

# THE MILITANT

**INSIDE**  
Why workers must oppose  
Moscow assault on Chechnya  
— PAGE 8

A SOCIALIST NEWSWEEKLY PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF WORKING PEOPLE

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## Bank collapse spotlights fragility of capitalism

BY GREG ROSENBERG

The oldest investment bank in Britain imploded over the February 25-26 weekend, roiling world financial markets. Barings P.L.C., a 233-year-old institution, went belly-up after incurring massive losses on stocks and futures in Japan and Singapore.

The Barings failure is the latest in a series of events since the 1987 stock market crash and aftermath of the 1991 war against Iraq — which helped usher in an international depression — that have laid bare the explosive instability of world capitalism. Earlier this year the uncontrolled results of the collapse of the Mexican peso brought the capitalist financial system to the brink of a meltdown.

Barings is estimated to have lost \$1.24 billion in the space of a few weeks. As the losses were tallied, the Bank of England mobilized a rescue operation involving the largest banks in the country. The effort collapsed when it became clear that some 20,000 futures contracts Barings had purchased on Japan's Nikkei exchange would remain open until March 10, so losses could not be capped.

Spokespeople for London's financial district, the City, scurried to bolster badly shaken confidence throughout world financial markets. The Bank of England said February 26 it would "stand ready to provide liquidity to the banking system to ensure that it continues to function normally."

Barings management and the financial press immediately pinned the blame on Nicholas Leeson, a manager of the bank's futures operation in Singapore. The 28-

Continued on Page 3

## Protests in Mexico demand withdrawal of government troops from Chiapas



Militant/Margrethe Siem

"Chiapas isn't a military barracks — army get out!" chanted 500 demonstrators, most of them young, who marched through Mexico City to the National Palace February 25 (above).

Two days later 2,000 peasants from across the country rallied in the capital to protest the drastic rise in prices, interest rates, and tariffs triggered by the crash of the peso. Recent events in Mexico illustrate the instability of

world capitalism today and its inability to offer a future to working people.

A team of *Militant* reporters currently in Mexico will provide on-the-spot coverage in upcoming issues. The trip will cost some \$3,000.

The *Militant* depends on contributions by readers to make such coverage possible. If you can help, send a check to: *Militant*, 410 West St., New York, NY 10014, earmarked Travel Fund.

## Socialist runs for mayor of Decatur, Illinois - city at center of labor battles

BY RONI McCANN

DECATUR, Illinois — "Union solidarity is one of the themes that Betsy Farley says she'll run on to be elected mayor of Decatur," the WAND TV 17 anchor-

woman reported on the February 25 evening news here. Following a news item on the restoration of unemployment benefits for striking rubber workers, Farley and supporters were shown at a press confer-



Militant/Nereida Flecha Perez

Betsy Farley is presenting a working-class voice in campaign for mayor of Decatur, Illinois. Above, Farley launches socialist campaign at courthouse press conference.

ence announcing her campaign earlier in the day. Farley, 42, is running on the Socialist Workers Party ticket.

The socialist candidate's news conference also made the front page of Decatur's daily newspaper, the *Herald and Review*, the next morning. "I'm running because I believe that working people need an alternative in the election," staff writer Ted Kleine quoted Farley as saying.

Farley and her supporters spent the day campaigning among strikers on the picket lines in Decatur. "Caterpillar, Bridgestone/Firestone, and A.E. Staley — the corporations that run the city of Decatur — are in the front ranks of the capitalists' war against working people right now," Farley told strikers. "Regardless of whether the corporate owners are U.S., Japanese, or British, they unite in their assault on the working class."

Growing capitalist stagnation over the past two decades, Farley said, slid into depression conditions in the 1990s. Workers' real wages have been cut, the workday has been stretched out, and speedup and conditions on the job have gotten worse. Levels of unemployment considered high for the quarter century following World War II are today the norm — and official figures cover the true extent of joblessness and involuntary part-

Continued on Page 6

## Passports returned to youths who visited Cuba

BY FRANK FORRESTAL

CHICAGO — The U.S. Department of State has returned the passports of the three young people who had their documents seized upon returning from a reporting trip to Cuba in January. The three youths and their supporters across the United States and around the world had waged a month-long protest campaign demanding the return of the passports.

Sukul Baul, 21, Dannen Vance, 27, and Aislinn Pulley, 16, were among the 70 participants in the International Youth Brigade to Cuba in January. Upon their return, the three were detained and interrogated by U.S. Customs agents at Chicago's O'Hare airport. Their passports were confiscated, and they were threatened with hefty fines.

All three were on editorial assignments to report firsthand on various aspects of the Cuban revolution today. Baul's articles are appearing in the *Daily Vidette* of Bloomington, Illinois; Vance's in the *Valley Courier* of Clive, Iowa; and Pulley's in *Family Matters* of Chicago. Pulley was also interviewed by the New York radio station WBAI on its program "Focus on Cuba."

At the end of February, each of the three received letters dated February 21 from

Continued on Page 5

## Why labor must lead the fight for jobs for all

Nearly one-third of the workers of the world are jobless or underemployed. That stark figure, recently released by the International Labor Organization, is the highest since the world depression of the 1930s. It brings home why the fight for jobs, as an excerpt on page 14 from the Marxist magazine *New International* explains, is "one of the most important social questions that the labor movement should be campaigning around today."

Every jolt to world capitalism — the collapse of a banking house in London, a

## EDITORIAL

default on foreign debt by a government in the third world, sudden wars or uprisings — can abruptly skyrocket the number of workers thrown onto the streets. In Mexico, for instance, a quarter of a million workers lost their jobs in January as the peso plummeted, according to the Mexican Employers Federation. Such instability, with its unpredictable breakdowns, is part and parcel of capitalism in today's depression conditions. The reality is becoming clearer that there is no such thing as a permanent, secure job for a worker under

Continued on Page 14

**All goals met in drive to sell socialist publications! — page 4**



### St. Lucia banana farmers strike

Farmers in the Banana Salvation Committee of St. Lucia announced an indefinite strike February 21 to protest the government's refusal to reveal details of a new marketing contract. Farmers in St. Lucia are the largest producers of bananas in the eastern Caribbean. Four islands in that region export about two-thirds of the bananas consumed in Britain. Last year a banana strike in St. Lucia cost the big exporters millions of dollars.

Currently, Washington is pressing London and other governments in the European Union to open their markets wider to imports from U.S. companies, such as Chiquita Brands International, which grow bananas primarily in Latin America and Hawaii, not the Caribbean.

### Bank tries to gloss Haiti sell-off

In a move to try to broaden support in Haiti for the sell-off of state-owned enterprises, the International Finance Society (SFI) announced February 14 that victims of the former Haitian dictatorship would receive 10 percent of the capital of the companies slated for privatization. The SFI, a branch of the World Bank, is working on the sale of nine public enterprises, including the national airport, the national port authority, and the national oil-producing enterprises.

According to plans worked out by the Haitian government and the SFI, 50 percent to 60 percent of the capital will be sold to foreign investors.

### U.S. seeks to keep Iraq embargo

Washington continues to demand that the United Nations Security Council maintain the brutal embargo of Iraq imposed in 1990 in the buildup to the U.S.-organized war in the Persian Gulf. The sanctions should not be lifted, the U.S. government insists, until the Security Council can be assured of Baghdad's "peaceful intentions." The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) reported in October that as a result of the embargo, 3.3 million Iraqis were at risk of malnutrition and disease, including 625,000 infants and children under five.

Divisions continue to deepen, however, between Washington and other capitalist



Four Gypsies were killed in Austria February 5 by a pipe bomb in a spate of rightist terror against Gypsies there. The onset of depression conditions throughout the capitalist world has fueled racist and antilabor attacks by fascist groups in Europe.

powers that made up the 1990-91 coalition that waged war on Iraq. The French government is pressing for the embargo to be lifted and has announced that Paris will soon establish a diplomatic interests section in Baghdad. And the Iraqi regime is already shipping 80,000-100,000 barrels of oil a day through Turkey or along the Gulf coast.

### Military runs Venezuela airports

Twenty airports were taken over by the Venezuelan military February 19 to end the delay of flights caused by a slowdown by air traffic controllers. Venezuelan defense minister Moisés Orozco Graterol announced the military had taken over the commercial airports in the country in response to threats by the owners of international airlines to suspend flights.

The 1,300 controllers started the work-to-rule job action February 10. Blastoni González, secretary of the National Association of Air Traffic Controllers, said that the delays will be indefinite until the gov-

ernment fulfills past agreements on wage increases and retirement benefits pegged to those hikes.

### Beijing-Manila rift over islands

The governments of China and the Philippines are involved in a dispute over the Spratly Islands where Beijing built a military installation in January. Manila, which views Beijing's move as a violation of its territory, responded by sending military aircraft to the disputed area.

Other governments that claim parts of the islands include Vietnam, Malaysia, Taiwan, and Brunei. The region is viewed to be potentially rich in gas and oil.

### Fascists murder youth in France

About 3,000 people, mostly from the Comoros Islands off eastern Africa, attended the February 24 funeral of an African youth murdered by ultrarightists. The young Comoran and several friends were returning from an AIDS concert rehearsal February 21 in Marseilles, France, when they were confronted by men putting up posters of the ultrarightist French group the National Front.

"We were running to catch the bus" when "they shot us like animals," one of the Comoran youths later explained.

### Poverty gap widens in EU

Figures released by the European Union statistical office reveal the deepening uneven economic development among regions of capitalist Europe. Based on 1992 data, the study found that every region in Greece and Portugal falls below the average European Union gross domestic product per capita and that only one region in Spain is above that level. Twelve regions in the EU have a GDP per capita of less

than half the EU average, as do five east German states.

### Jobless rate worst since '30s

According to a report released February 22 by the International Labor Organization, 30 percent of the world's workforce is unemployed or underemployed, the highest figure since the Great Depression of the 1930s. In absolute figures, that comes to some 820 million people, according to the study.

### Chevron settles harassment suit

Four female employees of the Chevron Corp. have won an agreement from the company to pay them \$2.2 million to settle sexual harassment charges. The women said they had been inundated with offensive jokes, E-mail messages, and sexual comments. Chevron has agreed to abide by any court order the women may win in later proceedings requiring the company to adopt new policies with regard to sexual harassment complaints.

The women are also plaintiffs in a class-action discrimination suit charging Chevron with a record of paying women less than men in similar jobs and failing to promote qualified women. The lawsuit is filed on behalf of 771 women who worked for Chevron in San Ramon, California, since 1991.

### Pact made in desegregation fight

The Kansas City, Missouri, school district and state officials announced February 21 that they had reached an agreement in their fight over school desegregation. (See "Kansas City school desegregation under fire in lawsuit" in the February 27 issue.) The terms of the deal provide that the school district itself will cover the costs of \$22.7 million of the \$190.7 million the state had pledged toward the desegregation plan for the 1995-96 school year.

Federal court desegregation orders required the school district to upgrade buildings and raise the achievement level of students. Prior to the agreement, the state of Missouri's appeal of the federal court rulings was before the U.S. Supreme Court for decision. School officials and the state government will now have six months to negotiate a longer-term settlement.

### Official fights to fly racist flag

The attorney general of South Carolina announced February 17 that he would seek to keep the Confederate battle flag atop the statehouse. The State Supreme Court is considering a lawsuit by some businessmen and the mayor of Columbia, who say the flag hurts the state's economy and is an inappropriate reminder of slavery.

The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People organized protest marches last summer against the flag and has threatened an economic boycott of the state if the banner keeps flying.

—MAURICE WILLIAMS

## THE MILITANT

### Fight racist attacks

*From the attacks on affirmative action in California to protests against the ban on Black youths entering local stores in Union Point, Georgia, the 'Militant' covers resistance by workers and youth to racist assaults. We're on the scene at demonstrations opposing cuts in funding for schools and housing and protesting cop brutality around the world. Don't miss a single issue!*



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Editor: STEVE CLARK

Managing Editor: GEORGE FYSON

Business Manager: NAOMI CRAINE

Editorial Staff: Naomi Craine, Hilda Cuzco, Laura Garza, Martin Koppel, Paul Mailhot, Argiris Malapanis, Greg Rosenberg, Pat Smith, Damon Tinnon, and Maurice Williams. Published weekly except for one week in December and biweekly from mid-June to mid-August by the Militant (ISSN 0026-3885), 410 West St., New York, NY 10014. Telephone: (212) 243-6392; Fax (212) 924-6040.

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Internet: 73311.2720@compuserve.com or: themilitant@igc.apc.org

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# Bank's fall reveals capitalism's fragility

Continued from front page  
year-old "rogue trader," they claim, single-handedly brought Barings down. Peter Baring, bank chairman, speculated that Leeson had engineered a fraud to bust the bank and enrich himself.

The bank's Singapore office, allegedly through Leeson, bet heavily on futures contracts on the Osaka Nikkei and Singapore Simex exchanges. Expecting the market to bounce back from its drop following the Kobe earthquake, Barings made a bad bet. In the space of a few weeks the bank bought nearly 17,000 futures contracts on the Nikkei, for a grand total of 20,076 — eight times the level of the next largest holding. The exchange continued to fall, taking Barings with it. With each 4 percent drop in the markets, the bank lost — and will lose — another \$280 million.

Barings claims it was hoodwinked. But the Osaka Securities Exchange publishes a weekly table of brokers in Japan with the largest investments in the futures market. Peter Baring could read it over his morning tea.

On news of the bank failure, stock markets in East Asia dropped sharply. The Nikkei index fell nearly 4 percent February 27, recovered slightly on the following day, and then tumbled 2.5 percent March 1. The British pound hit a historic low against the German mark, before rising slightly. Wall Street's Dow Jones stock index tumbled 23 points. The collapse reinforced a flight of capital to bonds and currencies of the strongest imperialist powers, especially into German currency and U.S. bonds.

Barings creditors are unsure if and when — and how much — they'll be paid. Pension funds invested in the bank are among the first on the chopping block. One arm of the bank held deposits in the range of \$3.75 billion. Bank of England governor Eddie George estimated the national deposit insurance fund will pay out only \$52 million.

"If it could happen to Barings," asked a *Financial Times* writer, "which other finance house can be sure it is safe?" The February 28 *Wall Street Journal* asked, "How many other Barings are out there?"

## Pressures on world economy

The world capitalist economy is stretched tight as a drum. Sudden financial catastrophes — or political developments such as an outbreak of war, the fall of a government, or a popular uprising — could provoke a collapse of the banking system. Fear of such developments feeds today's economic instability.

Wall Street and Washington, like their capitalist rivals the world over, seek to steady this situation. To do so, they have grasped at various straws, including the so-called Balanced Budget Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, now mired in congressional debate; the imposition of currency boards on weak capitalist economies; and ratcheting up interest rates in hopes of attracting capital from abroad, bolstering the dollar, and finessing a "soft landing" when the business cycle turns toward recession.

Such items on the capitalists' financial wish list, however, easily turn into their very undoing.

An opinion piece by Christopher Farrell in the March 6 issue of *Business Week*, for example, argued against congressional passage of the Balanced Budget Amendment. The amendment, he writes "would strip away much of the government spending that cushions the economy in hard times — just when disinflation and the prospect of deflation are raising the odds of financial crises." Farrell predicts that this would create "bigger swings in the economy and a far more volatile financial system."

"In a world of low inflation," Farrell continues, "the risk from unexpected financial crises soars." By exacting such spending controls in a period when "white-hot domestic and international competition" have been exerting deflationary pressures on prices, Farrell argues, "A stock market crash, a bank failure, or a drop in the dollar's value could send asset prices plunging." He cites the warning of

"a disastrous debt deflation" by another writer.

Imposing measures that have the effect of restricting money creation — like the currency board in Argentina that pegs its pesos to U.S. dollar reserves at a one-to-one ratio — may calm inflationary pressures in the short term. But as capital flows from the imperialist countries begin to slow, as they are today in wake of the Mexico crisis, the mechanisms also choke off capital upon which countries like Argentina rely to pay their debts to the imperialist powers. Such schemes are bound to unwind under strain, often explosively.

## Decreasing value production

Sudden financial breakdowns — such as the Barings collapse — and the overall instability that marks world capitalism, are an inevitably increasing product of today's deflationary depression conditions.

"Hot damn, what a year!" is the headline *Business Week* gave its article on 1994 profits. "Thanks to a robust economy and a strong dose of corporate cost-cutting, 1994 turned out to be the best year for company earnings in more than two decades." Profit margins were the highest since 1988, the magazine reports, and there was "huge capital spending on plants and equipment."

The longer-term picture for the capitalist rulers, however, is far less rosy. The owners of the means of production face a decades-long decline of profit rates in industrial production. They have been decreasing investment in capacity expanding plants and equipment that draw more workers into production. The much talked-about recent boom in capital spending has been concentrated in cost-cutting equipment, such as computerization, that does not expand productive capacity.

Under these conditions, capital over the past couple of decades has increasingly flowed into towering piles of paper on Wall Street, in London's City, and in other financial markets the world over. The bottom line is that new value production is not being sustained at anywhere near the rate needed to pay off this expanding debt. Debts incurred today are simply put off — like the old ones — till the future. But anytime one of these balloons bursts, for whatever reason, it threatens to savage the world banking system.

It's not just the high rollers who would be affected by such a collapse, either. As in the 1930s and earlier in the history of world capitalism, an international banking breakdown would devastate industrial production; result in massive factory shutdowns, layoffs, and unemployment; throw millions out of their homes; and drive hundreds of thousands more small farmers off the land. The entire thing could come down overnight. That is the threat that each sudden major political development or financial catastrophe carries with it in the 1990s.

## Defending the dollar

Wall Street and Washington are acting to defend the dollar as currencies are being bounced around on international markets. The U.S. currency — still by far the chief store of wealth for capitalists the world over — nonetheless declined 11 percent against the German mark and the Japanese yen in 1994, and the bleed continues.

The Clinton administration's "generous" pledge to offer Mexico's rulers \$20 billion in loan guarantees and currency swaps was not aimed at "bailing out" Mexico or its currency. The deal was aimed directly at sterilizing the effects of "peso contagion" against the dollar.

The U.S. rulers' hoped-for outcome is undecided. Ever since the U.S. government said it would attempt a financial arrangement with Mexico City, the world's largest money traders have pounded the dollar. Washington's rivals in Bonn have been the chief beneficiaries.

The fallout from the peso crisis, Barings debacle, and general instability continues to unsettle international finance capital, shake economies, and convulse currencies.

The Mexican peso continues to fall and is now worth less than 17 cents of a dollar.

## Metal workers launch strike in Germany



Metalworkers picket Siemens electronics plant in Nuremberg, Germany. The IG Metall union launched the selective strike February 24 in Bavaria to demand a 6 percent raise and implementation of a 35 hour workweek. The metal strike has expanded to 20,800 workers at 33 companies.

In early December the peso traded at 29 cents. On February 27, the Mexico City stock market suffered its worst percentage loss of the year, tumbling nearly 7 percent. "We're trying to remain reasonably calm and rational, but this was the kind of day that is really hard to explain on a rational basis," said the director of "emerging markets" equity for Bear, Stearns & Co. in New York. Capital has continued to flee Mexico in the wake of the Clinton-Zedillo deal.

Maintaining high interest rates, one of Washington's onerous conditions on Mexico City for the loan-guarantee deal, has led to some short-term rates of up to 74 percent. Interest rates on mortgages, car loans, and credit cards have rocketed to 97 percent annually.

The vaulting rates have contributed to massive layoffs. Up to a quarter-million workers were axed in January and February. The giant Banamex bank has announced it will eliminate up to 35 percent of its 35,000 employees. Loan defaults to Mexican banks have already reached 10 percent of deposits.

The squeeze has been put on the Argentine government and capitalists as well. With investors bolting markets in Latin America, it is doubtful the government will have the capital it needs to both meet its budget and pay off \$9 billion in principal and interest payments due this year. Economy minister Domingo Cavallo announced February 27 that the government will slash spending by \$1 billion. It will also raise taxes. The regime is counting on a \$400 million loan from the International

Monetary Fund just to make do.

The market whirlwind is also wreaking havoc on the weaker imperialist powers. Canadian finance minister Paul Martin presented a budget proposal to Parliament February 27 that would slash 45,000 workers from government payrolls over the next three years and cut sharply into funds for post-secondary education, health, and welfare. The proposal further erodes the social wage workers have fought for over the decades, while resuming the government's stalled privatization program.

Wealthy bondholders and financial institutions have insistently threatened that there will be havoc if Ottawa does not reduce its budget deficit by cutting into the social wage.

"The underlying tendency toward profligacy remains," sniffed a *Financial Times* editorial responding to the budget. After a short rally, the Canadian dollar dropped back virtually to where it had been before, at just under 72 cents to the dollar.

The Barings fallout and political crises also sent the Spanish peseta and Italian lira plunging to record lows against the German mark.

On February 28, William Popejoy, the new chief executive of Orange County, California, announced that the bankrupt county's losses were "much worse" than he had thought when he assumed office two weeks earlier. He said the county would make deep cuts, including big layoffs in its 15,000 person workforce. The new cuts, he said, will be "nasty."

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# International campaign to sell and study New International ♦ The Militant ♦ Perspectiva Mundial

## 1,589 copies sold of Marxist magazine! All sales goals met!



Militant/Mark Friedman

Issue no 10 of *New International* sparked interest at the XVI International Book Fair in Mexico City

BY NAOMI CRAINE

We did it! Supporters of the socialist press wrapped up an international campaign to sell copies of *New International* no. 10 and renewal subscriptions to the *Militant* and *Perspectiva Mundial* on time and in full.

In the final week, distributors sold 325 copies of the recent issue of the Marxist magazine, going well over the goal of 1,500. Last week 165 readers decided to renew their *Militant* subscriptions and 59 signed up to continue receiving the Spanish-language magazine *Perspectiva Mundial*. This brings the total to 100 percent of the international goal of 80 *Perspectiva Mundial* renewals and 149 percent of the goal of 320 *Militant* renewals.

About 15 percent of the sales over the course of the drive were sold by socialist workers to members of industrial unions on the job, at the factory gates, and elsewhere. George Williams, a member of the United Auto Workers in Birmingham, Alabama, described how the articles in *New International* no. 10 fit into break-time discussions in his plant.

### Discussions on Mexico crisis

Citing an article in *USA Today* detailing the \$20 billion Mexico "bailout," one worker commented, "Their concern is not for the working people in Mexico. This \$20 billion is solely to protect the huge investments of the rich in this country." Several other workers jumped into the discussion,

including Williams, who read from the *New International*. The worker who first spoke later borrowed the magazine to consider getting a copy.

Many young people were also interested in the latest issue of *New International*, which features articles on defending the Cuban revolution, explaining the explosive instability of capitalism today, and how working people can organize against imperialism's march toward fascism and war. Weekly meetings to read and study the Marxist magazine have been organized in many cities. One participant in the Morgantown, West Virginia, class series decided to join the Young Socialists.

By talking socialist politics to large numbers of people during the campaign, many distributors increased their sales of copies of and new subscriptions to the *Militant* and *Perspectiva Mundial* as well. For example, supporters in Salt Lake City sold 39 copies of the *Militant* to members of the United Steelworkers of America over the last week at meetings to discuss contract negotiations at Geneva Steel.

### Protests against education cuts

Sales at a February 27 student protest against proposed cuts in education funding in Albany, New York, included 56 copies of the *Militant*, one copy of *Perspectiva Mundial*, an issue of the Spanish-language *Nueva Internacional* on the political ideas of

Che Guevara, and several Pathfinder pamphlets.

Participants in a February 25 rally in Union Point, Georgia, celebrating the lifting of a racist ban against Black youth there, bought 16 copies of the *Militant* at a socialist literature table, and one signed up for a six-month subscription renewal.

And five picketing workers in Decatur, Illinois, bought the *Militant* from a team launching Betsy Farley's campaign as the Socialist Workers candidate for mayor of that city.

Distributors in Los Angeles didn't just sell the largest number of *New Internationals* and renewals. They also signed up 17 new *Militant* subscribers and 10 new *Perspectiva Mundial* subscribers during the 10-week sales campaign.

All of this puts us in a strong position to launch a spring sales drive in a few weeks to get out the *Militant*, *Perspectiva Mundial*, and all of the issues of *New International*.

By that time, the sister publications of *New International* in French and Swedish will have new issues out, both containing the same articles as *New International* no. 10. The Spanish-language *Nueva Internacional* rolled off the presses earlier this week.

From the *Militant* staff, we thank everyone for their fantastic effort. Let's keep up the good work in getting out the socialist press around the world!

Sold to date: 106%  
Should be: 100%

	New International no. 10			Militant renewals		Perspectiva Mundial renewals	
	goal	sold	percent	goal	sold	goal	sold
<b>Australia</b>	16	19	119%	9	9	2	0
<b>Canada</b>							
Vancouver	35	38	109%	8	9	1	3
Toronto	50	53	106%	15	17		0
Montreal	45	45	100%	12	15	3	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>136</b>	<b>105%</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>France</b>	20	21	105%	—	—	—	—
<b>New Zealand</b>							
Wellington	3	5	167%	5	5	0	0
Auckland	30	31	103%	10	15	1	4
Christchurch*	20	19	95%	8	8	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>104%</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>United States</b>							
Miami	35	42	120%	13	13	6	7
Philadelphia	50	56	112%	12	15	3	2
Salt Lake City	45	50	111%	13	14	3	3
Atlanta*	40	43	108%	12	16	2	3
Chicago	50	54	108%	15	15	3	0
San Francisco	90	97	108%	16	29	5	10
Cleveland*	30	32	107%	15	15	5	5
Peoria, IL	20	21	105%	6	8	0	0
Des Moines, IA*	40	41	103%	9	16	4	5
Detroit	40	41	103%	11	15	2	0
Los Angeles	100	103	103%	25	37	10	10
Pittsburgh	40	41	103%	11	11	2	0
Seattle*	40	41	103%	12	17	2	2
Brooklyn	100	101	101%	12	12	4	2
New York	100	101	101%	13	16	4	1
Birmingham, AL	40	40	100%	8	9	2	0
Greensboro, NC	35	35	100%	7	9	2	1
Houston	25	25	100%	8	10	2	2
Morgantown, WV	25	25	100%	6	8	0	0
Tucson, AZ	5	5	100%	—	—	—	—
Washington, DC	45	45	100%	10	18	3	3
Twin Cities, MN	50	47	94%	14	13	2	1
Newark, NJ	100	90	90%	12	15	3	3
Boston	45	40	89%	12	19	4	4
Cincinnati	5	3	60%	—	—	—	—
Other	—	20	—	—	7	—	0
<b>Total U.S.</b>	<b>1195</b>	<b>1239</b>	<b>104%</b>	<b>272</b>	<b>357</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>64</b>
<b>Britain</b>							
London	55	55	100%	15	15	2	0
Manchester	40	40	100%	15	13		0
<b>Total</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Greece</b>	5	4	80%	4	4	—	0
<b>Sweden</b>	15	12	80%	7	6	3	4
<b>Iceland</b>	4	3	75%	5	5	0	0
<b>Puerto Rico</b>	2	1	50%	0	0	2	1
<b>Belgium</b>	—	4	—	—	0	—	1
<b>International Total</b>	<b>1535</b>	<b>1589</b>	<b>106%</b>	<b>385</b>	<b>478</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>80</b>
SHOULD BE	1500	1500	100%	320	320	80	80
<b>In the Unions</b>							
USWA	20	31	155%	—	6	—	0
UFCW	5	6	120%	—	3	—	1
UTU	55	53	96%	24	29	—	0
UMWA	10	9	90%	—	2	—	0
ACTWU/ILGWU	20	18	90%	11	0	—	7
UAW	60	54	90%	—	14	—	2
IAM	40	35	88%	—	12	—	0
OCAW*	40	34	85%	—	13	—	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>240</b>	<b>96%</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>12</b>
*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.

## N.J. students protest murder by cop

BY TONI JACKSON

PATERSON, New Jersey — Students at Eastside and John F. Kennedy high schools here walked out of class February 22 and 23 to protest the police shooting of Lawrence Meyers. Housing officer Ronald Cohen shot Meyers in the back of the head February 21 during an alleged drug bust. No drugs or weapon were found on Meyers. The 16-year-old Black Eastside High School student was declared brain dead by hospital officials February 22

and died two days later. Police defended the involvement of housing cops in the events that led to the fatal shooting. Cohen was blocks away from the nearest housing project when he shot the youth. "It's totally possible the drugs could have ended up in the housing project," a police official told the local paper, in an effort to rationalize the killing.

Following a February 23 march at city hall, some protesters broke store windows. Police

used this as an excuse to crack down even harder. Cops traveled the streets in groups of four in full riot gear, dispersing or arresting groups of teenagers they came across. Ten youths were arrested at a downtown protest February 24. Cops pushed students with their night sticks. Many demonstrators said the police were even more aggressive when news reporters were out of sight.

"They're all criminals with badges — a big gang that's le-

gal," said Rob Soto, a 21-year-old protester speaking about the cops' brutal actions.

The demonstrators and members of Meyers's family demand that Cohen be arrested and prosecuted for the killing.

"Justice is the main issue,"

said Belinda Smith, a Eastside High School student who participated in the walkout. "No matter what he was doing, whether he was dealing drugs or not, it did not mean that he should be shot in the head. It comes down to justice or no peace."



# Passports returned to Cuba brigade members

Continued from front page

William B. Wharton, Director of Passport Policy and Advisory Services, an agency under the direction of the U.S. Department of State. "Your passport is herewith returned since there was no violation of a passport restriction," said the letter.

Wharton added, however, that the passports were "taken up by the Customs Service with other evidence of travel to Cuba in contravention" of restrictions "imposed under the provisions of the Trading with the Enemy Act (50 U.S.C. App. 1 et seq.) and the Cuban Democracy Act of 1992 (22 U.S.C. 6001-10)."

"The return of the passports was a victory," said Vance, "but Wharton is dead wrong in saying that Customs had any reason to act on the basis that a law had been 'contravened' by me or by Aislinn or Sukul. We went to Cuba as journalists, in compliance with Treasury Department regulations."

Pulley added that the actions by Customs "constituted harassment in violation of our First Amendment rights and freedom of the press and freedom to travel, pure and simple." Wharton's attempt to justify this unconstitutional action poses a further threat to those rights, Pulley said.

"Dannen, Sukul, and I — and many others like us — will continue to exercise our constitutional rights," she added, "and we will continue calling for an end to all restrictions on travel to Cuba."

Vance said the decision to launch a broad public defense campaign immediately after the passports were seized was the most important thing about the victory. "The campaign began the moment we walked out the door of U.S. Customs at O'Hare," he said. "We had two choices: wait patiently and hope the passports would be returned, or wage a fight against the government and make them accountable for their actions."

"A large number of people from all different backgrounds simply refused to let this violation of basic constitutional rights go unchecked," Vance said.

Pulley explained that when she told friends at her high school that the passport had been returned, they replied, "Yeah, right on!" The return showed that what the U.S. Customs officials did was wrong, she said, and "that we do have a right to travel to Cuba and can fight against these undemocratic attacks and win."

"The whole experience, the trip to Cuba and the harassment in the United States after returning," Baul said, "has made me more political and has led me to get involved in politics."

All three said they would like to go back to Cuba again and help to spread the truth about the revolution more widely. "In no way has this experience deterred me from going to Cuba again," said Vance. "If anything, it helped reinforce my admiration for the Cuban people and at the same time my distrust of the U.S. government."

Leading up to the return of the passports, the defense campaign continued to receive support from students, trade unionists, religious figures, politicians, and others. U.S. Sen. Tom Harkin sent a letter to Customs asking that Vance's passport be returned. The 8th day Center for Justice, a religious organization in Chicago, sent a protest message to U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher, as did more than 20 members of the International Association of Machinists at Northwest Airlines in Chicago.

A victory celebration will be held here in Chicago on March 4 at the Pathfinder Bookstore.

The victory also strengthens the fight by others who have been targeted by the U.S. government for traveling to Cuba, especially since last August when the White



Top: Jamil Salaam, Sukul Baul, Aislinn Pulley, and Ryan Kelly (from left to right) spoke at a Militant Labor Forum in St. Paul, Minnesota, on their experiences in Cuba. Meeting backed fight by Baul and Pulley to win back passports seized by U.S. Customs officials.



Left: Dannen Vance at forum in Des Moines, Iowa, holds up passport returned to him at the end of February.

House tightened travel restrictions to the island. Following the World Conference in Solidarity with Cuba in November, six participants in the Freedom to Travel Campaign (FTC) delegation were harassed by U.S. Customs in Canada, as were two participants in the U.S.-Cuba Friendship Caravan. All six people on the FTC trip received letters from the U.S. government ordering a full accounting of their activities in Cuba and threatening them with prosecution.

Participants in last year's Venceremos

Brigade were also harassed by Customs agents, as were a group of U.S. academics earlier this year who went to Cuba to do research without applying beforehand for a license.

The February 11-12 meeting of the National Network on Cuba held in New York City decided to set up a task force to coordinate opposition to the travel ban and facilitate defense efforts for those harassed by the U.S. government.

## Cuban youth leaders set to begin speaking tour to 13 regions in U.S.

BY RYAN KELLY

MINNEAPOLIS—Cuban youth leaders Rogelio Polanco and Kenia Serrano are scheduled to begin a six-week U.S. speaking tour here March 7.

Polanco and Serrano have received more than 60 letters from professors and

academic departments inviting them to speak at their schools. The Cubans will travel throughout the United States, speaking about the reality of the Cuban revolution today. As associate researchers at the Center of Studies for Youth in Havana, both are knowledgeable about the situation facing young people in Cuba.

Serrano served as president of the Federation of High School Students (FEEM) in Las Tunas province and was later elected president of the Federation of University Students (FEU) at the University of Las Tunas. There she helped lead voluntary student mobilizations doing work in agriculture in order to help confront the food shortages that have marked life in Cuba since the cutoff of subsidized trade with the Soviet Union earlier in this decade. Serrano is currently completing a major in the English language at the Enrique José

Varona Teaching Institute in Havana.

Polanco also served as a FEEM president — in Holguin province — and was later elected as national officer of the FEU. He represented the FEU in the leadership of the International Union of Students in Prague in 1992-93. He has participated in numerous international youth forums in Cyprus, the Middle East, and throughout Europe and Latin America.

Both Polanco and Serrano are also members of the Union of Young Communists.

While here in Minnesota, Serrano and Polanco will speak at public forums with university students, meet with trade unionists, talk with students at a Native American technical college, and meet with others in the Minneapolis-St. Paul region. The accompanying box contains the schedule for their U.S. tour.

### U.S. TOUR SCHEDULE FOR CUBAN YOUTH LEADERS ROGELIO POLANCO AND KENIA SERRANO

TWIN CITIES, MN, MARCH 7-11  
LOS ANGELES, MARCH 12-14  
SAN FRANCISCO, MARCH 15-17  
HOUSTON, MARCH 19-21  
ATLANTA, MARCH 23-24  
GREENSBORO-CHAPEL HILL, NC, MARCH 27  
PHILADELPHIA, MARCH 29-30  
NEW YORK, MARCH 31- APRIL 1  
NEWARK, APRIL 3-4  
WASHINGTON, D.C., APRIL 5-8  
BOSTON, APRIL 10-12  
CHICAGO AND ILLINOIS, APRIL 14-18  
MIAMI, APRIL 23

For more information, write the Faculty-Student Cuban Youth Lectures Committee, Latin American Studies, 214 Social Sciences Tower, 267 19th Ave., S., University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN 55455 or call (612) 624-1512 or fax (612) 626-2242.



Rogelio Polanco and Kenia Serrano have been invited to dozens of U.S. campuses

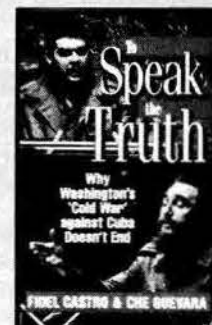
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Why Washington's 'Cold War' against Cuba Doesn't End

BY FIDEL CASTRO AND CHE GUEVARA

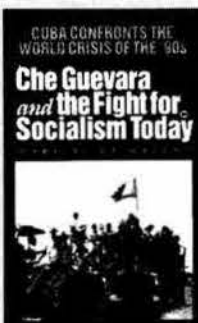
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# Georgia rally celebrates end of racist ban

BY LINDA JOYCE

UNION POINT, Georgia — Shouting "No justice, no peace!" more than 300 young people, workers, NAACP members, and other supporters of Black rights marched proudly through neighborhood streets here February 25. In a victory for democratic rights, a racist ban on 21 Black youths entering downtown businesses had been lifted four days earlier.

Close to 100 members of the Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union (ACTWU), the majority from garment and textile plants in the region, marched wearing union T-shirts. Workers from the Chipman-Union hosiery plant, who won union certification in 1993, carried signs calling for a decent contract. Students from Atlanta Metropolitan College, Morehouse, and the University of Georgia also marched.

Mayor John Stewart, a business owner, had ordered all downtown shops to close the day of the march, claiming to be protecting local merchants from a "riot." The morning of the march, the mayor held a meeting of 80 people to defend the ban.

Stewart enacted the prohibition last December in collaboration with the police, city council, and local merchants. They produced a list of young people they claimed were potential shoplifters and vandals. When a federal lawsuit was filed on behalf of 12 of the young people, the town received international media attention. Town officials rescinded the ban February 21 after the Greene County NAACP called for a boycott of stores that

barred the youths and pledged to hold marches until the ban was unconditionally lifted.

March organizer William Breeding, head of the Greene County NAACP, explained the threats he had received during the fight against the ban. Chipman-Union plant owner Bryan Sibley told Breeding that if the NAACP went ahead with the march it would be a "catastrophe."

ACTWU members Scottie Williams and Mark Tolbert distributed "End Discrimination at Chipman-Union" and "End Discrimination in Union Point" stickers at the march.

"It's clear to me that the fight in the plant and in the city are identical," said Williams. Both Tolbert and Williams described discriminatory practices in the plants, including paying white and Black workers different rates for the same jobs.

Twelve of the young people who were formerly banned participated in the march. Some wore signs reading "unbanned." "I'm glad we're marching today," said 19-year-old Reggie Barnett, "because things have been crooked for a long time." Barnett got a citation the day after the ban was rescinded for walking on the road and "blocking traffic."

Morris Moon, 19, who spent two months in jail on trumped-up drug charges, and Mark Mallory, 20, were both told by their probation officer that they were not to participate in the march. "If we do anything like this," they explained, "we were told we would be locked up!"

Paul Gresham, a member of United



Militant/Linda Joyce

Hundreds of unionists and students celebrate victory march in Union Point, Georgia.

Auto Workers (UAW) Local 882 at the Ford plant in Atlanta, said, "It took me back to the early '60s when we did the sit-ins in Atlanta to prevent things like this happening today!"

Ella King, a sewing machine operator at the Scott-Orr plant in nearby Madison, Georgia, said, "The majority of us women

today in this march have sons and grandsons. We see this police harassment and discrimination first hand, and we're not going to take it anymore!"

Linda Joyce is a member of UAW Local 882 in Atlanta. Arlene Rubenstein contributed to this article.



Militant/Amy Husk

February 27 rally in Albany, New York against proposed education cuts drew thousands from campuses statewide. Another action has been called for March 23.

## Thousands march in New York state capital against education cuts

BY JACK WILLEY

ALBANY, New York — "We need to keep putting on the pressure. It's going to take more actions to push these measures back," said Natara Feller, a student at the State University of New York (SUNY) Binghamton who participated in the February 27 protest here against proposed cuts in funding for state education.

Six thousand students from more than 25 college campuses across the state piled into buses and poured into Albany for the demonstration. Unfurling banners and chanting, "Hey, hey, ho, ho, Pataki's budget has got to go!" the students

marched from the state Capitol Building to the Department of Education, and back to the capitol steps for a rally. "We know you're inside, our voices will be heard," the demonstrators chanted.

The Albany protest and others on public and private college campuses in New York City and elsewhere across the state come in response to proposed state education cutbacks that would raise tuition fees by about \$1,000 if adopted and carried out. Many financial assistance programs for students would be axed, professors laid off, and study programs eliminated. Students have expressed outrage that some smaller SUNY campuses could face closings if the measures go through.

"Something as basic as education should be free," said Joseph Giacalone, from SUNY Purchase. "What they are telling us with these cuts is that only people with money can get an education. Since SUNY Purchase is a small art school, it may be forced to shut down. It's going to take a larger fight, with more students united against these cuts, to push [Gov. George] Pataki's proposals back."

Following up on the Albany action, a student strike and city hall rally have been called by the CUNY Coalition Against the Cuts for March 23.

In a related development, 20,000 demonstrators marched from the Empire State Building to the a rally at Bellevue Hospital in New York City March 1 to protest proposed cuts in city and state spending on health care. The rally was organized by the National Health and Human Services Employees Union Local 1199. "We are fighting for New York's health-care system and for our jobs," said union president Dennis Rivera.

Jack Willey is a member of the Young Socialists in New York. Amy Husk also contributed to this article.

## Socialist runs for mayor of Decatur, Illinois

Continued from front page  
time or temporary work.

The Democrats and Republicans, the socialist candidate noted, are also working together to try to push back social programs that have been won by working people through struggle, like Social Security, unemployment compensation, and food stamps and Aid to Families with Dependent Children.

Striking United Auto Workers (UAW) member Kathy Clapman told Farley that Caterpillar had called her to work as a scab during the strike. "They know that a single parent is not really going to be able to turn them down," she said. But inside the plant Clapman realized that the workers needed a union. "I've been in union shops before but they didn't really do much. Here it was so clear that without the UAW it was a dangerous place. I walked out and called the union to join up. 'I'll definitely read your flyer,' she said.

Farley explained why she opposed so-called jobs programs "like Earnfare here in Decatur. I was laid off from a plant here with ten regular employees and four or five workers on Earnfare who work 80 hours for \$230 and \$100 in food stamps, paid for out of local government funds," Farley said.

"Workers are held out the promise of job training and a job," Farley said, "but no company will hire them because they get their labor for free. After two weeks,

the company just lets them go and gets some more."

"I'm sure Cat would like to hire some of those people," said one picketer.

At the United Rubber Workers picket line outside the Bridgestone/Firestone plant, striker Kelly Campbell told the socialist candidate, "We're broke, fired, unemployed — what else can they do to us — we're just going to stay out."

Farley said the socialist campaign supports the strikers. "You are fighting back against company demands for mandatory 12-hour workdays, massive wage cuts, and for justice and democratic rights on the job."

"These struggles deserve the support of all working people, farmers, and youth — employed and unemployed, union member or not."

She told the picketers that their struggles had won the solidarity of thousands nationwide who see the city of Decatur as a battlefield between workers and bosses.

One striker agreed, "What happens here will have a domino affect at major corporations. That's why we need to support each other."

At the press conference later that afternoon, the socialist candidate explained that the rightward shift of Republican and Democratic party policies opens the way for fascist voices to get a hearing today. "Presidential candidate Patrick Buchanan is one of those who play

on fear and resentment," she said, "blaming the victims of capitalism for the crisis."

Farley called for ending the U.S. embargo against Cuba and vowed to use her campaign to tell the truth about the socialist revolution there. She defended a woman's right to choose abortion and explained the importance of affirmative action programs that are under attack today in California and elsewhere.

Frankie Travis, a worker locked out by A.E. Staley Manufacturing, explained why he decided to support Farley's campaign. "I came out because I want to change the system we have in Decatur. We have candidates running who are just saying what people want to hear but the true issues — in Decatur and the world — have to come out."

The socialist candidate will be campaigning for the next several weeks until the general election April 4. Three city council seats are open in addition to the position of mayor. Four of the 12 candidates running for city council in the February 28 primary were union members, and two, including Dave Watts, United Paperworkers International Union (UPIU) local president, were among the six candidates for city council who made it into the narrowed field for the general election.

For more information about the socialist campaign or to get involved write: P.O. Box 3114, Decatur, IL 62524-3114.

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# Youth visit coal mines, defend immigrant rights

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 KEVIN JOHNSON  
AND STEFANIE TRICE

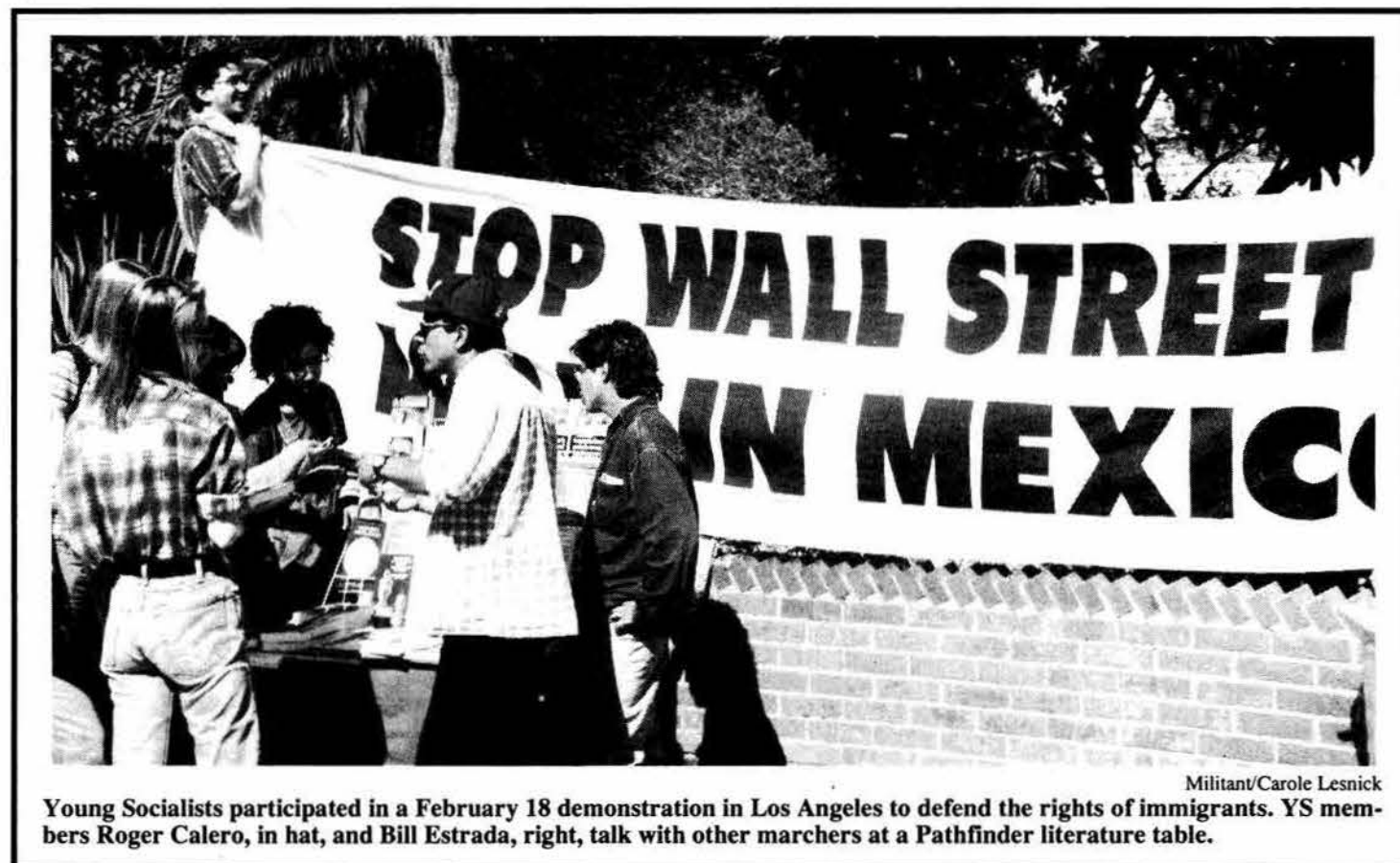
Young Socialists from Morgantown, West Virginia; Cleveland; and Pittsburgh recently took a trip with a member of the Socialist Workers Party to talk to miners about the *Militant* newspaper at the Bailey and Enlow Fork mines located halfway between Pittsburgh and Morgantown. For all of the YS team members — Ilse Rachut and Cecilia Ortega, both 16, and Stephen Poff, 25 — it was their first trip to a mine.

Bailey and Enlow Fork are nonunion mines operated by Consolidation Coal Co. (CONSOL). They are the largest coal producers of all underground mines in the United States. These nonunion operations are at the heart of the bosses' attempt here to make inroads into these union-dominated coalfields. The United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) has been unsuccessful in organizing these mines.

Over the years CONSOL has paid these miners higher wages and given company perks such as televisions and cameras in an attempt to keep the union out. But several miners at Bailey and Enlow Fork say they are far from happy with working conditions and would like to get organized into the UMWA.

The team sold 15 copies of the *Militant* to miners at the shift change. "Their enthusiasm for the paper shows they want to reach out to other workers and their struggles," said Poff. "Although discussions were short, due to the extremely cold weather, the miners were very interested in talking to the team about politics."

Ortega reported her discussions with



Young Socialists participated in a February 18 demonstration in Los Angeles to defend the rights of immigrants. YS members Roger Calero, in hat, and Bill Estrada, right, talk with other marchers at a Pathfinder literature table.

miners revolved mainly around two of the lead articles in that week's issue — the crisis in Mexico and the case of Roger Warren, a framed-up miner in Yellowknife, Northwest Territories, Canada. "A lot of the miners I spoke with were very interested in the Warren case and wanted more information about it," she said. Ortega talked to another miner who had read the paper before and expressed appreciation for the coverage on the United Auto Workers strike against Caterpillar.

"These teams are great," said Poff, "because we get to talk to workers who

have been struggling, and who we believe are the only force that can change the world for the better." Inspired by the friendly reception by the miners, these Young Socialists all plan to hit the portals and other workplaces again, and encourage other young rebels to do the same.

Kevin Johnson is a YS member in Pittsburgh. Stefanie Trice is a YS member in Morgantown.

BY CHRISTINA PEREZ

LOS ANGELES — Demonstrations took place in Phoenix and Tucson, Ari-

zona, February 18 to protest human rights abuses by border patrol officers in the last few months, as well as to demand a halt to the Mexican government's invasion of Chiapas. Both were organized by Pueblo por la Paz, Derechos Humanos, and the Chiapas Coalition. About 50 participants met in front of the Federal Building and marched to the Civic Plaza for a rally in downtown Phoenix. They carried signs and banners that read "Equal Rights for Immigrants" and "Raza Sí, Migra No."

Miguel Ortega, one of the organizers, said that immigrant-bashing was not just a Latino issue but an attack on the working class in general, since it creates divisions among us. He called on the youth of this country to help forge the unity needed to "form a powerful front to end violence by corporate gangs and gangs in blue and green [police and border patrol]."

Tony Posada, whose nephew, Eddie Posada, and another youth were murdered by a border patrol officer in August, demanded a full investigation of this crime, as well as three other killings, three rapes, one beating, and the deportation to Mexico of a Native American woman.

Later that day some 70 people in Tucson marched to the Mexican consulate. They demanded equality for immigrants and women, respect for the demands of the indigenous peoples of the region, and a halt to the invasion of Chiapas. Two Young Socialists from Los Angeles participated in the events. They discussed future immigrant rights protests with other fighters they met there, as well as the situation in Chiapas, the Cuban revolution, and defense of abortion rights and affirmative action.

## Governor joins affirmative action assault

BY HARRY RING

LOS ANGELES — The drive to scrap state affirmative action programs in California shifted into higher gear with the official endorsement of Gov. Pete Wilson. Meanwhile, President Bill Clinton declared it was necessary to review federal affirmative action programs with an eye to getting rid of those that assertedly don't work.

An initiative is being readied for the 1996 California ballot to end state affirmative action programs in hiring, education, business contracting, and other areas. Wilson said he would issue executive orders scrapping as many programs as he could, but that to bury affirmative action permanently requires a change in the state constitution, which is what the projected ballot proposition aims to do.

The California campaign against affirmative action is expected to spur similar efforts in other states.

And, to the extent that this gains ground, it will add new fuel to the ongoing

fight against affirmative action by employers in private industry.

Falsely branding affirmative action as discriminatory, Wilson argued that ending it would end "unfairness and the increasing festering resentment which it has bred."

He likened the drive for the measure to the passage last November of California's anti-immigrant Proposition 187, for which he also spearheaded the fight.

Meanwhile Clinton said there would be a White House review of all federal affirmative action programs, admonishing that "we shouldn't be defending things we can't defend." The president also asserted that "it's not true that I'm backing off" on affirmative action.

Rep. Kweisi Mfume, a Democrat from Maryland, praised Clinton's move as positive. "Let's look and see what's working and what's not working," said Mfume, who is a past chairman of the Congressional Black Caucus.

California State Assembly Speaker

Willie Brown, a Democrat who is Black, also endorsed Clinton's approach. A week earlier he had assailed the projected initiative as racist.

Advocates of the proposition couch their arguments against affirmative action in terms of "fairness," insisting they are opposed to discrimination against non-whites and women. In his endorsement of the proposed ballot proposition, Wilson declared, "It's not right or fair...to replace one form of discrimination with another."

And ultrarightist Patrick Buchanan declared, "We've got to remove discrimination wherever we find it," but affirmative action means "we're holding back working-class whites."

Meanwhile, the Census Bureau reported that in 1993 the median income of families that are Black was \$21,550 and that of white households was \$39,310.



Pete Wilson, Republican governor of California, left, has endorsed effort to scrap state affirmative action programs. State Assembly Speaker Willie Brown, a Democrat, supports Clinton proposal to "review" existing programs for "effectiveness."

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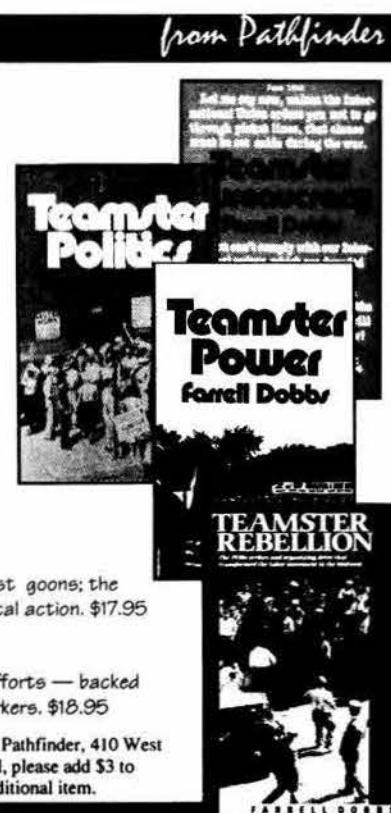
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# Why workers must oppose Moscow's assault on Chechnya

## A reply to Communist Party leader

BY MAURICE WILLIAMS

In "Chechnya and oil — a Communist view," Gus Hall, national chairman of the Communist Party USA, purports to put forth some "Marxist-Leninist premises" to clear "the media fog." The article in the January 14 *People's Weekly World* in reality provides cover to the murderous war and repression inflicted by the regime of Russian president Boris Yeltsin on workers and peasants in Chechnya.

"Chechnya is not a republic" and "never was," Hall says. There "is also not one single, united nationality" in Chechnya, he adds. Pointing out that the "bottom line" in the conflict is oil — certainly a weighty factor for Yeltsin and the privileged petty-bourgeois layers whose interests he represents — Hall approvingly cites the authority of William Safire, the *New York Times* columnist and former speechwriter for Richard Nixon. Safire says that if Chechnya goes, "other Caucasian dominoes will fall and Moscow will be denied the Caspian [Sea] oil."

Hall wrings his hands over the tragedy of "innocent people caught up" in the crisis in Chechnya, but concludes that the "unraveling of the Russian Federation" would be a "major victory" for imperialism. Hall then pulls out his political trump card to justify Moscow's bloody crack-down. "How would we react if confronted with the prospect of, say, oil-rich Oklahoma, seceding from the United States and becoming a separate state or country?" Hall asks.

### Who is 'we'?

It is impossible to answer Hall's question without knowing exactly who "we" is. Perhaps it is U.S. secretary of state Warren Christopher, who said on a television talk show in December that Yeltsin had "probably done what he had to do to prevent this republic from breaking away." Or maybe it's Jack Matlock, former U.S. ambassador to the Soviet Union, who wrote in the February 16, *New York Review of Books* that "Yeltsin had both the right and the obligation to quell an illegal seizure of power within his country, employing — if absolutely necessary — military force to do so."

But the "we" that includes the Clinton administration and other U.S. imperialist officials is not the "we" that includes the workers and farmers of the United States, or anywhere else. It is the "we" of the class of propertied families the world over who grow wealthy off the exploitation of the labor of working people.

The ultrarightist politician Patrick Buchanan, who just announced his candidacy for the 1996 Republican presidential nomination, warned in his syndicated column last December that the "nationalist virus" in Russia and the former USSR "is spreading to the West." Saying that Yeltsin is "risking power and the oppro-

brium of the world by crushing Chechnya, rather than let Russia break up," Buchanan concluded: "Look homeward, America! With the multinational empires torn apart, are the multinational nations next?... Already, African-American militants insist on calling the 1992 L.A. riots an 'uprising.'" Hall's analogy of "oil-rich Oklahoma" fits in with Buchanan's "America First" demagoguery quite nicely.

### Mass deportation an 'episode'

Another Stalinist apologist for Yeltsin's massive pounding of Chechnya, Emile Schepers, wrote in the February 4 *People's Weekly World*, "the Chechen people were never persecuted or exploited under the USSR," except during the regime of Joseph Stalin, which deported hundreds of thousands of Chechens to Kazakhstan "because a proportion of them collaborated with Nazis during World War II."

Schepers continues: "No matter how badly or brutally Yeltsin has handled the effort to stop the Chechen secession, the fact remains that Chechen nationalism à la [former Soviet air force officer and Chechen president Dzhokar] Dudayev is not a progressive phenomenon but a corrupt, bourgeois and pro-imperialist one — of benefit only to the new Chechen business elite and its foreign allies, present and future."

Schepers's argument that the Chechen people were never persecuted except for the "episode" during World War II is false.

First, to dismiss the deportation of an entire people because "a proportion of them collaborated with the Nazis" as an "episode" is outrageous. Schepers fails to mention that the Communist Party USA supported such collective punishment of the Chechens, Crimean Tatars, and others at the time and for decades afterward.

What's more, there is no truth to Schepers's claim that, except for that "episode," the Chechens had it good in the USSR.

The workers and peasants in the Mountain republics of the Caucasus region — of whom the Chechens are one — long faced oppression from Russia's tsarist government. Following the Russian revolution of 1917, the Bolshevik-led workers and peasants government under the leadership of V.I. Lenin sought to combat the national oppression of the Chechens and others in the region. Land stolen from them under tsarist domination was restored. And despite Gus Hall's assertion that Chechnya is "not a republic" and "never was," the Bolshevik-led government recognized a Mountaineers' Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic in 1921, with the establishment the following year of a Chechen Autonomous Region as part of it.

This proletarian internationalist approach to the right of national self-determination began to be reversed under



Chechen women ask a Russian soldier not to enter Grozny, their capital. Many Russian workers in uniform have resisted orders to join in bloody assault on Chechnya.

the growing dominance in the mid-1920s of an emerging social caste in the Soviet government and Communist Party apparatus led by Stalin. Lenin had sought to fight initial manifestations of this anti-working-class course as part of the final political battle he led over the two years before his death in early 1924.

With the consolidation of the Stalinist counterrevolution by the early 1930s, the "Union of Soviet Socialist Republics" — forged under Bolshevik leadership as a voluntary federation of republics of the toilers — reemerged as a prison house of nations inherited from tsarism and Great Russian imperialism. The oppression of the peoples of non-Russian republics continued under all of Stalin's heirs. This national oppression fell especially hard on peoples of the regions of the Caucasus and Central Asia, registered by every measure of economic and social development — from industrialization to life expectancy, average income, housing, and education.

Moscow's policies, from Stalin to Yeltsin, reinforced national oppression and divisions for decades, building up explosive pressures and fueling inevitable uprisings for self-determination and independence.

Schepers's description of Dudayev as "corrupt, bourgeois and pro-imperialist" is beside the point in this regard. The Chechen workers and peasants will have to settle accounts with their class enemies closer to home, such as Dudayev and others. But they are not helped in doing so by being pounded mercilessly by Moscow's artillery units and bombing squadrons.

It is not Dudayev and his closest cronies who have stood up for months to the Russian onslaught. It is not they who have linked arms around towns and cities to confront Russian soldiers and appeal for them to turn back, often winning political sympathy and solidarity. It is not Dudayev thugs who have fought courageously in face of the much better armed and equipped Russian army.

### Lenin fought for toilers' unity

Schepers seeks to justify his reactionary apology for Moscow's war by presenting it as communism, as the Stalinists have done with their entire counterrevolutionary course since the late 1920s. "Lenin's attitude toward the national question was that minority nations (defined very specifically — not every minority ethnic group qualifies) had the right to secede from the Soviet Union but that this should not be applauded or encouraged."

But Schepers misrepresents Lenin's policy on the question of self-determination for oppressed nations. The Bolsheviks aimed to unite the workers and peasants of Russia and of the oppressed regions of the old tsarist empire against their common exploiters, both the landlords and capitalists at home and the imperialist ruling classes in Europe and North America.

To do so, Lenin recognized that the working class in Russia had to make clear that it did not give even the tip of its finger to the oppressive, Great Russian chauvinism of the landlord and capitalist exploiters. To win the confidence of the toiling majority of the oppressed nations and forge a fighting unity with them, the labor movement in Russia had to recognize the right to self-determination of oppressed nations and nationalities. This included

recognizing the right to separation if that is what the majority of the oppressed people freely chose.

"The proletariat must demand freedom of political separation for the colonies and nations oppressed by 'their own' nation," Lenin explained in his pamphlet *The Right of Nations to Self-Determination*, "otherwise...neither confidence nor class solidarity would be possible between workers of the oppressed and the oppressor nations."

Lenin and the Bolshevik leadership in the opening years of the revolution insisted on a voluntary Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, not a new "Soviet" nationality and super-state as cooked up by Stalin and his heirs as cover for maintenance and expansion of Great Russian domination and bourgeois nationalism.

In one of its first acts after the October 1917 revolution, in an appeal "to all toiling Muslims of Russia and the East" — including explicitly the "Chechens and Mountaineers of the Caucasus" — the new Soviet workers and peasants republic declared to these oppressed peoples, "your beliefs and customs, your national and cultural institutions are declared free and inviolable. Build your national life freely and without hindrance.... Know that your rights — like those of all the peoples of Russia — are defended by the full force of the revolution."

### Russian troops out now!

Today, given what Chechen working people (and other working people throughout the former USSR) have faced for more than six decades, there is tremendous sentiment among them to get out from under the boot of their oppressors in Moscow. In the face of such uprisings, working people in Russia and around the world have absolutely no class interest in defending the "national integrity of Russia," which in reality means defending the power and privileges of the bureaucratic caste and wanna-be capitalists in Moscow.

Why do Gus Hall, Emile Schepers, and the *People's Weekly World* — who normally express the most intense malice toward Yeltsin for his role in the crack-up of the Stalinist apparatus in the former USSR — come to the defense of the Russian president's policy in Chechnya? Because they hold onto the elusive hope that the deepening social and political crisis in Russia will open the door to a coup in which the remnants of the old apparatus can reassert their domination. "You may have dispossessed our car for the moment," it's as if they're saying, "but we plan to get it back and want to make sure the battery, white walls, stereo, and velour seat covers are still there when we do."

None of this has anything to do with the interests of the working class in Russia, the United States, Chechnya, or anywhere else. Working people around the world should stand shoulder to shoulder with the Chechen masses, and with the courageous workers and farmers in Russia who have spoken out and taken action against this reactionary course, including the Russian soldiers who have refused orders to join in Yeltsin's bloodbath.

Class-conscious workers should demand that Moscow withdraw all its troops from Chechnya now and grant the Chechen people their national rights, up to an including independence if they so choose.

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# Capitalist depression and defense of Cuba discussed at conference in New Zealand

BY JOAN SHIELDS

AUCKLAND, New Zealand — "Our responsibility as communists is to be part of the fight by the working people of Cuba to defend their revolution," Janet Roth told delegates attending the fifth constitutional convention of the Communist League (CL) in New Zealand February 4-6. Roth was reporting to the convention on behalf of the CL's national leadership.

Despite the enormous difficulties and challenges faced today in Cuba, the Cuban government remains on a revolutionary course, Roth explained. Above all, she added, the working class in Cuba is still fighting to defend the socialist course it began 36 years ago.

Delegates discussed the importance of bringing together workers and young people from Cuba, New Zealand, and elsewhere so that they can learn from and reinforce each other's struggles. Among the organization's top priorities for 1995, they decided, will be to help organize a speaking tour of Australia and New Zealand by a representative of Cuba's Union of Young Communists.

This was the first of three reports discussed and adopted by convention delegates. Altogether, 39 people attended the convention. They included five members of the Communist League in Australia and two representatives of the Socialist Workers Party and Young Socialists in the United States.

## The course of world politics

"The course of world politics points to an inescapable conclusion — that the future capitalism has to offer is that of deepening economic depression and an accompanying march to fascism and war," CL national committee member Mike Tucker told the convention in a report based on "Imperialism's March Toward Fascism and War," published in *New International* No. 10.

While world capitalism has entered a depression, the ups and downs in the business cycle continue, he said, pointing to the upturn in New Zealand's economy that has been gaining strength since 1992. Gross domestic product is currently growing at an annual rate exceeding 6 percent.

"This upturn in the business cycle after a decade of economic stagnation is an upturn in capitalist profits, not the living standards of working people," Tucker told the delegates. "It grows out of what they have done to us, and to our unions, over the past decade."

The capitalist rulers of other developed capitalist countries point to the "Kiwi school of economics" as a model for the kind of market "reforms" they seek to impose.

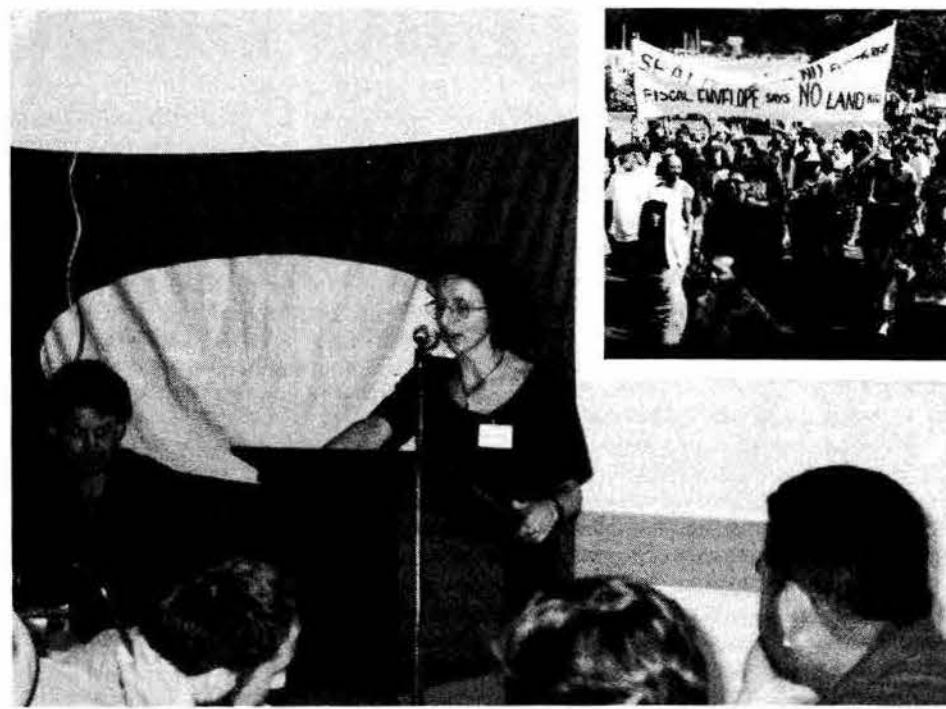
"Roger Douglas is a frequent commentator on television and radio programs in Canada," Tucker pointed out. "He also functions as an advisor to the Conservative premier of Alberta, the Canadian province where many of the deepest anti-working class measures have been implemented to date." As finance minister in the Labour Party government that came to power in New Zealand in 1984, Douglas is widely regarded as the architect of the "more market" reforms that sharply transformed the capitalist economy here. Today he heads a new rightist party, ACT, that pledges to complete the "revolution" he began in the 1980s.

"The fate of workers the world over is more and more intertwined," Tucker commented. "Building a working-class movement to resist the rulers' offensive, more than ever, must be on international, and not national, lines."

## Rise in poverty

The real disposable income of the poorest 60 percent of New Zealand's population is less than it was in the 1970s, while the highest 20 percent are better off, and the income gap is widening.

Three-quarters of the workforce are no longer covered by union contracts. Increasing numbers of workers are working more than 50 hours a week, while others are only able to find part-time, temporary, or casual work.



Annalucia Vermunt reported to delegates on tasks of Communist League. Maori protesters (inset) march on Waitangi Day for land rights. Capitalist crisis has reinforced effects of national oppression in New Zealand, hitting Maori workers hardest.

With high unemployment and the erosion of social welfare protections, more and more families are forced to turn to charity handouts. In Auckland alone there are more than 130 food banks. There were only 16 at the end of the 1980s. Nationally, 40,000 food parcels a month are distributed by 365 food banks run by churches and other volunteer organizations. (New Zealand's population is less than 4 million.)

Convention delegates — the big majority of whom were industrial workers — discussed the blows inflicted on working people as the capitalists intensify competition for profits.

Felicity Coggan, a meat-packer from Auckland, explained that a concession contract had been imposed at the plant where she works. Among other things, it removed premium overtime rates. As a result a 50-55 hour work week is now common.

The lengthening of the workday, the accompanying speed-up, and the company's lack of attention to necessary maintenance is having a devastating effect on safety standards, she noted. In several recent instances, beef carcasses have fallen from the chain, narrowly missing workers. In one such case, a woman worker was knocked unconscious by a falling piece of metal. Workers walked off the job in protest. It took the bosses two hours to convince the workers that the problem would be fixed and persuade them to return to work.

## Impact on Maoris

Several delegates commented on the impact of the capitalist economic restructuring of the last decade on the Maori population. There is a growing Maori middle class in business and the professions. At the same time, the big majority of Maori working people are among the most impoverished layers of the population.

A recently released Ministry of Health report shows that average life expectancy for Maoris is five years less than that of the rest of the population. There is a disproportionately high death rate for Maoris from lung cancer and hypertension. The Maori death rate from diabetes is six times that of non-Maoris.

"Capitalism in crisis recreates and reinforces the effects of national oppression," Tucker noted in his remarks. "The fight for Maori equality is part of the fight to unify the working class. It requires the labor movement championing affirmative action and jobs for all, and defending the social rights we have won in past decades, such as public health care, education, and housing."

The employers and capitalist politicians are increasingly targeting the social wage — the social security rights won by working people to protect our class from the worst effects of capitalism.

Despite the rulers' initial successes against the working class, the capitalist powers operate from a position of weakness, not strength, in the world today, Tucker said.

"The more successfully capitalists in New Zealand integrate themselves into the world market, the more they increase their susceptibility to the pressures of intensifying price competition and competition for markets, and to the effects on the market of political instability."

This comment was borne out two days later when the value of the New Zealand dollar fell sharply as London and New York currency markets reacted to exaggerated reports of damage caused by an earthquake off the coast of New Zealand, and Asian investors heard of the protests by Maori activists at the official February 6 Waitangi Day ceremony. (Waitangi Day — a national holiday in New Zealand — marks the 1840 signing of a treaty between the British colonizers and Maori chiefs.)

## Capitalist politics moves to right

"The weakness and instability of capitalism today drives bourgeois politics to the right and is reflected in the disintegration of the two-party system that has been in place in New Zealand since World War II," Tucker said. There are now seven parties represented in parliament (up from four at the time of the last general election) and a number of others outside parliament. Overwhelmingly, these are parties of the right.

These politicians campaign around proposals that go further in attacking working people than the government feels able to do today. "There is no working-class voice in politics today, so the vacuum gets filled by the rightward march of these parties," Tucker commented.

The so-called "cultural war" — the capitalist ideological offensive that seeks to blame those most affected by capitalism for its problems — goes hand-in-hand with the offensive against social welfare.

In the discussion, delegates took up some recent examples of this.

The law-and-order policy released by ACT last July blamed the "breakdown of the family" and "the universal materialism of a society which has seen many women enter the workforce not from choice but from necessity," as key causes of an alleged increase in violent crime.

ACT calls for compulsory army training in jobs skills, under military law, for youth under 25 years who have been unemployed three months or more; an end to the right to silence for the accused; longer prison sentences; and mandatory life imprisonment, without parole, for those with three convictions for serious and violent crimes.

Another delegate described the demagogic, rightist campaigns being waged by

Mike Moore, the former parliamentary leader of the Labour Party. In a recent newspaper column, for example, Moore argued that resentment against immigrants was to be expected because immigrants put pressure on scarce resources in education, health, and housing.

Another prominent voice who articulates rightist themes is Maori novelist Alan Duff. His contempt for the working class comes through graphically in the movie *Once Were Warriors*, based on his best-selling novel of the same name.

*Once Were Warriors* depicts a Maori working-class couple who rely on social welfare handouts and spend their time getting drunk at all-night parties. The husband is depicted as a brutish animal who savagely beats his wife. Neglected by their parents, one son joins a street gang, and another turns to petty crime. The daughter is raped by a friend of her parents and commits suicide.

*Once Were Warriors* has become the first movie to gross more than NZ\$6 million (NZ\$1=US\$0.63) in New Zealand box office receipts.

The themes of the capitalists' ideological offensive all point to the same conclusions, Tucker said, "that workers are lesser people."

"They target women, they target youth, they target Maoris and Pacific Islanders — but their target is always the working class. They try to teach us that we are incapable of leading ourselves and society."

Although there is very little labor resistance and capitalist politics have shifted to the right, there has not been a rightward move in attitudes in the working class, Tucker noted. "If anything, a majority of workers are less susceptible to appeals to racism, sexism, chauvinism, and the like today."

What's more, he added, the working class is stronger today. It is more international in composition, something that strengthens its unity and ability to fight. And the weight of Stalinism in the world — which derailed and demoralized previous generations of working-class fighters — is far less today.

"There is broad space in the working class for communists and other vanguard fighters to function in politics today," Tucker concluded.

Under the report entitled "Organizing a Party of Communist Workers and Building the Young Socialists," presented by Annalucia Vermunt, delegates discussed how to take advantage of this political space. They decided to participate in an international campaign to sell subscriptions to the *Militant* newspaper and copies of the newly-published *New International* No. 10.

Priority was given to assisting members of the Young Socialists in New Zealand, beginning with a special effort at the start of the campus year. One young student attending the convention decided to become a member of the Young Socialists.

An educational conference was held alongside the formal convention sessions. Activities included classes and discussions, working meetings of Communist League members active in three industrial unions, and the first national meeting of members of the Young Socialists.

Two public meetings were held: a Militant Labor Forum on "U.S. and World Politics Today," featuring Paul Mailhot, a leader of the Socialist Workers Party and a staff writer for the *Militant*; and a fundraising rally that raised more than NZ\$6,000.

Featured at the rally were Bill Estrada, a Young Socialists member from Los Angeles who took part in the International Youth Brigade to Cuba in January, and two participants in the international solidarity conference held in Cuba last November.

Delegates also elected a new national committee to lead the Communist League's work over the coming period.

Joan Shields is a member of the Meat Workers Union in Christchurch, New Zealand.



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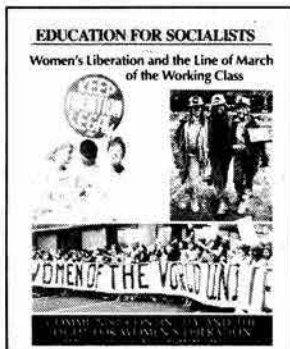
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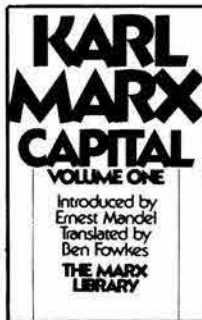
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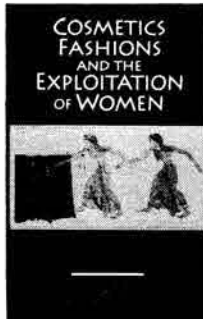


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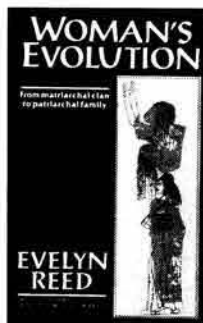


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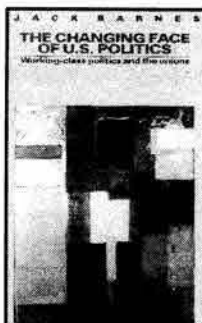


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# New Zealand gov't targets immigrants in school cutback

BY JAMES ROBB

AUCKLAND, New Zealand—"Anti-immigrant incidents are symptomatic of problems in society at large," said Manying Ip, a spokesperson for the Concerned Chinese Parents Association. "When problems arise, it is very easy to blame everything on a visible minority such as immigrants. Immigrants and their children need to be guaranteed our basic human and constitutional rights. We want to be treated like human beings, not economic chess-pieces."

Ip was addressing a Militant Labor Forum here February 11 on "The crisis in education and the scapegoating of immigrants." The forum focused on a dispute that erupted over a proposal by the board of trustees of Epsom Normal Primary School in central Auckland to bar entry to children of recent Asian migrants.

The board claimed that because these children speak little or no English, educating them consumes too much of the school's resources and it could no longer afford to take them. The board was backed by the Auckland Primary Principals Association, which issued a statement calling on all primary schools to refuse entry to non-English-speaking children aged five to seven years. At least one other school, Johnsonville West in Wellington, which has a number of children of immigrants from Latin America and the Pacific, said it was considering such a policy.

By law education is free and compulsory up to the age of 16 in New Zealand. Until recently, each local public school was allotted a geographic zone and could not refuse to enroll any child resident in the zone. But in 1989 the government began a series of education "reforms" that abolished the zoning system and vested greater financial responsibility for the running of schools in the boards of trustees, which are elected by parents of the students. This shift gave the boards the final decision on enrollments. The government

had wanted to give the boards the power to set teachers' salaries as well, but this proposal was defeated after strong opposition from teachers.

As a result of these reforms, inequalities among schools have widened. Some facilities have become very overcrowded, while others are underutilized. Increasingly parents have been called on to pay more of the costs of education. While education remains officially free for citizens and residents of New Zealand, schools have been encouraged to enroll fee-paying students from other countries as a source of additional income.

"The government has set schools up as competitive entities," said Chris Carter, Labour Party Member of Parliament for Te Atatu, in his remarks to the forum. He cited the example of a high school in his electorate that has enrolled about 100 fee-paying students, who are charged NZ\$7,500 each. (NZ\$1.00 = US\$0.63)

Ip scored the hypocrisy of the Epsom board and the principals association. "In fact, many Auckland primary schools are already levying big fees from Asian parents for teaching English as a second language. Some are demanding 'donations' of up to NZ\$50 per week from parents, which some Asian parents cannot afford to pay." Carter pointed out that it is illegal for schools to charge children of permanent residents extra tuition.

On February 14 the government moved to defuse the widening debate over English tuition, promising extra teachers for schools with many non-English-speaking pupils.

Minister of Education Lockwood Smith said he was considering longer-term solutions, including imposing fees on immigrants to pay for their children's English tuition and tougher language tests when their families arrived.

James Robb is a member of the Meatworkers Union of Aotearoa in Auckland.



## PATHFINDER AROUND THE WORLD

BY JANET FISHER AND CECILIA MORIARTY

Pathfinder, located in New York with distributors in Australia, Britain, and Canada, publishes books and pamphlets by revolutionary fighters whose struggles against capitalism, racism, and all forms of exploitation and oppression point the way forward for humanity. Pathfinder bookstores are listed in the directory on page 12.

Pathfinder is making a special effort to place a wide variety of books and pamphlets in U.S. college bookstores for Women's History Month in March. Through a mailing to more than 300 stores and a round of telephone calling by volunteers, 38 stores have already ordered 782 books and pamphlets. Top sellers thus far are *Is Biology Woman's Destiny?* (104 copies), *Abortion is a Woman's Right* (97 copies), *Problems of Women's Liberation* (65 copies), and *Cosmetics, Fashions, and the Exploitation of Women* (64 copies). Fifty-three copies of the *Communist Manifesto* have also been ordered. Orders to individual bookstores ranged from 5 to 30 books each.

Several bookstore buyers said that activities were being organized on campus around women's issues and they needed a special display to meet the interest generated by these events. Volunteer sales representatives explained that the Pathfinder titles cover topics from the role of women in the development of human society to working people's stake in the fight for women's economic and social emancipation.

Some of the bookstores that ordered the titles on the fight for women's rights

had also taken advantage of a similar offer for Black History Month. One buyer commented on how pleased she was with the successful sales of Pathfinder titles during Black History Month. Another bookstore has already placed a second order.

At the end of the special order form for Women's History Month, two new titles by Pathfinder were included — *The Bolivian Diary of Ernesto Che Guevara* and *New International no. 10* featuring the articles "Imperialism's March toward Fascism and War" and "Defending Cuba, Defending Cuba's Socialist Revolution." Twelve copies of each of these titles have been ordered through this promotion.

In addition to calling college bookstores for Women's History Month, volunteers contacted various university libraries to suggest librarians add the most recent Pathfinder titles to their collections.

Volunteers also visited professors to discuss Pathfinder titles for course adoptions, suggested reading lists, and recommendations for library acquisitions.

A prisoner writes: "I'm an inmate incarcerated at a California State Prison. Recently at the prison library a poster was on display that read as follows: *To Speak the Truth: Why Washington's 'Cold War' against Cuba Doesn't End by Fidel Castro and Che Guevara*. I hereby would like to request the book or any literature pertaining to the above-mentioned poster display."



# Caterpillar, under pressure, backs down on denial of pension credits to strikers

BY RONI McCANN

PEORIA, Illinois — On a chilly day outside Caterpillar's Mapleton plant here, picket Dennis Weaver summed up the determination found among thousands of United Auto Workers (UAW) members in their eight-month-long strike. "I've never quit in the middle of anything before," he said, "and I don't plan on starting now." Weaver has 28 years with the heavy-equipment producer and could have retired last summer. But, like many others, he decided to stick it out.

In nearby Decatur, Illinois, the spirit was the same. "I never really believed in unions until I started working for Cat," said striker Kathy Clapman. "Now I know what it would be like without one and we can't let that happen." Clapman was hired by Caterpillar and called to work after the UAW went out. After three months in the plant, she joined the union and walked out. "The fact is," another picket added, "the big majority has stayed strong."

While 20 percent to 30 percent of union members have crossed the line, most 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. Plants have been operating with temporary and white-collar workers, who are themselves being worn down by production work they are not prepared to do over the long haul.

In January, Caterpillar bent to the pressure and agreed to negotiate after months of insisting their final offer was on the table and not up for discussion. Talks recessed February 3 with both sides agreeing to meet again in the near future.

Some 11,000 UAW members at Caterpillar's rival heavy-equipment producer, John Deere & Co., will be voting on a contract March 4-5. The pact is reportedly similar to one the UAW recently negotiated with agricultural and construction equipment manufacturer J.I. Case Corp. That agreement was voted up by the union membership.

## Backtracking on pension denial

Feeling the screws tightening, Caterpillar announced February 22 it was rescinding its August 1994 decision to eliminate the accrual of pension credits for UAW members on strike. The union had filed a lawsuit and an unfair labor practice charge saying the decision violated federal pension law. At the time Caterpillar said revoking the pension credits would save the corporation \$1 million a week. Now the company flip-flopped, stating that litigation from the UAW lawsuit would be too costly.

"The company tried to take away the workers' accrued service for only one reason — to get more and more people to cross the picket lines — only it didn't

work," said UAW Local 974 president Jerry Brown.

The Peoria *Journal Star* reported February 25 that Caterpillar chairman Donald Fites received \$1.8 million in salary, bonuses, and other compensation in 1994, as well as 60,000 shares of company stock. That's an 11 percent raise over the \$1.63 million he received in 1993. Strikers say Fites is padding his own pockets while trying to lower the living standards of the workers. Meanwhile, receiving \$300 a week in strike benefits, UAW members have remained firm.

## Bal Harbour delegation

During the week of February 21 some Cat workers joined striking rubber workers and locked-out corn processing workers in Bal Harbour, Florida. The 70 unionists and supporters, nearly all from Decatur, traveled there to appeal to AFL-CIO officials at their convention.

As guests entered the hotel, strikers politely asked them if they had heard about what's happening in Decatur, where 1,250 United Rubber Workers (URW) members are on strike against Bridgestone/Firestone, 700 United Paperworkers International Union members are locked out by A.E. Staley Manufacturing, and 1,800 UAW members are striking Caterpillar.

The unionists sought out labor federation officials and urged them to help get the word out about their strikes. They also raised the idea of a nationwide strike fund. "It was a positive experience," said URW striker Leo Chalifoux.

In other developments the UAW joined with the Chicago-based Citizens for a Better Environment to look into possible hazardous waste buried at a former Caterpillar dump site along the Illinois River in East Peoria. UAW members say the leaky barrels are draining into the river. An environmental lawsuit might be filed, reported the *Journal Star*. The two filed another complaint last year against Caterpillar before the Illinois Pollution Control Board. The suit demanded the tractor giant clean up 13,000 tons of toxic dirt stored at the East Peoria plant.

Weaver said he used to be on a Hazardous Waste Response Team inside his plant. This was necessary to make sure the proper procedures were followed in case of a spill. These kinds of safety questions have a lot to do with the strength of the union, he said.

## Safety violation

The *Journal Star* quoted Caterpillar spokesman Keith Butterfield saying, "Safety has been and continues to be a top priority" for the company. He blamed recent fines by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) on the "UAW's in-plant campaign of orches-

trated litigation and harassment."

Butterfield's remark was "a dishonest statement and I've got the hospital records to prove it," replied Caterpillar worker Maywood Williams in a letter to the editor published February 22. Williams's hand was cut and one tendon completely sev-

ered when he was ordered to operate a lathe with a disabled safety switch. "I still have a scar on my hand and a finger that will never be straight again, which I would be happy to show Keith Butterfield in case he is confused about why the company is in trouble with OSHA."

## Steelworkers return to work after one-week strike at five Kaiser Aluminum plants



Militant/Robbie Scherr

Strikers walk picket line February 22 at Kaiser plant in Gramercy, Louisiana.

Some 3,000 aluminum workers approved a 47-month contract February 28 and returned to work at five Kaiser Aluminum and Chemical Corp. plants in Ohio, Louisiana, and Washington. The United Steelworkers of America (USWA) members walked off the job eight days earlier after narrowly rejecting a previous offer. They had been working under an expired agreement for more than three months. Details of the new pact were not available at press time. Kaiser had been demanding job combinations that would shrink the workforce and threaten safety. The steelworkers raised concerns over the carcinogens, intense heat, and dangerous job conditions they currently face. The company also proposed a health-care plan that would limit benefits for employees with working spouses.

"We are making less money than we were in 1985," said pot operator Ricardo Davila while picketing outside the Tacoma, Washington, aluminum smelter.

Perry Angelou, a member of USWA

Local 5702 at Kaiser's Gramercy, Louisiana, plant, said workers have never recouped what they've lost since agreeing to a \$5-an-hour wage cut in 1983. Angelou was one of several pickets who tried to convince truckers to turn back at the plant gate.

"I'm nonunion," a driver from a local linen service told the strikers.

"We understand, brother," the steelworkers explained. "But, we're asking you to honor our picket line and turn around. Our livelihoods are on the line." The trucker turned around.

"I know we are doing the right thing," said Rafael Gomez of USWA Local 7945 in Tacoma. "It's time to stand up."

About 100 strikers and their supporters rallied in Seattle February 27.

Roni McCann, a member of USWA Local 9126 in Cleveland; Jeff Powers in Tacoma; and Robbie Scherr, a member of Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers Local 4-227 in Houston, contributed to this article.

# Socialists in coal-mining regions meet

Discuss world capitalist crisis and miners union resistance to coal bosses

BY DAVID SALNER

MORGANTOWN, West Virginia — "Every day we see more examples that confirm that world capitalism is in a deep crisis," said Estelle DeBates in the opening report to a conference here of socialist workers who live and work near coal-mining areas. Participants in the recent gathering came from Birmingham, Alabama; Pittsburgh; Peoria and Decatur, Illinois; Morgantown; and Salt Lake City, Utah.

The report and discussion centered on the impact of the crisis on working people and the unions in the United States and around the world. Delegates paid special attention to the struggles of miners in the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) against ongoing attacks by the coal bosses.

The \$50 billion loan guarantee pledged to Mexico by the Clinton administration is aimed at propping up the dollar and protecting the profits of U.S. capitalists, said DeBates, a garment worker in Morgantown. All this is being done at the expense of the living and working conditions of fellow working people in Mexico, she

said. Pointing to the kinds of attacks workers have to be fighting in the United States, DeBates explained that among the main bills being discussed in the West Virginia state legislature are reintroduction of the death penalty, the gutting of workers compensation, and a 24-hour waiting period for a woman to have an abortion.

Turning to the situation facing the ranks of the UMWA, DeBates said that "miners have been pushed back on job conditions and forced into working longer hours with more irregular schedules." She noted they have suffered an erosion of certain principles won through struggle, such as "no contract, no work," national strikes not selective strikes, and no victimization of union brothers and sisters. "But the fighting capacity of the miners has not been broken," said DeBates.

The UMWA was the only major industrial union in the United States to hold off deep concessions of the kind that swept the labor movement in the 1980s, she reported. This was a product of the powerful movement that transformed the UMWA in the late 1960s and early 70s, forged by

miners to press for safety on the job and to protect their health against black lung disease. At the time, strikes and protests swept West Virginia and other states. On the crest of that movement, coal miners began to seize control of their union. They kicked out the corrupt machine of President Tony Boyle and began to use union power to defend miners' interests.

The power of the ranks was brought to bear in national strikes in 1978 and 1981, the report explained. And in 1989 some 40,000 UMWA members shut down the mines in solidarity with members striking against concession demands by the Pittston Coal Co. Participants in the meeting discussed these high points of miners' struggles, as well as the 1984 defeat of a selective strike against A.T. Massey in West Virginia and Kentucky and the inconclusive 1993 selective strike against the Bituminous Coal Operators Association.

John Hawkins and Clay Dennison, UMWA construction workers in Alabama, pointed to resistance in coalfields there to the new four-day schedules and the discussion among workers about contract ne-



Fight in late 1960s to demand government action to eradicate black lung and compensate victims helped transform United Mine Workers of America.

gotiations with the Association of Bituminous Contractors. Unlike most UMWA members, mine construction workers have taken major concessions in past contracts.

Continued on Page 12



# Socialists in coal-mining regions meet

Continued from Page 11

Now, with construction expanding, many felt they were in a position to fight for more than the \$1.50-an-hour pay raise and pension increases offered by the bosses.

Stefanie Trice, a West Virginia rail worker and young socialist, is able to talk with miners while her crew loads coal for hauling. She described a discussion with a veteran of the Black Lung movement and a young coal sampler—a temporary, nonunion job. The discussion concluded that the unions should take action against the bleak unemployment picture for today's youth. "Miners are also interested in abortion rights, the crisis in Mexico, and the Cuban revolution," Trice said.

Delegates discussed the importance of the ongoing *Militant* sales teams to mine portals. Such sales are an important way to talk socialist politics with miners, learn about what's happening in the mines and the union, and encourage miners to get active in political meetings and protests. "It is important for young socialists to join the teams, so they can meet and have discussions with miners and UMW members. Miners, like other fighters, like to know that young people are getting involved in fighting back too," said a participant in the meeting.

A public celebration of the publication of issue no. 10 of the Marxist magazine *New International*—featuring articles on the world capitalist crisis and the Cuban revolution—was held as part of the conference. Hawkins gave the feature presentation along with Ilsa Rachut, a new member of the Young Socialists in Morgantown. Participants in the conference had already taken a goal of selling 10 copies of *New International* no. 10 to UMW members.

Betsy Farley of Decatur, Illinois, described a strike meeting she attended where a participant in the recent youth brigade to Cuba spoke to workers, followed by a lively discussion session lasting a couple hours. Kevin Johnson, a young socialist and participant in the brigade, spoke about plans to arrange meetings with UMW members and others in West Virginia and Pennsylvania interested in finding out about his visit to Cuba.

There was also discussion of the alarming increase in serious accidents in the airlines and other industries, as the bosses drive to increase their profits and beat out the competition. One participant had worked in a mine in Wilberg, Utah, where 27 miners were killed a little more than 10 years ago. "Wilberg is a grim reminder of what happens when profits come before safety," she said. The accident took place while the Emery Mining Co. was attempting to break a longwall production world record, as part of a productivity drive. While individual miners put up some opposition to this dangerous drive, there had been little organized resistance, she said.

A UMW report on the Wilberg disaster pointed out that many more people were at the longwall face than usual, including top company officials responsible for directing operations in the event of an explosion or fire. But the goal of breaking the record led them to ignore signs of a serious problem when smoke was initially detected. The UMW report had also revealed a general deterioration in safety precautions—from inadequate ventilation and escapeways, to lack of maintenance of lifesaving equipment and training in its proper use. All 27 victims died of smoke inhalation. Officials of the Mine Safety and Health Administration had authorized some of the practices that contributed to the disaster, the union report concluded.

Hawkins noted that the U.S. government recently reported that last year 43 coal miners were killed in accidents, the lowest number recorded. If mining has gotten any safer, he said, it is only due to the strength of the membership of the UMW.

Participants also discussed how socialist workers can make progress toward getting back into mining jobs to join forces with other UMW fighters to strengthen the union against the coal bosses.

## MILITANT LABOR FORUMS

### FLORIDA

#### Miami

**Origins of the Myth of Race.** Speaker: Sam Manuel, Socialist Workers Party, member of United Transportation Union. Sat., March 11, 7:30 p.m. 137 NE 54th St. (between NE 1st Ave. and NE 2nd Ave.) Donation: \$5. Tel: (305) 756-1020.

### ILLINOIS

#### Chicago

**Protest Government Attacks on Welfare and Benefits!** Speakers: Ethel Washington, president, Local Advisory Council; Robert Taylor Homes-B; Julie Bingham, Socialist Workers Party. Sat., March 11, 5 p.m. 545 W. Roosevelt Rd. Donation: \$4. Translation into Spanish. Tel: (312) 829-6815.

#### Decatur

**The Socialist Alternative in the Decatur Mayoral Elections.** Speaker: Betsy Farley, Socialist Workers candidate for mayor of Decatur. Sat., March 11, 5 p.m. Richland Community College, Room SC 53, Shilling Continuing Education Center. Brush College Rd. at I College Park.

### MASSACHUSETTS

#### Boston

**Work Can Be Dangerous to Your Health: Deteriorating Health and Safety in the Workplace.** Speaker: Danny Booher, Socialist Workers Party. Sat., March 11, 7:30 p.m. 780 Tremont St. Donation: \$4. Tel: (617) 247-6772.

### MINNESOTA

#### St. Paul

**Prairie Island, Nuclear Power, and the Fight to Defend the Environment.** Sat., March 11, 7:30 p.m. 2490 University Ave. (east side of route 280, on 16A bus line). Donation: \$4. Tel: (612) 644-6325.

### OHIO

#### Cleveland

**The Fight Against Cuts in Social Entitlements.** Speakers: Amy Roberts, member of Young Socialists, student Antioch College, participant in Columbus cutback protests; Bob Laycock, member AFSCME Local 100; Susan Hope, Socialist Workers Party, member of United Auto Workers Local 2015. Sat., March 11, 7 p.m. Reception: 6 p.m. 1832 Euclid Ave. (across from Cleveland State University). Donation \$3.50. Tel: (216) 861-6150.

### TEXAS

#### Houston

**Mexico: Class Struggle and Financial Crash. What the Peso's Collapse Tells Us About World Economics and Politics.** Speaker: Margrethe Siem, Socialist Workers Party, participant in the annual Mexico City book fair to promote Pathfinder books. Sat., March 11, 7:30 p.m. 6969 Gulf Freeway 250 (in the Woodridge Plaza). Donation: \$4. Tel: (713) 644-9066.

### WASHINGTON

#### Seattle

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

### WASHINGTON, D.C.

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

### AUSTRALIA

#### Sydney

**The Logging Debate: Why Defending**

**Forestry Jobs is not Counterposed to the Fight Against Environmental Degradation.** Speaker: Mamie Kennedy, Communist League election campaign, member of Australian Manufacturing Workers Union. Sat., March 11, 6 p.m. *Surry Hills Neighbourhood Centre* (corner Norton and Collins St., Surry Hills). Donation: \$4. Tel: (02) 281 3297.

### BRITAIN

#### London

**Lebanon: Working People and Youth Confront the Politics of the 1990s.** Speaker: Paul Davies, recent visitor to Beirut. Sat., March 11, 6 p.m. 47 The Cut. Donation £2. Tel: 071 928 7993.

#### Manchester

**The Working Class and the Struggle for Abortion Rights Today.** Sat., March 11, 6 p.m.

**Politics in the United States Today. What Lessons Does it Hold for the Working Class in Britain?** Sat., March 18, 6 p.m.

Both events at 1st Floor, 60 Shudehill. Donation: £2. Tel: 061 839 1766.

### NEW ZEALAND

#### Auckland

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

#### Christchurch

**Defend Democratic Rights.** Speaker: Joan Shields, Communist League. Sat., March 11, 7 p.m.

**Labor and the Fight for Workplace Safety.** Speaker: Kate Rodda, Communist League. Sat., March 18, 7 p.m.

Both events at 199 High St. Donation \$3. Tel: (03) 365-6055.

## Ireland pact registers London's weakness

Continued from Page 16

Woman clinic were assisting a 21-year-old woman to get her flat back in a housing project where she had confronted hostility for alleged drug-dealing. The RUC has charged Nellis with false imprisonment and abduction.

"The RUC know they can't make the charges stick," McLaughlin said. "They are trying to discredit the cease-fire and discredit Sinn Fein."

McLaughlin reported other incidents of RUC harassment in recent weeks. Moreover, British troops continue to be deployed in areas like South Armagh, digging up gardens and detaining people on the pretext of searching for explosives.

In other areas, the British army presence has diminished. In Belfast open daytime patrols have ended and there have been no recent assassinations. Most working people are enthusiastic about the eas-

ing of tensions and more relaxed atmosphere. The demonstration to commemorate Bloody Sunday (when British paratroopers shot down 13 unarmed civil rights demonstrators in 1968) was larger this year than for many years.

There has also been an increase in street protests. This includes the launching of a campaign called "Saorise" by relatives of Irish political prisoners calling for the release of these fighters from jail.

John Major returned from the talks in Belfast to another gathering storm over policy toward the European Union, with deepening divisions in the Tory (Conservative Party) ranks and a government majority in Parliament of only 12 seats.

Unionist MPs, who have bolstered the Tory majority for several years, are not likely to prompt a general election by backing a no-confidence vote in Parlia-

ment. But speculation as to their intentions adds to the atmosphere of disarray surrounding Major's government. Within days of his Belfast trip, the prime minister hot-footed it to Scotland to respond to growing nationalist demands there for Scottish devolution or independence.

At the international England and Ireland soccer match in Dublin February 15, a rightist group waving Union Jacks and loyalist flags led a riot that stopped the match. They ripped up seats and railings to use as missiles against Irish fans. The Irish police vigorously and indiscriminately charged the English and Irish crowd with batons.

Irish and English fans discussed what had happened in pubs around Dublin later that night. Several English fans who were interviewed said they had spent all night apologizing for what the rightist thugs had done.

## IF YOU LIKE THIS PAPER, LOOK US UP

Where to find Pathfinder books and distributors of the *Militant*, *Perspectiva Mundial*, *New International*, *Nouvelle Internationale*, and *Nueva Internacional*.

### UNITED STATES

**ALABAMA: Birmingham:** 111 21st St. South. Zip: 35233. Tel: (205) 323-3079.

**CALIFORNIA: Los Angeles:** 2546 W. Pico Blvd. Zip: 90006. Tel: (213) 380-9460, 380-9640. Compuserve: 74642,326. Internet: 74642.326@compuserve.com. **San Francisco:** 3284 23rd St. Zip: 94110. Tel: (415) 285-5323. Compuserve: 75604,556.

**CONNECTICUT: New Haven:** Mailing address: P.O. Box 16751, Baybrook Station, West Haven. Zip: 06516. Tel: (203) 688-5418.

**FLORIDA: Miami:** 137 N.E. 54th St. Zip: 33137. Tel: (305) 756-1020.

**GEORGIA: Atlanta:** 803 Peachtree NE. Zip: 30308. Tel: (404) 724-9759.

**ILLINOIS: Chicago:** 545 W. Roosevelt Rd. Zip: 60607. Tel: (312) 829-6815, 829-7018. **Peoria:** P.O. Box 302. Zip: 61650-0302. Tel: (309) 674-9441.

**IOWA: Des Moines:** 2105 Forest Ave. Zip: 50311. Tel: (515) 246-8249.

**MASSACHUSETTS: Boston:** 780 Tremont St. Zip: 02118. Tel: (617) 247-6772.

**MICHIGAN: Detroit:** 7414 Woodward Ave. Zip: 48202. Tel: (313) 875-0100. Internet: 74767,1050@compuserve.com.

**MINNESOTA: Twin Cities:** 2490 University Ave. W., St. Paul. Zip: 55114. Tel:

(612) 644-6325.

**NEW JERSEY: Newark:** 141 Halsey. Mailing address: 1188 Raymond Blvd., Suite 222. Zip: 07102. Tel: (201) 643-3341.

**NEW YORK: Albany:** P. O. Box 2357, E.S.P. Zip: 12220. Tel: (518) 465-0585. **Brooklyn:** 59 4th Avenue (corner of Bergen) Zip: 11217. Tel: (718) 399-7257. **New York:** 214-16 Avenue A. Mailing address: P.O. Box 2652. Zip: 10009. Tel: (212) 388-9346; 167 Charles St. Zip: 10014. Tel: (212) 366-1973.

**NORTH CAROLINA: Greensboro:** 2000-C S. Elm-Eugene St. Zip: 27406. Tel: (910) 272-5996. Compuserve: 75127,2153.

**OHIO: Cincinnati:** P.O. Box 19484. Zip: 45219. Tel: (513) 662-1931. **Cleveland:** 1832 Euclid. Zip: 44115. Tel: (216) 861-6150.

**PENNSYLVANIA: Philadelphia:** 1906 South St. Zip: 19146. Tel: (215) 546-8218. **Pittsburgh:** 1103 E. Carson St. Zip: 15203. Tel: (412) 381-9785.

**TEXAS: Houston:** 6969 Gulf Freeway, Suite 250. Zip: 77087. Tel: (713) 644-9066.

**UTAH: Salt Lake City:** 147 E. 900 S. Zip: 84111. Tel: (801) 355-1124.

**WASHINGTON, D.C.:** 1802 Belmont Rd. N.W. Zip: 20009. Tel: (202) 387-2185. Compuserve: 75407,3345.

**WASHINGTON: Seattle:** 1405 E. Madison. Zip: 98122. Tel: (206) 323-1755. Compuserve: 74461,2544.

**WEST VIRGINIA: Morgantown:** 242 Walnut. Mailing address: P.O. Box 203. Zip:

26507. Tel: (304) 296-0055.

### AUSTRALIA

**Sydney:** 19 Terry St., Surry Hills 2010. Mailing address: P.O. Box K879, Haymarket, NSW 2000. Tel: 02-281-3297.

### BRITAIN

**London:** 47 The Cut. Postal code: SE1 8LL. Tel: 071-928-7993.

**Manchester:** Unit 4, 60 Shudehill. Postal code: M4 4AA. Tel: 061-839-1766.

### CANADA

**Montreal:** 4581 Saint-Denis. Postal code: H2J 2L4. Tel: (514) 284-7369.

**Toronto:** 827 Bloor St. West. Postal code: M6G 1M1. Tel: (416) 533-4324.

**Vancouver:** 3967 Main St. Postal code: V5V 3P3. Tel: (604) 872-8343.

### FRANCE

**Paris:** MBE 201, 208 rue de la Convention. Postal code: 750175. Tel: (1) 47-26-58-21.

### ICELAND

**Reykjavik:** Klapparstíg 26. Mailing address: P. Box 233, 121 Reykjavik. Tel: 552 5502.

### NEW ZEALAND

**Auckland:** La Gonda Arcade, 203 Karangahape Road. Postal address: P.O. Box 3025. Tel: (9) 379-3075.

**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.



**Fewer but busier** — On some flights, Delta Airlines has cut cabin workers from four to three. The company claims passengers say the service "is as good or better, because the flight attendants



Harry  
Ring

appear busier."

**'Believe it or not'** — U.S. "peacekeepers" in Somalia will

test new, nonlethal "crowd control" weapons (a super-sticky foam to immobilize people, etc.). They considered, but ruled out, a laser that blinds people temporarily. "The lasers were rejected for humane reasons," a Pentagon official said. "I know that sounds weird, but we had some qualms."

**A tribute to capitalism** — To help save the lives of infants in a huge shantytown, a Bombay hospital is apparently paying nursing mothers in its maternity ward to contribute breast milk. A report notes that "this increases the danger that poverty-stricken women may be tempted to sell their breast

milk in order to feed the rest of their families."

**Too busy making more plutonium** — The testes and ovaries taken from hundreds of people who lived near the Rocky Flats nuke plant in Colorado have been sitting in freezers for more than 15 years. They were collected from autopsies to determine if people in the area had more plutonium in their bodies than those who lived elsewhere. But the study ran out of money.

**It gets so tedious** — Just wrestling with a checkbook balance is no fun, so we could almost sympathize with Salomon Bros.,

the big Wall Street firm that took a \$194 million write-off. It seems that for at least six years the folks who run its London office weren't reconciling daily transactions with the numbers being reported to New York.

**American Way of Death** — The Federal Trade Commission estimates that a funeral may be the third most expensive consumer purchase after a home and a car.

**'Community relations'** — A police gay rights organization held its initial convention in San Juan, Puerto Rico. The police force there, in a bid to improve its tarnished image, has begun training

rookie cops in music appreciation and the like. The gay cops charge they were gathered at a bar when 10 San Juan officers busted in with automatic weapons. They said they were checking the club's license.

**They can't work in teams?** — Under Puerto Rican law, a cop can be bounced from the force for associating with gays, prostitutes, and, dig this, "persons of ill repute."

**Thought for the week** — "Our code of conduct is different from those of other professions." — Puerto Rico police superintendent Pedro Toledo.

## Caribbean protests condemn nuclear shipment

BY RON RICHARDS

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico — Protests throughout the Caribbean are condemning the shipment of tons of deadly nuclear waste from France to Japan. The outcry has once again put a spotlight on the lethal consequences of nuclear power and the wastes generated in the atomic process, which represent a grave threat now and for millennia to come.

The radioactive material is being shipped from the French nuclear company COGEMA to Japan aboard the British Nuclear Fuels-owned ship *Pacific Pintail*. The vessel's likely route will take it through some of the world's major oceans, including the Atlantic, the Caribbean Sea, and the Pacific.

The *Pacific Pintail* is carrying a steel cask containing 28 glass blocks of high-level radioactive waste from COGEMA's nuclear reprocessing plant at La Hague. The waste is derived from spent fuel rod casings and other materials, which originated at some of Japan's main electrical utilities. The stuff in the containers is so radioactive that a person standing within three feet of a single unshielded block could receive a lethal dose in less than one minute.

The environmental group Greenpeace is using its ship, the *Rainbow Warrior*, to organize protests and educational activities throughout the Caribbean. The protest voyage began January 11 in Trinidad and Tobago and in less than four weeks 9,000 people had visited the ship in a number of Caribbean ports. The ship's crew hopes to be in Panama when the nuclear waste carrier passes through the Panama Canal.

The *Rainbow Warrior* arrived here February 2, and that afternoon about 200 people marched from the dock to the Japanese consulate. The spirited, young crowd marched behind flags showing the planet Earth as seen from space as well as Puerto Rican flags. The next day the ship was opened to tours of student groups as well as the general public. The issues around the nuclear shipment have been discussed by a steady stream of journalists visiting the ship.

The *Pacific Pintail* left Cherbourg, France, at the end of February and is expected to arrive in Japan sometime in April. The shortest and therefore cheapest sea route from Europe to Japan is via the Mona Passage between Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic and then through the Panama Canal. It is expected that in the next 15 years that at least 100 voyages will be needed to transport the nuclear material that is currently being reprocessed in France to Japan. Each voyage has the potential of carrying 10 times the radioactive material that was released in the catastrophe at Chernobyl in the Ukraine.

Greenpeace has shown that the safety standards for transporting the radioactive material are inadequate. For instance, the standard specifies that the container should survive an 800°C fire for 30 minutes. But in a collision with an oil tanker the resulting fire could burn at more than 1,100° for 20 hours.

In late 1992 the *Akatsuki Maru* made a similar voyage. The entire operation was cloaked in secrecy. To reduce protests the ship used a route that passed the Cape of Good Hope at the southern tip of Africa. This route kept the ship hundreds of miles from shore but added thousands of miles to the trip. The effect of the secrecy was to internationalize the opposition. Since no-



Militant/ Ron Richards

Banner at February 2 protest read "No plutonium through the Caribbean Sea."

body knew the route, there were worldwide protests by people who had the misfortune to live in countries straddling strategic maritime routes. Dozens of governments opposed the shipments — even the then-apartheid regime of South Africa. Demonstrators met the ship on its arrival in Japan in early 1993.

In order to cut costs, the shipping companies want to begin using the shorter Caribbean route.

The capitalist ruling parties in the Caribbean are under public pressure to oppose these shipments. The result has been virtually unanimous opposition to the nuclear voyages.

The governments grouped in the Caribbean Community have issued protests to London, Paris, and Tokyo. "The Community is implacably opposed to any such movement of hazardous waste through the Caribbean Sea and strongly appeals to all members of the international community to respect the wishes of the peoples of the Caribbean whose patrimony, the Caribbean Sea, they will place in jeopardy by attempting to secure the passage of such hazardous waste through our region," read a statement by Owen Arthur, prime minister of Barbados and Caribbean Community chairman.

In a rare show of unity, the elected representatives from Washington's colony in Puerto Rico and other "possessions" in the Caribbean and Pacific — the U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, and the Northern Marianas — have all sent letters to President Bill Clinton to protest the shipment of nuclear materials. The governor of Puerto Rico and several members of the U.S. House of Representatives have added their voices to the opposition.

The protests have spread beyond the Caribbean. The government of Nauru, a Pacific island devastated by uncontrolled mining of phosphate-rich guano deposits that once covered the island, has demanded the nuclear-laden vessel come nowhere near its waters. The Nauru foreign affairs department, in a message to the Japanese embassy, wrote that it "strongly opposes the shipment of nuclear and radioactive substances through Nauru's 200 miles Exclusive Economic

Zone."

Fifty-eight organizations in Puerto Rico signed an open letter being circulated here which reads in part, "We demand that the government of the United States support the proposed total ban on the separation and use of plutonium" to be discussed at

an April conference to revise the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty in New York.

The only voice in the Caribbean speaking out publicly in favor of the nuclear shipment is a team of atomic industry executives traveling through the region. After its visit to Puerto Rico this damage-control team will head to Panama. Malcolm Miller, a former sea captain who works for British Nuclear Fuels, told the press that he was surprised by all the outcry over the proposed shipment. "To date we've never had one accident with radioactive materials," said Miller.

The U.S. government has studiously avoided public comment on the dangers posed by the shipment. "My understanding is, from Washington, that we don't have a role in this," said Jeanne Fox, regional administrator for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

The government of France has tried to keep a low profile over the radioactive load. In addition to the worldwide opposition to its trucking of nuclear waste through the open sea, Paris has a dirty history in relation to opponents of its nuclear policies. In 1985 the first *Rainbow Warrior* was on its way to the French colony of Polynesia to protest Paris's planned nuclear weapons tests there. A French secret agent planted a bomb that destroyed the ship while it was docked in New Zealand.

Ron Richards is a member of the American Federation of Government Employees in San Juan, Puerto Rico.

## — 25 AND 50 YEARS AGO —

### THE MILITANT

Published in the Interest of the Working People

March 13, 1970

Price 10¢

DETROIT — "An overwhelmingly male legislature does not have the right to decide the reasons for which a woman can have an abortion. They have only the duty to repeal all abortion laws that exist, to prevent the death of women who will suffer and die if these laws continue to be on the books."

This testimony, given by a leader in the Detroit women's liberation movement, expressed the sentiment of most of the 500 women who attended the Michigan Senate hearings on abortion. Though three out of the four laws up for discussion in the Senate were reform bills, most of the testimony by women called for total repeal of all abortion laws.

Evelyn Kirsch, Socialist Workers Party candidate for Lt. governor and an active member of MORAL (Michigan Organization for Repeal of Abortion Laws), received a round of applause from the audience when she prefaced her testimony with an attack on the undemocratic way in which the hearings were organized.

"Right here at this hearing," she stated, "we see the whole struggle for equality taking place; that is what the issue of abortion repeal is all about." Noting that in Michigan alone an estimated 10,000 illegal abortions took place in 1969, she said, "It's about time Michigan's 124-year-old relic of an abortion law be repealed, and that free, legal abortions be made avail-

able to all women.

"Women are demanding decision-making powers in those areas which directly affect their physical and mental well-being, and will come out by the hundreds of thousands to demonstrate in the streets if these powers continue to be kept from them."

### THE MILITANT

PUBLISHED IN THE INTERESTS OF THE WORKING PEOPLE  
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March 10, 1945

According to an act of Congress in 1934, the date for the independence of the Philippines from the United States was set for July 4, 1946. To curb unrest in the islands and to guarantee the support of the Filipinos for American against Japanese imperialism in the war, this promise of independence has been constantly dangled before the people.

It has also been used as a propaganda weapon by the Roosevelt administration to cloak the predatory aims of American imperialism in the Orient with idealistic intentions.

Now, however, that the military power of the United States is once again firmly entrenched on the Philippines, a new note is heard from Washington. A dispatch from the capital in the *New York Times* (Feb. 27) states that officials characterized the "hope of independence" (on July 4, 1946) as unlikely of accomplishment. On that date, these anonymous sources state, independence "will still be a thing of the future." The alibi now given is destruction caused by the Japanese. Before the Japanese invaded the islands there were other alibis.



# Oppose attacks on immigrants

On February 21, a 17-year-old African youth was murdered in France by a supporter of the fascist National Front. Jean-Marie Le Pen, the organization's presidential candidate, has pledged to expel 3 million immigrant workers from the country if elected, claiming this would "solve" high unemployment.

Le Pen's reactionary demagoguery mirrors the immigrant-bashing advanced by the main figures in bourgeois politics in France.

A pipe bomb killed four Gypsies in Austria on February 5 during a spate of rightist terror aimed at Gypsies and immigrants. In New Zealand, government officials are pushing efforts to deny free public education to children of recent immigrants.

Across the United States, campaigns have begun to place measures similar to California's anti-immigrant Proposition 187 on the ballot. Two outfits in Florida, for

example, are preparing to put such packages up for statewide vote next year.

More and more big-business politicians portray "illegals" as the source of capitalism's ills. The scapegoating chorus aims to create a pariah layer in the workforce, enabling the bosses to drive down the value of the labor power of a section of the working class — and lower the value of workers' labor power as a whole. Governments use the threat of deportation to force undocumented workers to accept lower wages, worse living conditions and a second-class status in society.

The labor movement must champion the rights of immigrant workers, mobilize to demand the highest penalties under law for thugs who carry out physical assaults, and demand that Washington open the borders to working people of all nationalities. This puts labor in a stronger position to defend the rights of all.

# Jobs for all is key for workers

Continued from front page  
capitalism.

Workers have also seen our real wages — what we can buy with our take-home pay — decline over the last two decades, and our working conditions are worsening. In the United States, the buying power of the minimum wage has fallen nearly 40 percent since 1968, and 10 percent in the last decade. Restoring the minimum wage to its 1968 level would put it at \$6.95 per hour; today's rate is \$4.25. Tens of millions of workers are now earning less than the 1968 minimum.

The average real wage for industrial workers in the United States has fallen dramatically over this period as well. In many industries two-tier wage scales have been imposed, in some cases with new hires never closing the gap. The cost-of-living protection many unions fought for and won to protect wages from erosion by inflation has been taken back in one union contract after another over the past 15 years.

While wages have dropped, the workday and workweek continue to be extended. Twelve-hour shifts and six- or seven-day workweeks have become a feature of life for many workers. This has reached the point where auto workers struck several General Motors plants last year to demand the company hire more people. Speedup, safety, and other job conditions — including simple human dignity in face of management abuse — are often central issues in labor struggles today, such as the ongoing strike at Caterpillar or the recent eight-day walkout against Kaiser Aluminum.

Despite these deep inroads against our living and job conditions, and despite the weakness of our unions today, the bosses have come nowhere near breaking the working class and labor movement in the United States, other imperialist countries, or elsewhere in the world. The employers remain a long way from achieving what they must do to restore the rising profit rates the market system demands.

Under these profit pressures, the capitalist rulers around the world have also been preparing the ground to press against fundamental social rights working people have wrested in many countries, such as jobless benefits, workers compensation, retirement pensions, and medical care. The bosses do so under the banner of the need to cut the government budget deficit. The capitalists resist higher taxation that would cut even more deeply into profits, and they are determined to protect the value of their massive bondholdings and the enormous interest payments they collect on this debt.

But the social entitlements the employing class seeks to roll back are a product of the struggles fought by workers and the unions in the 1930s and during the labor upsurge in the United States and other capitalist countries following World War II, as well as subsequent fights such as the movements for Black rights and women's equality. The working class, and many in the middle classes as well, have come to consider these to be *social rights*, so the employers face big obstacles in trying to take away these entitlements.

In the United States, both capitalist parties seek to play on the insecurities of middle-class layers to convince them this social wage nonetheless has to be cut to bring back "order and stability" to the economy and broader society. While the rulers scapegoat welfare recipients, single mothers, and a supposed "underclass" for capitalism's fiscal crisis, the big target they are after is Social Security and other aspects of the social wage that all working people rely on.

Resistance by the working class and its allies to these attacks plays a decisive role in determining how fast and how far the rulers can go in their offensive against our right to employment and our wages, job conditions, and social wage. The protest marches and rallies that have taken place in recent weeks — across Canada, and more recently in New York state — against proposed cuts in funding for education, health care, and other social needs are an important beginning.

To fight effectively, the labor movement needs a program that advances solidarity within the working class in order to carry out this fight and bring the potential power of the unions to bear.

Unemployment remains the most fundamental division within the working class, as it has been throughout the history of capitalism. All the ways the bosses try to divide and exploit us — by race, gender, immigration status, age — feed into and reinforce this basic separation between those who have jobs and those who don't. The capitalists depend on the jobless reserve army of labor to put downward pressure on wages and conditions.

The bosses count above all on the competition for jobs among workers, which is built into the capitalist system and brings the dog-eat-dog values of the bourgeoisie into our class. But the labor movement must have its eyes elsewhere — on the solidarity among working people that, as we know from centuries of struggle, results from being pushed together by the exploiters' ceaseless assaults.

The working class needs to fight for jobs for all as well as other measures that strengthen and unify the working class. This includes demanding from the bosses and their government:

- A 30-hour workweek for 40 hours' pay to spread the available work around. Fighting for a shorter workweek can unite workers who are unemployed, young workers who have never had a steady job, and those who are bearing the brunt of speedup and overtime. This struggle, like earlier fights for a shorter workweek in the history of the labor movement, is an international one.

- Provide jobs — at union-scale wages — through a public works program to restore the infrastructure capitalism has let go to rot and to build badly needed housing, schools, hospitals, public transportation, and other social facilities.

- Full unemployment compensation for all at union wages, not just a pittance to get along. Young people and women who decide to join the workforce for the first time but have not yet found employment should be eligible for benefits. This would ease the pressure on workers to take any job at any wage.

- A sliding scale of wages, that is, full cost-of-living protection, to combat the devastating effects of inflation on workers' pay.

To cut across the bosses' attempts to divide our class based on skin color, gender, and nationality, the labor movement needs to propose:

- Defend and extend affirmative action, with quotas for hiring and training. Seniority lists should be structured so layoffs do not reverse what the unions and civil rights struggles have conquered in increasing the percentage of women, Blacks, and other oppressed nationalities in the mines, mills, and factories.

- Immediately increase the minimum wage. Pay scales are set from the bottom up, starting from the base of what the employers can pay the worst-off layers of the working class. Raising the minimum will help all workers in our fight for higher wages.

- Defend and extend the social wage won by the working class to include lifetime free public education, child care, workers compensation, and retirement pensions — as universal social rights.

The rulers try to pit workers in different countries against each other. To unite ourselves as an international working class, labor should demand:

- Cancel the third world debt. Take the boot of the U.S. and other imperialist banks and billionaire bondholders off the backs of working people in Mexico and everywhere else.

- For a world without borders. End immigration restrictions that are used to create a pariah layer of the undocumented within the working class.

A fight along these lines is the working-class response to the unemployment that is already growing in the world today, and that under today's deflationary conditions could explode overnight to much more massive proportions. Such a program would put working people in the strongest position to lead the struggle to rid the world of the capitalist system. This system is responsible not only for the scourge of joblessness but for the wars, brutal assaults on democratic rights, and other social and economic ills endemic to the quest for profits by the propertied families who grow wealthy off the labor of workers and toiling farmers worldwide.

# Why labor should demand sliding scale of hours, pay

Below are excerpts from the article "Imperialism's march toward fascism and war" by Jack Barnes, included in issue no. 10 of the magazine of Marxist theory and politics *New International*. Its Spanish-language edition, *Nueva Internacional* no. 4, has just come off the press. These excerpts are reprinted by permission of *New International*, copyright © 1994.

One of the most important social questions that the labor movement should be campaigning around today is the fight for the shorter workweek. Despite the current upturn in the business cycle and increased hiring, the official unemployment rate remains over 6 percent. In fact, many Democratic and Republican politicians alike now talk of this as the "natural rate" of unemployment! And the real figure is roughly double that, including workers who have involuntarily had to take part-time or temporary jobs or who have been pushed out of the workforce for now.

At the same time, the employers are increasing absolute surplus value by lengthening the workweek to the highest levels in half a century. Average weekly overtime has increased by a full hour just since mid-1991....

The situation is even worse in Western Europe (let alone in the Third World, where unemployment levels of 50 percent or more are not uncommon). In the countries that make up the European Union, official unemployment rates average nearly 11 percent, with the real figures well over 20 percent....

As we explain in *An Action Program to Confront the Coming Economic Crisis*, the deepest economic division in our class is between those who have a job and those who don't. Growing joblessness saps the strength, the morale, and the fighting capacity of the working class and labor movement. [That's why] the workers movement [must] lead the fight for a shorter workweek *with no cut in pay*.... We must continue to link the fight for the sliding scale of *hours* to a sliding scale of *wages* to protect the working class against the effects of inflation. [E]ven with today's deflationary pressures real wages fell once again by 1 percent over the past year in the United States. Buying power declined both because the employers succeeded in pushing down actual wage rates — of union and nonunion workers alike — and because there continues to be inflation even if at a low level of around 3 percent officially. The cost-of-living adjustments — COLA clauses — that a lot of unions fought to include in contracts in the sixties and seventies fell short of keeping up with rising prices. But the number of workers covered by even this partial protection has fallen to its lowest level in a quarter century, as the officialdom in one union after the next has succumbed to the bosses' concession demands.

The threat of sudden inflationary explosions is built right into deflationary depression conditions. Because in the face of plummeting profit rates, increasing unemployment, and a rise in working-class resistance, the bourgeoisie will divide over how to attempt to weather the crisis. Sooner or later, some capitalist governments will panic and simply begin pumping out money in hopes of buffering the shocks. When that happens, workers and working farmers get slammed with the worst of both worlds — high levels of unemployment and explosive inflation. Employed workers will see real wages plunge; working people living on pensions will be devastated; and farmers will be hit with a new wave of foreclosures. This is what the working-class movement must prepare for.

This has happened before in the history of capitalism. It happened during the long depression in the closing decades of the last century. And it happened during the so-called Great Depression of the 1930s.

Despite their names, *inflation* and *deflation* are not opposite, mutually exclusive phenomena under capitalism. *Inflation* is a monetary phenomenon that arises when the purchasing power of a national currency declines. Governments and banks crank out money in various paper forms, eventually far outstripping the output of commodities that could be purchased with that money. Under such conditions, competing capitalist commercial interests bid prices up and up and up and up, in an ultimately self-defeating effort to reap surplus profits. *Deflation* is something quite different. It is not primarily a currency phenomenon. It is the product of the long-term tendency of capitalist profit rates to fall, heightening price competition among rival capitals and putting enormous downward pressures on capacity-increasing investment and expanded production—the conditions we've been discussing.

So the question for the workers movement in a depression is not an "either...or": *either* to prepare for deflation *or* to prepare for inflation. There will be unanticipated currency inflation superimposed on the deflation endemic to depression conditions. A sudden disastrous collapse of productive employment can soon be accompanied by a terrible price explosion.

That is why the labor movement must be ready to unite working people nationally and internationally around the fight for a program to advance workers' common interests, including measures to protect our class and its toiling allies against the ravages of both capitalist-caused joblessness and inflation.



# New York State nurses continue contract fights

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

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

supplying 150 strikebreakers to Nyack Hospital and said they lacked nurses to replace those on strike at Mercy.

## Civil workers in Turkey win wage increase

After strike actions paralyzed many districts and brought ground transportation and worksites to a

halt, the Turkish government granted 1.6 million civil workers a pay raise January 27. Despite fierce snow storms, hundreds of thousands of workers had held rallies and mass marches in December in Ankara, Istanbul, and other major cities and towns throughout the country demanding the increase. They also threatened a general strike.

Postal workers, transportation, telecommunications, teachers, public works employees, electric workers, and others participated in the one- to three-day strike actions. For the first time in recent history workers at Turkish Airlines joined the struggle of the civil workers as well.

President Suleyman Demirel, the minister of education, and other government officials launched a campaign of intimidation through the big-business media threatening that workers who "make use of such tactics would only worsen their own conditions." The government threatened to use anti-labor laws and moved to organize scabs. One of the anti-labor laws in its arsenal prohibits rallies, demonstrations, and the right to strike.

## Striking oil workers tour U.S. and eastern Canada

Some 264 striking workers at the Irving Oil refinery in Saint John, New Brunswick, are appealing to workers in eastern Canada and northern New England to support their nine-month-old walkout. For 10 days in February, a delegation of striking oil workers visited factories, shopping centers, and Irving gasoline stations in Maine and New Hampshire to build a boycott of Irving products and win solidarity for their strike. Similar tours were organized in Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, and Newfoundland in December and January.

The response to the U.S. tour "was very, very, positive," said Jack Melanson. "We visited more than a dozen cities, mostly in Maine. We leafleted several paper mills and the big shipyards in Portland and Bath," the striker continued. "Everywhere we went, people took the information and



Striking nurses and supporters rally in Nyack, New York, February 20. The 450 nurses walked out February 7 against proposed speedup.

## ON THE PICKET LINE

about what is happening in your union, at your workplace, or other workplaces in your area, including interesting political discussions.

Two hundred nurses and their supporters held a candle-light vigil February 20 in Nyack, New York. Some 450 members of the New York State Nurses Association are fighting Nyack Hospital's planned work-schedule changes. The proposal would force nurses to put in one unpaid hour a day, work every other weekend and holiday, and take on a heavier work load. The nurses planned another rally for February 27.

In nearby Port Jervis, New York, striking nurse Brenda Wolpert and National Health and Human Services Employees Union vice president Theresa Alaimo ended their month-long hunger strike in mid-February, saying the Sisters of Mercy and the Catholic Archdiocese of New York "are actively pursuing a just resolution" to their five-month-long walkout against Mercy Community Hospital. More than 100 nurses struck the hospital September 1 with demands for improved wages and benefits.

The hospital was forced to reduce the number of intensive-care beds because they are unable to find enough qualified nurses to cross the line. U.S. Nursing, a temporary employment agency, is

most said they would support us." Paul Price toured Newfoundland in December. "The collapse of the fishery has created high unemployment in Newfoundland," he said. "The towns we visited had unemployment rates anywhere from 50 percent to 90 percent. So you can imagine that people were very supportive when we told them that our strike is about keeping a reduced work week and preserving jobs."

engine is running. "We watch in amazement as several companies are in there doing deicing operations," said one airline worker. "There's a rainbow of vehicles that keep running back and forth, a mix of airplanes and vehicles in a very close area." Another worker suggested blocking the aircraft wheels while deicing.

Because the plane's black box was erased before federal investigators got around to checking it, it is not clear who, if anyone, gave orders to move the aircraft. The transcript of communication between aircraft controllers and the pilot was lost when the black box was left running. The tape runs on a 30-minute loop, recording over itself unless stopped manually or by sudden impact.

Contributors to this week's column include: George Chalmers in New York; Sevda Ucer in Athens, Greece; Roger Annis, a member of Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union Local 841 in Montreal; and Annette Kouri, a member of IAM Local 712 in Montreal.

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## Montreal airline workers killed while deicing plane

The International Association of Machinists (IAM) and the Quebec Federation of Labour won their demand for a public inquiry into the deaths of three workers killed at Mirabel International Airport in Montreal January 21. Jean-Pierre Massie, 37; Giovanni Forgiione, 48; and Marc Tremblay, 32, were deicing a plane when the aircraft moved, throwing them to their deaths.

The IAM had previously denounced the carriers' unsafe practice of deicing aircraft while the

engine is running. "We watch in amazement as several companies are in there doing deicing operations," said one airline worker. "There's a rainbow of vehicles that keep running back and forth, a mix of airplanes and vehicles in a very close area." Another worker suggested blocking the aircraft wheels while deicing.

Contributors to this week's column include: George Chalmers in New York; Sevda Ucer in Athens, Greece; Roger Annis, a member of Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union Local 841 in Montreal; and Annette Kouri, a member of IAM Local 712 in Montreal.

## LETTERS

### Declining rate of profit

I found the exchange of ideas between a reader and the *Militant* on the declining rate of profits to be very interesting [See *Militant*, February 20]. I believe your "Reply to a reader" was right in saying that it's not necessary to look at often confusing and technical studies. I'd like to add a further thought.

I used to believe that a declining rate of profit meant "automatic doomsday" for capitalism. Not so. Nor does an increasing rate mean smooth sailing for the so-called free enterprise system.

Capitalists will lay off workers and reduce wages whenever they can get away with it—good times or bad. What really counts is the muscle, willingness, and political leadership that working people have to fight back.

Albert Fried-Cassorla  
Melrose Park, Pennsylvania

### Gus Hall on Chechnya

A recent article in the *People's Weekly World* by Gus Hall, national chairman of the Communist Party USA, outlines the CPUSA's support for [the Russian government in] the Chechnya war. Hall begins by reinventing reality—the secession of various Soviet republics, he maintains, led to the decline and "dismemberment" of the Soviet Union.

"It was [former Soviet leader Mikhail] Gorbachev's and later [Russian president Boris] Yeltsin's policies that led to the corruption that made the people vulnerable to nationalism and se-



cession. Centuries-old backwardness, nationalism, extremist religions were rekindled," Hall says.

In actuality, the national question in Russia has never really been settled, precisely because of the criminal, anti-working-class policies carried out by the Stalinist regime.

Hall's approach stands in stark contrast to the course charted by V.I. Lenin and the Bolsheviks. Lenin fought for the rights of oppressed nations within Russia as part of the strengthening of the revolution as a whole. For instance, 82 Chechens participated in the Congress of the Peoples of the East in Baku in 1920. In 1922, Lenin vociferously criticized [Joseph] Stalin's plan of "autonomization," which called for the absorption of non-Russian republics into Russia with centralized control in Moscow. To the "Great Russian" nationalism of

the Moscow bureaucrats, Lenin counterposed a union of equals between all the republics.

Hall writes, "Chechnya is not a republic, a separate country or a nation."

Then what is it?

Chechnya, Hall says, "is one of the richest oil producing regions in the former USSR. It has vast natural gas deposits. It is a major chemical processing center. It has a vital pipeline running through its territory to the Caspian Sea port."

In other words, one large captive gas station for Moscow.

Hall positively foams at the mouth at the audacity of the Chechens. "How would we react if confronted with the prospect of say, oil-rich Oklahoma seceding from the United States and becoming a separate state or country?"

Hall ends his article by explaining that supporting Moscow's

murderous course against the Chechens, "will make our advocacy of socialism USA more attractive and more credible."

To the contrary, it exposes Stalinism for what it is. But at the same time, it also makes it easier to raise the communist perspective, as explained by Lenin, which is "to defend the non-Russians from the onslaught of that really Russian man, the Great Russian chauvinist, in substance a rascal and a tyrant, such as the typical Russian bureaucrat is."

That is, to defend the right of oppressed nations to self-determination.

Bill Kalman  
Des Moines, Iowa

Editor's note: See the article by Maurice Williams in this week's issue responding to Hall and a related article from the *People's Weekly World*.

### Keep up the good work

I am presently incarcerated in a California state prison at Crescent City. The reason I am writing this letter is to inquire about your complimentary subscriptions for prisoners to the weekly *Militant* and monthly *Perspectiva Mundial*. I am currently housed in a maximum security lockup unit and without funds. I would very much like for my name to be placed on your prisoners mailing list.

Compliments to all the staff on a job well done. Keep up the good work.

A prisoner  
Crescent City, California

Editor's note: The *Militant Prisoner Fund* makes it possible to send reduced-rate subscriptions to prisoners. To help, send contributions to *Militant Prisoner Fund*, 410 West Street, New York, N.Y. 10014.

### Turkish government

Turkey's defense ministry recently introduced a new bill in Parliament to further boost its war budget. A \$10 billion project to modernize its armed forces began in the 1980s. The government's war against the Kurdish people in the southeastern part of the country cost nearly \$8 billion in 1994, about 20 percent of the national budget. An additional 1,500 "specially-trained" elite troops backed by two Black Hawk helicopters, 3,000 soldiers, and units of armored vehicles were sent the first week of February to the eastern province of Tunceli to join the more than 300,000 troops already deployed to the regions surrounding it, in the on-going war, which is exacerbating Turkey's mounting social crisis. According to official estimates, some 13,000 people have been killed in the 10-year conflict.

Sevda Ucer  
Athens, Greece

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.



## Ireland 'framework' pact registers weakening of the United Kingdom

BY CELIA PUGH

LONDON — The prime ministers of Britain and Ireland unveiled a "framework document" February 22 for all-party talks on the future of the north of Ireland. The 37-page text would establish a cross-border body of representatives elected by the Irish parliament and by a new Northern Ireland assembly. This "North-South body" is to have executive and "harmonization" powers in aspects of trade, transport, health, education, and economic policy.

In Britain's House of Commons February 22, Prime Minister John Major outlined a "triple lock" against any plan being imposed without consent. An agreement would require parliamentary endorsement in Westminster, support by political parties in Northern Ireland, and approval in a referendum. Separate referendums are proposed for the north and south of Ireland.

The framework document states that Dublin will renounce claims to the six counties of Northern Ireland under articles two and three of the Irish republic's constitution. In turn, London would amend or replace the Government of Ireland Act, which confirmed Britain's control over the north with the partition of Ireland. (The island was divided in 1920 after the workers and farmers of Ireland waged revolutionary battles that defeated the British imperialist occupation and established an independent republic in the south.)

The new pact says that terrorist threats will necessitate "the active support of the armed services" and continuation of emergency legislation under the direction of the British government. Major told Parliament February 22 that he would "keep troops on the streets of Northern Ireland for as long as it is necessary." The framework document also claims to protect "civil, political, social and cultural rights."

### Hailed by bourgeois opinion

The document was hailed as a historic breakthrough by the big-business press. "Now a peace everlasting," declared the headline in the *London Evening Standard*. The media contrasted the current situation to the collapse of previous constitutional changes in Northern Ireland in face of Unionist-organized strikes and mass



Last year's commemoration of Bloody Sunday in Derry in the north of Ireland. Most working people are enthusiastic about easing of tensions and are more willing to take to the streets. The Bloody Sunday march this year was the largest in a long time.

demonstrations. The February 23 *Guardian* headline, "Unionists out on a limb," captured the general view that there is little support for such protests today.

The Confederation of British Industry (CBI) in Northern Ireland also welcomed the document. "Growing the economy of the whole of Ireland is in everyone's interest," said chairman Doug Riley, "and the CBI Northern Ireland will work together with everyone towards achieving this aim." Belfast businessman Gordon Hamilton told the *Guardian* that while he would vote to stay in the United Kingdom, he welcomed the document. "I look at Ireland very much as a whole, commercially speaking. It's one island, it makes sense to look at it that way."

Labour Party leader Tony Blair told the British Parliament February 22, "We have supported the government throughout the

peace process. We do so again today without hesitation."

Sinn Fein president Gerry Adams told his party's conference February 25 that he welcomed publication of the framework document "as a clear recognition that partition has failed, that British rule in Ireland has failed, and that there is no going back to the failed policies and structures of the past." Adams appealed to the Unionist parties to consider the framework document and bring their concerns to the conference table.

### Angry response by Unionists

The document's reference to "the people in the island of Ireland" drew angry denunciations from Ulster Unionist members of Parliament like David Trimble and Ken Maginnis. Trimble stormed out of a February 22 live television interview

when the show was joined by Sinn Fein leader Martin McGuinness. Ian Paisley, leader of the Democratic Unionist Party, blasted the document as a sellout and "declaration of war."

While criticizing the framework document as "a shattering blow to loyalists," David Ervine of the Progressive Unionist Party welcomed the all-party negotiations. Ervine served time in the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) section of the Maze prison in the 1970s for possession of explosives. The UVF is a rightist street gang known for torturing and assassinating workers who are Catholic.

Gary McMichael, son of a leader of the paramilitary Ulster Defence Association murdered by the IRA, welcomed anything that would "promote and encourage dialogue." While labeling the proposed cross-border institutions an unacceptable "creeping reunification," Jim Dillon, Ulster unionist councilor in Lisbon near Belfast, rejected the idea of street protests. "There is no point getting people out on the streets. The time has long gone for just saying no. We must discuss the document."

Media interviews in pubs and streets throughout the six counties reflected similar views. A Unionist demonstration to protest the document at Hillsborough Castle Belfast drew only four people. They huddled under a Union Jack umbrella and battled with rain and wind to burn a mock-up of the text. Despite heated denunciations, none of the Unionist parties have pulled out of the all-party talks but instead plan to bring their own proposals.

### Raid on Sinn Fein offices

An angry crowd of 300-400 people did turn out, however, as the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) raided the Sinn Fein offices and the Well Woman clinic in predominantly Catholic Derry. The RUC arrested seven Sinn Fein members, including local councilor Mary Nellis, and spent two hours carting away documents.

As the raid was under way, protesters rocked the police vans and chanted "SS-RUC!" and "Disband the RUC!"

In a telephone interview from the Sinn Fein office in Derry, John McLaughlin told the *Militant* that Nellis and the Well

Continued on Page 12

## Algiers slaughters opponents in raid on prison

BY PAT SMITH

The Serkadji prison in Algeria's capital city was turned into a slaughterhouse February 22 by the military government. Death toll figures vary widely: opposition party estimates are as high as 200, the government puts the count at 96, and the French government reports 40 dead.

The regime in Algiers said all but 15 of those killed were charged with "terrorist acts." The government is trying to keep details of the bloodbath quiet, including the victims' names. Human rights groups estimate that the government has incarcerated 30,000 of its political opponents.

"Killing 95 inmates or more is a spectacular act by any measure," a former Algerian cabinet minister said. "It shows a grim determination to eradicate the opposition."

Government officials claim the prisoners were trying to organize a mass escape similar to the breakout of 1,000 from Tazult-Lambese prison last March. Several guards at that notorious penitentiary in southeast Algeria had helped in last spring's breakout.

The massacre came on the heels of an intensified government clampdown on the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS). According to the *Financial Times*, days earlier the government refused visitation by family members to an FIS leader in the hospital and ordered other FIS representatives to report to police headquarters. Opposition forces stepped up their attacks, including reportedly killing a high-ranking army officer and a well-known women's rights leader and attacking key bridges and railroads.

Some 1,000 people are killed each week in Algeria's civil war, which began in 1992 after the ruling National Liberation Front (FLN) handed the government over to the military to avoid an electoral defeat. The military government annulled the balloting, unleashed a brutal campaign of repression against its opponents, and banned the FLN's main bourgeois rival, the Islamic Salvation Front. The FIS played on the soaring unemployment, mounting corruption, rising debt, and impoverishment of growing layers of workers under the FLN government and its current military

surrogates to garner widespread support.

Washington and European governments are urging the increasingly unstable Algerian regime to come to terms with its political opponents, many of whom have taken up arms.

Paris, Algeria's former colonial ruler and quartermaster to its bourgeois regimes, has been pushing for talks. Algiers, however, flatly rejected an accord brokered by several opposition parties in January; the parties called on the regime to restore free political activity, unban the FIS, and release hundreds of political prisoners.

"Time to help Algeria," the *Economist* urged. The strife has become "so urgent that it gives outsiders the license to interfere," the editors argued. Algiers "lambasted President [François] Mitterrand of France for suggesting that the European Union might help these proposals along by holding some sort of gathering, scolding him for behaving as if his country still ruled Algeria. That is nonsense: the generals' outcry owed less to offended nationalism than to their fear that France, which

has backed them to the hilt, was no longer sure the army could win the war."

London's *Financial Times* points to the "dilemma" facing European governments debating future loan agreements. According to the *Times*, Algiers will need up to \$9 billion in relief on its \$26 billion debt to stay afloat. Capitalist rulers in Europe fear the consequences of the regime's fall, including further mass emigration. Michel Camdessus of the International Monetary Fund said Algiers had "scrupulously" abided by IMF prescriptions and sometimes even exceeded expectations.

For working people, the regime's adherence to IMF austerity plans has meant dreadful conditions. More than 25 percent of the country is without work, inflation in 1994 stood at 30 percent, the value of the currency was cut in half, and state enterprises are operating at only 50 percent of capacity.

The World Bank is pushing a privatization plan that would result in layoffs of hundreds of thousands of workers, and five state-owned hotels are already on the auctioning block.