

# THE MILITANT

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Philadelphia transit workers  
score strike win

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## Thousands converge to defend women's rights

### Youthful crowd rallies for right to choose

BY LAURA GARZA

WASHINGTON, D.C. — They covered the mall in front of the capitol, tens of thousands of people, pouring onto the grass carrying handmade signs, banners, and placards to defend women's rights. The first national gathering of this kind since a 1992 event held to defend abortion rights, the April 9 Rally for Women's Lives drew a largely youthful crowd from around the country.

Students from many colleges filled buses, vans, and packed into cars to join the national action. They brought signs reading: "Keep Abortion Safe and Legal;" "Stop Violence Against Women;" "Skidmore Women Say Equal Rights Now;" "UAW Supports Social Security;" and "Stop the Killing of People Providing Health Services."

The rally, called by the National Organization for Women (NOW) lasted five hours as people came and went throughout the sunny afternoon. The park police put the crowd at 50,000 but many at the rally estimated nearly twice that number.

Participants addressed a number of themes including proposed cuts in welfare, limits on abortion funding, domestic abuse, and attacks on immigrants and affirmative action.

"I wanted to be involved in a huge rally to support women's rights," said Allison Hanover, 20, who came in one of three vans organized from the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor. "Women don't have equality and the people in the White House aren't helping. We shouldn't have to ask for our rights, we should take them."

Many in the crowd came with a wide variety of campus organizations, including



"We shouldn't have to ask for our rights," said one 20-year-old demonstrator at the Washington, D.C. rally for women's rights April 9. "We should take them."

gay rights groups, women's centers, environmental clubs, and groups organized to prevent sexual assaults. But many others were like Rosemarie Davis, 19, from Mt. Vernon College in Washington, D.C., who heard about the rally at school and came with a friend, Leola Goodwin, also 19. Both were joining in a national protest for the first time. Contingents of unionists from the United Auto Workers, the United Food and Commercial Workers, the

United Mine Workers of America, and others joined in the action. Representatives of the Teamsters, the International Union of Electrical Workers, and the Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance were among those who joined the speakers on the platform.

Family members of three of those killed in attacks on abortion clinics spoke at the rally. Many in the crowd who were sitting

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## Strikes pile up in France as workers say 'Enough'

BY NAT LONDON

PARIS — A strike wave continues to move across France leading up to the May presidential elections. Each day brings word of new walkouts and protests, and the employers have begun a public debate of how to cope with the situation.

For Gerard Mahé, a 40-year-old production worker at the GEC-Alsthom plant in the Paris suburb of St. Ouen, which is not currently on strike, "things are beginning to move everywhere. It's been a long time since we've seen something like this in a pre-electoral period. In my opinion, workers don't expect anything from the candidates' promises. You hear it a little bit everywhere: 'that's enough, seeing the bosses filling their pockets while the workers get nothing except getting fired.'"

Other social protest actions have also sprung up, using the openings to advance broader demands. On April 8, tens of thousands of youth demonstrated throughout France at the call of a broad coalition that included the General Confederation of Labor (CGT) and French Democratic Confederation of Labor (CFDT), against all forms of "social exclusion" and for the "right to housing and jobs and against the racist anti-immigrant laws" of the French government.

On April 5, thousands of bus and subway workers struck, blocking public transportation in the city of Lyon. The same day, the Palace of Versailles, a major tourist attraction, was shut down by a strike. Twenty-four hours later, the Louvre museum and others in the Paris area were struck. On April 6, 400 race track workers invaded Longchamps, blocking all horse racing as well as pari-mutuel betting.

The same day, 250 lighthouse guards began occupying the lighthouses to protest

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## '100 days' of the Clinton-Gingrich gang

BY MAURICE WILLIAMS

Reveling on prime-time national television April 7, Congressman Newt Gingrich boasted that his plan to "remake government" was moving along. He likened himself to "F.D.R. in '33," in describing his success pushing through the Republican Party's "Contract with America" in the U.S. House of Representatives during

their first 100 days in office.

All bluster aside, only two bills from the "contract" have become law, but the bipartisan assault on the social wage working people have won in past decades of struggle continues in the measures working their way through the legislative process.

On March 24 the House passed the so-

called "Personal Responsibility Act of 1995." It calls for slashing more than \$17 billion from the federal budget. The Senate nearly matched that performance two weeks later, voting 99 to 0 to cut some \$16 billion. Democratic senators patted themselves on the back for getting a miserly \$835 million added back to the budget for some social programs.

The knife is projected to slice deeply into programs that benefit working people — including \$2.7 billion from rental subsidies and \$1.3 billion from heating bill assistance. A \$1.7 billion summer jobs program for inner-city youth would be terminated if the bill becomes law. The bill would deny food stamps to adults after 90 days even if they are willing to work and can't find jobs.

The welfare "overhaul" package would also strip legal immigrants of eligibility for dozens of major aid programs including food stamps, Medicare, rental assistance, and testing children for lead poisoning. The cuts are projected to affect at least 2.2 million legal immigrants.

Children of immigrants would be denied vaccines that protect them from childhood diseases. Pregnant women and their children would be denied food assistance as well as Medicaid benefits.

These reactionary measures, although

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## U.S. gov't orders Cubans expelled for defending UN mission

BY MARTÍN KOPPEL

In a step-up of its hostile policy against Cuba, the Clinton administration is ordering the expulsion of two Cuban diplomats at the United Nations. The unprecedented move stems from an assault by rightist thugs on Cuba's UN mission in New York last August.

The U.S. State Department had demanded the Cuban government waive diplomatic immunity for its two officials in order to try them on trumped-up charges of assaulting New York cops during the August 30 incident. When Cuba refused this demand, Washington announced they would be expelled — an unusual move to take against UN diplomats.

The two Cuban officials are Minister Counselor Edmundo Suárez Hernández and Saúl Hermida Griego, an attaché. A third diplomat facing charges returned home several months ago.

In August 1994, the Clinton administration began detaining thousands of emi-

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**CUBA**

and the 'Special Period'

How workers use their socialist revolution to fight effects of international crisis of capitalism

Sat., April 22, 7 p.m.

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Editor of *New Internationalist*  
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## Argentine state workers protest

Government workers throughout Argentina held protests in March to demand salary improvements. At least 10 provinces have yet to fully pay the February wages of public workers. Antonio Cassia, secretary-general of the pro-government General Confederation of Labor, warned, "There is a state of unrest and excitement" in the 10 provinces. Some officials fear a replay of the December 1993 protests in northern Argentina when more than 5,000 public employees and their supporters seized and burned the provincial government building to demand payment of back wages.

Unionists marched in San Salvador de Jujuy March 22, blocking traffic to demand higher pay and the reversal of a government decree reducing retirement benefits. Public workers in San Miguel de Tucuman demonstrated March 18 against the provincial government's plan to slash their wages by 5 percent as a "contribution" toward solving the government's financial crisis. Provincial governments in Catamarca, Corrientes, and Cordoba also announced wage cuts for public workers. The Menem administration has shifted responsibility for austerity measures, including layoffs, pay reductions, and cuts in social programs, onto provincial authorities.

## Spratly Islands rivalry heats up

Tensions are high among Beijing and five of its neighbors who lay claim to all or part of the Spratly Islands. The governments of China, the Philippines, Taiwan, Vietnam, and Malaysia have built garrisons on the potentially oil-rich islands in the South China Sea. The government in Brunei has also declared its rights to the chain of hundreds of reefs, atolls, and sandbanks, but has not set up a military installation.

In February, Manila dispatched warships to a reef it claims and destroyed Chinese-built markers. Philippine naval vessels also seized four Chinese fishing trawlers. The Philippine government accused Beijing of erecting a military structure, while the Chinese government said it was a shelter for fishing vessels. The Fidel Ramos regime has also refused to return 62 Chinese fishermen it seized in the is-



Several thousand fishermen rallied April 6 outside Canadian Embassy in Madrid against Ottawa's harassment of Spanish fishing trawlers. Governments and capitalists of both countries are fanning flames of national chauvinism in conflict over fishing rights outside Canada's 200-mile maritime limit.

lands. The Vietnamese government asserted that Taiwanese troops stationed on Taiping, the largest of the Spratly Islands, fired on passing Vietnamese transport ships April 2.

## "Peacekeeping" is good business

U.S. exports to Haiti have picked up since Washington's troops invaded last September, topping \$46 million in January, up from \$17 million the year before. Rice, cereals, and military equipment were among the leading exports.

Ralph Cwerman, vice president of the United Nations Association of the United States, said U.S. businesses are by far the largest suppliers to UN "peacekeeping" operations, with annual sales of more than

\$500 million worth of goods and services. "The UN is good for U.S. business," Cwerman said. Companies that sell to UN troops can more easily "tap into other business opportunities." Currently 28 cents of every dollar Washington contributes to the United Nations returns to U.S. corporations.

## Youth protest in Iran

Hundreds of young people protested in Islamshahr, Iran, April 4, demanding better water supplies. The demonstration quickly turned into a protest against steep price hikes in essential goods and services. Tehran doubled fuel prices in March and annual inflation is now estimated at 40 percent. Police helicopters moved in with tear gas against demonstrators. According to news reports government forces then fired on the protesters. At least one person was killed and several injured. This working-class suburb of Tehran was the site of protests three years ago against the government's destruction of 200 homes and businesses the municipality said were built illegally.

## China faces low harvest

Chinese officials said drought, fertilizer shortages, and pests are spoiling the spring planting, which accounts for more than 60 percent of the country's annual harvest. Floods and other disasters in 1994 drove grain production down 2.6 percent and

food prices up. The high cost of food contributed to China's 24 percent inflation rate in 1994.

## Layoffs planned in Indonesia

Pertamina, Indonesia's state-owned oil and gas company, is restructuring to gain an edge on competitors. The enterprise plans to cut 13,000 of its 33,000 workers.

## Ukraine: IMF checks fine print

Ukraine's Parliament passed an austerity budget April 6 to satisfy International Monetary Fund demands for releasing a \$1.8 billion loan. The government hopes IMF guarantees will result in billions of dollars in other new credits. The \$16 billion budget is the second time in six months the government drastically cut social spending. Legislators rejected a tax on businesses. Graeme Justice, the IMF representative, said Parliament's performance "looks fairly reasonable, but we're assessing the fine print."

## New KGB gets sweeping powers

President Boris Yeltsin renamed the Russian secret police organization that is the successor to the KGB and granted the agency sweeping new powers. Now called the Federal Security Service, the bureau employs 75,000 people, has authority to operate its own prisons, infiltrate foreign organizations, and create enterprises as fronts.

## Prisons up, Mexico down

A company that manages prisons, the Corrections Corp. of America, was the top-performing stock on the New York Stock Exchange in the first quarter of this year. The stock nearly doubled, from \$16.13 to \$30.63 in the first three months of trading in 1995.

Stocks in Mexican companies took the steepest dive. Shares in Grupo Elektra, for example, which sells low-priced appliances and furniture, dropped from \$14.13 to \$4, despite the company's 68 percent rise in earnings in the quarter.

## U.S. senators make headlines

Welcoming Pakistani prime minister Benazir Bhutto on the floor of the Senate April 6, North Carolina Republican Jesse Helms introduced her as the prime minister of India. Pakistan has fought three wars with India since the countries gained independence from British colonial rule. Helms apologized profusely, saying, "I've never made a more grievous error."

Alfonse D'Amato, senator from New York, on the other hand was not so quick to express regret. Outrage over his mimicking of Asian Americans on a call-in radio program April 5 prompted the politician to offer, "If I offended anyone, I'm sorry." Further protests forced D'Amato to try harder 24 hours later. Chastened and visibly nervous he delivered an apology before the Senate saying his actions were "totally wrong and inappropriate."

— PAT SMITH

## THE MILITANT

### Defend women's rights

Tens of thousands of women's rights supporters rallied in Washington, D.C., April 9. From the clinic defense lines to protests against right-wing antiabortion group to the battle to defend affirmative action, the 'Militant' is there covering the fight for women's rights. 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, Greg Rosenberg, Pat Smith, Damon Tinnon, and Maurice Williams.

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

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# Washington aims to cover Guatemala link

BY GREG ROSENBERG

The White House, Congress, and U.S. secret police apparatus are circling the wagons to prevent further disclosures of Washington's collaboration with the Guatemalan regime. A bipartisan effort is underway to halt recent revelations from cascading into a broader review of the U.S. government's decades-long backing of the Guatemalan military, which has slaughtered some 110,000 people since 1978.

The recent exposures began in late March, when Guatemalan colonel Julio Roberto Alpiroz was named as the organizer of the torture and murder of Guatemalan guerrilla Efraín Bámaca Velásquez. Bámaca was married to U.S. lawyer Jennifer Harbury, who waged a protest campaign demanding the facts on her husband's case. Alpiroz is also linked to the execution of a U.S.-born innkeeper living in Guatemala.

The Guatemalan colonel, who is second in command of the largest military base in that country, was a highly-paid CIA employee at least until 1992.

U.S. president Bill Clinton has formed an "investigative" panel, which will limit inquiries to whether laws governing U.S. spies were violated and examine information on "the torture, disappearance, or death of any U.S. citizens in Guatemala since 1984." The CIA's role in the deaths of Guatemalans is out of the picture.

## 45,000 'disappeared'

On April 4, Nineth Montenegro, president of the Mutual Support Group (GAM), accused John Taylor, first secretary of the U.S. Embassy in Guatemala in 1984, of knowing about multiple "disappearances" in the country. Montenegro demanded Taylor's extradition to Guatemala.

GAM is an organization made up of the relatives of 45,000 people made to disap-



Guatemalan soldiers arresting market vendors during a strike in the 1980s. Human rights violations were "slipped under the carpet," stated the director of the CIA.

pear by the Guatemalan regime. She leveled the charge during a visit to La Verben Cemetery, believed to be the site of a common grave holding more than 10,000 unidentified corpses.

In an April 6 article, *New York Times* columnist William Safire rose to the CIA's defense. Bemoaning the fact that "the agency faces months of headlines about its support of the Guatemalan government," Safire raised the banner of "our support of anti-Communist regimes in Central and South America."

"From the coup in 1954 that threw out Arbenz in Guatemala to the defeat of the leftists in El Salvador and Nicaragua in the late 80's, C.I.A. agents carried out their assignment of helping stop the spread of

Castro's Communism in our neighborhood," wrote Safire, who failed to note that the Cuban revolution did not triumph until 1959. "U.S. policy was the opposite of imperialism," ventured the columnist. "Reform the CIA, but don't reform away its covert capacity."

Few have backed the CIA so forthrightly. A string of White House denials, and subsequent reversals, has been mirrored in Congress by self-serving claims of professed ignorance. Acting CIA director Adm. William Studeman told the Senate intelligence committee on April 5 that the facts on Alpiroz had somehow "slipped under the carpet." The senators, who have been briefed on the CIA's Guatemala operations for years, claimed

they were astounded. Senator William Cohen said the CIA had "intentionally misled" the panel.

House Speaker Newt Gingrich attacked Rep. Robert Torricelli, who made the official revelations public, April 3. Gingrich called Torricelli's actions "explicitly inappropriate." A virulent opponent of the Cuban revolution, Torricelli was said to have caused "a public embarrassment to the United States." Torricelli was scolded by fellow members of the House intelligence committee on April 7 for spilling some of the beans, but they did not kick him off the panel as Gingrich had requested. Instead, he was referred to the House ethics committee for violating a secrecy oath.

Guatemalan officials and the officer corps, confident that their long-standing relationship with the U.S. government will protect them, have brazenly rejected charges of collaboration between their army and the CIA.

Alpiroz has called the charges "perverse and baseless," saying he never worked for the CIA although he had many "good friends" in the agency. Guatemalan president Ramiro De Leon Carpio said Alpiroz, against whom there are no formal charges, may sue U.S. politicians "for libel, slander, and other applicable offenses."

## The interests of United Fruit

After World War II, rising worker protests and peasant land occupations in Guatemala forced its government to initiate labor and agrarian reform laws. These moves met with immediate disapproval from Washington. The State Department cabled Guatemala City and demanded the measures — such as granting farm workers the right to organize unions and some land expropriations — be rescinded, since they impinged on the profits of U.S. agricultural giant United Fruit.

In his 1963 memoirs, former U.S. president Dwight Eisenhower boasted of how he had ordered the CIA to carry out the 1954 coup against the Jacobo Arbenz government. He even told the American Booksellers Association he had ordered the CIA to supplement B-26 bombers and P-47 fighters bombing and strafing Guatemala City with U.S. Air Force planes flying out of Nicaragua.

Ever since, the CIA has virtually run the show in Guatemala, directing the operations of the G-2 secret police, and organizing various massacres and political assassinations.

Washington's target in Guatemala has always been the protection of the interests of U.S. capital, which means heading off the demands of the mostly Indian peasantry for land, and using the country as a platform to crush popular revolutions. U.S. aid sharply escalated in response to the Nicaraguan revolution in 1979 and initial moves toward unity among revolutionary groups in Guatemala. This included full support to the scorched earth campaign by the military, which killed tens of thousands in the 1980s.

# Maori rights supporters continue protests as New Zealand police carry out eviction

BY TONY GIBSON

AUCKLAND, New Zealand—A two-year dispute at an Auckland high school came to a head April 5 when police and private security guards evicted Maori rights supporters who had been occupying the former Tamaki Girls' College.

Local Maori groups occupied the facility, situated in the middle of a working-class area, in late 1992 after it was closed. They argue that the land and buildings should be available to the community and not sold to the highest bidder.

More than 200 residents and supporters gathered outside the school to protest the police action and shout encouragement to the 23 occupants as they were physically ejected. Four people were arrested. Since the eviction, protesters have maintained a 24-hour vigil outside the school.

The government's ministry of education, which claims ownership of the school, has been trying unsuccessfully to sell it since it became vacant.

Ani Hawke, a spokesperson for the protesters, explained that the government had no right to sell the land. It was Maori land that had been given for educational purposes, and when it was no longer used for that, it should have been returned.

A claim for the land has been lodged with the Waitangi Tribunal, a government appointed judicial body that considers Maori claims.

The eviction was organized as the ministry of education tried to push through the sale of the school to the Chinese Christian Church, which had signed an agreement to buy it. The government claimed the church was obligated to proceed with the NZ\$1.5 million purchase (NZ\$1=US\$0.64). But church leaders say they were duped by the ministry, which had assured them there were no Maori claims on the land before the Waitangi Tribunal.

"We want to buy land, not steal it," declared church spokesperson David Chan. The Maori protesters and the church have agreed to pool resources to fight the sale and win back the church's NZ\$150,000 deposit.

The eviction was organized as the gov-

ernment has come under growing rightist criticism for failing to take tougher action against a series of Maori occupations of land and buildings.

Wanganui Maoris and supporters have been occupying Moutoa Gardens in the center of that city since February 28.

Local Maoris began an occupation of Takahue school near Kaitia March 29 to demand that the land be returned. The school was closed in the 1980s.

In Rotorua, Maori rights protesters occupied the Maori Arts and Crafts Institute April 3 to demand a government guarantee that it would not be privatized.

Maori students occupied a campus marae (meeting place) at Waikato University in Hamilton, April 6 and have been holding what they call a 24-hour open fo-

rum. "We are here to return to some confiscated land," a leader of the protest, Gareth Ormsby, told *Militant* reporters when they visited the marae April 9.

The Waikato campus land is part of 1.2 million acres of Maori property confiscated by the government last century from the Tainui tribe. It is earmarked to be vested to the Tainui Maori Trust Board as part of a NZ\$170 million deal by the government as compensation for the confiscations. The students, who oppose the deal, want the campus land restored to the local sub-tribe to which it originally belonged.

*Tony Gibson is a member of the Engineers Union in Auckland. James Robb, a member of the Meat Workers Union, also contributed to this article.*

# Gov't austerity provokes strikes in Bolivia

BY HILDA CUZCO

Protests against government austerity measures have swept Bolivia in recent weeks. Workers and peasants have strongly rejected the belt-tightening plan. The government denies there is "unrest."

After the police and army broke up a march of more than 3,500 rural teachers heading to La Paz March 21, the Bolivian Workers Confederation (COB) called for a nationwide strike. The appeal was made in response to the repression and the arrest of 27 teachers charged with sedition and conspiracy. "In addition to the repression, the government has refused to meet our economic and social demands," said Oscar Salas, COB executive secretary. The unions submitted their demands several months ago.

The miners union went on a 48-hour strike to protest the attacks against the teachers' unions. Health and social security workers, Bolivian Government Oil Deposit workers, and university employees soon joined the walkouts. Although news of the workers' actions have been virtually blacked out, union members interviewed by telephone report that con-

struction, railroad, and other factory workers have gradually joined the protests.

Clashes continue. Some 1,000 soldiers and police dispersed a procession of 1,000 teachers marching 125 miles from Oruro to La Paz March 28. The teachers had planned to join other striking workers in the capital. The teachers union, with 80,000 members, opposes the government's Education Reform Law and demands a pay increase from 200 to 574 bolivianos (about \$160.00).

Víctor Prado Guerrero, National Teachers Union executive board member, said in a telephone interview that the teachers throughout Bolivia have observed the strike. Public schools are shut down and marches of up to 4,000 are being organized every day in defiance of government repression. "So far 100 teachers have been arrested, union leaders among them. Only a few have been freed," said Prado. "It will be the process of the struggle that will free them." Prado pointed out that although many factory workers fear losing their jobs if they join the strike, "they have participated in solidarity marches in the evening."

Bolivian president Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada, a wealthy former mine entrepreneur who took office in August 1993, says that the Education Reform Law will not change. His administration has also introduced a privatization plan. Under this scheme foreign capitalists would own half of the companies and would manage the enterprises.

The six "Sacred Cows" scheduled to be sacrificed are: the state petroleum, electricity and telecommunications companies, the country's biggest smelter, its railroad system, and its national airline. The yard sale comprises about 60 percent of the country's gross national product. The goal is to have it completed by the end of the year.

Bolivia is the poorest country in South America, with 6.5 million people and a gross domestic product of less than \$1,000 per capita.

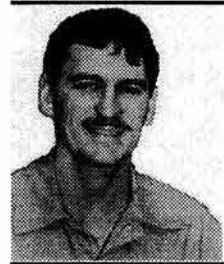
In another development Bolivian foreign minister Antonio Aranibar reported that Washington is insisting it has a right to kidnap Bolivian citizens charged with drug trafficking or "terrorist" activities to be tried in the United States.



# Phone companies feast at prison budget trough

BY MARK CURTIS

FT. MADISON, Iowa — "Prisons are big business." That's a common assessment among guys I've met in the Iowa prison system. They're referring mainly to the guards, counselors, administrators, and building contractors they see feeding at the deep trough of the state's correc-



Mark Curtis

tions budget, involving millions of dollars. These expenditures are mushrooming as more and more cells are built to keep up with the growing numbers of incarcerated men and women. With longer sentences

and fewer chances for parole, more prisons than schools are being constructed today. This fact has come to the attention of various capitalists who circle like buzzards for a chance to pick a body clean.

One block of buzzards taking note of the prison "market" is the telephone industry. As a recent article in the *Wall Street Journal* put it, "Few have reaped richer rewards from the nation's tough stance on crime than telephone companies."

Phoning family and friends is one of the few ways an inmate can stay in touch with "the streets" — the outside world. Most prisons have pay phones available and inmates can make collect phone calls. One company gets a contract from the prison for the long distance calls and the company can charge what they want.

So cornering the prison market, with 1 million inmates behind bars, means big profits. In fact, "Prisons have the highest margins around," one industry analyst said.

To get such a windfall, companies make a regular habit of paying out kickbacks, which they call "commissions," to state correction departments. MCI, for example, pledged to return 55 percent of its gross prison sales to Kentucky to get the franchise there.

Additional "surcharges" and premium rates super-exploit the families of prisoners who pay for the privilege of talking to their loved ones.

It's not just the phone companies who get on the gravy train. There are mail order companies entirely devoted to the prison market. Access Catalog Co. of St. Louis and J.L. Marcus of Milwaukee sell inmates televisions, radios, sporting goods, clothing, soap, shampoo, and other items — some with "security features" like non-removable screws. Prison administrators usually designate a few such companies as "approved sources" for buying things.

State and the federal governments have

also bit on the idea of making prisoners pay for their own incarceration. Since January 1, all inmates — with some exceptions — entering federal prisons are assessed a one-time "fee" of about \$21,000. Some county jails now present the prisoner with a bill when they get out, including charges for room, board, haircuts, and visits to the doctor and nurse. The bills are turned over to a collection agency if payment is past due.

As bizarre and outrageous as all this seems, it's nothing but the workings of the capitalist system, squeezing into every nook and cranny to exploit and make a profit.

Prisons, like the cops and the standing army, are indispensable weapons of a ruling class that needs force and violence to keep the much larger working classes in check. With recent trends, the exploiters seem to be adding that no matter how brutal the means of rule becomes, it's always possible to make a buck while you do it.

## Cuban youth discusses politics, health, culture in the revolution today

BY PETER THIERJUNG

RALEIGH, North Carolina — Members of the Pullen Memorial Baptist Church youth group here hosted a dinner and discussion March 27 with Kenia Serrano, a youth leader from Cuba currently on a speaking tour of the United States.

Several members of the group are planning to visit Cuba this summer and saw Serrano's visit as one way to prepare for their trip. They asked her a variety of questions.

Serrano described the history of the Cuban revolution and Washington's unremitting hostility toward her country. The discussion also ranged to cultural and social issues.

One member of the group asked Serrano her opinion of the Cuban film *Strawberry and Chocolate*. The film remains controversial in Cuba and had a longer-than-usual run at the theaters in Havana, Serrano noted. While some may see it as critical of the revolution, "It is an authentic work of art."

The movie, which is a story about a relationship between two men — one a political activist and the other a gay artist — reflects the ferment in Cuba about the direction and values of the revolution, Serrano said. "The film fits into this reality and reinforces the current openness to debate in Cuba."

On March 28, Serrano spoke to an assembly of 80 students at Bennett College in Greensboro. The college is attended primarily by Black women.

One student asked why the U.S. government hates Fidel Castro and wants to get rid of him. Serrano explained that the U.S. government and media try to blame all the problems in Cuba on the fact that Castro is the president.

"Leaders are important, but they alone do not make a revolution," the youth

leader said. "Fidel Castro is a talented person who expresses the aspirations of the Cuban people, but one person cannot uphold a revolution for 35 years. It's easier for the U.S. press to attack one person than 11 million Cubans."

Asked about conditions in Cuba today, Serrano noted that Cubans were faced with a choice in 1989 when aid from the countries of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union ceased. "We had to decide to continue with the revolution or to end it and sell off our country to the multinationals," she said. "We decided to continue the revolution and fight to defend its gains."

The U.S. embargo of Cuba has a much more severe impact on Cuba today in the absence of aid from Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, Serrano said. One example is the regular electricity blackouts due to the shortage of petroleum. Another is the lack of access to such life-saving medical devices as pacemakers.

"There is a greater political, rather than commercial, necessity for the economic blockade," Serrano said. "It is an attempt to finish off the revolution. We would be dreaming if we thought the blockade will be lifted in a year or two. The prospect is more likely that it will be tightened."

Serrano scored North Carolina senator Jesse Helm's proposed bill to escalate the embargo against Cuba. "It's an attempt to further internationalize the embargo," she said. Helm's bill would mandate sanctions against countries that do business with Cuba.

The Cuban youth leader ended her tour here with a meeting at the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill attended by 30 students and others. Three journalists from Cuba — in the United States on an educational exchange — attended the meeting and participated in the discussion.

Serrano invited young people she met to



Militant/Kathy Mickells

Striking United Auto Workers members at Caterpillar's York, Pennsylvania, plant welcome Cuban youth leader Kenia Serrano to their picket line.

come to Cuba for the August 1-6 International Youth Festival called by a number of youth organizations there. Several young people expressed interest and signed up for more information.

BY NANCY COLE

PHILADELPHIA — Whatever they may think of our revolution, Kenia Serrano told University of Pennsylvania students, "all young people in Cuba know that hospitals are not closing, that universities are not closing, that there will be social security for all workers."

"Being in Cuba — even with all our problems — and looking out through a window on the world, Cuba looks pretty good," she concluded.

Serrano — a 21-year-old student at the University of Havana — was responding to a comment and question from a Penn student from Mexico. He had visited Cuba for the first time three months ago. The University of Pennsylvania student expressed his admiration for Cuba and "what Fidel had been able to achieve," but he described Cuban youth as becoming more and more alienated.

"I don't know what kind of youth you spoke with," Serrano replied, "and I do know many young people who have lost the hopes and aspirations they may have had at one time." But the young people who may hang out on Havana's streets and complain about Cuba's problems are balanced by the many who "have no time to hang out in the street because they are trying to solve the problems we have," the Cuban youth said.

She went on to describe the young people who work 20 hours at a stretch doing research in biotechnology, the engineering students working in sugar mills, and the medical students working in emergency rooms that lack basic equipment, plasma, even bedsheets.

The March 30 meeting at the University of Pennsylvania was part of the campus's

Festival Latino. Among the 50 students in attendance were a half dozen or so members of the newly formed Penn group of Cuban-American students. Several stayed after to talk with Serrano more and to pose for photos with her.

In a two-day tour of the area, Serrano spoke at four college campuses and one high school, and related to students the leading role of youth in the struggle to overcome Cuba's economic crisis and the social problems it has engendered.

One Temple University student asked Serrano about Cuba's AIDS policy, basing his disapproval on a "60 Minutes" segment on Cuba's sanatoriums. Serrano detailed the two-phase system in Cuba. Many HIV-positive individuals are housed in sanatoriums, where they get the best medicine and health care. "This is not intended to marginalize people with AIDS, but to contain the disease and prevent its spread to others," she said. The second phase consists of walk-in clinics. The Cuban government has also taken steps to heighten the consciousness of the responsibility a person with the disease has toward others. "In the three weeks that I've been here, I've asked how AIDS patients are treated here." She reported that the answers she received made her conclude that the slogan of the health industry in the United States is, "Don't get sick!"

Serrano also described the strange feeling she had entering Chester High School through a metal detector, especially since she plans to be a teacher.

Serrano visited two picket lines while in the state. On the first day of the city transit strike here, Serrano talked with striking members of the Transport Workers Union in South Philadelphia. Caterpillar strikers in York, Pennsylvania, also welcomed her.

Nancy Cole is a member of International Association of Machinists Local 1776 in Philadelphia.

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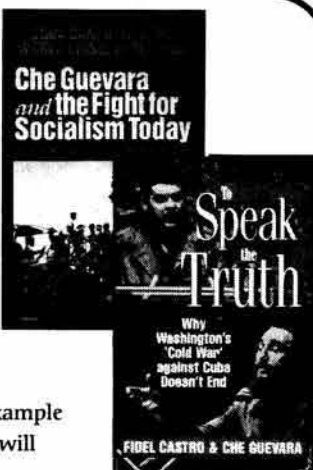
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# international campaign to win new readers

Militant 2,950  
 Perspectiva Mundial 675  
 New International 1,200

sold 7%  
 should be 10%

## Subs come in, target week set

BY LAURA GARZA

The campaign to increase circulation of the socialist press was kicked off in cities from Auckland, New Zealand, to Tucson, Arizona, with visits to campuses, strike actions, and a big effort by many who joined in the massive rally for women's rights held in Washington, D.C., on April 9. Supporters of the socialist press are aiming to sell 2,950 subscriptions to the *Militant*, 675 subscriptions to the Spanish-language magazine *Perspectiva Mundial*, and 1,200 copies of *New International*, a Marxist magazine with editions in English, French, Spanish, and Swedish.

Supporters of the *Militant* helped staff literature tables at the April 9 Rally for Women's Lives, which drew tens of thousands, as well as at a two-day Young Feminist Summit preceding that event. More than 475 copies of the *Militant* were sold, along with 42 subscriptions and several copies of *New International*.

A team of three supporters from Montreal and one from Albany sold 27 copies of the *Militant* and four subscriptions at the rally. Mary Ellen Marus reported that articles on the fight for women's rights from Canada and the United Kingdom, as well as on the protests in the Philippines against the hanging of a Filipina worker by the government of Singapore, convinced many to buy the paper. Others were interested in coverage on Cuba and the fight for Black rights.

Participants in the rally were surprised and pleased to see activists who had come down from Canada. "We explained that Randall Terry, from Operation Rescue, is coming to Canada to the conference of Human Life International (HLI) and that we are part of the coalition against HLI preparing a protest rally on April 19," Marus said. "We invited people to join us." Several students living close to the Canadian border took flyers on the upcoming protest.

A special target week for the sales campaign has been set for April 29 through May 7. Supporters of the *Militant* will be organizing special teams and striving to make higher goals that week to help boost the drive. Anyone who wants to participate in the international campaign is welcome and should write to the *Militant* at the address listed on page 2.

Following are some of the reports supporters have sent in on the initial effort to introduce new readers to the socialist press.

In New Zealand four subscrip-



Sales table at April 9 women's rights rally in Washington, D.C.

tions were sold going door-to-door in university hostels, and eight other students purchased subscriptions at tables set up during campus enrollment and orientation. *Militant* supporters have also been taking the paper to the many young people and others involved in Maori land occupations around the country.

Four Maori students who are participating in an occupation of the *marae* (meeting place) at Waikato University made the two-hour drive to attend a socialist education day in Auckland April 8. The program included classes on the lessons of the Russian revolution and the example of the Cuban revolution and ended with a *Militant* Labor Forum on the case of Mark Curtis. Participants heard an explanation of the issues in the Waikato occupation from the students and one youth left with a subscription to the *Militant*. Another bought a copy of *New International* no. 10.

When thousands of workers struck the Safeway grocery chain in northern California April 6, supporters of the *Militant* wasted little time getting to the picket lines.

Striking members of the United Food and Commercial Workers bought eight single copies and one subscription to the socialist newsweekly from one team of *Militant* supporters in the San Francisco Bay Area. Roger Guy, picketing the Hayward Safeway, was impressed with the *Militant's* coverage of the strike wave in France, his country of origin. "It's different in France, but everywhere they [the bosses] are seeing how far they can push us back," he said.

A literature display of revolutionary books published by Pathfinder along with the socialist press was welcomed by workers at a contract meeting April 2 of more than 1,000 members of United Auto Workers Local 148 at McDonnell Douglas in Long Beach, California. Workers were interested in articles on affirmative action, the situations in Nicaragua and Haiti, and other topics. Two subscriptions and 16 single copies of the *Militant* were sold, and more than \$100 worth of other literature, including five copies of *New International*.

In Tucson two supporters have set Mondays as a day to put up a literature table at the University of Arizona. The first week they sold out of their bundle of 10 *Militants*, along with a copy of *New International*.

The next week they sold five single copies of the *Militant*. They got a lot of requests for information on the anti-immigrant Proposition 187 recently passed in California since an attempt is under way to place a similar initiative on the ballot in Arizona. Supporters of the *Militant* plan to reprint articles from previous issues reporting on the debates and mobilizations against Proposition 187 in California.

Contributing to this article were Mary Ellen Marus in Montreal; Felicity Coggan in Auckland, New Zealand; Kathleen Denny in San Francisco; Carole Lesnick, member of United Auto Workers Local 148 in Long Beach, California; and Betsy McDonald in Tucson, Arizona.

	Militant			Perspectiva Mundial		New International	
	sold	goal		sold	goal	sold	goal
Puerto Rico	1	2	50%	8		5	
Iceland	5	15	33%	1	1	3	
Sweden	9	40	23%	3	15	23	40
Greece	2	10	20%	1	1	4	
Australia	6	40	15%	1	6	3	15
New Zealand							
Auckland	13	80	16%	6	2	20	
Christchurch	5	40	13%	1	2	10	
Wellington	1	10	10%			4	
Total	19	130	15%	1	8	4	34
Britain							
London	5	70	7%	1	5	6	30
Manchester	5	60	8%	4	4	25	
Total	10	130	8%	1	9	10	55
United States							
Houston	17	80	21%	2	15	7	20
Seattle	11	85	13%	3	15	3	25
Peoria	6	50	12%	2	2	20	
Los Angeles	19	180	11%	24	90	21	90
Boston	9	100	9%	4	30	35	
Morgantown	5	55	9%	2	2	20	
Salt Lake City	9	105	9%	2	20	35	
Miami	8	105	8%	6	45	2	60
Twin Cities	9	120	8%	17	35		
Philadelphia	8	115	7%	30	6	45	
Cleveland	4	65	6%	1	12	20	
Brooklyn	6	130	5%	2	40	14	65
Chicago	7	130	5%	2	30	1	50
Birmingham	3	70	4%	1	5	1	20
Des Moines	3	85	4%	36	30		
Greensboro	3	70	4%	8	20		
Newark	5	130	4%	1	35	60	
San Francisco	4	150	3%	45	9	75	
Washington, DC	2	80	3%	30	4	35	
Detroit	2	95	2%	10	28		
Pittsburgh	2	105	2%	12	4	30	
New York	2	135	1%	30	1	75	
Atlanta	0	90	0%	20	3	25	
Cincinnati		15	0%				
Tucson		10	0%	2	5		
New Haven		15	0%	3	3		
Total U.S.	144	2370	6%	48	584	76	926
Canada							
Toronto	4	85	5%	15	45		
Vancouver	13	70	19%	8	3	20	
Montreal	1	75	1%	25	1	45	
Total	18	230	8%	1	48	4	110
Belgium	0	3	0%	4	4		
France		10	0%	5	20		
International Total	214	2950	7%	55	675	122	1200
Should be	295	2950	10%	67	675	120	1200
IN THE UNIONS							
U.S.							
ACTWU/ILGWU	5	30	17%	2	24	18	
IAM	5	75	7%	1	15	33	
OCAW	1	55	2%	6	33		
UAW	5	100	5%	1	10	25	
UFCW	1	15	7%	25	40		
UMWA	0	23	0%		12		
USWA	2	40	5%	3	7		
UTU	5	85	6%	7	12		
TOTAL	24	423	6%	4	90	180	
UNION TOTALS	29	434	7%	4	92	0	183

ACTWU-Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union; AEEU-Amalgamated Engineering and Electrical Workers Union; AFMEU-Automotive, Food, Metals and Engineering Union; CAW-Canadian Auto Workers; EU-Engineers Union; FPU-Food Preservers' Union; IAM-International Association of Machinists; ILGWU-International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union; MWU-Meat Workers Union; NUM-National Union of Mineworkers; NUW-National Union of Workers; OCAW-Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers; RMT-National Union of Rail, Maritime, and Transport Workers; TGWU-Transport and General Workers Union; UAW-United Auto Workers; UFBGWU-United Food, Beverage and General Workers Union; UFCW-United Food and Commercial Workers; UMWA-United Mine Workers of America; USWA-United Steelworkers of America; UTU-United Transportation Union.

## Socialists launch Philadelphia campaign

BY MITCHEL ROSENBERG

PHILADELPHIA — From the picket lines of the Transport Workers Union (TWU) on strike against the Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority (SEPTA), to the national rally for women's rights in Washington, D.C., April 9, the Philadelphia Socialist Workers campaign is involved in a flurry of activity.

Standard bearers on the

working-class slate are Deborah Liatos for mayor, and John Staggs and Hattie McCutcheon for city council at-large. Liatos is a utility worker at USAir and a member of the International Association of Machinists Local 1776; Staggs is a machine repairer at Ford Electronics and a member of the United Auto Workers (UAW) Local 1695; McCutcheon is a sheet-metal worker at Boeing Helicopters and a member of UAW Local 1069.

During the transit strike, candidates and their supporters joined picket lines, distributing the first campaign statement, which urged support for the union action. The socialists used their campaign to answer the big-business slanders against the strikers aimed at dividing them from workers who rely on public transportation.

"It's the TWU that is standing against SEPTA's attempts to further cut service and safety," the campaign statement read.

In the days leading up to the national women's rights mobilization in Washington, the socialists held a press conference at City Hall and organized their first campaign rally. The event was a success; three young supporters of the campaign decided to join the Young Socialists, and nearly \$900 was pledged or contributed.

Erin Forbes, a Young Socialist who joined candidates at the rally, urged young fighters to get involved, noting the "unsatisfying future capitalism has in store for most young people."

The Philadelphia socialist campaign plans an aggressive effort to get on the ballot. More than 3,000 petition signatures are required, and two Democratic Party candidates were recently ruled off the primary ballot through challenges.



# Hundreds attend Young Feminist Summit

## Activists discuss struggle for women's rights and broader political issues

BY NAOMI CRAINE

ARLINGTON, Virginia — Where does violence against women come from and who benefits from women's oppression? Why is there an ideological offensive against single mothers, welfare recipients, immigrants, and others today? How can supporters of women's rights effectively defend abortion rights? These and many other issues in the fight for women's rights and in broader politics were discussed and debated by hundreds of young people who traveled here from every corner of the United States.

Many participants in the April 7-8 Young Feminist Summit on Violence, called by the National Organization for Women (NOW), had never taken part in such a conference before. Some heard about the gathering through an electronic bulletin board or from a friend and decided to come.

Mara Trachtenberg, who puts out a women's studies newsletter at the University of Rhode Island in Kingston, came to the conference with seven other students in a van sponsored by the student government.

Another participant had been involved in protests in New Brunswick, New Jersey against racist comments by the president of Rutgers University. She is also a member of Gabriela, an organization of women from the Philippines. "We're the baby-sitters and the sweatshop workers," she said, urging participants to join in fighting "against the U.S. military aid to the Philippines and the military rape of our women."

Many at the conference have been organizing rape counseling and support groups and demanding policies to combat sexual assault on their campuses.

High school students made up a large component of the gathering. Most were not members of NOW. By the second day of the summit, nearly 1,200 people had registered, as more arrived to participate in the Washington, D.C., Rally for Women's Lives the next day.

### Defending abortion rights

Shanti Beard, a student at Hampshire College in Massachusetts, was seeking others interested in organizing a day of educational activities at campuses across the country October 3, focused on access to abortion. "That's Rosie Jiménez Day," she noted, referring to the first woman to die from a botched abortion after the Hyde Amendment went into effect in 1977, barring public funding for abortions. A conference on reproductive rights had just

been held at Hampshire College.

Shannon Neely said this would be her first national rally. She and Tamar Ragir, both members of the Mills Feminist Alliance at Mills College in Oakland, California, had participated in abortion clinic defense. They said they came to the conference to make connections with activists from other areas. Neely and Ragir were among many veterans of abortion clinic defense lines at the conference.

At many points in the conference, there was discussion on how best to defend

many of these things will be voted on in Congress and settled in a few weeks?" asked one participant. Lobbying and electing politicians who would be more supportive of women's rights was one frequent response.

Others participants pointed to actual struggles going on and how to link them up. A student from Bucknell University in Lewisburg, Pennsylvania, described how students there held a rally focused on opposing cuts in education, and used it to talk about the broader attacks against

rights must be out in the street with workers, defenders of immigrant rights, and others. In response, an older NOW activist from Oklahoma defended the Democrats as "consistently pro-choice," praised Hillary Clinton, and implored, "Don't dis the Democrats."

Besides Ireland and other NOW leaders, speakers at the plenary sessions included Lisa Tiger, a Native American activist who does AIDS education; Alexis Baptist, who is involved in work around welfare rights in Philadelphia; and Katie Koestner, a prominent speaker on date rape who has organized sexual assault support groups on different campuses.

### Broad political discussion

Young people at the summit were grappling with a broad range of other questions as well.

In a workshop called "From Gangsta Rap to Tabloid Journalism: Violence in Music, Language, and Media," participants debated why there is the phenomenon of lyrics that project disdain for women. Some said that this is part of the culture of young people who are Black and Latino. Others argued that violence and poor treatment of women comes from those who run society.

Some of the same ideas came up in a workshop on "Global Feminism," where some participants said it was hard for people in the industrialized countries to raise criticisms of the status of women in Third World nations without impinging on cultural values shared by women in those countries. A woman from India responded that it was within anyone's rights to be critical of bridal dowries and other repressive practices.

Nearly 40 people, including many high school students, attended a workshop on sexual harassment in colleges and high schools. Several participants described incidents of school officials refusing to take action to deal with reports of harassment or keep records of these incidents. "I reported sexual harassment, and the teacher just said 'boys will be boys,'" said one high school student. "This will keep happening until someone does something."

Participants were interested when Stefanie Trice, a 24-year-old rail worker in West Virginia, described how she got support from male co-workers and the union to push back harassment by a supervisor. Affirmative action has played a big role in women gaining confidence and equality, she said, adding, "Unless women are getting into jobs, it [sexual harassment] will continue in schools and in society."

### Fight for immigrant rights

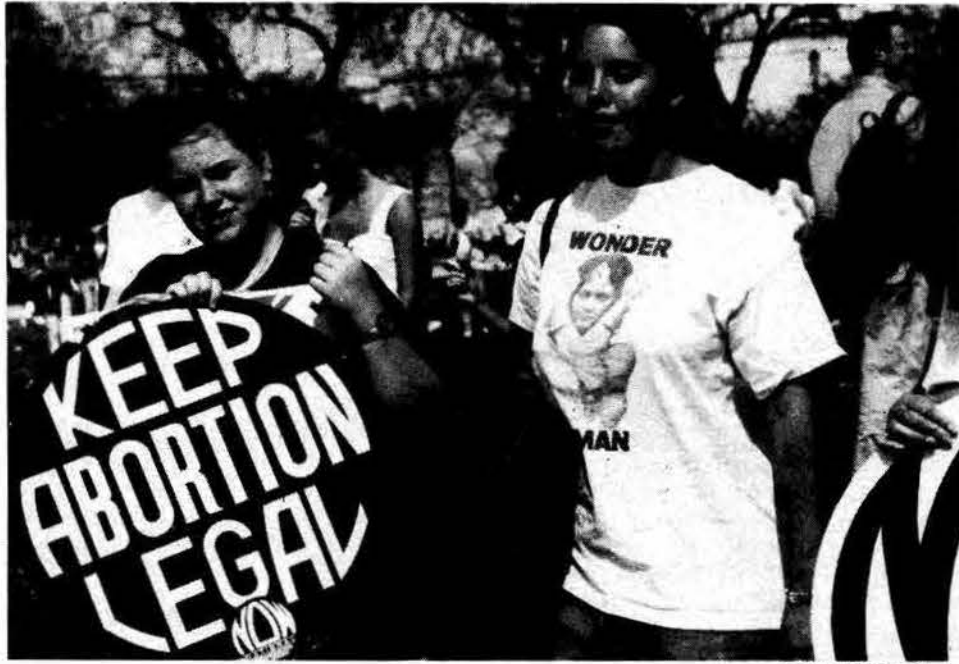
Many participants saw attacks on immigrant rights, such as California's Proposition 187, as connected with the government campaign against women's rights, but wanted to discuss how to explain this to others. "You can say it's scapegoating, but that's not enough to convince everybody," said an activist from Seattle.

The anti-immigration campaign "is used to divide the working class," replied Socialist Workers Party member Laura Garza. "It helps the bosses in their attempt to lower the wage scales of all."

There was also interest and debate over the question of Cuba. One participant spoke in an open-microphone session about a recent youth brigade to Cuba and said the revolution there showed the way forward for women's rights and for working people in general. This sparked some debate, with one young Cuban-American declaring that "the only way women in Cuba are equal is in starvation."

Many participants were interested in learning more about the Cuban revolution. About 25 gathered around one evening for an impromptu discussion with Kenia Serrano, a youth leader from Cuba who was in the area as part of a national speaking tour. Several of them asked for information on the "Cuba Lives" international youth festival that will take place in August in Cuba.

No concrete, coordinated plans for action were projected at the summit, but many were planning activities and looking for actions to take part in. Some said they would be at the NOW national conference in Columbus, Ohio, in July.



Militant/Hilda Cuzco

April 9 action in defense of women's rights in Washington, D.C. Hundreds of young activists gathered two days prior to the rally to discuss how best to advance this fight.

abortion rights. "I think we need to combat the antiabortion propaganda," said one participant. "Some young people are convinced that the woman isn't the question, that it's a question of a baby. We have to answer that."

"The right wing tries to win minorities on this" by claiming that abortion is racist, noted a young clinic worker from Atlanta. "We need to do more to reach out beyond white college students."

One of the best-attended workshops was on "Feminization of Poverty," where discussion focused on government attacks on welfare benefits, Social Security, unemployment compensation, and other entitlements. The workshop speakers targeted the Republicans' "Contract with America" and Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich as the culprits in the offensive against women.

"What can we do to fight back, since

women and others. She urged other activists to do the same.

In her keynote speech to the conference, NOW president Patricia Ireland focused on Gingrich and the Republicans for carrying out a "war on poor mothers." Ireland praised President Bill Clinton for appointing several women to high posts in the administration after his election in 1992, including Attorney General Janet Reno. She said the 1994 election marked a "backlash" because "old, rich, white, able-bodied, apparently straight men hold power, and we're coming after their jobs." Ireland's answer was to "mobilize the majority of voters" in the 1996 election to put the Democratic Party back in control.

Discussion on this continued throughout the conference. At the final plenary some participants took the floor to argue that both capitalist parties are moving to the right, and that supporters of women's

## Rally for women's rights draws thousands

Continued from front page

on the grass rose to their feet when they were introduced. "A woman's right to control her body is the foundation of basic human rights," said June Barrett. She was shot and her husband, James, was killed along with Dr. John Britton outside a clinic in Pensacola, Florida, last year.

The Barretts regularly served as escorts at the clinic, long a target of right-wing opponents of legalized abortion. "Help stop the violence and defend a woman's right to choose. We won't go back!" she exclaimed. The crowd chanted "We won't go back," as other speakers followed.

Megan Lowney, the sister of Shannon Lowney, who was killed in an attack that targeted two Boston-area clinics in December, explained Shannon was a firm supporter of a woman's right to choose and was proud of her job as a receptionist at the clinic, where she often translated for Spanish-speaking clients.

David Gunn Jr., whose father was a doctor killed outside another Pensacola clinic in July 1993, urged those present to speak out in outrage against attacks on abortion rights. "Once they rob us of the right to choose, they rob us of other rights," he said.

Among the crowd were many veterans of efforts to defend abortion clinics throughout the country like Johanna Kitman and Sara Crowe, 19-year-old University of Pennsylvania students who have both been escorts at clinics. Margaret Hor-

lick and Amy Mielke, both 21, are co-chairs of Students United for Reproductive Freedom at Oberlin College, where students filled two buses and 50 more hopped in cars to join the action.

Like others in attendance, Allison Hanover was part of a campus group defending women who have been sexually assaulted. They organized to allow women to change classes or dorms if they were assaulted and to end the practice on many campuses of pressuring women not to report attacks.

Melissa Daily, a 22-year-old University of Rhode Island student, said she came because "I feel strongly about opposing the Contract With America and hating Newt Gingrich." This sentiment was widely expressed and many participants were eager to discuss how to oppose cuts in funding for food stamps and attacks on single mothers.

Most speakers at the rally pointed to the Contract With America as the source of the problems being faced by women and others whose rights are under attack today. Among the speakers were Jesse Jackson; Patricia Ireland, NOW's president; Gloria Johnson of the Coalition of Labor Union Women; Marian Kramer of the National Welfare Rights Union; and Charles Schumer, a congressman from New York who is a sponsor of the Violence Against Women Act and the Freedom of Access to Clinic Entrances Act.

Dolores Huerta of the United Farm

Workers union reported she just arrived from participating in a California demonstration against proposed attacks on affirmative action and said, "We will not support any Democrat who takes a step back on affirmative action, clinic defense, or abortion rights."

Throughout the day participants exchanged opinions on how to defend women's rights, why concepts like "illegitimacy" are being resurrected as part of the attempts to cut back on social spending, and how to respond to the growing attacks on affirmative action.

"A lot of people are interested in how to answer these attacks and are looking for arguments," said Naomi Craine. Craine was part of a group of Young Socialists and others who stood behind a banner that read "Keep abortion safe and legal, Defend affirmative action, Jobs for all — 30 hours' work for 40 hours' pay, Stop the bipartisan assault on women's rights, unions, and social welfare." The sign attracted attention, she said, "and lots of people wanted to discuss if it was real to fight for jobs for all today, and how to defend affirmative action."

In conjunction with the rally a display of 6,000 T-shirts, called the Clothesline Project, was organized to highlight the problem of domestic violence and abuse. The shirts displayed words and drawings by women who had been abused and were expressing their will to survive and continue on with their lives.



# Regional actions set in defense of Cuba

BY ROLLANDE GIRARD

MIAMI — Activists opposed to the U.S. government's aggressive policy toward Cuba met in Miami April 8. The meeting, mostly of member groups of the National Network on Cuba (NNOC) based in southern states, drew activists from North Carolina, Georgia, and Florida. The gathering called for a regional demonstration against the U.S. embargo of Cuba to be held in Atlanta October 14.

The event in Atlanta will coincide with actions on the same date in New York City, Chicago, and a city on the West Coast. The NNOC is initiating these protests as part of the international day of solidarity with Cuba that was called by 3,000 international participants in the World Meeting in Solidarity with Cuba, held last November in Havana.

Andrés Gómez, one of the four national co-chairs of the NNOC, gave a presentation on the situation facing the Cuban revolution today and developments in Miami's Cuban-American community. He had returned from Cuba a few days prior to the meeting.

Gómez, who is also a leader of the Antonio Maceo Brigade, an organization of Cuban-Americans that supports the revolution, explained that while there is a wide divergence of views on many issues in Cuba, the vast majority remain committed to the revolution.

"The people of Cuba," he said, "have been more at ease in the last few months. Last summer the economy touched bottom. The free fall stopped, and when you're no longer falling it's a great relief, even if things are not getting better."

Gómez said that the new agricultural markets are very important because, even though food prices are still exorbitantly high, it is now possible to obtain goods that were previously unavailable. "At first people were very happy that food was available on the agricultural markets but now they are complaining about the prices. That's good because the prices

need to come down," he said.

Regarding the Cuban-American community, "Miami has changed dramatically since the *balsero* [rafter] crisis," Gómez noted, referring to the thousands of Cubans who tried to reach the United States by raft last summer and were detained at the U.S. naval base at Guantánamo Bay, Cuba. He said many Cuban-Americans are very upset about the holding of Cubans in virtual concentration camps at Guantánamo. "They feel betrayed by the U.S. government," the Antonio Maceo Brigade leader said.

Gómez reported that right-wing Cuban-American groups, already fractured, became even more divided after the Guantánamo camps were set up. At first virtually all the rightists supported the Clinton administration's detention policy. But later, when the camps were set up, most rightists felt compelled to go with the overwhelming sentiment of Cuban-Americans against this policy. Ultrarightists like Jorge Mas Canosa of the Cuban American National Foundation lost some support because of their identification with the White House policy.

Ernie Mailhot from the Miami Coalition to End the Embargo of Cuba gave a report on the national meeting of the National Network on Cuba in February. He noted that the NNOC is the broadest umbrella group of organizations opposing Washington's anti-Cuba policy that has existed in this country for decades.

The February meeting of the NNOC was especially important because of the call for the October 14 protests as well as local teach-ins and other activities in April and May.

The 30 activists at the Miami meeting represented the Florida Coalition for Peace and Justice, Atlanta Network on Cuba, Southern International Education Committee, Miami Coalition to End the Embargo of Cuba, Antonio Maceo Brigade, Alliance of Workers of the Cuban Community, Socialist Workers



Militant/Charles Ostrofsky

Supporters of the Cuban revolution march in Washington, D.C., November 12 demanding an end to the embargo imposed by the U.S. government.

Party, Committees of Correspondence, Communist Party, Young Socialists, and other groups and individuals.

A steering committee was chosen to coordinate the regional work to build the October 14 Atlanta demonstration protesting the U.S. embargo of Cuba.

Those wanting to find out more about the October 14 demonstration can contact the Miami Coalition to End the Embargo of Cuba at P.O. Box 867, Miami, FL 33137, or the Atlanta Network on Cuba, c/o ACLA, P.O. Box 5252, Atlanta, GA 31107.

## BY ESTELLE DEBATES

CHICAGO — A Midwest conference of the National Network on Cuba (NNOC), held here April 8, called an October 14 demonstration in Chicago. The action will raise the following demands on the U.S. government: end the embargo of Cuba, lift the travel ban, respect the sovereignty of Cuba, and normalize U.S.-Cuban relations. The demonstration will be followed by a teach-in. In addition, a meeting will be held the following morning to discuss future activities against Washington's policy toward Cuba.

Representatives of Cuba solidarity coalitions and committees in Chicago; Detroit; Morgantown, West Virginia; Pittsburgh; and St. Louis attended the Chicago conference. Also attending were participants from the Peoria Peace Network in Illinois; students from Lexington, Kentucky, and the University of Chicago; Pastors for Peace representatives from Minneapolis; activists from Minneapolis involved in the U.S. tour of Cuban youth leaders Rogelio Polanco and Kenia Serrano; and a unionist active in the labor battle against A.E. Staley in Decatur, Illinois. Several members of an international youth brigade that went to Cuba in January also participated.

Ignacio Meneses, a co-chair of the NNOC and leader of the U.S.-Cuba Labor Exchange in Detroit, stressed the importance of holding a public demonstration in Chicago. He noted that it will be one of four U.S. demonstrations that day and can have a positive effect in that region of the country.

The U.S.-Cuba Labor Exchange is organizing a trip to Cuba in April. The Chicago conference included a meeting to help build the trip.

## Reaching out to broader numbers

Throughout the meeting activists shared their experiences over the last several months in reaching broader numbers of people to oppose Washington's criminal policies against the Cuban revolution.

The Minnesota delegation was largely made up of young people who have recently become involved in activities in defense of Cuba. A couple of them had just become involved through the successful tour by Polanco and Serrano in that area. The Chicago Cuba Coalition is also working on the tour. Frankie Travis from Decatur explained that Serrano would be addressing his union local at its next meeting, as well as visiting the picket lines at Staley, Caterpillar, and Firestone in that city.

Among those at the meeting were Danden Vance, Aislinn Pulley, and Sukul Baul, whose passports were seized on their return from the International Youth Brigade to Cuba. Vance thanked fellow

activists for their help in forcing the government to return the passports. Brigade participants related the experiences they have had since their return, speaking at dozens of meetings and getting a favorable response to the newspaper articles they had written about the trip. They said these developments underline the opportunities to win more young people today to the defense of the Cuban revolution.

Activists from several cities reported on plans for the June solidarity caravan sponsored by Pastors for Peace. Some spoke about organizing meetings featuring speakers from Cuba as well as organizing public speaking engagements for those returning from various trips to Cuba.

Marilyn McKenna, a leader of the Chicago Cuba Coalition, said the meeting marked a significant step in building a movement in defense of Cuba. But, she added, there are now important opportunities to reach out much more broadly to all organizations and individuals that have worked to defend Cuba.

The Chicago Cuba Coalition is sending a 3,000-piece mailing to inform others about the October action. Special efforts will be organized to draw in NNOC affiliates in the area that could not make it to this meeting.

A steering committee was formed with representatives from each city present. This committee is open to any groups that want to participate. A steering committee meeting will be held in Chicago May 20. For more information contact the Chicago Cuba Coalition at (312) 663-0527, or write NNOC Midwest Region, c/o CCC, Box 469, Chicago, IL 60690.

## BY THABO NTWENG

SAN FRANCISCO — Members of several Cuba solidarity groups held a regional meeting here April 9 and voted to call a demonstration in San Francisco October 14 against Washington's aggressive policy toward Cuba. They came from Seattle; San Francisco; Los Angeles; Salt Lake City; Santa Barbara, California; and Portland, Oregon.

A number of delegates noted that current political developments are creating openings to draw new forces into the fight to defend Cuba. They pointed to the protests against anti-immigrant Proposition 187 in California, which mobilized thousands of people last year and continues to propel young people and others into action.

The activists also discussed a report on legislative activities and a proposal to meet with several members of Congress to seek support in the fight against the U.S. embargo on Cuba.

**The National Network on Cuba invites you to a**  
**Northeast Regional Meeting**  
**Sunday April 30th**  
**11 a.m. to 4 p.m.**  
**Casa de las Américas**  
**104 West 14th Street**  
**New York City**

The meeting is open to all groups and individuals working to end the economic blockade against Cuba.

# U.S. gov't expels Cubans for defending UN mission

Continued from front page

grating Cubans at sea and put them in detention camps on the U.S. naval base at Guantánamo Bay, Cuba. U.S. president Bill Clinton also restricted travel and the sending of cash remittances by Cuban-Americans to their relatives on the island.

Encouraged by the White House's moves, an ultrarightist Cuban-American group, the November 30 Committee, staged an attack August 30 on Cuba's UN mission.

Fifteen thugs chained shut the building's doors and physically assaulted Cuban diplomats.

The New York police, who maintain a 24-hour guard at a post that commands all approaches to the building, refused to prevent the attack.

In an April 5 note to the U.S. mission at the United Nations, Cuban officials explained that their personnel "did nothing else but protect the door of the Permanent Mission against attempts to penetrate by force in the Cuban diplomatic premises." The rightist attackers, the note added, "chained the Mission's door, thus preventing the entry and exit of Cuban officials in and from their own Permanent Mission."

The New York cops responded by assaulting and verbally abusing the defenders. Four Cuban diplomats were arrested, handcuffed, and dragged off to the police station. The cops were forced to release them because of their diplomatic immunity.

Three rightists were also arrested. They face federal and local charges but, seven months later, have yet to be prosecuted for the attack, despite the fact that the incident was filmed and broadcast on local television news.

Since the August incident, the Cuban government has repeatedly asked U.S. authorities to meet to discuss it and prevent

further such occurrences.

In response, the State Department demanded Cuban officials Suárez and Hermda be prosecuted. The Manhattan district attorney's office announced it was ready to file charges for "riot in the first degree" and obstruction of government administration in the second degree. "We would indict them if we could," Barbara Thompson, a spokesperson for the DA's office, told the *Militant*.

At a special April 5 meeting of the UN committee dealing with U.S. responsibilities as host country for the United Nations, Cuban ambassador Bruno Rodríguez Parrilla rejected the State Department's charges against Cuba and said lack of action by U.S. authorities led to the right-wing assault. This inaction, he said, "has emboldened the perpetrators of these actions."

Rodríguez recalled the numerous right-wing terrorist bombings of the Cuban mission during the 1960s and in 1979-80, and the September 1980 assassination of Félix García Rodríguez, a member of Cuba's UN delegation. The Cuban ambassador held Washington responsible for any future attacks.

Calling the U.S. government's action "patently unfair," Leslie Cagan of the New York-based Cuba Information Project said the targeting of the Cuban diplomats "is an attempt at selective prosecution."

"The U.S. doesn't have the right to decide who can and cannot be assigned to another country's diplomatic mission," said Cagan in a phone interview.

Washington's move to expel the Cuban diplomats comes shortly before the two governments are due to meet to discuss progress in implementing a September immigration agreement. The meeting is scheduled for April 17-18 in New York.



# U.S., Japan in WWII: imperialist slaughter of working people

BY PETE SEIDMAN

This year marks the 50th anniversary of the end of the war between the United States and Japan in the Pacific. News accounts of each bloody battle remind us how working people were sent to slaughter each other by the competing imperialist powers.

Many articles in the U.S. media, not surprisingly, stress the barbaric cruelty of the Japanese military. A report in the *New York Times* March 17 spotlighted a particularly gruesome story — germ warfare research and fiendish experimentation on live human subjects by Unit 731 of the Japanese Imperial Army.

Says *Times* correspondent Nicholas Kristof, "A trickle of information about the program has turned into a stream and now a torrent. Half a century after the end of the war, a rush of books, documentaries and exhibitions are unlocking the past and helping arouse interest in Japan in the atrocities committed by some of Japan's most distinguished doctors."

This sudden "torrent" of information on Japanese atrocities dovetails neatly with efforts to prettify Washington's own crimes against working people during the Pacific War. The most notorious being the dropping of atom bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, instantly incinerating an estimated 170,000 human beings and killing an equal number through radiation-caused diseases within the next five years. Asked by a reporter recently if it wasn't time to issue an apology for that atrocity President Bill Clinton curtly responded "no."

Washington and Tokyo were fighting over which imperialist power would dominate in Asia and the Pacific. As Unit 731 and Hiroshima each reveals, both powers would stop at nothing to be triumphant.

## Unit 731

Kristof explains that Unit 731 was created during the 1930s, when the Japanese army, which was then occupying a large chunk of China, evicted the residents of eight villages near the city of Harbin in Manchuria to make way for the headquarters of Unit 731.

Like the rest of the capitalist world, Japan was plunged into a deep economic crisis after the U.S. stock market crash in 1929 and the opening of the Great Depression. The United States was Japan's largest trading partner at that time. Protectionist measures, such as the Smoot-Hawley Tariff, taken by Washington to protect its economy devastated Tokyo.

An extreme nationalist current developed that felt an invasion of China — and ultimately, the creation of a Japanese-dominated "Asian co-prosperity zone" — was the only way for the heavily

import-dependent country to avoid suffocating within its own borders.

By 1932, Japanese military forces conquered Manchuria and set up the "independent state" of Manchukuo.

Japan's imperialist ambitions quickly came up against massive struggles by Chinese workers and peasants, who fought to end the imperialist exploitation of their country. Furthermore, Washington began rushing aid to China's rightist Chiang Kai-Shek regime in an effort to bolster its own plans for the domination of China.

## Genocidal warfare

The Japanese occupation army resorted to genocidal methods of warfare as they became bogged down in a losing situation against massive popular resistance.

Kristof bares the class hatred of the Japanese imperialists towards their victims. He explains how, "the subjects were called marutas, or logs, and most were Communist sympathizers or ordinary criminals."

The military rulers' goal was to find ways to efficiently and quickly kill masses of people. Experiments to this end included:

- Locking up diseased prisoners with healthy ones to see how readily various ailments would spread.

- Testing new weapons by taking victims "to a proving ground... where they were tied to stakes and bombarded."

- Japanese planes dropped plague-infested fleas over Ningbo in eastern China and over Changde in north-central China.

- Japanese troops also dropped cholera and typhoid cultures in wells and ponds.

Kristof cites estimates that more than 200,000 Chinese were killed in such germ warfare field experiments.

"Plague-infected animals were released as the war was ending," as well, Kristof reports, causing "outbreaks of the plague that killed at least 30,000 people in the Harbin area from 1946 to 1948."

Unit 731 also carried out other ghoulish human experimentation, for example, people who had been sick with plague and other diseases were dissected alive, without anesthesia. Why? "If we'd used anesthesia, that might have affected the body organs and blood vessels that we were examining. So we couldn't," one Unit 731 torturer told Kristof.

Despite such genocidal techniques, by 1938, the Japanese military in China found itself locked in a war of attrition. In a desperate bid for vital raw materials with which to continue its war, Japan began military moves against the Asian colonies of France, Britain, and Holland — seeking to exploit the outbreak of war in Europe to



A view of downtown Tokyo on March 19, 1945. On March 10, 1945, 300 U.S. B-29s dumped 1,700 tons of incendiary bombs, enveloping the entire city in flames. The slaughter left 100,000 dead, 900,000 wounded and 1 million homeless.

its advantage.

Washington reacted sharply to these moves. It froze Japanese assets in the United States. Then it began a graduated series of embargoes on oil, steel, arms, ammunition, and other strategic shipments on which Japan was in many cases 100 percent dependent for all its supplies.

Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor was forged between the tong of U.S. economic sanctions and the hammer of the Chinese resistance.

Indeed, U.S. foreign policy consisted largely of provoking Japan into exactly such an attack so that Washington could advance its own plans of conquest under a smokescreen of outraged innocence. Only two weeks before Pearl Harbor, for example, Secretary of War Henry Stimson wrote in his diary, "The question... was how we should maneuver them into the position of firing the first shot without allowing danger to ourselves."

The Roosevelt administration was confident that, given the superior economic base and war-making capacity of U.S. imperialism, it could, over time, easily regain on the battlefield what it had been willing to lose at Pearl Harbor.

## U.S. war crimes

Long before the dropping of the atom bombs, the Japanese government had begun to sue for peace. Relentless U.S. aerial bombing had destroyed almost all Japan's industrial base, and submarine warfare, effectively blocked Japan from exploiting vital raw materials available as a result of its conquests earlier in the war.

Like their Japanese counterparts in China, U.S. commanders justified the heavy civilian casualties they inflicted as a "necessity" of war. As Curtis LeMay, commander of the 20th Air Force, put it in one report, "We were going after military targets. No point in slaughtering civilians for the mere sake of slaughter. Of course there is a pretty thin veneer in Japan... It was their system of dispersal of industry. All you had to do was visit one of those targets after we'd roasted it, and see the ruins of a multitude of tiny houses, with a drill press sticking up through the wreckage of every home."

"The entire population got into the act and worked to make those airplanes or munitions of war... men, women, children. We knew we were going to kill a lot of women and kids when we burned [a] town. Had to be done."

On March 9-10, 1945, for example, low-flying U.S. bombers dropped napalm on Tokyo. It is estimated this raid killed 100,000 people, and injured 900,000 others. One million people were left homeless, the firestorm having destroyed about 25 percent of the city's housing.

The 20th Air Force was ordered, however, to spare the Emperor's Imperial Palace in Tokyo as it laid waste to the city around it.

And on the specific orders of Stimson, no raids were carried out against Kyoto, an ancient artistic and religious center, either. It was Stimson, though, who insisted that the "most desirable target" for the atom bomb "would be a vital war plant employing a large number of workers and closely surrounded by workers' houses."

The germ warfare unleashed by the Japanese army is still remembered by many people in China. Chinese immigrants working in U.S. plants today can relate stories passed on to them by their relatives. But the revelations in Kristof's article come as a shock to many people in the United States and Japan. This is largely a product of U.S. policy.

Kristof reveals that Unit 731's "research was kept secret after the end of World War II in part because the United States Army granted immunity from war crimes prosecution to the doctors in exchange for their research data. Japanese and American documents show that the United States helped cover up the human experimentation. Instead of putting the ringleaders on trial it gave them stipends."

Kristof reports, "Partly because the Americans helped cover up the biological warfare program in exchange for its data, Gen. Shiro Ishii, the head of Unit 731, was allowed to live peacefully until his death from throat cancer in 1959. Those around him in Unit 731 saw their careers flourish in the postwar period, rising to positions that included Governor of Tokyo, president of the Japan Medical Association, and head of the Japan Olympic Committee."

Faced with the prospects of mass, revolutionary struggles Washington decided that the advanced "how to" guide for genocide could prove more valuable than the propaganda value of exposing the Japanese military's war crimes to the people of the world.

## U.S. policy at home

Scientists working for the U.S. Atomic Energy Commission also carried out secret experiments to test the effects of radiation on live human beings without their consent. According to a report recently released by the U.S. Energy Department's office of Human Radiation Experiments, about 9,000 people including women and children were used in 154 experiments during the 1940s and '50s.

In terms echoing Kristof's interview with the Unit 731 vivisectionist, the Strong Memorial Hospital at the University of Rochester Medical Center justified a research project in which 31 healthy patients were unknowingly injected with radioactive plutonium, uranium, polonium, and other poisons. "It is of primary importance," a report said, that "the subjects have relatively normal kidney and liver function as it is desirable to obtain a metabolic picture comparable to that of an active worker."

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# How Bolsheviks fought to win peasantry

## Excerpts from 'Lenin's Final Fight' on results of the New Economic Policy

Five years after the victory of the October 1917 revolution in Russia, V.I. Lenin led the fight within the Bolshevik leadership to maintain the communist course with which the party had led the exploited producers to power over the landlords and capitalists. This fight, waged in the last year of his active life, was to be his final political struggle. At issue were the burning questions of the day:

- The world struggle for socialism.
- How to forge a voluntary federation of soviet republics uniting workers and peasants against imperialism and defending the rights of oppressed nations.
- The New Economic Policy — a conscious decision by the central Bolshevik leadership to lead a temporary retreat from expanding socialist relations of production. It was necessitated by the devastation of industry, agricultural production, trade, and social life caused by several years of civil war and imperialist invasions.
- Strengthening the worker-peasant alliance.
- Defending the state monopoly of foreign trade.

The new Pathfinder book *Lenin's Final Fight* offers a record of the speeches, articles, letters, and memos in which Lenin took up this battle. Excerpted here is the speech Lenin gave in November 1922 to the Communist International, which grouped revolutionary organizations from around the world, explaining the roots of the New Economic Policy and the obstacles it had begun to overcome.

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### BY V.I. LENIN

Now . . . I shall deal with the results of our New Economic Policy.<sup>1</sup> I repeat: at that time it was still a very vague idea, but in 1921, after we had passed through the most important stage of the civil war, and passed through it victoriously, we felt the impact of a grave — I think it was the gravest — internal political crisis in Soviet Russia. This internal crisis brought to light discontent not only among a considerable section of the peasantry but also among the workers.

This was the first and, I hope, the last time in the history of Soviet Russia that feeling ran against us among large masses of peasants, not consciously but instinctively. What gave rise to this peculiar and for us, of course, very unpleasant situation? The reason for it was that in our economic offensive we had run too far ahead, that we had not provided ourselves with adequate resources, that the masses sensed what we ourselves were not then able to formulate consciously but what we admitted soon after, a few weeks later, namely, that the direct transition to purely socialist forms, to purely socialist distribution, was beyond our available strength, and that if we were unable to effect a retreat so as to confine ourselves to easier tasks, we would face disaster.

### Has this retreat benefited us?

The crisis began, I think, in February 1921. In the spring of that year we decided unanimously — I did not observe any considerable disagreement among us on this question — to adopt the New Economic Policy. Now, after eighteen months have elapsed, at the close of 1922, we are able to make certain comparisons. What has happened? How have we fared during this period of over eighteen months? What

1. Under the New Economic Policy, launched in early 1921, the Soviet government ended the requisition of peasant grain surpluses, replacing it with a tax in kind. That is, peasants were required to provide the government a percentage of their harvest, fixed by a sliding scale to favor the small peasants as well as those who produced most efficiently. The government authorized a private market, first for farm products and later for other commodities. Privately owned enterprises were permitted in rural and small-scale industry. Foreign capitalists were encouraged to invest in the Soviet republics by acquiring "concessions" that they would operate under strict government control, although very few responded to this offer.

is the result? Has this retreat been of any benefit to us? Has it really saved us, or is the result still indefinite? This is the main question that I put to myself, and I think that this main question is also of first-rate importance to all the Communist parties, for if the reply is in the negative, we are all doomed. I think that all of us can, with a clear conscience, reply to this question in the affirmative, namely, that the past eighteen months provide positive and absolute proof that we have passed the test. . . .

I shall now try to prove this. . . .



"The peasants know that we have seized power for the workers," said Lenin, "and that our aim is to establish the socialist system." As a result of NEP advanced by the Bolsheviks, "any serious dissatisfaction with us on the part of the peasantry as a whole is quite out of the question. This has been achieved in the course of one year."

First of all I shall deal with our financial system and our famous Russian ruble. I think we can say that Russian rubles are famous, if only for the reason that their number now in circulation exceeds a quadrillion. [Laughter] That is something! It is an astronomical figure. I am sure that not everyone here knows what this figure signifies. [General laughter] But we do not think that the figure is so very important even from the point of view of economic science, for the zeroes can always be crossed out. [Laughter] We have achieved a thing or two in this art, which is likewise of no importance from the economic point of view, and I am sure that in the further course of events we shall achieve much more. But what is really important is the problem of stabilizing the ruble. We are now grappling with this problem, our best forces are working on it, and we attach decisive importance to it.<sup>2</sup>

If we succeed in stabilizing the ruble for a long period, and then for all time, it will prove that we have won. In that case, all these astronomical figures, these trillions and quadrillions, will not have mattered in the least. We shall then be able to place our economy on a firm basis, and develop it further on a firm basis. . . .

Now I come to our social objectives. The most important factor, of course, is the peasantry. In 1921 discontent undoubtedly prevailed among a vast section of the peasantry. Then there was the famine. This was the severest trial for the peasants. Naturally, all our enemies abroad shouted: "There, that's the result of a socialist economy!" Quite naturally, of course, they said nothing about the famine actually being the terrible result of the civil war. All the landowners and capitalists who had begun their offensive against us in 1918 tried to make out that the famine was the result of socialist economy. The famine was indeed a great and grave disaster which threatened to nullify the results of all our organizational and revolutionary efforts.

2. In 1922 a new currency issue was introduced in which one ruble was worth 10,000 rubles of previous issues. The decision to go over to a stable currency backed by gold was taken both to facilitate trade between town and country and to make possible a planned revival of industrial production.

And so I ask now, after this unprecedented and unexpected disaster, what is the position today, after we have introduced the New Economic Policy, after we have granted the peasants freedom to trade? The answer is clear and obvious to everyone; in one year the peasants have not only got over the famine but have paid so much tax in kind that we have already received hundreds of millions of poods<sup>3</sup> of grain, and that almost without employing any measures of coercion. Peasant uprisings, which previously, before 1921, were,

The third question is that of heavy industry. I must say that the situation here is still grave. Some turn for the better occurred in 1921-22, so that we may hope that the situation will improve in the near future. We have already gathered some of the resources necessary for this. In a capitalist country a loan of hundreds of millions would be required to improve the situation in heavy industry. No improvement would be possible without it. The economic history of the capitalist countries shows that heavy industry in backward countries can only be developed with the aid of long-term loans of hundreds of millions of dollars or gold rubles. . . .

Thus, the situation in heavy industry is really a very grave problem for our backward country, because we cannot count on loans from the wealthy countries. In spite of that, we see a tangible improvement, and we also see that our trading has brought us some capital. True, it is only a very modest sum as yet—a little over twenty million gold rubles. At any rate, a beginning has been made; our trade is providing us with funds which we can employ for improving the situation in heavy industry. At the present moment, however, our heavy industry is still in great difficulties. But I think that the decisive circumstance is that we are already in a position to save a little. . . .

### NEP has yielded dividends

I . . . feel that we may draw the conclusion from all this that the New Economic Policy has already yielded dividends. We already have proof that, as a state, we are able to trade, to maintain our strong positions in agriculture and industry, and to make progress. Practical activity has proved it. I think this is sufficient for us for the time being. We shall have to learn much, and we have realized that we still have much to learn. We have been in power for five years, and during these five years we have been in a state of war. Hence, we have been successful.

This is understandable, because the peasantry were on our side. Probably no one could have supported us more than they did. They were aware that the White Guards had the landowners behind them, and they hate the landowners more than anything in the world.<sup>4</sup> That is why the peasantry supported us with all their enthusiasm and loyalty. It was not difficult to get the peasantry to defend us against the White Guards. The peasants, who had always hated war, did all they possibly could in the war against the White Guards, in the civil war against the landowners.

But this was not all, because in substance it was only a matter of whether power would remain in the hands of the landowners or of the peasants. This was not enough for us. The peasants know that we have seized power for the workers and that our aim is to use this power to establish the socialist system. Therefore, the most important thing for us was to lay the economic foundation for socialist economy. We could not do it directly. We had to do it in a roundabout way.

4. White Guards was the general designation for Russian counterrevolutionary forces following the October Revolution.

so to speak, a common occurrence in Russia, have almost completely ceased.

The peasants are satisfied with their present position. We can confidently assert that. We think that this evidence is more important than any amount of statistical proof. Nobody questions the fact that the peasants are a decisive factor in our country. And the position of the peasantry is now such that we have no reason to fear any movement against us from that quarter. We say that quite consciously, without exaggeration. This we have already achieved. The peasantry may be dissatisfied with one aspect or another of the work of our authorities. They may complain about this. That is possible, of course, and inevitable, because our machinery of state and our state-operated economy are still too inefficient to avert it; but any serious dissatisfaction with us on the part of the peasantry as a whole is quite out of the question. This has been achieved in the course of one year. I think that is already quite a lot.

Now I come to our light industry. In industry we have to make a distinction between heavy and light industry because the situation in them is different. As regards light industry, I can safely say that there is a general revival. . . .

3. A pood is a unit of weight equal to about 36 pounds.

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# World coal mining bosses sacrifice lives for profits

BY JOHN HAWKINS

BIRMINGHAM, Alabama — If anyone needed a reminder that coal mining remains one of the world's most dangerous occupations, four separate mine disasters in the last three weeks in March should more than suffice.

During that brief period, in Turkey, Russia, and China alone, more than 120 coal miners lost their lives.

In Russia, where miners continue a series of strikes and protests demanding months of back pay and against a World Bank plan to restructure Russia's coal industry, 10 people were killed March 31 in an explosion at the Vorkutinskaya mine in the northern part of the country.

In Turkey, where 10,000 miners and their supporters mobilized last November in a successful protest against threatened mine closures, as many as 40 workers were killed in a March 26 explosion at a mine near the town of Sorgun.

A March 13 mine explosion in Yunnan province and March 26 a blast in Henan province in China claimed the lives of 72 miners.

Meeting earlier this year, delegates to the International Labor Organization's (ILO) Coal Committee urged coal-producing nations to establish a convention on mine health and safety.

Among the delegates at the meeting were Richard Trumka, president of the United Mine Workers of America, and Arthur Scargill, president of the National Union of Mineworkers in the United Kingdom and of the International Miners'

Organization.

An ILO study entitled "Recent Developments in the Coal Mining Industry" documents that "as many as one million serious accidents and 11,000 fatalities" occur each year.

The study monitored safety and health trends in the world's major coal-producing countries from 1989 to 1993. During those five years, the study showed, fatalities were much higher in coal mines in so-called developing countries and in the deformed workers states in Eastern Europe and Asia than in the advanced capitalist countries.

Worldwide, the coal industry employs close to 9.4 million workers, according to the ILO study. In Central and Eastern Europe, more than 300,000 miners have lost their jobs in the last five years — in Western Europe it's more than 180,000. In the United States more than 30,000 mining jobs have been eliminated in the past two years.

However, these losses have been more than offset by increases in the mine workforce in China, the world's largest coal producer. Chinese mines employ a total of 5.4 million people, according to the ILO.

Australia had the best safety record, with a fatality rate of 0.1 mine worker per million metric tons of coal mined, followed by the United States with 0.11 and 0.17 in the United Kingdom. By comparison Pakistan's fatality rate was 29.9 workers per million metric tons mined, Romania's 10.3, and China's 6.1. The country with by far the highest fatality rate for that

period was Turkey, which averaged 119 fatalities per million metric tons mined.

These statistics reflect the differential impact of the world capitalist economic crisis on the colonial and semicolonial world and the workers states of Eastern Europe and Asia. They are but one of the consequences of the accelerating trend in the imperialist countries toward the export of capital to these countries in an effort to shore up and maximize sagging profits.

They are also a reflection of the increasing social unevenness that capitalist development is bringing with it.

In absolute numbers the gravest situation by far exists in China.

The death toll in China's mines is directly attributable to that government's course toward greater integration into the world capitalist market. Not only has this policy opened China's markets to foreign capital, it has also spurred a mad rush for profit among layers of the Chinese population itself. The two mine explosions in March highlighted this deadly trend. From January 1 through March 15, there were 92 major mining accidents involving three or more fatalities reported. In those accidents alone 573 miners lost their lives.

According to various news reports from China, as many as 10,000 miners lost their lives in 1993. While China's economic "reforms" have promoted the proliferation of thousands of legal and illegal private operations mining coal and other minerals, the two most recent explosions took place in government-run mines.

## Making money at any cost

"As the price of coal has increased," said the official *Worker's Daily*, "some township mines have been eager to make money at any cost and negligence of safety has been the chief cause of the accidents." An investigation of the March 13 explosion at the Juhui mine revealed a longtime pattern of neglect for safety by the mine's management.

Following the explosion and investigation, Juhui, which was called a "death trap" by the *Worker's Daily*, has been closed. The mine's management now faces legal proceedings. The Chinese government is concerned that it is sitting on a social powder keg. The article's very appearance in the press is proof of that.

Another indication of the Stalinist rulers' fear of what might develop is their appeal for help from mine experts in Australia in tightening their control over the



Militant/Greg Rosenberg  
Life in South Africa's mines has begun to change as workers put their mark on society through the democratic revolution.

industry and in restoring some semblance of regard for elementary aspects of safety.

Growing resistance by workers in other branches of industry to the consequences of the economic crisis will be on the agenda in China's coal-mining regions in the future. Undoubtedly mine workers in China are discussing this grave situation.

## South African miners fight for safety

A different picture of work and life in the mines is beginning to emerge in South Africa. There the democratic revolution that has begun to dismantle the apartheid state is opening new opportunities for working people to effect deep-going changes in their conditions of life and work.

In response to demands from South Africa's National Union of Mineworkers (NUM), a public inquiry was conducted last year into safety and health conditions in the country's coal and mineral mines. This was the first such inquiry in more than 30 years.

The commission has recommended government action to draft a new set of laws governing mining. In a 191-page report issued at the end of March the commission acknowledges the validity of the NUM's demands for immediate remedial action to reduce death, injury, and disease in the mining industry.

According to the report, more than 69,000 mine workers were killed in industrial accidents in the period from 1900 to 1993 and more than 1 million were seriously injured.

Meanwhile, the NUM is preparing for negotiations with the South African mining companies later this year. High on the union's list of demands, published in a document entitled "Addressing the legacy of apartheid," are improved safety and health conditions, along with affirmative action for black miners to allow them to move into higher-paying, more highly skilled jobs, and housing for black miners who, under apartheid, were barred from living in white towns near the mines.

## April 9 protesters respond readily to Mark Curtis case

BY ELLIE GARCIA

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Demonstrators at the April 9 national Rally for Women's Lives promptly responded to the defense campaign for union and political activist Mark Curtis. A large display caught peoples' eyes and drew them to the literature table set up by supporters of the defense effort.

One rally participant after another expressed outrage on hearing about the frame-up of Curtis, a packinghouse worker and political activist in Des Moines, Iowa, on false charges of rape and burglary.

"Hasn't he petitioned for parole?" asked a demonstrator who is a staff member for the United Food and Commercial Workers in this city. After learning that Iowa authorities continue to deny Curtis parole year after year because of his political activities, she and two other friends took several pieces of literature to read more about the case.

Most of the people who stopped by the table were young women and many signed up for more information. Some of the activists discussed inviting Curtis supporters to speak at future meetings.

A group of four women who are members of the Amnesty International chapter in a Baltimore high school signed up to have a speaker come to their meeting. "We want to learn the facts," said one of the students, who suggested organizing a letter writing campaign for Curtis.

Students from Columbia University in New York and the University of Iowa placed their names on the list to organize a video showing of *The Frame-up of Mark Curtis* at meetings of their organizations. Many people were not surprised when they heard that the Des Moines cops had beat and framed up the activist.

"I know [cop beatings] happen everyday because it happened to me," said Andrea, a member of Amnesty International, who lives near Des Moines. Andrea explained that her husband, who is a police officer, brutally beat her and her three children. After she filed charges and took him to court, he was found not guilty. "Three cops sat in their pressed uniforms and lied for him," she said.

A member of the Gray Panthers organization in Philadelphia spent a while at the

table discussing the defense of Curtis. "I was involved in the defense of the Scottsboro Boys in the '30s," he said. "This is basically the same kind of frame-up by the cops." He volunteered to present the case to his organization and other political groups in the area.

Supporters of the defense campaign remarked about the discussions they had with activists at the rally, including the anti-immigrant Proposition 187 that passed in California and the scapegoating of immigrant workers around the world.

Several participants bought the new pamphlet from Pathfinder titled, *Why is Mark Curtis still in prison? The political frame-up of a unionist and socialist and the campaign to free him*, to find out more facts of his case and the stakes for working people in organizing to win his freedom. The pamphlet is available at bookstores listed on page 12 and from the Mark Curtis Defense Committee, Box 1048, Des Moines, Iowa, 50311.

## Philadelphia transit strikers gain

BY PETE SEIDMAN

PHILADELPHIA — The "no money" chorus led by the Southeastern Pennsylvania Transit Authority (SEPTA) and Mayor Ed Rendell changed its tune here April 10, as management was forced to reach a settlement in a two-week strike by 5,200 members of Transport Workers Union (TWU) Local 234.

SEPTA came up with additional funding for wages, pensions, and benefits after the TWU extended its strike from city to suburban lines — eventually shutting down virtually all bus, subway, and trolley service west of the Delaware River. The TWU members, who received no strike benefits and had their medical insurance canceled, demonstrated their willingness nonetheless to stay out for as long as it would take to win an acceptable contract.

Despite an injunction limiting to four the number of pickets at City Division locations, hundreds of strikers turned out for early-morning rallies at suburban stations where SEPTA was counting on still-operating trains to undercut the impact of

the strike for riders who could use them as alternate transport to work.

Strikers returned to work after the TWU Executive Committee approved the proposed settlement. The membership will vote on the new contract April 14.

According to accounts in the media here, the terms of the agreement include:

- Pay increases of 3 percent in each year of a three-year contract. These raises will be "backloaded" to take effect in December of each year.

- An increase from the current \$35,000 annual cap for earnings on which pensions are calculated to \$40,000.

- An increase in sick pay benefits to 45 percent after three days.

- Improvements in tool allowances and dental benefits.

SEPTA had originally insisted that it could increase its final offer only if the workers accepted changes in work rules and cuts in other benefits. But the TWU members insisted they would not be suckered into taking money from one of their pockets just to put it in another. SEPTA

"found" the funds to make its new offer after coming under behind-the-scenes pressure from city and state officials.

The determination of TWU members to struggle made it clear that the politicians' "crazy-to-strike-in-these-hard-times" anti-labor campaign was becoming counter-productive. Despite the avalanche of anti-labor propaganda, many workers here expressed admiration for actions by TWU members aimed at making their strike more effective.

As Mayor Rendell's chief of staff David Cohen, who is credited with helping SEPTA "recrunch" its calculations, described it, "I think the role we tried to play was to focus SEPTA on the consequences of there not being a settlement and there being an extended strike."

The two-week transit shutdown cost Philadelphia businesses nearly \$30 million, with many stores reporting sales down by 25 percent to 30 percent. Many merchants were alarmed about missing out altogether on Easter week business if the strike had gone into a third week.



# Textile workers ratify first union contract

BY ROBERT DEES

MARTINSVILLE, Virginia — After voting in the union last August, Tultex workers ratified a new contract March 26. This win marks a big turnaround here. The Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union (ACTWU) had lost four previous attempts to organize this company. The turning point came last year when Tultex Corp. unilaterally cut wages and benefits.

"It's progress," said a Tultex worker walking out of the plant recently after a 12-hour shift.

The pay cut "was really bad in some departments," Addie Edwards explained. "Some people lost as much as \$100 a week." Others lost between \$25 and \$75 a week, she said. "Plus they took away all our benefits."

The company alleged that the reductions were necessary because 1993 profits were "only" \$5.9 million.

The union estimated that last year's cuts cost workers an average of \$3,000 in wages and \$2,850 in benefits. Tultex workers decided to respond to this attack and approached union officials about getting organized.

The *Washington Post* reported that ACTWU southern regional director Bruce Raynor said, "The union was skeptical, and told the workers they had one week to show there was serious interest in organizing by having employees in the plant sign union authorization cards." Within a week, the in-plant group had collected 1,300 cards.

Tultex is one of the country's leading manufacturers of sweat suits and athletic wear. As part of trying to defeat the organizing drive, the company violence-baited unions by showing videos of the United Mine Workers of America strike at Pittston Coal Co. This did not stop the workers from voting 1,321 to 710 for the union, forcing company spokesperson Kathy Rogers to concede, "It's obvious our employees wanted to be represented by the union."

In early March, Tultex workers voted

down the company's wage offer of 3 percent, 2 percent, and 2 percent increases over three years. Some 200 union members then held a public rally to protest the low proposal. The union was demanding 7 percent, 8 percent, and 8 percent increases over three years. Shortly thereafter the company agreed to a contract that includes wage increases of 5 percent, 4 percent, and 4 percent for everyone except the sewers.

The pact provides for lower medical and dental insurance deductibles, and improved bidding, pension, overtime, and seniority rights. Temporary workers become permanent after 60 days in the main plant, with looser provisions for distribution center workers.

The most important thing was "getting back what's ours," said Michael Hairston, a material handler. Fannie Kellum pointed out that workers at the plant "hadn't had a raise in five or six years."

"The raises, and the respect of the su-

pervisors" were the most important gains of their fight, Jackie Austin remarked.

"Respect was a big problem," reported George Massey who works as a lot coordinator in the knitting room.

"I've worked for the union for five years, through the last three campaigns," Addie Edwards noted. "I think every business in Martinsville and Henry County should be unionized," she went on. Edwards works as a sewer in the plant and was a member of the union's negotiating committee.

"It's good for a first contract," Edwards said. "The 12-hour people did better than the sewers, but we're satisfied." Sewers did not get any wage increase. "They gave us two options," she explained. Rather than a pay increase, "we got our jobs guaranteed for three years." Edwards went on to point out that there are 260 sewers at the plant, down from 700 to 800 two years ago.

"We didn't get a pay increase, but we

got some incentive bonuses," she said, and "we get a \$50 bonus every six months for two years. Also, we're guaranteed the same styles as long as these styles are needed." Edwards said the average for the department is around \$8.25 an hour.

"Some young sewers wanted the pay increase, but the majority wanted job security," she mentioned.

Tultex is ACTWU's biggest organizing victory in the South since the J.P. Stevens fight 20 years ago, but it is not the only recent win. The union has organized some 8,500 new members in the past five years.

ACTWU, with about 200,000 members nationwide, is slated to merge in late June with the 155,000-member International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union. The new union, is to be known as the Union of Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Employees.

Robert Dees is a member of ACTWU at a textile mill in North Carolina.

## California grocery workers walk off job after bosses plan to cut health benefits

BY LENORE SHERIDAN

SAN JOSE, California — Some 32,000 members of the United Food and Commercial Workers union at Safeway, Lucky, and Save Mart supermarkets walked off the job April 5. The strike affected grocery stores from Fresno, California, to the Oregon border.

The main issue in the walkout is the attempt by the giant food store chains to take away current employee and retiree health-care benefits. It is striking how many union members in front of the stores are wearing carpal tunnel syndrome wrappings on their wrists — caused by the repetitive motions at the automatic check out. The strike is receiving unparalleled public support. The parking lots at Safeway stores are nearly empty and passing

drivers honk their horns continuously in a demonstration of solidarity.

A *San Francisco Chronicle* reporter traveled to nearby Guerneville April 11, a one supermarket town, to see if the strike had support. To his surprise he found overwhelming backing for the union, even though it means a 30-minute drive to do any serious shopping.

"Most everybody is shopping somewhere else," Roger Parker a local bartender told the *Chronicle*. "People won't shop there during the strike. Everybody's sick and tired of the corporations taking away from the working people."

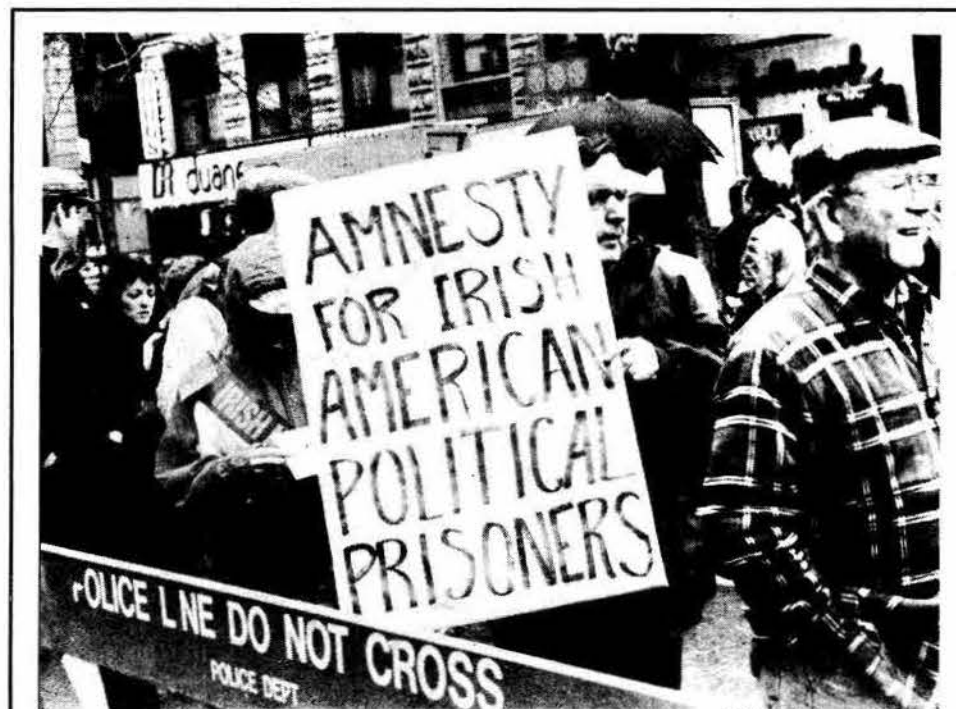
At some stores strikers are offering to drive shoppers to other stores to buy their groceries. There have been reports of some management personnel bringing union members coffee on the picket line. The media reported at least one assistant manager quit his job and has joined the

strikers on the line outside. At the office where this reporter works nearly all of the workers are refusing to shop at the struck stores.

In another show of solidarity Teamsters truck drivers are refusing to deliver goods to the stores. The companies have hired 100 nonunion drivers to get around the Teamsters solidarity.

One young worker on the picket line here said he was expecting a long strike. "My wife is pregnant and if the company gets its way I would have to pay for the delivery of the baby," he said in explaining why the workers had to put up a fight. Another said that the workers "plan to stay out as long as it takes."

Lenore Sheridan is a member of the American Federation of Government Employees Local 2011 in San Jose. Paul Montauk in Oakland contributed to this article.



Militant/Marc Lichtman

Some 300 demonstrators rallied in front of the Federal Building in New York City on April 8 to demand the release of Irish political prisoners in U.S. jails. A hunger strike memorial rally has been called for May 6.

## Irish activists fight against deportation; others rally for release of prisoners

NANCY ROSENSTOCK

NEW YORK CITY — A deportation hearing against Irish activist Gabriel Megahey opened here April 5. Megahey, 51, has lived in the United States for 20 years and is a member of the International Union of Operating Engineers.

Megahey served time in the 1980s on charges of shipping weapons to the Irish Republican Army. The presiding judge ruled the conviction could not be used as a case for deportation.

Megahey has sought permanent resident status in the United States based on his marriage to a U.S. citizen and his lengthy stay in the country. His legal application details a series of threats, harassment, and persecution that he encountered while living in Belfast, Ireland, and England.

Megahey is one of 20 people in the United States currently facing deportation or extradition who have been convicted in connection with the Irish struggle. Sinn Fein president Gerry Adams submitted a list of these individuals to U.S. president Bill Clinton during Adams recent visit to the White House.

Witnesses called to testify on Megahey's behalf included Bernadette Devlin McAliskey, who described the pattern of harassment and victimization that exists in Northern Ireland against supporters of Sinn Fein and the IRA, including those who have returned from the United States. Also testifying was Gerry Conlon of the Guildford Four, a group of young Irish activists who served up to 16 years in Britain's jails for charges they were later completely exonerated of.

Conlon told Megahey that if he had not

left England when he did, Megahey would have become one of the "Guildford Five."

In addition, U.S. Congressmen Peter King and Eliot Engel sent letters supporting Megahey's case.

BY ROY INGLEDGE

PHILADELPHIA — A spirited picket line of 75 supporters of the Irish freedom struggle demonstrated in front of the Federal building here April 8. Protesters demanded the release of Irish political prisoners in U.S. jails; an end to complicity between the U.S. Justice Department and the British government; an end to FBI and Immigration and Naturalization Service harassment of Irish activists seeking political asylum; and a halt to FBI training of the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC).

For two hours the demonstrators marched and chanted, "Free the Irish prisoners now!" Passersby took leaflets and a few joined the picket line, including two construction workers wearing carpenters' union T-shirts. Slogans on banners carried by participants included, "Remember Joe Doherty," "Towards a lasting peace in Ireland," "Stop training the RUC," and "Grant Amnesty."

The demonstration was organized by the Irish Action Coalition and supported by the Ancient Order of Hibernians and NORAI. The Irish Action Coalition called on the participants to "build a coalition with other oppressed people who also face harassment from the FBI and the U.S. Justice Department." Demonstrators were also urged to support a hunger strike memorial rally that has been called for May 6 in New York.

F R O M P A T H F I N D E R

### Ireland and the Irish Question

KARL MARX AND FREDERICK ENGELS

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### MARX ENGELS

#### Ireland and the Irish Question

PROGRESS Publishers



Continued from front page

not nearly through the pipeline yet, have led to a stampede of applications for U.S. citizenship. Requests jumped to 232,850 from October 1994 through January of this year — an 80 percent rise over the same period a year earlier. There are approximately 10 million legal immigrants in the United States.

Under bills passed by both houses of Congress, the federal school lunch program is to be cut back and merged with other programs administered by the states. U.S. president Bill Clinton, while expressing concern at the repercussions of gutting programs that benefit working people, urged the big-business politicians "to keep the momentum going....After all, we share much common ground."

Clinton specifically mentioned that he would work with the Republican-dominated Congress to set time limits on how long workers could receive public assistance. He also said he was for giving states more flexibility to cut social programs.

## A 'dry run' for Medicare

"The fracas over the school lunch program was a dry run over Medicare," said William Kristol, a Republican strategist.

"The old-fashioned cutting won't get us there," said Rep. Bill Thomas, chairman of the House Ways and Means health subcommittee. "I want to restructure" Medicare, he stated.

Gingrich sought to head off a storm of debate when he declared during his prime-time address, "No one will touch your Social Security."

Meanwhile, under the guise of improving service, the Clinton administration announced April 9 its plans to begin making at least modest changes in the "politically sensitive" Social Security program. Clinton is proposing to Congress that some of the agency's functions be turned over to private companies and that the mailing of 49 million disability and retirement checks that are sent at the beginning of each month be staggered.

Included in the other proposals being reviewed is a plan to close five of the agency's 10 regional offices and cut 350 jobs.

"Business Is Big Beneficiary As 'Contract' Is Completed" gloated a headline in the April 7 *Wall Street Journal*. Cost-benefit formulas that restrict environmental and other regulation; legal requirements that curb shareholder and product-liability suits; and a large number of tax cuts that reduce capital-gains rates, double investment write-offs for small businesses, and repeal minimum taxes that many corporations pay, were some of the gains pointed to in the big-business press.

Of course, "because most of the House action has yet to be approved by the Senate or signed into law, business officials said they couldn't tell precisely how big the benefits will be," the *Wall Street Journal* article stated.

"Still, the business victory was so complete that Ford Executive Vice President Peter Pestillo urges his colleagues not to rub it in," it continued.

This warning was also sounded by conservative *New York Times* columnist A.M. Rosenthal, who had earlier urged the U.S. lawmakers to be careful not to start the "American class struggle."

"Americans who find themselves poorer or more frightened, with nothing between them and the ground, will look to business, a big beneficiary and supporter of the cuts," with "expectations it does not want to meet and cannot," Rosenthal said. "That will be not only the prescription for class struggle but the beginning of its reality."

As if anticipating Rosenthal's class struggle, six bills designated as the "Take Back Our Streets Act" were adopted by the House in February. The bills, retread versions of Clinton's draconian 1994 crime bill, increase allocation for prison construction from \$8 billion to \$10.5 billion on condition that states receiving federal funds guarantee that inmates stay locked away for at least 85 percent of their sentence without parole.

Clinton's crime bill expanded the death penalty to about 60 federal offenses; the new measures would also restrict the time inmates are allowed to file habeas corpus appeals, ensuring a step-up in executions.

# -MILITANT LABOR FORUMS-

## CALIFORNIA

### Los Angeles

**The Struggle for Women's Rights Today.** Speakers: Representative, National Organization for Women, San Fernando Valley Chapter; John Evenhuis, Young Socialists. Sat., April 22, 7:30 p.m. 2546 W. Pico Blvd. Donation: \$4. Translation into Spanish. Tel: (213) 380-9460.

## IOWA

### Des Moines

**The Fight for Women's Rights Today: A Report From April 9 Rally in Washington, D.C.** Speaker: John Cox, Socialist Workers Party and member of United Food and Commercial Workers Local 431. Sat., April 22, 7 p.m. 2105 Forest Ave. Donation: \$3. Tel: (515) 246-8249.

## MINNESOTA

### St. Paul

**Education Is Our Right.** Sat., April 22, 7:30

p.m. 2490 University Ave. (East side of Hwy. 280, on 16A bus line). Donation: \$4. Tel: (612) 644-6325.

## PENNSYLVANIA

### Philadelphia

**Why Workers Should Oppose Cuts to Welfare Recipients.** Sat., April 22, 7:30 p.m. All events at 1906 South St. Donation: \$3. Tel: (215) 546-8218.

### Pittsburgh

**Why Working People Should Defend Affirmative Action.** Speakers: Oliver Montgomery, president of Penn Hills NAACP, founding board member of Coalition of Black Trade Unionists; Kathy Wilson, National Board Member of National Organization for Women from 1989 to 1994; Arnold Everson, member of United Steelworkers of America. Sat., April 22, 7 p.m. 1103 E. Carson St. Donation: \$4. Tel: (412) 381-9785.

## WASHINGTON

### Seattle

**Report from the April 9 National Rally for**

**Women's Lives and Young Feminist Conference.** Speakers: Meg Novak and Beverly Thompson, Young Socialists. Sat., April 22, 7:30 p.m. 1405 E. Madison. Tel: (206) 323-1755.

## AUSTRALIA

### Sydney

**Turkey's Invasion of Iraq and the Kurdish Struggle.** Speaker: Marnie Kennedy, Communist League and member of the Australian Manufacturing Workers' Union. Sat., April 22, 6 p.m. Surry Hills Neighbourhood Centre, corner Norton & Collins Sts., Surry Hills. Donation: \$4. Tel: (02) 281 3297.

## BRITAIN

### London

**Why Is Mark Curtis Still In Prison?** Speaker: Gaetan Whiston, Young Socialists. Sat., April 22, 6 p.m. 47 The Cut. Donation: £2. Tel 071-928 7993.

# Strikes sweep France; workers say 'Enough'

Continued from front page

proposals to end weekend and night repair work.

Some 5,000 workers from Renault factories throughout France marched April 6 along the Péripherique, the highway that circles Paris, speaking to truck drivers and other motorists. "Given the social climate in the country today," remarked one television reporter, "it is not surprising that, in spite of being blocked on the Péripherique, almost everyone showed their support for the Renault workers."

The current round of walkouts began with strikes that for a time idled every Renault assembly plant in France. The auto workers' unions have called the bosses' current 3 percent wage offer inadequate and the wage struggle continues.

On April 9-10, Air Inter workers struck for the fourth time in a month. Paris airport workers have announced an unlimited strike starting April 11, the same day as a one-day walkout at the state-run aircraft engine manufacturer SNECMA's plant in Gennevillier. Unions at the Elf petrochemical company have called for a one-day national strike April 11.

On April 13, bus and subway workers in the Paris area will strike again for one day as they did two weeks ago. This time they will be joined by Paris area postal workers. In the nearby suburb of Bobigny, postal workers decided not to wait until then and occupied the mail sorting center during the night of April 10. A one-day national strike by gas and electric workers is planned for April 14.

Two Michelin tire factories have been out since April 5, demanding higher wages. Despite the bosses' threat to per-

manently close the plants, the strikes have continued. Workers also voted to close Michelin's central factory in Clermont-Ferrand on April 12.

Increased wages are a key demand of the strikes, but as the walkouts have grown, new demands have been raised. Some companies, such as SNECMA, are threatening layoffs and downsizing. Some strikes have demanded that companies hire more workers. Another demand has been to make permanent the large number of workers in France on temporary contracts.

In a 17-day postal strike in Orléans, workers voted to defy a court order fining them 50,000 francs a day (US\$1=FF5) for blocking mail sorting centers. Finally, the postal authorities caved in, abandoning plans to eliminate 61 jobs. Instead, they were forced to create 10 new jobs to be filled by provisional workers.

A public debate has broken out among leading capitalists after Jean Gandois, president of the National Council of French Employers, said bosses might have to be more flexible in granting higher wages. Serge Daussault, chairman of Daussault Aviation, agreed saying some of the employers' recent profits could be distributed as a special bonus. Renault chairman Louis Schweitzer publicly criticized Gandois, countering, employers meet resistance when they try to lower wages when profits are down. Schweitzer added that as a result of wildly fluctuating currency values in Europe, Renault faces increased competition from Italian and Swedish car manufacturers.

Eric Pechaud, a maintenance worker at Renault's Choisy-le-roi factory, thought

there were lessons to be learned from recent strikes by metal workers in Germany. "The German metal workers won the 35-hour week. When working hours are reduced, it forces the bosses to hire more workers. But to be able to do this, the workers have to be very strong," he said. Pechaud noted that in Germany everyone in a union-organized factory belongs to the same union, that there is a dues check-off system, and that the unions have strike funds — all of which are unknown in France. "This could make for a strong workers movement," he added, "provided that the union isn't eating at the same table as the bosses."

Nat London is a member of the CGT at Renault in Choisy-le-roi. Derek Jeffers, a member of the CGT in St. Ouen, also contributed to this article.

# -CALENDAR-

## MASSACHUSETTS

### Boston

**Cuban Reality Program at Roxbury Community College Presents:** Cubans in the United States. Speaker: Andrés Gómez. Wed., April 19, 6 p.m. **Talks on Life in Cuba Since the Collapse of the Soviet Union.** Speakers: Mary-Alice Waters, editor of the Marxist magazine *New International* and *The Bolivian Diary of Ernesto Che Guevara*; Richard Levins; and a representative from the Cuban Interests Section in Washington, D.C. Wed., April 26, 6 p.m. All events held at Roxbury Community College, Student Center, Room 102, 1234 Columbus Ave. For more information, call: (617) 427-0060 X5151.

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**Rápido, rápido!** — A new audio cassette, "Housekeeping in Spanish." Includes everything "from compensation to rules" and "room-by-room" instructions.



Harry Ring

**Managed care** — A hospital in Fort Worth, Texas, made a \$5 million settlement with the family of a man who died of cancer after they removed the wrong lung. A week after the operation, hospital

officials knew it might have been botched, but said nothing.

**No openings for vegetarians** — First Marathon may not be Canada's biggest brokerage house, but is respected for its hustling approach to making money. The staff gets no salary; it's strictly commissions and related fees. On Bay Street, Toronto's financial center, this is known as "Eat what you kill."

**The stick-it-to-'em society** — A federal judge rejected a proposed settlement of a class action suit against the Ford Motor Co. involving unsafe Bronco IIs. The judge said the deal would, in ef-

fect, give the 680,000 plaintiffs zilch, but Ford would pay their lawyers \$4 million in fees and expenses. Ford and the lawyers denied any connection between the fees and the settlement.

**Dr. Feelgood** — Girded for court battle, the tobacco industry has a stable of scientists ready to swear that nicotine isn't addictive. Like David Warburton, a British prof. who favors nicotine for its mood-elevating effects. In London, he founded Arise (Associates for Research into the Science of Enjoyment), which stresses not feeling guilty about eating chocolate or smoking. It's mainly funded by tobacco and food com-

panies and, perhaps in solidarity, the liquor industry.

**Enjoy** — One green pea in every four, one pear in every six, and one onion in every eight contain illegal pesticides. That's from an Environmental Working Group study based on government data. The group charges that the feds underreport or ignore illegal pesticide use.

**Enforcing austerity?** — The Mexico police were mortified. Three cops spotted an approaching armored Jeep Cherokee and decided to carjack it. Instead they were disarmed by gun-toting bodyguards driving in front of and

behind the jeep. The jeep driver was President Ernesto Zedillo's son.

**Likes do attract likes** — "We do not necessarily find our sources among the pristine, the honorable, the elegant." — Acting CIA director William Studeman at the inquiry into the agency's cover-up of the murders by its hiring of Guatemalan army colonel.

**Ask the expert** — CIA chief Studeman urged Congress to pass President Clinton's Omnibus Counterterrorism Act, which, in the name of combating "terrorism," would further shrink the Bill of Rights.

## Rail carriers reorganize to maximize profits

BY BILL KALMAN

**DES MOINES, Iowa** — Major railroad mergers in the United States have recently been making the news. These developments, especially west of the Mississippi River, underline how the rail bosses are reorganizing to maximize profits.

There are two powerful incentives driving western carriers: transborder traffic with Mexico, and the competition to haul coal, especially low-sulfur western coal.

A banner headline in the October 17 *Los Angeles Times* asked, "Who Will Rule the Rails?" It described the tussle between railroad giants Burlington Northern Inc. (BN) and Union Pacific (UP) over which company would be able to take over the Santa Fe Pacific Corp. (SF).

BN won the scramble. In February the proposed merger between the BN and SF became official, pending an Interstate Commerce Commission (ICC) review.

The newly merged railroad would be worth \$7 billion with more than 31,000 miles of track stretching over 27 states and two Canadian provinces. The merged railroad would replace the UP as the largest carrier in the United States and the dominant rail line in the West.

In March, the UP announced acquisition of the Chicago and North Western Railroad (C&NW) in a cash deal worth \$1.2 billion. The takeover is expected to be concluded in May. The UP, the most profitable U.S. rail carrier, has 17,800 miles of track in 19 states; by contrast, the C&NW has just 5,600 miles in nine states. But C&NW routes would give UP direct access to Chicago from the West Coast, as well as an avenue into the highly profitable Wyoming coal fields. The new UP would be the second-longest railroad in the United States, right behind the Burlington Northern and Santa Fe Railway Co.

The reorganization of western railroads is the most intense since the 1970s, when both the Rock Island and the Milwaukee Road went bankrupt and were merged with other railroads. And it comes at a time of record profits. Last year was the most profitable for the railroad owners since 1987, and overall carload traffic increased by 6.1 percent.

### American Railroads The Case for Nationalization by Dick Roberts

It recounts more than a century of struggles by rail workers to unite in an industrial union, and argues why railroads must be reorganized to meet the needs of working people, farmers, and small businesses the railroads are supposed to serve — why they should be

nationalized and run for the benefit of society, not for private profit. **\$11.95**

Available from bookstores, including those listed on page 12, or write to **Pathfinder**, 410 West St., New York, NY 10014. Tel (212) 741-0690; Fax (212) 727-0150.



Rail line at the Black Thunder mine in the Powder River Basin of Wyoming. Rail barons are fighting to control coal transportation and new markets in Mexico.

In the aftermath of the North American Free Trade Agreement, rail transportation to and from Mexico promises a profits bonanza for U.S. railroad owners. *Railway Age*, an industry magazine, published a bilingual special report on "growth opportunities" in Mexico last October. The main reason that the Santa Fe was such a prize for the BN was its highly coveted routes in southern California and Texas.

The heart of the battle is for the 15,000-mile Mexican state-owned railroad, the Ferrocarriles Nacionales de Mexico (FNM). U.S. rail executives, in their quest to grab Mexican track rights, have labeled the FNM "bloated," and "a weak link in Mexico's transportation chain."

U.S. railroads built the Mexican rail lines in the late 1800s. That is why all major rail routes in Mexico run north and south. The Mexican government, under popular pressure, nationalized the railroads in the 1930s. Following the devaluation of the peso in December, Mexican president Ernesto Zedillo put some of the railroad up for sale, and plans are being made to privatize its operation. The sale of rights to operate the railroad, combined with selling off port facilities, power plants, and petrochemical assets, is expected to bring in more than \$10 billion.

First to get in line was the UP, which formed a partnership with Empresas ICA, Latin America's largest construction firm. UP already is the busiest U.S. railroad operating in Mexico, and is interested in rebuilding an intermodal terminal and a freight switchyard in Mexico City. The Union Pacific is pursuing construction of a new \$70 million trestle in Laredo, Texas, the first new bridge across the Rio Grande in more than 80 years. Capitalists in Canada, France, and Spain are also expected to bid on the rail lines in Mexico.

The Western carriers are also fiercely competing to haul coal, the largest single commodity carried by the rail industry, and the most profitable. With annual tonnage more than three times greater than farm products, coal accounts for nearly 40 percent of total freight tonnage carried by

Class I railroads. Coal-hauling nationally has increased dramatically. According to an Association of American Railroads spokesperson, "Demand for rail service this year will likely surpass the previous record set in 1990, when 580 million tons were moved."

The Powder River Basin in Wyoming and Montana contains about one-third of

total U.S. coal reserves, all of it low sulfur, which is very attractive to utilities. The BN and the C&NW run into the basin on track owned by the BN. Major track work is currently underway, including laying double and triple track mains.

The railroad mergers will undoubtedly be accompanied by renewed efforts by the railroad owners to lay off, force relocations, and implement less safe working conditions for rail workers.

Officials of the Transportation Communication Union and Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees have criticized the BN and SF merger by pointing out that thousands of jobs will be eliminated. Carriers put the figure at almost 3,000.

Jim Sabourin, a BN spokesman, said, "Because we are doing a better job of managing operating expenses, we don't have the need for the same amount of people as we had in the past." This is an important point of contention, since the ICC has awarded rail workers laid off in past major mergers up to six years of wages and benefits.

This severance, under the New York Dock Labor Protection, has a critical exemption — cutbacks due to "technological improvements" or "business fluctuations" — which is of course what the carriers claim.

The contract covering most U.S. rail workers and the National Carriers Conference Committee, which represents eight major railroads, expired January 1.

Bill Kalman is a member of United Transportation Union Local 867 on the C&NW in Des Moines.

## — 25 AND 50 YEARS AGO —

### THE MILITANT

Published in the Interest of the Working People  
April 24, 1970 Price 10¢

**APRIL 15** — Hundreds of thousands marched and rallied today in major cities throughout the nation in a full day of mass actions against the war in Vietnam.

More than 100,000 rallied in Boston, the biggest demonstration in the country, and in New York City, some 40,000 turned out. The message to President Nixon again resounded: Get all U.S. troops out of Vietnam now.

As part of the nationwide strike sponsored by the Student Mobilization Committee to End the War in Vietnam, students [in New York] boycotted junior high schools and senior high schools throughout the five boroughs over demands for a high school bill of rights. Some schools were reported virtually empty. With full reports not yet in, it was estimated that more than 150,000 New York students boycotted classes today. The board of education placed the absence figure at 60 percent. Some 1,000 students, a significant percentage of them Black and Puerto Rican, staged a citywide high school rights rally at New York's City Hall at noon. In Chicago, 25,000 marched down State Street culminating a day of antiwar actions that turned the schools into antiwar centers and the Chicago Loop into a gi-

gantic traffic jam for peace.

### THE MILITANT

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

April 21, 1945

At a delegated conference of miners from the coal mines of the Charleroi basin [in Belgium] in February, the following dramatic exchange took place between the mine workers and Allied officers who were attempting to prevent an extension of the strike to the Charleroi area.

"What a difference," the officers said, "with September 1944! Then your women gave us drink and presented us with flowers. Now you are sabotaging the war by striking."

One of the delegates replied: "Gentlemen: it is true that we joyfully acclaimed your arrival because we saw in you our liberators. Alas! we see now that like the Germans you are supporting the exploiters."

Another delegate continued: "When Hitler's armies came to Belgium the workers were not inclined to look on that too badly, believing that they were going to put the bosses in their place. But when they saw that the German authorities, on the contrary, supported the bosses against the workers in order to obtain the most possible coal, then we began to sabotage. Today, like Hitler, you are also supporting the bosses. And you are surprised because we are thinking of going out on strike?"



## Build rallies to defend Cuba

The recent regional conferences calling for coordinated actions on October 14 to oppose Washington's policy toward Cuba were an important step forward. Initiated by affiliates of the National Network on Cuba, the demonstrations will be held in Chicago, San Francisco, and Atlanta; activists in New York are discussing similar plans. These actions provide a big opportunity to educate thousands and draw fresh new forces into the fight to defend Cuba's socialist revolution.

If anything shows the potential for involving a new generation of fighters in the defense of Cuba, it is the April 9 women's rights rally in Washington, D.C., and the continuing student marches against education cutbacks in New York and elsewhere.

At these events, many have expressed keen interest in learning the truth about the Cuban revolution and why Washington hates it so much. Similarly, the U.S. tour of two Cuban youth leaders has drawn students and workers who are only now learning about Cuba, but distrust U.S. government propaganda and are hungry to find out more.

Above all, what attracts young and working-class fighters to Cuba is how working people there are using their socialist revolution to combat the effects of the capitalist economic crisis that is ravaging the world. Cuba

was the first nation to confront a "special period" of economic hardship. But now Mexico and other countries are plunging into their own period of social catastrophe. Capitalist regimes everywhere attempt to place the burden of the crisis onto the shoulders of working people with mass layoffs, attacks on basic social rights, and scapegoating of immigrants and others. In contrast, Cuba's workers and farmers, together with their communist leadership, are organizing to minimize the impact of the crisis and defend the gains of their revolution.

It is Cuba's ability to stand up to this international crisis — and to unrelenting aggression and pressure by the imperialist powers — that drew thousands to hear Cuban president Fidel Castro in Copenhagen last month. The youth there liked what they heard when Castro explained why capitalism is a dead end for humanity.

Supporters of the Cuban revolution discover that everywhere there are people interested in finding out the truth and joining the fight to defend Cuba — at union picket lines, high schools, colleges, and every kind of political event, from rallies supporting affirmative action to meetings on the Irish freedom struggle. Reaching out in this way can lead to broad and successful actions on October 14 against the U.S. embargo of Cuba and in defense of the revolution.

## 'Contract' runs into limits

As the hullabaloo over "the first 100 days" recedes, the real assessment of the twin parties of American capitalism is that they have yet to begin. Even the accomplished goals of the Republicans' "Contract with America" — not to mention the ones dead in the water — are a poor substitute for taking on the broad gains won over decades of struggle by the working class. That's why the *Economist* declared them to be "timid revolutionaries."

What the American rulers want and what they can get without provoking resistance are two different things.

The offensive against the living conditions of workers and small farmers doesn't spring from a "Republican revolution." It is a product of the hand-in-hand march of the two parties to the right. "We can do a lot of business together," declared President Bill Clinton as the Republican majority arrived in Congress.

The owners of capital are crying out for slashing Social Security and entitlement programs such as Medicare. Every penny of Social Security is a cut from the overall surplus value collected by the billionaire class, and they want it back.

But cutting too far, too fast, can be their undoing. Some big-business columnists are already warning that rapid austerity measures will bring "class struggle."

They are right. Young people defending abortion clinics from terrorist thugs, Caterpillar strikers fighting to defend their union, and auto workers striking to force GM and Chrysler to hire more people are part of the resistance beginning to emerge. Transit workers in

Philadelphia gave a resounding answer to government officials who say there is no money to raise the standard of living of working people — by shutting down public transportation and winning their strike. Actions like the April 9 women's rights rally in Washington, D.C., and an accompanying conference of young feminists, are proof that Bill, Newt & Co. won't have such an easy time of it in the months ahead.

Working-class conquests won in struggle — from the right to universal Social Security, to Medicare, to affirmative action and the right to choose abortion — are seen by tens of millions as being at the heart of basic human dignity.

Under intensifying competitive pressures and driven to defend capitalist profits, the two parties of big business will attempt to lead us off to new slaughters of fellow workers abroad.

Working people have to give a class answer to the bipartisan assault on our rights and living conditions, and demand:

Jobs for all. Shorten the workweek to 30 hours with no cut in pay. Defend affirmative action. Defend immigrant rights. Defend a woman's right to choose abortion. Support union struggles. And join with tens of millions of workers and farmers around the globe to demand that Washington cancel the debt owed by governments in Africa, Asia, and the Americas, which is one more vehicle the capitalists use to suck up the wealth produced by working people.

## War crimes of U.S. and Japan

This year the imperialist slaughter known as World War II is being feted in ceremonies around the world, marking the 50th anniversary of the end of the war.

Ignoring the massive cost paid with the lives of working people, the imperialist powers seek to absolve themselves of responsibility for that horror in hopes of gaining acceptance for future military adventures.

For the capitalist rulers of Japan, Germany, the United States, the United Kingdom, and other imperialist powers, the only solution to their shrinking markets and declining profit rates was to organize a world war to militarily decimate competing powers and regain control of the world market. The result was the slaughter of millions of working people and the massive destruction of factories to pave the way for a new expansion of capitalism.

Fifty years later, Washington and its rivals face another crisis of their system. The U.S.-led assault on Iraq sounded the opening cannons of World War III. The problem facing the U.S. government is that to organize another imperialist slaughter, it must go through the workers first.

The employers and their government have utter contempt for working people — and no remorse for the assaults they organize against us. The U.S. rulers are quick to deplore the killing of "American" soldiers in war, but

the truth is we are just so much cannon fodder in their military moves. President Clinton recently replied with a curt "no" when asked if it was time to apologize for the nuclear bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Many government officials in Japan are vocally opposed to apologizing for the atrocities their predecessors committed in China and throughout Asia and the Pacific. They have even gone so far as to organize a chauvinist campaign in opposition to offering an apology.

The imperialist powers were responsible for starting World War II, but it was the workers of the world who were responsible for putting an end to it. Millions of workers and peasants in China fought the Japanese invasion and forced Tokyo into an untenable military position. Washington came in for the kill and unleashed untold brutality on the people of Japan, as a lesson for all those fighting for independence from imperialist bondage.

Workers have no interest in debating who committed the worst crimes or covering up the atrocities of imperialist war. Equally, we don't care which gang of bandits fired the first shot.

Our interest lies in uniting with fellow working people around the world and preventing imperialism's march to a third world war that would devastate our class and set back humanity.

## Russia's privileged caste: are factions fighting for different programs?

Reader Steve Craine asks the *Militant* to comment on aspects of the crisis in Russia (see letter on facing page).

The various branches of Russian president Boris Yeltsin's regime are administered by a petty-bourgeois bureaucracy. Many government officials, Yeltsin included, are holdovers from the Stalinist apparatus that lorded over the Soviet Union until that regime disintegrated. Others are newly-emergent entrepreneurs.

The bureaucracy's overriding goal is the re-establishment of capitalism in Russia, and its insertion into the world capitalist system. To accomplish this

## DISCUSSION WITH OUR READERS

means, as a first step, reversing seven decades of nationalized ownership in basic industries and agricultural production.

But the drive toward this goal engenders sharp economic and social polarization. Even the limited steps taken by the Yeltsin government so far have resulted in a severe plunge in living conditions — and actual life expectancy — for the toiling majority. Meanwhile, a handful of incipient capitalists are getting very rich.

"Are there factions fighting for counterposed programs?" asks Craine. The privileged caste incorporates factions and contesting wings, but they all share a common "program" — self-enrichment and retention of their perks.

Government officials and directors of state-owned industries, mines, and farms compete with each other. That is why, in spite of vaunted "privatization" measures, like handing out vouchers, directors of these enterprises have demanded — and generally received — fat subsidies from Moscow.

These officials ape and envy the consumption habits of the bourgeoisie. But they can't be sure about their own fate if industry and agriculture come into private hands. Will it be their own hands? Or will they get the short end of the stick? So fierce struggles are waged by wings of the bureaucracy to ensure their own survival. One such brawl by competing gangs culminated in combat on the streets of Moscow in October 1993, when Yeltsin crushed a group of opponents in Parliament.

Yeltsin's adjustments in his administration begin from the same overall starting point — to best advance the course of integrating Russia into the world capitalist system. When it is perceived abroad that some official, such as Vladimir Plevanov, would be an obstacle to this road, that individual is sacrificed. Such steps are taken to soothe the jangled nerves of potential capitalist investors and to neutralize rivals.

A week after Plevanov was axed, Russian prime minister Viktor Chernomyrdin signed a decree stating that would-be private farmers on collective farms — now officially "joint stock companies" — must win unanimous approval from others on the farm before peeling off to establish their own enterprise. This is one reflection of the reality that moves to dismantle state-owned farms have proven unpopular in the countryside.

The working class has yet to be taken on in Russia. There is no defined wave of political resistance that has emerged from the working class or peasantry. But the recognition that if they push too far it will spark such resistance seizes the bureaucracy with fear. That is why many of the regime's "reform" measures have been partial and halting. On April 7, coal miners on Sakhalin island in Russia's far east held a sit-in protest demanding the government pay them back wages. Yeltsin made a point of mentioning another miners strike during his February 16 address to Parliament.

Even a recent poll showed three out of four people in Russia oppose increasing moves toward a market economy.

The main trend within the Russian government is the attempt to consolidate itself as a Bonapartist regime, not as a bourgeois democracy. And in the process of attempting to carry out their reforms, they will undoubtedly provoke large-scale working-class struggles.

— GREG ROSENBERG



# Bus workers in Britain: still fighting dismissals

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 about what is happening in your union, at your workplace, or

The dismissed workers have maintained a permanent picket outside the bus station in Chelmsford, as well as running union buses along company bus routes and collecting donations for a solidarity fund. They have spoken to other trade unionists, the media, addressed meetings such as the Militant Labor Forum, and carried out other activities to win support from fellow workers in Britain. A recent solidarity march in

## ON THE PICKET LINE

other workplaces in your area, including interesting political discussions.

"We've come to show the bosses we're still here fighting to get our jobs back," said Chris Andrew, one of the "Chelmsford 105" bus workers fired last November after taking a half-day strike action. Andrew, who worked for Badgerline bus company for 10 years, was part of a delegation of 14 bus workers who came to lobby members of Parliament April 5 and publicize their case of unfair dismissal. Bus workers from Swansea, Bristol, and Leeds also traveled to London to show their solidarity.

Between 40 and 50 people gathered outside the Palace of Westminster for press photographs, then passed through rigorous security to get into the Jubilee Room. There they met with several Labor Party MPs and with Bill Morris, general-secretary of the Transport and General Workers Union.

Badgerline bosses had pushed for increased driving times and fewer breaks, which threatens safe driving.

After notifying the company and carrying out a planned three-hour stoppage, 96 bus workers were fired November 18 and replacement workers brought in.

Chelmsford drew 1,200 people.

The company has continued its harassment of workers, firing another nine for talking to workers on the picket line. This brings the number of dismissed drivers to 105.

"It's not about money," said union member Andrew outside Parliament. "They want to push us to work 10 and a half hours a day, seven days a week."

The visit to Parliament came one day after Badgerline announced a merger with Scottish bus company Grampian Regional Transport. The new company, called First Bus, will be the second largest bus company in Britain with a market share of more than 11 percent, a fleet of 5,600 vehicles, and employing 14,400 workers.

### One miner killed, a second injured in Utah

One underground coal miner was killed and another sent to the hospital in unrelated accidents at the White Oak Mine near Scofield in Carbon County, Utah, March 24.

Twenty-year-old Blue Denny Samples, who was on the job only three weeks, was killed when he was pinned between a continuous miner (an excavation machine) and the wall of the mine. Fellow

miners tried to revive Samples and then drove his body to the mine entrance, where he was declared dead.

Another miner was sent to Castleview Hospital from the same section of the mine earlier in the day.

Miners at White Oak, formerly Valley Camp, voted to join the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) last August and have been trying to get a union contract ever since. Wages, benefits, and safety standards are inferior to other UMWA-organized mines in Utah.

Mike Dalpiaz, president of District 22 of the UMWA, which covers miners in Wyoming, Utah, and Arizona, maintained that the company failed to correct safety hazards at the mine.

### UAW wins GM contract after week-long strike

Some 5,000 members of the United Auto Workers (UAW) ended a week-long strike at General Motors' Pontiac East truck plant on April 6. The *Wall Street*

*Journal* reported that GM "lost another battle."

GM tried to transfer 1,700 workers who were laid off by a plant closing in Pontiac last year to factories in other parts of the country.

According to press reports on the new agreement, the auto giant will be forced to hire these workers at the Pontiac truck plant instead, which has been operating heavy overtime schedules. GM will also have to hire about 150 workers at its pickup truck plant in nearby Flint, Michigan.

Union officials did not release vote totals on the pact, which was voted on by nearly 3,000 union members.

### United Farm Workers score some union gains

After years of being pushed back by the growers, farm workers in California are beginning to make some gains in union organizing and contracts.

Since last year's march from Delano to Sacramento called by the United Farm Workers (UFW),

which involved thousands of farm workers and supporters, workers have organized and won union representation elections at eight farms and negotiated a total of 21 new and renewed contracts.

This March, the union won an election and gained a contract at the Bear Creek Production Co., a rose grower employing 1,400 workers at peak season. Other elections were won by 650 strawberry workers in Oxnard, 340 workers at a tree fruit company in Hanford, and at several date farms in Coachella — where the union's first grape strike occurred.

As a result of these elections, more than 2,700 new workers are now being represented by the union. New contracts negotiated cover 2,207 workers.

Contributors to this column include: Emma Jenner and Stephen Jenner, members of the Young Socialists in London; Dan Fein, a member of United Transportation Union Local 1416 in Salt Lake City, Utah; and Vanessa Knapton, a member of the YS in Los Angeles.

## LETTERS

### Stalinist lies

The facts expose the Stalinist charge of "collaboration with the Nazis" during World War II against the peoples of the Caucasus region for the fraud it is, as Maurice Williams mentions in "Why workers must oppose Moscow's assault on Chechnya" (*Militant*, March 13, 1995).

This was simply a pretext used by Stalin to deport 1 million non-Russian people, among them the total population of Chechens, Ingushes, Crimean Tatars, Kalmyks, Balkars, and Karachis, to "special settlement zones" in Kazakhstan, Kirgizstan, and Uzbekistan between December 1943 and January 1945. Their national entities and autonomous regions in the Caucasus and Crimea were abolished and wiped off the maps.

The sole basis for the accusation of "collaboration" is that those who came under occupation (mostly elderly men and women and children since the able-bodied men were all at the front of the Soviet army) were forced at gunpoint to provide foodstuffs and other supplies to the Nazis. But many of the Chechens and others later deported by Stalin didn't even live in areas that had been under Nazi occupation and thus never had an opportunity to "collaborate"!

The lie is also given to this accusation by Stalin's identical treatment of other peoples, such as the Meskhs of southern Georgia, all of whom lived 150 miles from the southern most advance of the Nazis. They were deported

en masse in November 1944 "for their own protection," to get them out of the way of the "advancing" Nazis. By that time, however, the Nazi armies (a big component of which had surrendered in January 1943 at Stalingrad, north of the Caucasus) had been pushed back a further 1,000 miles to Poland and were bogged down in Yugoslavia.

The Stalin regime used whatever pretexts it could find to strike what it hoped was the final Great Russian chauvinist blow to the non-Russian peoples of the Caucasus. Fifty years later these lies still ring as hollow as they must have to Stalin's victims at the time.

Doug Cooper  
Sydney, Australia

### Capitalism and Russia

The article on the chronic political crisis in Russia by Greg Rosenberg in the March 6 *Militant* was helpful in showing how the contradictions of the Russian economy today have resulted in a series of policy flip-flops by the Yeltsin government.

The horrors that even their so far limited moves have imposed on the working class (on top of the real but sometimes hidden stagna-



tion that had been going on for decades before reform was even mentioned) — an actual decline in life expectancy is the most dramatic — have engendered resistance and will continue to do so.

While there is no evidence of any principled opposition to a pro-capitalist course within the privileged caste, shifts in policy reflect different, and changing, assessments of what is possible and how quickly changes can be pushed through. Indirectly, then, they give an indication of the strength of the working class.

The "retreats" mentioned by the *Militant* therefore imply a certain level of resistance on the part of Russian workers.

There was one other develop-

ment in this same time period that I wish the *Militant* would comment on. In late January, Yeltsin criticized and then removed privatization director Vladimir Plevanov for suggesting that some privatizations should be reversed.

The capitalist press had presented Plevanov's appointment as a victory for those who wanted to slow down the market reforms. They saw his downfall as proof that the pro-capitalist reformers actually retain the upper hand on a national level.

The *Washington Post* quoted an unnamed government advisor saying Plevanov's policies "represented the strongest challenge yet to privatization, and [they were] rejected."

How do you think this develop-

ment fits in with the ones pointed out in Rosenberg's article? Is there a trend in one direction or the other? Are there factions fighting for counterposed programs?

Steve Craine  
Morgantown, West Virginia

### In Solidarity

I am a student active in the environmental movement, a vegetarian, and declare my solidarity with oppressed and exploited people everywhere, including offering my continued support to the working classes in our struggle for economic justice and an end to the madness of capitalist exploitation run rampant. I identify with and support feminist, socialist, environmental and working class movements. I work as a tutor and Recycle Worker on campus and subscribed to your paper when I found out about it at a Minnesota Public Interest Research Group conference for young people concerned about the environment and social justice.

I believe that vegetarian and socialist perspectives need to converge more. Vegetarians need a socialist perspective and vice-versa.

Brandon Juhl  
St. Paul, Minnesota

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.



## Mexico peasants struggle for land

### Indians in Oaxaca fight repression, demand relief from economic crisis

BY LAURA GARZA

"When the price of oil went up, everything else went up too," said Hilaria Cruz, explaining the impact of drastic economic measures by Mexico's government on working people. Cruz, 26, and her sister Yolanda, 21, are Chatino Indians from the village of Cienaguilla in the southern state of Oaxaca. Currently students in Olympia, Washington, the two were recently in New York on a speaking tour to draw attention to the situation facing indigenous peoples in Mexico.

In an interview the two activists described the crisis shaking the countryside, where peasants are being driven off the land and forced to seek work on big plantations as farm laborers or in the cities as wage workers. This process is accelerating with the huge price hikes, rising interest rates, and other austerity measures sparked by the December 1994 devaluation of the peso.

#### Prices set by the landowners

The main crops grown by peasants in Oaxaca are beans and corn. "Those who dominate the market are the same big landowners who rule the region and they have kept prices down" for the products the peasants sell, said Hilaria Cruz. At the same time, before the recent hikes in electricity and gasoline, they hoarded many goods and jacked up prices on basic items most small farmers must buy.

"If there is no rain many peasants are devastated and may have to eat the corn they were saving for seed," she added. "Then they have to buy the seed from the landlords. Often they have no choice but to go to work as domestic servants or on the coffee plantations" for wealthy capitalists. The growing number of landless peasants is swelling the huge pool of un-



Members of an Indian human rights organization in Oaxaca setting off for a march in Mexico City against repression and army occupation of Chiapas.

employed workers.

Many peasants from their community end up working in the city of Oaxaca, the state capital. They find jobs in industrial sites like the soft drink factory or lime plant, or in restaurants, earning 13 pesos a day, or about \$1.90. Others get hired on the coffee plantations, said Hilaria Cruz, where "15 pesos is the most you earn if you're a man; women are paid even less." Many other peasants migrate to Mexico City or the United States.

Working people on the land face abysmal living conditions. "There are no hospitals in our community. People have to take an eight-hour bus ride to the single

hospital in the city of Oaxaca," Hilaria Cruz noted.

The fight to raise living conditions in the area has centered on struggles by small farmers for land. "Land that was communal has been taken from the indigenous peoples and ended up in the hands of the big political bosses," said Yolanda Cruz.

The government's policies have aided the efforts by wealthy landowners to accumulate more and more land formerly held by peasants. Under laws dating from the Mexican revolution and the agrarian reform of the 1930s, land that was owned and worked communally — known as *ejidos* — could only be passed on to oth-

ers who actually tilled it. But under the previous administration of President Carlos Salinas, the Mexican constitution was amended to eliminate restrictions on buying and selling *ejidos*.

"This change allowed individual peasants to hold titles to their plots and to sell the land," Hilaria Cruz said. "Many small farmers who do not have enough money to buy basic necessities often get an offer from a landowner to sell their land. To them the price seems like a lot. But soon they're out of money, and without land they have no way to survive."

#### Capitalist farmers resort to terror

Many peasants are organizing to retake the formerly communal lands that were grabbed by big landowners. The government and the capitalist farmers have responded with terror against peasants and Indians.

The Cruz sisters related how their father, Tomás Cruz, a community leader, was assassinated on Sept. 26, 1989, at the age of 38, for fighting for the rights of indigenous communities. He defended peasants who had been arrested or otherwise victimized by authorities.

Tomás Cruz also organized a cooperative to make better use of forest lands owned by Indian communities. Big lumber companies would offer to come in and cut trees, offering to pay the community 10 percent of their earnings.

"The company would say, 'Don't you need a road? We'll build you a road, but you have to let us cut trees for 10 years to pay for the road,'" Hilaria Cruz explained. "My father said: 'Why don't we cut the trees ourselves but in a planned way, to protect the forest, and sell the wood to get the money to fix schools?'"

#### Efforts to expand the fight

Hilaria said Tomás Cruz, a well-known member of the Chatino Indians' supreme council, wrote an article exposing one case of how land was being taken from the indigenous communities. It was published and widely distributed. Shortly afterward he was gunned down.

Yolanda and Hilaria Cruz are involved in this expanding fight. They have been supporting the efforts of the Indian Organizations for Human Rights in Oaxaca (OIDHO), one of several Indian rights groups in the area. In March, OIDHO organized a march by peasants from Oaxaca to Mexico City to demand an end to repression and to the army occupation of Indian communities in nearby Chiapas, and for better conditions in their towns and credit for farmers.

In the United States, the two activists have helped form the Committee in Solidarity with the Indigenous People of Mexico. The group can be reached at P.O. Box 10176, Olympia, WA 98502; Tel. (360) 352-6342; Fax (360) 352-8526.

Meanwhile, the government of President Ernesto Zedillo is pressing ahead with its austerity program against working people. On April 11 it hiked the price of tortillas, a staple for millions, by 26 percent. It also recently increased electricity rates by 20 percent and gasoline prices by 35 percent.

The government raised the minimum wage a meager 12 percent, from an initial proposal of a 10 percent raise, in response to protests from union officials. But inflation has halved the buying power of most workers in recent months. The minimum wage is now 18.30 pesos a day, or about \$2.70.

In another move, which reverses the long-standing laws that prevented foreign ownership of Mexican land, the Zedillo government has granted permission for the first time to U.S. real estate barons to buy up properties in that country.

## Communists in Australia campaign for jobs, protection of social gains

BY LINDA HARRIS

SYDNEY, Australia — "The labor movement needs to advance a program of action to defend the interests of all working people — we need to fight for jobs for all and full protection of wages and social benefits," said Bob Aiken at a rally winding up the Communist League election campaign here at the end of March. Aiken ran for the Sydney seat of Cabramatta in the New South Wales state election. The rally concluded 10 weeks of campaigning by Aiken and his supporters among workers, farmers, and youth.

The Labour Party won the election by a one-seat majority, campaigning on an openly pro-business stance.

In an interview with the *Australian*, the major national daily, Aiken pointed out that "the Mexican currency crisis and the Barings bank collapse are further signs of the historic crisis of capitalism." The Communist League candidate said he was using the campaign "to explain the crisis that is unfolding in financial markets and what effect it will have on the people in the streets." Across Australia and around the globe, Aiken noted, workers are being pressed to put in longer hours and in more dangerous conditions. He cited the March 14 deaths of two workers at the BHP steelworks in Newcastle. The two crane operators were engulfed in a "blowback explosion" while working near the furnace. BHP had recently introduced 12-hour shifts in the area.

Aiken, a production worker at the Alcan aluminum plant in Sydney and a member of the Australian Workers Union — Fed-

eration of Industrial Manufacturing Employees amalgamated union, ran a campaign to reach working people in struggle. He spoke to workers there who had just ended a strike over company threats to fire injured workers. The 300 workers at Rheem were demanding a company policy for rehabilitation of injured workers.

A campaign team participated in a student demonstration of 2,000 at Wollongong University in New South Wales March 23. This was part of a national protest involving 15,000 students against

the Keating Labour government's plans to increase university fees.

The candidate joined a roadside demonstration in January of several hundred New South Wales farmers demanding the government take action to provide drought relief. As part of his campaign platform, Aiken demanded a halt to farm foreclosures by the banks and a moratorium on farm debt.

Aiken also traveled to Cuba to attend an international solidarity conference of 3,000 in Havana last November. Since returning, the Communist League candidate has spoken out at meetings defending the socialist revolution in Cuba. He concluded his remarks at the campaign rally by saying Cuba is "a concrete example of how working people can deal with economic crisis — when we have a workers and farmers government that acts with us to advance our interests."

Damien Lucas, a student at the University of New South Wales, spoke at the campaign event on behalf of the Young Socialists. "It is no surprise that students are concerned to defend the right to an education — there is plenty of evidence for that around the world," he said pointing to examples from France to Canada.

"Bourgeois figures have launched a campaign directed at youth urging them to 'just say no' to drug abuse and alcoholism," Lucas said. "As more young people say 'no' to racism and sexism and the violence fostered by capitalism and unite in defense of their democratic rights, the Young Socialists will offer these young people something to say 'yes' to!"



Militant/Linda Harris

In the face of the capitalist crisis, we must "advance a program in the interest of working people" the world over, said Communist League's Bob Aiken.