of line-crossers, temporary workers, and its own (increasingly demoralized and insecure) office and management personnel. This is reaching its limit, however. At a point when sales are no longer booming at the pace they were just a few months ago, the company is at the same time forced to operate with greater costs and tighter profit margins.

One indication of the mounting pressure on Caterpillar was the fall in the company's share prices right after it had announced record profits for the fourth quarter of 1994. While rising interest rates and other factors have

been unsettling stock markets in general over the past year, the drop in Caterpillar's share prices carried an additional message. It was also wealthy shareholders' way of complaining that Caterpillar "should have earned ... more than they did," as one Wall Street analyst put it.

At the same time, the workers remain firm in their resolve. Very few crossed after the first weeks of the strike last summer. Those who have stayed out see the fight as one not just for themselves but for other workers and the labor movement.

The issues in the strike — the company's attempts to fire and discipline workers for union activity and to impose a union-busting "final offer" — go to the heart of the right of the working class to organize to defend itself against the bosses.

"If we lose, you're next," is how one picket put it outside the Pontiac, Illinois, plant.

What's more, workers' experiences over the course of the strike have increased the identification of many of them with other struggles in this country and around the world and heightened their interest in a range of political ideas.

Caterpillar is weakening today. The UAW workers need and deserve the backing of the entire labor movement as they fight to push back Cat's arrogant "final offer" and return to work with their union intact.

Defend affirmative action

Affirmative action is coming under assault — from a proposed referendum in California that would end "preferential treatment" for minorities and women, to a February 21 vote in the House of Representatives to end a program to promote minority-owned media companies.

This assault is not packaged by its backers as openly racist or anti-woman. In fact, one of the authors of the mislabeled "California Civil Rights Initiative" is a university regent and businessman who is Black. The opponents of affirmative action try to appeal to the middle class and layers of workers by claiming to oppose special privileges and discrimination in new forms. Or they argue that affirmative action programs go too far. In a recent television interview, for instance, Republican senator Robert Dole demagogically asked, "should future generations have to pay for" slavery?

These arguments are false to the core. They misrepresent what affirmative action is, why the entire working class *does* need it, and why the labor movement should fight to defend and extend it.

As explained in the Socialist Workers Party's *An Action Program to Confront the Coming Economic Crisis* (see excerpt reprinted on this page), the fight for affirmative action in hiring, promotion, training, and education is part of the necessary struggle to unite working people in the United States and internationally. Special steps are needed to advance equality in the hiring of workers who are Black, female, or others who face discrimination due to the divide-and-conquer workings of capitalism. This is not a form of "atonement" for past horrors such as slav-

ery and Jim Crow, or the age-old subjugation of women. Nor is it a "sacrifice" today by workers who are white or male — an unfair sacrifice or a worthy one, as different individuals would have it — for the sake of some greater good down the road.

No, affirmative action is none of these. It is a necessary part of helping to break down the divisions the bosses use to push down the wages and conditions of all workers — of every skin tone, nationality, and gender. Measures to combat those divisions and advance real equality thereby strengthen our class as a whole.

As long as the bosses can pay less for the labor power of women, Blacks, and immigrants, they will use this as a club against all workers. Wage scales are set from the bottom up, not the top down. And that's true for job conditions and working people's overall quality of life as well.

That's why the *Action Program* explains that defending affirmative action is part and parcel of the fight for jobs for all — the fight for a 30-hour workweek for 40 hours' pay to spread the available jobs around, and for a massive, federally funded public works program to build schools, housing, and safer roads and bridges. The demand for an immediate increase in the minimum wage is also part of this package that the labor movement needs to lead all working people to fight for.

In the face of assaults on equality such as that being mounted in California today, it is the unions and labor movement everywhere that have the greatest stake in the fight to defend and extend affirmative action.

Join protests against budget cuts

In New York and Washington, D.C., workers and students are organizing protests against the harshest-ever cuts in spending for social services proposed by city, state, and federal officials. A rally is planned for February 27 at the capitol building in Albany, New York, and students are holding protest meetings across the city and state. A coalition of organizations has called for a March 7 demonstration in Washington, D.C., to protest the cuts proposed by the city administration and U.S. Congress. And in Boston, Massachusetts, 500 people rallied outside the State House February 10 to voice opposition to the bipartisan assault on recipients of Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) benefits.

Protest actions like these are much needed, and we urge our readers to help build and participate in them.

Marching to the tune of Wall Street, Democratic and Republican government officials — from the White House and Congress, to governors' mansions and city halls — are scrambling to ax social programs and aid the handful of ruling capitalist families to boost their profit rates. At every level of government, the legislative and executive branches are ganging up to slash AFDC, Medicaid, education, and other social programs. They are imposing takeback contracts and layoffs on city employees and seeking to weaken and eventually bust their unions.

These austerity measures are combined with sharpening attacks on democratic rights, including increased use of the death penalty and an ongoing assault on the rights of the accused and convicted. Government moves to put more cops on the streets and push back trial and appeal rights come as complaints filed against police brutality in New York City jumped more than 37 percent last year.

So-called government budget crises across the United States, and around the world, are products of the declin-

ing fortunes of world capitalism since the early 1970s, accelerated by the onset of depression conditions at the opening of the 1990s. These "fiscal crises" are the inevitable outcome of the profit drive and cutthroat competition of the employing class.

Whether it's in Washington, D.C., New York City, or Mexico, the capitalist rulers propose the same "solution" — to make workers and working farmers sacrifice in order to protect the interests of the wealthy owners of land and factories and wheeler-dealers in stocks, bonds, and commodities.

But working people and our organizations must resist these efforts to make the laboring majority pay the price for the instability and breakdown of an inhumane and exploitative social system.

Today's miserly welfare payments to working people are a drop in the bucket compared to the interest payments to the opulent bondholders. In the United States, the increase in interest income alone between 1987 and 1989 — not the mammoth sum itself, just the two-year increment — was greater than all the income paid out to AFDC recipients during the three decades between 1959 and 1989.

The meetings, rallies, and marches under way in New York, Washington, D.C., and elsewhere are part of worldwide protests that have taken place over the past year against government assaults on the social wage — from Canada and France to Mexico and Italy. The *Militant* does its best to cover these fights — carrying firsthand reports from active participants wherever possible — so that working people and youth the world over can learn from each other's experiences and emulate them.

All out for the February 27 and March 7 rallies in Albany and Washington, D.C.!

Affirmative action helps unite workers

The following excerpt on the fight for affirmative action is reprinted from *An Action Program to Confront the Coming Economic Crisis*, which was issued in 1988 by the Socialist Workers Party in response to the 1987 stock market crash. These excerpts are reprinted by permission of Pathfinder, copyright © 1989. Subheadings are by the *Militant*.

The devastation of Black working-class families has widened the gap between their average economic and social conditions and those of the working class as a whole. This gap had begun to narrow following the civil rights victories that were won in the 1960s and that were advanced in the beginning of the 1970s.

The big majority of workers who are unemployed or living below the poverty level are white, but workers who are Black make up a disproportionate number of those who have been driven into these conditions in recent years....

The devastation of working-class communities that are Black over the last decade is the product of the workings of capitalism in a society with a legacy of racial discrimination. Combined with the growing class differentiation within the Black population, the result for workers who are Black has been less desegregation and more resegregation — in the job market, in the schools, and in housing.

This is a blow to the lives and living standards of all workers. Gains such as desegregation of schools and housing, securing political rights, unionization of workers who are Black, advancing Blacks into jobs once reserved for whites only, raising the minimum wage all these laid the ground to improve the wages, working conditions, education, and living standards of all working people.

Most importantly, the victory over Jim Crow segregation by the civil rights struggles of the 1950s and 1960s strengthened the entire working class politically, and the rulers have not been able to roll back this historic conquest. The advances in the fights of workers who are Black promote greater unification of our ranks in the face of the racial and other divisions imposed by capitalism. These gains aid workers, regardless of nationality or sex, in seeing that we are all part of one class; this understanding helps to undermine the effects of individual competition for jobs and security that the employers use to pit us against one another and increase our exploitation.

The same is true for overcoming the divisions imposed by the capitalists to block unity with other workers targeted for discrimination because of their skin color, language, or national origin.

Breaking down sex barriers in employment and the workplace undermines prejudice against women and narrows one of the fundamental divisions used by the capitalists to weaken our class. As long as working-class women remain confined to the narrow world of the home, dependent economically on a man, it is much more difficult for them to engage in political activity and struggles to defend their class interests.

The influx of millions of women into the workforce has brought them into social and political life in a qualitatively new way, increasing their self-confidence and fighting capacities to the benefit of all workers. This is particularly true for women who have been able to break through long-established barriers, get jobs in industry, and become members of industrial unions. These women are guaranteed wages equal to men in the same job categories — wages substantially higher on the average than those of the big majority of workers who are women....

A disproportionate number of those working at the minimum wage are young, Black, Latino, or female. The employing class, through oppression and prejudice, has kept the price of the labor power of these workers lower than that of the class as a whole. In capitalist society wages are set from the bottom up, not the top down. In other words, what the bosses can get away with paying those of us who are worst off sets the floor for what they'll get away with paying all the rest of us.

Affirmative action is needed to combat widening wage inequality, as well. A victorious fight for jobs and a living income can be conducted only through a broad social struggle that aims to raise the living standards and secure equal rights for those of us who are the most oppressed under capitalism. It is along that road that we can transform the labor movement into a social movement that will better the conditions of us all....

Raising the federal minimum wage would help increase the wage level for all working people, particularly benefiting those who are the lowest paid. This would increase the unity and political strength of the working class....

As long as the employers can deny jobs to some workers because we are Black, Chicano, Puerto Rican, Asian, American Indian, foreign-born, or female, they can keep our class divided and weaken our ability to protect the jobs, wages, and working conditions of all workers. Left to their own devices, the capitalists will never enforce measures to insure equality on the job market and in the workplace. They will back every discriminatory practice inside the labor movement itself. We must demand that the government:

Establish and enforce affirmative action quotas to achieve preferential hiring and upgrading of workers who are Black, Latino, or women.

Labor can't let air safety take back seat to profits

BY MARK FRIEDMAN

The deteriorating safety conditions for the millions of airline passengers and workers at the nation's airports is becoming obvious to millions of people. Those of us who are airline workers see the companies cutting back on safety measures in the name of cutting costs, keeping profits up, and staying competitive. At the same time, the increase in fatal airline accidents — notably the track record of USAir and various commuter airlines — has forced the big-business media to pay more attention to safety in the skies.

UNION TALK

The government even held a special Federal Aviation Administration (FAA)-sponsored conference in Washington, D.C., attended by 1,000 people to try to reassure the public. It was really a cover-up for the FAA's own inaction, which, according to an article in the December 18 *New York Times*, was a "factor in 93 crashes in 11 years, resulting in 536 deaths." Let's review just a few of the most recent exposés:

- Airlines have been granted permission by the FAA to cease carrying life rafts on over-water flights within 162 miles of land to save money on fuel costs.

- There have been 187 rudder mishaps with Boeing 737s, including USAir and United Airlines fatal crashes. The FAA granted Boeing until the end of the century to fix the problem, even though 2,200 of the 737s are in use worldwide.

- Before the *Times* exposed the practice, reductions in safety checks resulted in nine USAir planes leaving the gate without sufficient fuel over 16 months. The FAA approved USAir's cutbacks in engine maintenance to save \$500,000 yearly per airplane.

- Ice formation on the wings of American Eagle ATR commuter aircraft resulted in fatal crashes and near accidents. All the aircraft were moved to warmer climates following pilots' refusal to fly them.

An editorial in the January 12 issue of the *Seattle Post* pointed to a Boeing study saying that if worldwide airline safety remains as it has been the past five years, by the year 2013 the industry can expect to lose one aircraft about every eight days.

Mechanics, ground crews, and pilots report the pressure they are put under by management to cut corners in order to "get the plane out on time" and "beat the competition with on-time performance."

A former American Eagle mechanic said, for example, that upon landing there is an "off-the-record" discussion between the pilot and maintenance personnel. They jointly decide which problems should be written up and which should not. A British Airways mechanic said it is common to "rotate a tire" to conceal a cut, or even to fill it in with black grease so the pilot won't see it on the preflight walk around the plane. He said that maintenance supervisors often overrule a mechanic's decision and "pencil-whip" the logbook to alter the mini-

mum maintenance procedures that must be done before the aircraft is said to be airworthy.

Of course, when an accident happens, the company blames individual employees, covering up the real problem.

During the International Association of Machinists' (IAM) strike against Frank Lorenzo's Eastern Airlines from 1989 to 1991, the union made airline safety an issue, setting an example for all airline workers. IAM mechanics carefully documented illegal procedures by scabs, management, and unlicensed personnel. Some infractions were even videotaped. But when these violations were brought to the attention of the FAA, this so-called impartial agency ruled in favor of Eastern. Ultimately the company and management personnel were indicted for safety violations and conspiracy to defraud the government, but not until hundreds of flight hours using unsafe equipment had been logged.

The deterioration of airline safety is part of a package with the weakening of the unions under the blows of the employers' offensive over the past 15 years. Despite increasing passenger, cargo, and mail loads, the size of ground crews has decreased, as has the aircraft time on the ground. We are increasingly using unsafe ground equipment and lack adequate fire-fighting equipment, reflectors, and well-lit runway and terminal signs. More work and less pay, worsening job conditions, and benefit cutbacks — all this breeds demoralization. We become lax in making sure every job is done right and that all safety precautions are taken.

With the implementation of more and more concessionary contracts, union safety committees and general safety consciousness have declined. Company-organized "safety committees" now dominate the scene. But these bodies have nothing to do with genuinely improving working and health conditions. Instead, they are organized by management to whitewash their failures, to make things look good before preannounced government inspections, and to try to undercut the union and any safety actions workers have taken independently. Unions that are not fighting for workers rights on the job also cannot live up to their responsibilities to help protect the flying public.

We cannot allow ourselves to become numb to airline crashes — as we do to train derailments, chemical and nuclear accidents, and so on — especially when we hear they involve a company other than the one we're working for. Union airline workers need not and cannot tolerate the risks the companies deem "acceptable." It will take unions standing up to management's cutbacks and corner-cutting to improve safety.

In exchange for contract concessions, the IAM officialdom at Northwest, TWA, United, and elsewhere has been given posts on the company board of directors in recent years. The bosses' aim here is to tie union officials closer to management and put them in more of a



Airline mechanics overhaul an engine. To aid carriers' profit drive, the FAA ruled USAir could switch long-haul engines to short-haul flights without an overhaul. Only unions can be guardians of safety.

mind-set to help keep the company profitable. This reinforces an unwillingness to take safety seriously on the grounds that it costs "our" company money. When "our" companies undergo a financial crisis — or a loss of public confidence after an airplane crash, chemical leak, or train derailment — workers are urged to stick together to defend company profits and thus our jobs. Company patriotism is supposed to come first.

We have to reject the bosses' efforts to rationalize cutting corners on safety in the name of keeping "America," and whatever company we happen to work for at the time, competitive and profitable. We end up losing elementary human solidarity if we cave in to such pressure. We lose the potential power of our unions, allied with other movements and organizations, to fight to improve safety for all.

Working people and our unions have to begin to discuss in our unions the need to chart a different course, taking the moral high ground. We must expose company violations of safety precautions and practices. We have to emulate the example of workers and unionists who say "no" to going along with unsafe practices under orders, or intense pressure, from management. Only we can be the guardians of safety for ourselves and the public. This is a central part of rebuilding our unions into the fighting instruments they need to become to turn back concessionary contracts and challenge the deterioration of environmental and safety conditions under capitalism. By what we do, both on the job and through our unions, we can help advance toward a fighting labor movement that begins to take back control over our working conditions and acts in the interests of working people and society as a whole.

Mark Friedman is a member of IAM Local 2785 in Los Angeles.

LETTERS

Case of Sheikh Rahman

The U.S. government, in its desperate attempt to obtain a conviction in the case of Dr. Omar Abdel Rahman, has taken one more step in violating his constitutional rights. The prosecution announced on February 6 that it was using Siddig Ibrahim Siddig Ali, one of Dr. Abdel Rahman's co-defendants in the case, as a star witness against him and 10 others on trial for allegedly conspiring against the U.S. government. Although known in advance to the prosecution, Siddig Ali's changing role was not made known to the defense, which was thus prevented from preparing strategies incorporating this development, depriving Dr. Abdel Rahman of his legal right to defend himself fully in court. The surprise announcement also appears to violate established rules for disclosure of evidence.

The prosecution has been attempting to buy out Siddig Ali, among others of the 12 co-defendants in the case, since last summer, to boost a case based primarily on the word of an informer, Emad Salem, who was reportedly paid \$1 million of U.S. taxpayers' money. The badly needed boost was to have lent credence to the testimony of Salem, a man whom even prosecutors admitted lied repeatedly under oath to another U.S. court, in a separate unrelated case. Salem and now Siddig Ali

are essential to the prosecution's case, which attempts to put on trial the words, thought, and speech of Dr. Omar Abdel Rahman, an internationally known and greatly respected Islamic scholar and teacher.

The specter of 240-year sentences handed down to four Muslims in the World Trade Center bombing trial last year, clearly designed to intimidate the defendants, may also have played a part in Siddig Ali's decision to cooperate. It is not yet known how much Siddig Ali will be paid for participating in the U.S. government's plan to railroad Dr. Abdel Rahman and the others.

The Committee to Free Sheikh Omar Abdel Rahman demands the immediate unconditional release of Dr. Abdel Rahman and the restoration of his First Amendment rights.

Ms. Nadrat Siddique
Committee to Free Sheikh Omar Abdel Rahman
College Park, Maryland

Environmental disaster

The projected Three Gorges Dam in Asia is an example of the misery caused by imperialism's financial institutions in underdeveloped countries. The plan is to erect a two-kilometer-wide concrete wall across the Yangtze River, which would create an inland sea the length of Lake Supe-



rior and submerge hundreds of towns, villages, and factories as well as 14,000 hectares of prime farmland. It would displace 1.3 million people.

Probe International had the project reviewed by independent experts who concluded that it is not technologically, economically, or ecologically viable. They also note that the dam is being built over fault lines and that planners have not taken adequate account of seismic activity that could be induced by the reservoir.

However, just days before going on the trade mission to China, Canada's Prime Minister [Jean] Chrétien endorsed the project and gave the go-ahead to the involvement of the Export Development Corp., a crown corporation that supplies credit to foreign govern-

ments that buy Canadian. The Canadian government is also fully aware that Chinese security officials have jailed critics and banned a book critical of the project and have threatened "severe punishment against conspiracies aimed at the dam."

Bea Bryant
Blenheim, Ontario

Subscribers' comments

As readers have sent in renewals for their subscriptions, many have taken advantage of a space allotted for comments and suggestions. Some of the comments follow:

More coverage of the Zapatistas in Chiapas, Mexico, is needed. The coverage of Mark Curtis is excellent, however more political

prisoners should be covered also.
Bloomington, Indiana

More on rural struggles. More on Pacific Northwest forest issues. More on strategy discussions.
Ashland, Oregon

Informative. Needs more coverage of Caribbean — i.e. Jamaica, Grenada.
N. Miami, Florida

What is the difference between scabs, strikebreakers, and replacement workers? You have used all three terms at one time or another.
Houston, Texas

Editor's note: With regard to the above question, all three terms refer to the same thing — people who are induced by the bosses to cross a picket line during a strike. The employers often prefer the more benign-sounding term "replacement worker," but this has also become a commonly used phrase when discussing the bosses' increased efforts over the past decade to bring in nonunion workers to replace those out on strike.

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.

New Zealand gov't rations life and death with attacks on health care

BY FELICITY COGGAN

AUCKLAND, New Zealand — Retired meatpacker James McKeown won a round in the battle by working people to assert their right to health services when he was hooked up to a kidney dialysis machine here February 1.

Dialysis removes waste products from the bloodstream for people whose kidneys have ceased functioning. Without the treatment, McKeown was expected to live only three months.

Health authorities had initially denied the 76-year-old access to dialysis because of his age. But they were forced to back down in face of widespread public opposition after McKeown took his case to the media. His family initiated legal action under the Human Rights Act, which bans discrimination on the grounds of age.

Minister of Health Jenny Shipley insisted that McKeown was refused treatment for medical reasons. But doctors treating him explained that due to limited funding, they ration access to dialysis according to criteria drawn up by the government's Core Health Services Committee. Age, as well as "compliance" and "antisocial behavior," are among the criteria that have been prepared for 19 different areas of health and disability support services.

The Core Health Services Committee was originally set up by the National Party government in 1991 to draw up a list of "core health services" that would remain publicly funded — and of those that would not. Last year the committee abandoned the task, saying it was too difficult,

and instead turned its attention to developing criteria for restricting access to specific health services.

Auckland's Regional Health Authority explored the issue of rationing dialysis treatment at a meeting last September. Claiming increasing demand was straining the authority's budget, they put forward for discussion 13 grounds for refusing dialysis treatment — including blindness, mental handicap, major antisocial behavior, major psychiatric illness, and age over 75.

Restrictions on access to the more high-tech forms of health care comes in the

context of continuing government cuts in public health services, ongoing moves to run medical services on a commercial basis, and the shifting of health costs onto individuals and families.

In the year to June 1993, government spending on health fell to 7.57 percent of gross domestic product, compared with 7.71 percent the year before. The same year government spending per capita dropped NZ\$21, while private spending per capita rose NZ\$47 (NZ\$1.00=US\$0.63).

Public hospital beds have dropped by 700 since 1993, when the government set

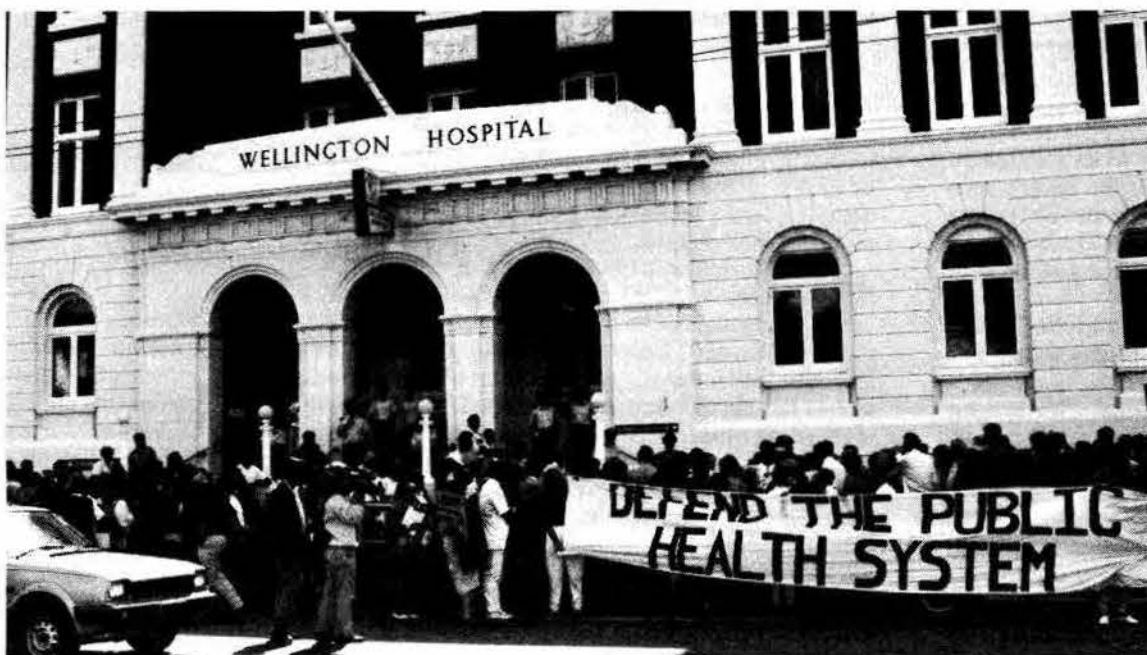
up Crown Health Enterprises to run public hospitals as commercial enterprises.

The government's health reforms have included closing or downgrading public hospitals in smaller towns. This has met with resistance, most recently in Kaitia, in the far north of the country, where 6,000 people — three quarters of the town's population — turned out February 9 to protest plans to downgrade the local hospital. "We're humans, not data," shouted one man on the march.

Public hospital waiting lists have grown 11.7 percent in the year to June 1994, and waiting times are longer. There are 77,000 people — more than 2 percent of the population — waiting for operations at public hospitals. Last March a senior surgeon at Dunedin Hospital resigned because of delays that he blamed on the health reforms, which he said could endanger patients' lives.

Meanwhile, last December, the chief executive of Northland Health, Dr. Bruce Gollop, weighed in with his solution to public hospital waiting lists. He explained that more people needing elective surgery, such as hip replacements, could be treated if staff did not have to spend so much time dealing with "avoidable" injuries from accidents and violence. He cited a breakdown in family values and parenting skills as the cause of much of the violence.

Felicity Coggan is a member of the Meatworkers Union of Aotearoa in Auckland, New Zealand.



A protest in April 1992 in Wellington against the introduction of user charges in public hospitals. The New Zealand government has continued since then to deepen its attacks on universal medical care.

Militant/Terry Coggan

'Buy Canadian' sums up Ottawa's foreign policy

BY ROBERT SIMMS

TORONTO — "If there is a dominant theme in the federal government's review of foreign policy, it is the rise of frank self-interest," wrote the *Toronto Globe and Mail* in approving the foreign policy statement released February 7 by the Canadian foreign affairs minister.

The key issue raised by Ottawa was the need to subordinate most other foreign policy considerations to the expansion of trade. "Peacekeeping, foreign aid, democratic development and sovereignty used to be priorities," the *Globe* editorialized. "Now the government ranks its interests more honestly. In a tough, new world, prosperity will matter more than philanthropy, economy more than democracy, drawing rights [on banks] more than human rights."

The operative words in the editorial are "more honestly." Ottawa's "peace-

keeping" ventures, foreign aid, and calls on specific semicolonial governments to respect human rights have always been no more than accessories in pursuit of the worldwide commercial interests of the handful of families that run Canadian finance capital.

The report stoutly defends the long-standing practice of tying foreign aid to the purchase of Canadian goods, in effect subsidizing Canadian business. "Tied aid provisions help build relations of mutual benefit," the report insisted.

The release of the foreign policy review followed by one week Prime Minister Jean Chrétien's return from a trade-promoting tour of Latin and Central America accompanied by 250 Canadian businessmen. Last November Chrétien, 9 of the 10 provincial premiers, and 400 businessmen trooped around the Asian countries of China, Vietnam, Indonesia, and Malaysia,

among others, on another sales trip.

Some \$8 billion worth of trade and investment deals were announced on the Asian tour. The Latin American tour netted \$2.8 billion.

Both the foreign policy review statement and trade tours spotlight the bind Canadian capitalists are caught in, given the depression conditions that mark world capitalist markets.

Canada is among the smaller imperialist powers. One government in Ottawa after the next has chafed under the ties binding Canada's capitalist economy to that of the much larger imperialist power to its south. Canada exports 25 percent of its gross domestic product and a higher percentage of industrial production. But 80 percent of that trade is with the United States, and 65 percent of Canadian direct investment abroad goes just across the border as well.

The U.S. rulers have been more successful than their Canadian counterparts in driving down the wages, working conditions, and social programs of working people. This has put Canada's ruling rich at a disadvantage. Interest rates — borrowing costs for access to capital — are higher in Canada, for example.

In the 1970s the Liberal government of Pierre Elliott Trudeau promoted expanded trade and investment with Europe as a so-called "Third Option." It went nowhere. The degree of dependence of Canadian capitalists on the U.S. market has been steadily increasing and will continue to do so.

Currently, only 4 percent of Canadian trade is with Asian countries, not including Japan, and 2 percent with Latin America and the Caribbean.

The trade deals announced on the recent tour of Latin America also put in sharp fo-

cus the gap between even a smaller imperialist power like Canada and relatively industrialized semicolonial countries like Brazil, Argentina, and Chile.

Almost all the deals that were struck are for Canadian investment in these countries — the export of capital, not sales of goods. In one deal, the Bank of Nova Scotia bought a stake in Argentina's seventh largest bank. The assets of the Bank of Nova Scotia, though, are greater than the assets of the entire Argentine banking system. Canada and Argentina have roughly equal-sized populations.

Some of the deals announced: Methanex of Vancouver, the world's largest producer of methanol, will expand its plant in Chile. Bema Gold and Canada Tungsten will open mines in Chile. Brascan, which owned Brazil's electric power grid and the public transit systems in São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro for decades, will invest \$350 million in agribusiness, natural resources, real estate, and financial services in Brazil. Other deals are joint ventures.

Chrétien also displayed imperialist arrogance on the tour, throwing cold water on the request by Trinidad's prime minister for help in gaining entry into the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA).

Chrétien met jointly with leaders of Panama, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras and told them they would have to change their economic policies before Canada would support their entry into NAFTA. Canadian officials singled out the need for changing the rules governing these countries' banks and stocks and bond markets and ending state subsidies to manufacturing and agriculture.

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